

# SOHARLEM

A CULTURAL INDUSTRIES INCUBATOR

## **Press Kit**

Fall 2022

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**SOHARLEM HONORS FASHION LEGENDS AT AWARDS BENEFIT CELEBRATING 11 YEARS IN THE  
MANHATTANVILLE FACTORY DISTRICT**

**NEW YORK–August 29, 2022** – SoHarlem, New York’s premiere cultural industries incubator, celebrates its 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> from 6pm to 9pm. This festive event will honor fashion icons along with cocktails, hors d’œuvres, dancing and a designer showcase at The Malt House, 461 West 126<sup>th</sup> Street, between Amsterdam and Convent Avenues.

The SoHarlem 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Benefit Celebration salutes three stellar fashion industry inspirations:



Designer, teacher and self-described ‘fashion engineer’ [Julian Asion](#) the “Hidden Gem” award;



Harlem’s gift to American fashion, [Dapper Dan](#), the “Cultural Fusion” award; and,



Consultant, model and jewelry designer [JoAni Johnson](#) the “Harlem Fashion Model” award.

With the assistance and guidance of a cadre of designers, artisans, and other creatives, SoHarlem has been part of the transformation of the once abandoned Manhattanville Factory District into an increasingly vibrant community since its founding in 2011.

Janet Rodriguez, Founder & CEO “We are so excited to celebrate our 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary by honoring three superstars of fashion while simultaneously showing the works of more than a dozen of our creative entrepreneurs who will have their designs showcased, and on sale at The Malt House from September through December.”

The architecturally spectacular Malt House will also be the venue for an exciting calendar of events featuring fashion, music and culture throughout the rest of 2022.

SoHarlem's mission is to "create equitable opportunities in Harlem through cultural industries workforce development." As a social enterprise a key goal is to connect people living in Harlem with opportunities designed to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency.

**Sponsors:**



For tickets and sponsorship opportunities to celebrate SoHarlem's 11 year journey, please contact [info@soharlem.org](mailto:info@soharlem.org) or call (212) 222-2792.

For more information about the event use bar code or visit [www.soharlem.org](http://www.soharlem.org)



**About SoHarlem**

SoHarlem has been an essential force in the transformation of the once underutilized Manhattanville Factory District into a successful business community employing local residents.

Over the past eleven years, SoHarlem has launched more than twenty successful micro-businesses comprising everything from custom-made, couture garments to fashion accessories and face masks.

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***Journey* designed by Javier Valencia, digital artist Carlos Nazario textile design and Tre Buchanan conceived and illustrated Journey**

## SoHarlem 11th Year Celebration Honorees



**Dapper Dan**, whose imprint on Harlem for his business tenacity, perseverance, designs and genuine care of our young people will receive the first ever SoHarlem **Cultural Fusion Award**. Among his many accomplishments as a man from East Harlem who has never left Harlem, we recognize his decades of fusing New York’s Black and Latino music and fashion cultures.

Daniel Day, aka Dapper Dan, is a Harlem couturier known as the “king of knock-ups.” A New York Times bestselling author and global fashion icon with a remarkable rags to riches story. Dapper Dan pioneered streetwear in the early 1980s with his eponymous store on 125th Street, co-opting luxury branding to design original garments with high-end detail.

His exquisite designs drew powerful New York hustlers as clientele who were also interested in Daniel’s street reputation as a proficient gambler and dandy. He has outfitted Eric B & Rakim, LL Cool J, Salt-N-Pepa, Big Daddy Kane, Missy Elliott, Jay-Z, Aaliyah, Mike Tyson, P.Diddy, Floyd Mayweather and many more.

In 2017, Gucci partnered with Dapper Dan to reopen his atelier as well as release a Gucci-Dapper Dan collaboration exploring the design synergies with Gucci’s creative director.



**JoAni Johnson**, one of SoHarlem’s steady supporters, is a certified tea blender, jewelry maker, turned model has earned the inaugural **Harlem Fashion Model Award**. “This honors of all those who before her, changed the fashion industry,” stated, Janet Rodriguez, Founder SoHarlem.

In 2018, JoAni joined Rihanna’s cast for **Fendi campaign** to serve all women of all cultures. JoAni’s beauty has been on the cover of Natural Geographic, and Redkin Campaigns among others.

She is a first generation Jamaican American Harlemit. An original Studio 54-er, she has many fascinating stories to tell from enchanting moments with Andy Warhol to dining with Josephine Baker.



The **Hidden Gem Award** shines a light on **Julian Asion**, who help launch SoHarlem’s Designers’ Studio in 2015 after semi-retirement as a way to give back to emerging designers. He shares his 40 years of experience collaborating with designers to bring their visions to fruition.

His hands are the first to cut a designer’s fashion design by creating the patterns that bring the designers vision alive. Julian is a creative engineer aka proud pattern-maker.

Julian has worked and consulted with such Fashion and theater luminaries: Jason Wu and Narciso Rodriguez, Cynthia Steffe and Zac Posen, Isabel Toledo on outfits for First Lady Michele Obama, Calvin Klein, Marc Jacobs, Ralph Rucci, Donna Karan, and Rebecca Taylor, Albert Nipon and the cast of the Broadway production of “After Midnight.”

Julian began his career as an assistant to the late, Arthur McGee, first costume designer for the legendary, Negro Ensemble Company and the first African American Fashion Designer to run a design studio (Bobby Brooks in 1957) in New York’s former Garment District.

Born in Cuba and a New Yorker “by choice”, Julian Asion speaks sample room Italian and Cantonese. His own line (GET NAME) of evening dresses have been worn by Lena Horne, Cicely Tyson, Leslie Gore, Debbie Mazar, and Princess Anne Sidamon-Eristoff.

**SOHARLEM ENTREPRENEURS-IN-RESIDENCE IN RESIDENCE AT THE MALT HOUSE SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2022**

**NEW YORK, NY - September 30, 2022** - SoHarlem is celebrating its 11th year in the Manhattanville Factory District as a “Cultural Industries Incubator”. During that time it has served local entrepreneurs, emerging designers seeking mentorship, residents in need of employment skills, consumers with a belief in “made in Harlem”, and a range of community partners. A celebration is truly in order at SoHarlem, as an organization that has managed challenges over the past three years related to everything from funding and the environment to the pandemic and now Monkeypox.

Of particular note, SoHarlem has championed equity in the fashion industry, where less than 5% of “successful” designers are people of color, despite the influential contributions those diverse populations have made to the field.



Janet Rodriguez, SoHarlem Founder & CEO stated, *“you have to celebrate people who are still here, who are full of hope and creativity, and our community leaders.”*

Throughout the fall SoHarlem will be promoting more than a dozen designers whose micro-enterprises it has been incubating over the years. This talented group will be telling their stories and selling their creations, all of them made in or for Harlem designs. The designers also offer services from learning how to sew or tailor or designs garments for those who have their own fashion ideas.

SoHarlem hopes to reach investors, buyers and other supporters committed to women and people of color who are serious about addressing years of inequity in the fashion industry. Our community is filled with loyal followers who shop with a conscious mind and care about this craft. Join us!

[Valerie Deas](#) who taught quilt making at SoHarlem to formerly incarcerated women has been restoring the Gee Benz Quilts that will inaugurate the Malt House for Shop SoHarlem



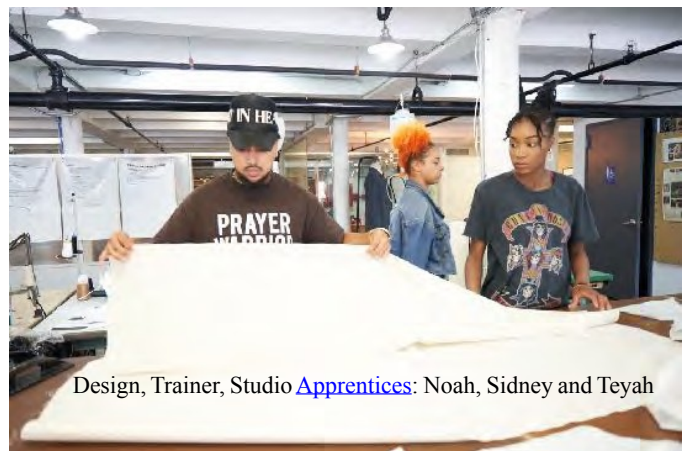
Olivia Smashum Blue Olive, Founder & Creative Director; Janet Rodriguez, Founder & CEO, SoHarlem; Javier Valencia, Studio Designer-In-Residence; and Tammy Echols-Howell Guest Artist helping SoHarlem’s artisans create shops that tell their stories at this new location.

Deirdre Washington, who started as an apprentice at SoHarlem, and now serves on the board of directors said, “SoHarlem is something that is vital to this community because it provides a service.” In response to her statement Noah Joseph one of SoHarlem’s emerging designers said, “SoHarlem provides a safe communal environment and is supportive in every way possible.”

SoHarlem designer and entrepreneur Olivia Smashum stated, “starting in September SoHarlem will be based in the Malt House. We have been in love with and watched the renovation of the space which is around the corner from our Studio and are thrilled to be able to set-up shop on the street level in the Factory District.

Designers, seamsters, seamstresses, and cutters have been working with SoHarlem’s social media team to amplify their complementary styles as they bring their wares and designs to individual shops at the Malt House from September-December 2023.

This street level incubation will help secure SoHarlem’s long-term goal of achieving sustainability, as it tests the idea of creating a permanent shop on the street level of the new, former, Taystee Building.



Design, Trainer, Studio [Apprentices](#): Noah, Sidney and Teyah



Scott Metzner, Principal, Janus Property Company (pictured left in one of his buildings) is once again supporting SoHarlem's mission. Janus is true community builders and as a developer with a 30 plus year history in Harlem. Janus has developed low to moderate income housing and is a respected community partner of the local community. The skills acquired by Janus in its 30 year history have enable them to strategically own and manage life sciences, commercial, mixed-use and multifamily

rental properties in New York City. A primary focus has been on the creative redevelopment of the Manhattanville Factory District and restoring the architectural wonders in West Harlem..



[Blue Olive](#), by Olivia Smashum Founder & Designer



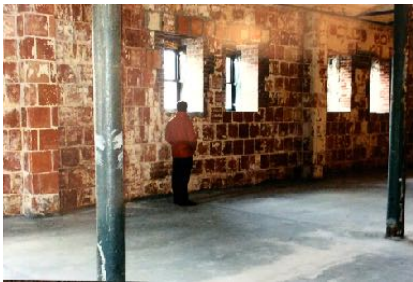
Intertwine, Guest Designer, Tammy Echols Howard

The Factory District has been a creative backdrop for SoHarlem's photo shoots enhancing the designers' vision.

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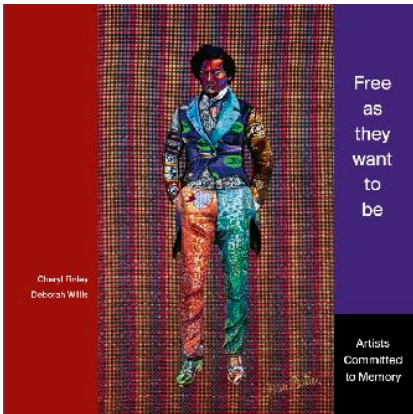
**October 27, 2022** The Fusion of the Fashion and Music Industry, Moderated by Kai Cogsville, Founder, Young Atlas and Noah Ortiz, SoHarlem Design Apprentice, and surprise guest.



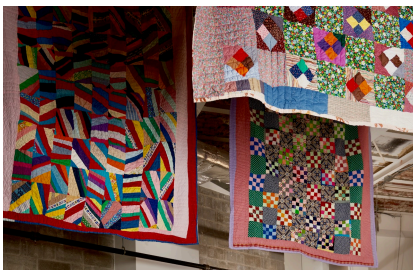
**November 10, 2022** **Developing the Manhattanville Factory District**, the developers of Manhattanville Factory District, Scott Metzner, Principal of Janus Properties and Stella Betts, partner at Levenbetts, will be discussing the architectural wonders of the Manhattanville Factory District.



**November 12, 2022, Olivia Smashum, Designer-In-Residence** who has created a life-style brand from resort wear, home decor, urban chic to designs that make your feel and look good is hosting a Shop & Sip and along with other designers will share her story from Executive Vice President at HBO to contemporary designers.

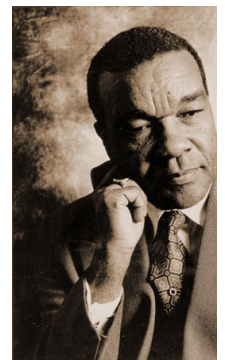


**November 17, 2022** The new publication by Cheryl Finley and Deborah Willis, *Nobody Knows My Name*, presents artists working in photography, video, silkscreen, projection and mixed-media installation, all of which explore the possibilities of freedom. Their quest to be “as free as they want to be” is envisioned in the subject matter they explore, as well as in their drive to innovate aesthetic practices in photographic mediums.



**November 26, 2022** *Healing: Creating Art in the Time Of Grief and Loss*, Valerie Deas, Master Quilter, and Josephine Richardson, Founder, Appalshop.

**December 1, 2022** *Remembering David Driskell*, One of Harlem’s remembrance of this creative giant who left a legion of artists, curators, historians, scholars and entrepreneurs who are all examples of his work and influence.





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**Javier  
Valencia**  
designed  
these three  
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our honorees



**Dapper Dan**

Cultural Fusion Award  
Tuxedo Jacket



**Julian Asion**

Hidden Gem  
Award  
Trousers



**JoAni Johnson**

Harlem Fashion Model  
Gown

# About SoHarlem

This fully functional, sun-filled compact manufacturing plant and studio is home to the SoHarlem Collective and a hub for all of our programming in support of our local community and beyond



**Mission:** Creating equitable opportunities in Harlem through cultural industries workforce development



TheMan Henry House of Tailoring

## Designers' Studio Offerings:


- Community Training
- Design Consultations
- Sewing Classes
- Made to Measure




## Mink Building


1361 Amsterdam Avenue @ West 126 St.  
Suite 340  
New York, NY 10027  
212-222-2792


[www.soharlem.org](http://www.soharlem.org)

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*Featured Designers*



**FOR DESIGNERS**

If you are an emerging designer seeking professional development, or an established designer interested in a peer-to-peer exchange, we encourage you to contact us for a free 30-minute consultation, in person or virtual.

SoHarlem has worked with a wide variety of designers, many of whom continue to make use of our services in the Studio, and the expertise of our creative team.



Creative Advisor & Guest Artist