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[FGI's 22nd Annual Rising Star Awards Brighten Up A Dreary Day \(<https://lookonline.com/fashion-cool-aid/new-york-fashion-cool-aid-by-laurel-25/>\)](https://lookonline.com/fashion-cool-aid/new-york-fashion-cool-aid-by-laurel-25/)

by LAUREL MARCUS (<https://lookonline.com/author/laurelmarcus/>)



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The 22nd Annual Fashion Group International Rising Star Awards luncheon took place at Cipriani 42nd Street yesterday where a full house of attendees turned it up and turned it out despite the oddly warm monsoon-like weather. One hundred and twenty nominees are winnowed down to (this year's) final 38 distributed over the eight categories of Fine Jewelry, Home Interior/Product Innovation, Beauty/Fragrance Corporate, Accessories, Beauty/Fragrance Entrepreneur, Retail, Menswear, and Womenswear.

(<https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Wassner.jpg>)

Gary Wassner
Photo: Randy Brooke

The Hilldun Business Innovation Award sponsored by Gary Wassner is given to one company which this year was Afterpay, the brainchild of Anthony Eisen and Nick Molnar although they were not personally on hand to receive the award they sent a representative. According to Wassner, Afterpay "enables the aspirational consumer to reach brands they could otherwise not afford" with an installment plan that they assume the risk while the retailer gets paid in full. This global, fast growing, public company has only been in the US for nine months - only time will tell if it's a smart move to trust the fashion obsessed living beyond their means - but hey, they're looking great while doing it.

(https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Hilfigerandwife_edited-1.jpg)

Tommy Hilfiger & Wife Dee Ocleppo
FGI's 22nd Annual Rising Star Awards Brighten up a Dreary Day
Photo: Randy Brooke

This year's keynote speaker was Tommy Hilfiger who gave an abridged version of how he launched his business in 1985 with \$150 and 20 pairs of secondhand bell bottom jeans purchased on St. Mark's Place. He'd earned the money working during high school nights and weekends at a gas station; he sold the jeans out of the trunk of his car in his home town of Elmira, New York. "I wanted to build my own brand," Hilfiger said, despite not being able to attend college or design school due to his dyslexia – "they had no remedy for it in those days."

Fast forward 34 years – "We have over 2,000 stores in 118 countries" which Hilfiger attributes to the resurgence of '90s trends coming back as well as the "see now-buy now" fashion shows which he's become known for. You're no doubt familiar with his past collaborations with Gigi Hadid – he'll now be working with singer/actress Zendaya ("she's got a taste level and a love for fashion and style that I have"). She will be "sharing her vision" with us for Hilfiger's late February Paris show so stay tuned for Zendaya x Tommy Hilfiger. His advice for those interested in breaking into the fashion industry include "pushing boundaries, staying true to yourself and the most rewarding part is giving back – we are very philanthropic with our commitment to the community."

[.https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/groupshotofwinners.jpg](https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/groupshotofwinners.jpg)

The Winners

Left to right: Nichola Gray, Kate McLeod, Victoria Hayes, Shivam Punjya, Jaclyn Aguilera, Daniel Mofor, Morgan Fulcher, Emmanuel Tarpin, Ronak Patel (Afterpay), and Sebastien Leon Agneessens

(Not pictured: Neha Dani Jewelry – Neha Dani – CO WINNER in Fine Jewelry

Gabriela Hearst – Gabriela Hearst – WINNER in RETAIL)

Photo: Laurel Marcus

When Wife Dee Ocleppo Hilfiger came to the podium to give out the Accessories award (presenters were often past winners), she commended her husband on doing a great job with his speech. "I've heard that story about 10 million times. But I have to say every time I hear it, I'm still incredibly inspired. So to all of you young designers – do not give up. Do not give up." Winner: Behno (Shivam Punjya). Other nominees – Bobby Roache, Genevieve Rose Atelier (Genevieve Foddy), Jibs Life (Natalie Kathleen), Lelet NY (Sara Bieler Sasson), Lutz Morris (Tina Lutz Morris).

Kate McLeod accepted the Beauty/Fragrance Entrepreneur award for her company Beauty Stones by Kate McLeod saying that winning this award was unexpected as she was still making her product in her pajamas over her Williamsburg stove last year. "I have free samples if anyone wants to put some BUTTER on your body," she added lasciviously. Other nominees – Flesh (Linda Wells), High Beauty (Melissa Jochim), Nateeva (Hope Freeman), Peach & Lily (Alicia Yoon), Scentinvent Technologies (Abby Wallach & Caroline Fabrigas).

The Retail award was presented by past winner Jennifer Bandier of Bandier to Gabriela Hearst who spoke briefly of sustainability and walked out shortly after her win toting one of her iconic handbags seen of late on Meghan Markle. Other nominees – Graupel, Inc. (Christina Fitzpatrick), Nova Octo (Silje Lubbe).

Menswear designer Kirby Jean Raymond who reminded us that he won this award a few years ago, looked over his shoulder in faux paranoia – "they send someone after I speak to make sure I don't say any crazy sh*t." Additional bon mots included: "stick to your convictions" and "design like you mean it." Winner – Don Morphy (Daniel Mofor). "Always follow your passion and your dreams like Tommy Hilfiger said." Mofor illustrated this point adding that it was only about two years ago that he had quit his computer engineer job at Walmart to make his designing dreams a reality. Other nominees – Eclectic (Franck Maleguez), Head of State (Taofeek Abijako), Reali New York (Lisa Reali).

[.https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PhillipLim.jpg](https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PhillipLim.jpg)

Phillip Lim

Photo: Randy Brooke

Presenting the Womenswear award was Phillip Lim (the 2006 winner) to this year's winner Victoria Hayes. Other nominees – Cristina Ottaviano, Haus Von M (Ludi Wang), Julianna Bass, Land of Distraction (Danita Short and Christian Juul Nielsen), Laurence & Chico (Laurence Li & Chico Wang), Sophia Is (Sophia Tezel –Tzelepis).

[.https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/marylouluther.jpg](https://lookonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/marylouluther.jpg)

Marylou Luther Fashion Director of FGI

Photo: Randy Brooke

Two categories resulted in ties including Fine Jewelry and Beauty Fragrance Corporate. For Fine Jewelry they went to Emmanuel Tarpin and Neha Dani Jewelry. Other nominees – Amanda Pearl (Amanda Pearl Brotman), and Foundrae (Beth Bugdacay). For the Beauty Fragrance Corporate awards went to Jo Malone London (Morgan Fulcher) and M.A.C. Cosmetics (Jaclyn Aguilera). Other nominees – Crème de la Mer – Kathryn Stuke and International Flavors and Fragrances (Mackenzie Reilly).

For the Home Interior/Product Innovation category the winner was Atelier D'Amis (Sebastien Leon Agneessens) who explained that his company name meant the studio of friends. Other nominees – Pandemic Design Studio (David Rozek) and The Original Lawn Furniture Co. (Charles Pavarini III) who makes very cool ivy covered outdoor sculpture/furniture. As I headed down the stairs of Cipriani into the somewhat lessening rain, I heard a woman call out to Mr. Pavarini. "Hey, I love your furniture! I need to get a garden for it." "Yes, you do that!" he replied with a good-natured grin.

– Laurel Marcus

(https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-4hPZSb9AZEY/XEskE39odrI/AAAAAAAc84/Flv5sSsqj8gIF-00bcStwkAv0plwsCL6gCLcBGAs/s1600/laurellarge.JPG)

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