

ELEGANT SENSUALITY

KLAUS VOGEL IN INTERVIEW WITH MODESTO DE LUCA, CHIEF FASHION DESIGNER FOR FREESOUL

I travelled from Japan to the States and throughout Europe over the last six weeks talking to as many important executives in our business as possible. Recently, I had a very interesting meeting with Modesto de Luca, chief fashion designer for the Italian brand Freesoul. His basic idea for weathering the current crisis is to deliver fresh interchangeable fashion at prices that enable consumers to buy two pieces

for the price they would normally pay for one garment of the same quality from some other brands. It is amazing that by using different fabrics and accessories, the same styles look very different in a collection, ranging from sportswear to sexy to elegant. De Luca, who has been chief fashion designer at Freesoul since 2008, when Freesoul was sold to the Balham Holding, always keeps the retailer very much in mind. Freesoul offers a variety of shapes in order to fit the tastes and demands in various markets from Holland to Scandinavia. Furthermore, the retailer is able to apply a very reasonable markup to each garment.

Mr. de Luca, Freesoul is certainly a very interesting Italian brand, and it has recently gone through some changes. What is the current situation? The word change was needed for a long time at Freesoul. This was the main reason the new investment group started with a total overhaul in all areas. They went through changes in product and design concept and they corrected the image and positioning of the brand. The advertising now gives the right image and clarifies the target consumer. They have developed a new corner concept accompanied by a simple business model. However, it will always remain Italian at heart. Why should a retailer buy Freesoul? Retail is experiencing the worst time in its history. In the past, things were going really well for historic brands like Freesoul, and they never really looked at the



retailer as a partner. Under its new management, Freesoul starts with support for the retailer. The retailer is looking for simple things: good prices on products, high quality, marketing support, high margins and good service. This is not an exact science, just the basic needs for the survival of the retailer. Freesoul recognizes this and is undergoing all changes internally to suit the retailer and help make them profitable.

The new corner concept will also help them bring up their own image and help them sell other products and brands. How important is denim for Freesoul? Denim has been a core product for most successful brands. However recently there are changes in the market that have not become evident to many brands. You cannot sell denim alone. You need to have other goods around to draw people into stores. So although denim is very important and will always remain the most important product category in our offering, fashion products that complement our denim will become increasingly important. What are your key markets? Our biggest market is France, followed by Italy, Spain and then Germany. Is there a special image Freesoul aims to achieve? The Freesoul customer is a very clean, chic and cool person who likes to be free, keep a pleasant attitude and is an intellectual. The Freesoul girl lives in a world of sensuality and makes everyone around her envious of her free spirit. Aside from denim, what are other strong-selling items for Freesoul? Freesoul offers a very good range of tops in various woven and knit fabrics. What is your advice for making it through this crisis? Elegant sensuality and value for money beat the crisis. Make the retailer your partner. Give constant imagery to the consumer and dress them up to feel free and spirited. Anything you would like to tell our readers? Have a look at the new collection and see the difference! Be positive, smile, act professional, and you will be successful.