



# What Happens When Youth No Longer Drives Fashion

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It's that time again. Lincoln Center is buzzing with hoards of retail buyers, socialites, celebrities and journalists, watching designers at Fashion Week unveil collections for spring/summer 2012.

But for other folks, the job is to think beyond next season.

Fashion trend forecaster David Wolfe has been picking through the latest designs coming down the runway in order to summon up the trends he expects to dominate in fall/winter 2012.

But beyond what colors and styles Wolfe, the creative director at Doneger Group, expects to see next year, there is a more important message: youth is no longer driving fashion, and younger lines are wisely "aging."

And that is having an impact on the designs of the clothes that we will see next year.

Why is this happening? Baby Boomers are regaining economic control of fashion. They have no desire to step back from fashion and sit at home in a housecoat.

Wolfe cited examples such as Meryl Streep, Martha Stewart, and Vogue's long-time creative director Grace Coddington, who in their sixties and seventies are still forces to be reckoned with when it comes to style and fashion.

That, and the fact that the Boomers, as well as their elders, have more money to spend than younger generations gives them the right to wield their influence.

Wolfe expects that we are gradually heading into a new era for fashion, which will produce more lady-like fashion that incorporates bright colors, warm spicy colors such as cinnamon, paprika, and cayenne, as well as notes of blue.

This doesn't mean that black and neutrals, which have dominated many recent designer collections will disappear, but they will evolve.

Wolfe also expects to see modernism revisited with clothing that incorporates abstract color blocking or

has an almost architectural heft.

But more than anything, these designs will be ageless. Think sheaths, shifts, suits, and pant suits paired with lady-like accessories.

Already, there are expectations that the spring/summer fashion lines that will be show this week at New York Fashion Week will feature bright colors, including neon pinks, greens and yellows. Styles are expected to remain causal, but will become more polished.

"Dressing up is the new cool, dressing down is old school," Neiman Marcus Fashion Director Ken Downing told Reuters.

Color is a great way to encourage consumers to restock their closets. In recent years, designers have favored black and neutrals because they would blend with the other items a woman might have in her closet.

Bringing in color, as is happening with the spring/summer collections, is a call to shop and restock. As designers transition to the fall and winter, this may get kicked up another notch.

If Wolfe is correct, designers will be looking to convince women to pull items together, with matching colors and ensembles that pair suits with coats. Accessories also will become more important.

According to Wolfe, fashion has been taking a back seat to technology.

"Apple stores are busy, specialty stores are not," Wolfe said.

There are ways for fashion designers to incorporate technology to make their designs more compelling, according to Wolfe. He expects over time, the industry will find ways experiment with new materials and methods such as motion-sensors, 3-D printing and mood sensitivity.

But that may be even farther into the future.