



# Janie Bryant, Lyn Paolo And Salvador Perez Open Up About Changing Role Of Costume Designers

By [Marcy Medina](#) / August 17, 2015



A costume designer's job is to create a character, but thanks to social media, what used to be a behind-the-scenes role has evolved into a consumer-facing one. As [Janie Bryant](#), [Lyn Paolo](#) and [Salvador Perez](#) can

attest, landing a gig on a show that strikes a chord in popular culture can lead to books deals and department store collaborations.

Speaking at WWD's inaugural [Fashion](#) Forum in Las Vegas on Sunday, the trio discussed the opportunities for both brands and retailers.

When Bryant began designing for "Mad Men" eight years ago, she had no idea it would inspire audiences to adopt the throwback styles of the Fifties and Sixties. Soon, she was approached by Brooks Brothers and Banana Republic to design collections offering contemporary styles with vintage flair. Now that the series has wrapped, Bryant has been able to express her personal design aesthetic via a collaboration with contemporary line Black Halo that just landed in Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus. "I like that I got to design a modern and sexy look," she said. Art may soon imitate life, as she is now working on Eva Longoria's new NBC show "Hot and Bothered."



Paolo said that she and "Scandal" creator Shonda Rhimes shared a similar ethos when it came to creating Kerry Washington's character Olivia Pope. Paolo interpreted Pope's tailored cream wardrobe into one of The Limited's best-selling collections. Released concurrently with the show, it generated over two billion media impressions when each episode aired.

“Several things helped the line — advertising and fashion press, and the fact that the whole “Scandal” team was able to live tweet during the shows, which drove sales exponentially,” Paolo said.



Perez called shows such as “The Mindy Project” “a commercial for clothes. [Mindy Kaling] wears something and things sell out of stores. The free marketing from social media sells things out.” In her discussion about California style, designer Trina Turk noted the bump in sales when Kaling wore one of her pieces on the show.

But Perez doesn’t spend all his time in stores. “I think there’s a perception that all we do is shop and that’s probably the least of what we do,” he said. “We have budgets and finances to deal with. Our job is to service the character, but what’s happening now with social media and so much interaction with fans is that what we do as costume designers is crossing over into fashion. The look that we came up with for Mindy with the prints and colors is resonating with fans, but there are so many variables. You have no idea what will end up being a hit.”



Bryant was quick to point out that their job differs from that of a stylist, noting, “We don’t dress people, we transform an actor into a character.” Often, it takes months of research to prep for designing costumes, as was the case with “Burnt,” an upcoming film starring Bradley Cooper and Sienna Miller. Paolo spent weeks following chefs in several London hotels in order to understand what shaped Cooper’s character beyond the white jacket and toque.

But, Perez noted, it falls to costume designers to amp things up for the big or small screen. “Reality is boring. What we do is heighten reality.”