



Jeanine Jeo-Hi Kim

Interview by Tony Triumph, Contributing Fashion and Culture Editor

The Founder and Executive Director of the Women & Fashion Film-fest. She was Founder of the Metropolitan Arts League, Editor-in-Chief of Fashion Review Publishing, and Board Member of Fashioning Our Industry. Ms. Kim began her career as an Editor, Researcher, and Speech-writer for the Deputy Prime Minister of Korea and an Editor and Speech-writer for the President of the Republic of Korea. She is married to technology and media entrepreneur and investor Paul Donohue, Co-founder of Wire Image and ImageLocker.

TONY TRIUMPH asks...

How is business for you?

JEANINE JE-O-HI KIM Busy, so I guess that's good! [Smile]

As you come from a family of entrepreneurs, did this shape you into the business woman that you are today?

Tremendously. My grandfather was an entrepreneur who built airplane parts in Japan. He went to the University and built his factory there. His entrepreneurship, self-reliance and inventiveness were ingrained into my father, who also went through several reinventions. It was almost necessary for a war-inflicted generation who suffered so much loss. The amazing thing about my father is that he has the ability to learn and figure out almost anything by himself. He is also very hands on with everything he does. He is over eighty years old and refuses to stop working. So, I learned a lot about self-reliance, hard work, dedication and innovation from him.

Your husband is one of the co-founders of Wire-image. Did you play a role in its idea screening, development, or day-to-day business operations?

My husband, Paul, is a lot like my father, self-taught, self-reliant and an amazingly perceptive and innovative thinker. He has a Masters in the Philosophy of Literature! Yet, he taught himself programming and technology. I tried to give him suggestions, but they kind of had things under control. He's now working on some other new technology/media companies. ImageLocker is one. Mostly, I complain about frustrating technology related problems, which helps him think of solutions to create.

How do you feel about social media and its impact on "celebrities"?

Social media is a part of our daily lives now. Like everything, there are pros and cons. For businesses, it's inescapable. Managing it is a challenge. Thankfully, I'm now working with Brian Lee Boyce and his company Small Victory Press who's helping us navigate because it's very time intensive. In fashion and entertainment, people have become brands. Last year, at our inaugural Women & Fashion Film-fest, we screened the film *Sexy Baby* by Jill Bauer and Ronna Gradus, which explored the impact of social media on girls. There's certainly a lot of posturing going on, and it can become tragic when "reality" and "image" digress.

Do you think it creates more opportunities, or overexploits the industry?

The impact of low cost media production is both good and bad. For artists and filmmakers, it's created great possibilities. Artists need a certain level of "celebrity" to become commercially successful. I understand their need to promote, and social media is one low cost way to do it (although Facebook is trying to make it more difficult). However, I'm not a proponent of "celebrity" for celebrity sake. At heart, I'm an artist and the Women & Fashion Film-fest is about creating opportunities for women and artists.

Speaking of The Women & Fashion in Film-fest, it is returning for its second year! Last year's festival was amazing, and when I saw who you had involved, I could only imagine how much bigger the following year would become. How did this initially come into play?

The Women & Fashion Film-fest is a combination of all the things I love and want to do in life. I love film because I'm a writer myself, and I love storytelling. I've always loved fashion, and I've always felt it is important to give back. I'm also a strong believer in mentor-ship. I benefited from having an amazing woman, Dr. Hesusung Chun Koh, as a mentor in college. She raised six children, two who went to work for the Obama administration, while pursuing her career. I believe women still need to mentor each other. Through this gathering of amazing leaders at our festival, we're providing information and tools to women, young people and students. We're also hopefully giving the message that it's important to think about the way we affect other people and society.

What is the one thing that keeps your team dedicated to your vision?

Fortunately, I'm surrounded by some of the most talented, dedicated, and genuine people. Paul Van Ravenstein, Director of the Women & Fashion Film-fest, is one of the kind-hearted, down-to-earth people I know, as well as his wife Pat Cleveland and daughter Anna. He is also very wise, and makes good decisions. Sandi Bass, a renowned casting director and muse to Hubert de Givenchy, has also been an incredible force behind the Women & Fashion Film-fest for the past two years. My list goes on and on. Some people may be attracted to what we're doing because it may seem glamorous, but then they realize that it involves a tremendous amount of work as we're a new platform. Those who aren't really dedicated tend to drop off. So in some ways, there's some self-selection going on.

As a media entrepreneur, do you live with any regrets?

Certainly, there are always lessons and regrets. We should have gotten this out on that date, not this date, etc. You can't be an entrepreneur or an innovator unless you are prepared to have lots of setbacks.

In the end, if you've sincerely put in your best effort, you realize that it's part of the route. Learning, from the result of trying and risk taking, is a gift in itself. You have to give yourself that gift and opportunity to learn and let go of regrets that can become barriers. Take a deep breath, and move on with the journey.

What advice would you give to an entrepreneur recovering from a set-back?

When certain things don't go the way people feel it should have gone for them, they can become embittered. It comes with the territory of working in these industries. You just try your best. You work hard; you try to be fair, reasonable and grounded.

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My education and experience in working in finance helps me a lot, I think. It put me through some tough challenges and strengthened my analytical skills. I think every artist would benefit from having financial and economic knowledge and organizational and management skills.

Do you have any plans to take the Women & Fashion in Film Festival abroad?

As a matter of fact, several festivals abroad have approached us about collaborating. We've also been approached about bringing the Girls Film Festival elsewhere. It's possible, but this year, the

focus is on New York City, an amazing center of fashion, independent filmmaking and media.

Will you expand to the levels of Cannes or Tribeca?

It's hard to imagine, but they were startups at some point too. I think the possibilities are tremendous. I looked at Tribeca's program for this year, and it's definitely not just a film festival any more, which makes sense.

While the potential for expansion is out there, we also want to be careful not to lose our vision and purpose.

What can we look forward to in your upcoming festivals?

We really hope to raise greater awareness. It's critical to continue building on what we've created. For just our second year, I think we're making quite some headway, especially in the fashion industry here in the US. Hopefully, as more people learn about what we're doing, the more they will want to join and support us, which will allow us to continue to have great programming and panelists, and incorporate more institutions that reach out to young people. We also would like to expand our online presence going forward. We're already working on topics for next year, but unfortunately, it's under wraps for now.

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