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Style Maven

St. Louis' "First Lady of Fashion" Susan Sherman on the growing arts scene, her recent fashion award and what she'll be wearing this gala season.

Interview by **LINDSAY PATTAN**

IN THE SEA OF head-to-floor designer ensembles donned by St. Louis' elite during the city's gala season, Susan Sherman stands out for her refreshingly down-to-earth approach to life, her love for the arts and her well earned fashion prowess. A key player in national art circles, Sherman has positioned herself as a catalyst for community growth, co-founding Craft Alliance's Fashion Lab alongside Boo McLoughlin and Saskya Byron in 2011 in an effort to bring the intellectual side of the industry to the forefront of the local arts scene. It's an accomplishment for which she will be recognized this gala season, at Craft Alliance's ARTrageous Dotted Ball on May 10. In light of her upcoming honor, ALIVE caught up with Sherman to talk current projects, the growing arts scene and what she'll be wearing this gala season.

ALIVE: The Fashion Lab Award is a prestigious honor designed to highlight individuals who play a vital role in promoting fashion as an important art form both locally and nationally. Naturally, you embody this wholly.

SUSAN SHERMAN: Let me start by saying thank you—I am terribly humbled and flattered to be awarded this honor, but Fashion Lab is and always has been a group effort. It took a village to launch and remains an ongoing collaboration.

ALIVE: Fashion Lab was created to showcase fashion as an art form. How do Fashion Lab endeavors stand out from other fashion events in St. Louis?

SS: Fashion is a complicated industry—an intricate web of inspiration, aspiration, craftsmanship, detail, design, identity and business. We wanted to showcase those behind-the-scenes elements that go into creating a line of clothing: the inspiration, the detailed work that contributes to an intricate piece, the business side and the branding. The back story interests us, and we want to bring that to the forefront of fashion and arts in St. Louis. We've brought in big designers, from talent like Todd Thomas and Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week [New York] veteran Timo Weiland,



to a special Fendi collection preview and several events in partnership with Saks Fifth Avenue. Fashion Lab has really contributed to the quality of fashion design exhibition in our city.

ALIVE: You have rightfully been identified as a catalyst—a woman who makes things happen. What's next for you in the fashion and art communities?

SS: All of us involved with Fashion Lab have made it a goal to focus less on shopping and more on the true art of fashion, so our events will continue to reflect that. I am excited to be a part of "A Queen Within," an amazing fashion exhibition featuring pieces by Alexander McQueen, among other designers, that will debut in October at the World Chess Hall of Fame. It is already putting St. Louis on the map internationally for art, fashion and culture. I have personally been working

with the talented designer Anjali Kamra [Run-golee], assisting her with her website, national promotion and sales. And I continue to look for projects that combine my passion for fashion and contemporary art.

ALIVE: With all of your projects, you still find time to maintain your inspiring personal style. What can we expect in your looks during gala season?

SS: I'm still playing with ideas for my ARTrageous Dotted Ball dress. I've been in conversation with Marilyn Glass, a talented vintage clothing dealer based in LA. She has an incredible collection and I'm excited to see what we will find together. I recently sourced a fabulous Alexander McQueen dress with the help of a friend, which I wore to the Dada Ball. Seeing some of the incredible pieces by him that are featured in "A Queen Within" really has me in a McQueen state of mind.