

GLOBAL FASHION CAPITALS

A TEACHING GUIDE





GLOBAL FASHION CAPITALS

Global Fashion Capitals is an exhibition that investigates the history of the “big four” fashion capitals (Paris, New York, Milan, and London), examining the factors that led to their prominence, as well as the rise of emerging cities that seek to join their ranks.

This guide can be used to evaluate comprehension of specific information offered in the exhibition (these are the “a” questions) and to stimulate discussion and deeper understanding of the exhibition’s larger themes (these are the “b” questions”).

This guide is aimed at college-aged students. The “a” questions should be given to students before and during their gallery visit.

(Please note that only pencils and electronic devices may be used to take notes in the gallery. Ink pens/markers are not permitted.)

The “b” questions can be used as discussion topics after viewing the exhibition.

All of the questions encourage visitors to look at the exhibition as a whole, drawing connections between the various cities’ fashion industries and designers.

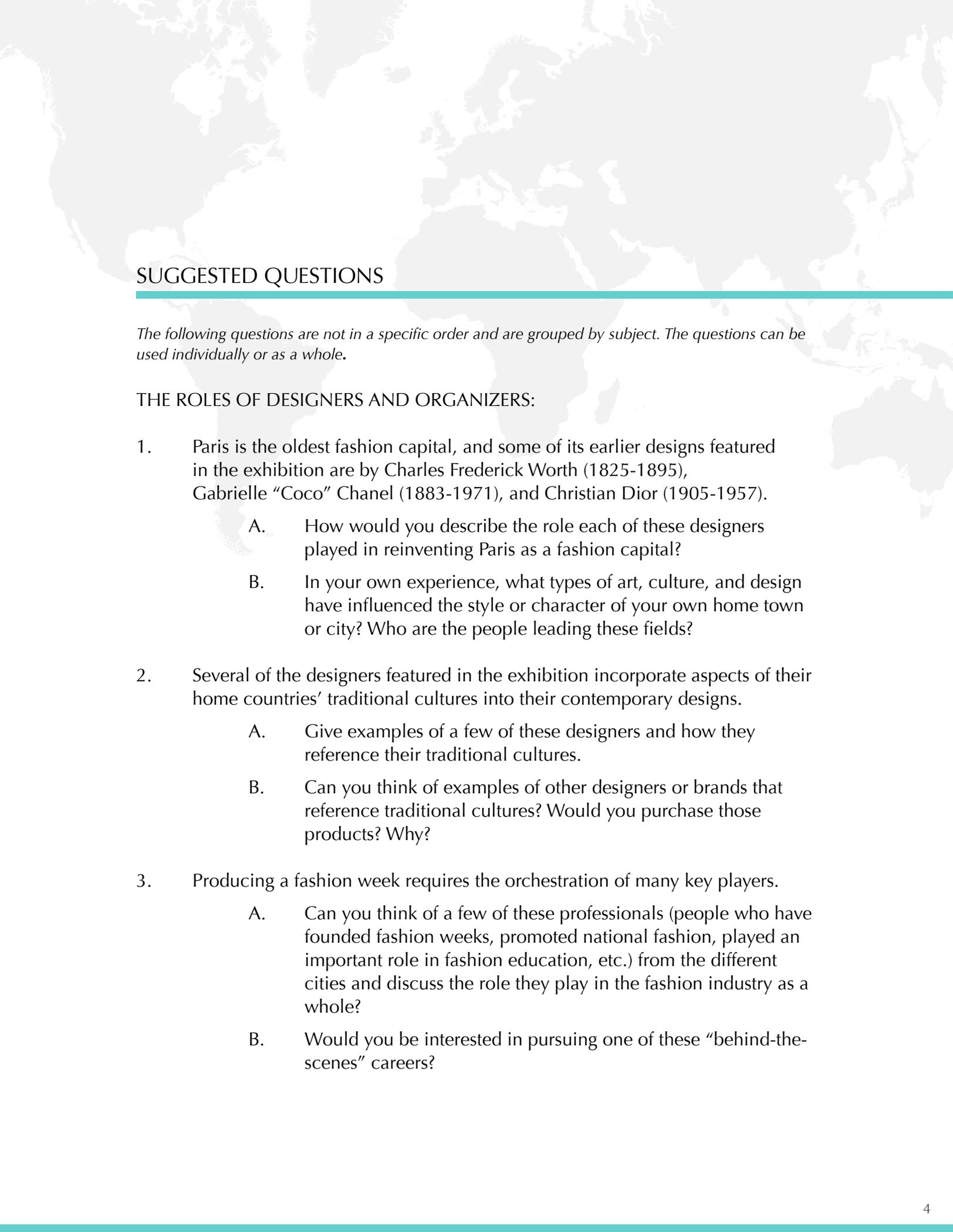


BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the past ten years, the global fashion industry has seen a phenomenal rise in the number of cities worldwide that host fashion weeks. While Paris, New York, Milan, and London are currently the four leading fashion capitals of the world, other cities with emerging fashion scenes are beginning to challenge their exclusivity. Governments around the world acknowledge the power of fashion to re-brand their cities as centers of innovation, attracting global attention and exerting creative influence. Yet, the success of a fashion city depends upon a delicate balance of economic, social, and cultural factors.

The exhibition *Global Fashion Capitals* begins with an introductory section, featuring a fashion calendar showing the dates of all the fashion weeks included in the exhibition and a digital style map geographically locating the cities and displaying examples of their runway and street fashions. Istanbul, the youngest fashion city examined in the exhibition, is also represented by two designers in the introductory section.

When visiting the exhibition, please continue on the left side of the second section, progressing clockwise around the perimeter of the exhibition space. Here the history of the four leading capital cities—Paris, New York, Milan, and London—is illustrated with 30 pieces from prominent designers, such as Charles Frederick Worth in Paris, Donna Karan in New York, Versace in Milan, and Alexander McQueen in London. The sections on the “big four” capitals each contain historical garments tracing the rise of the cities as fashion capitals. Worth’s design from Paris, dating from circa 1890, is the oldest object in the galleries. The exhibition continues with more than 40 mostly contemporary designs from 16 cities with emerging fashion scenes: Tokyo, Antwerp, Stockholm/Copenhagen, Berlin, Moscow/St. Petersburg, Kiev, Istanbul, Madrid, Mexico City, São Paulo, Johannesburg, Lagos, New Delhi/Mumbai, Seoul, and Shanghai.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

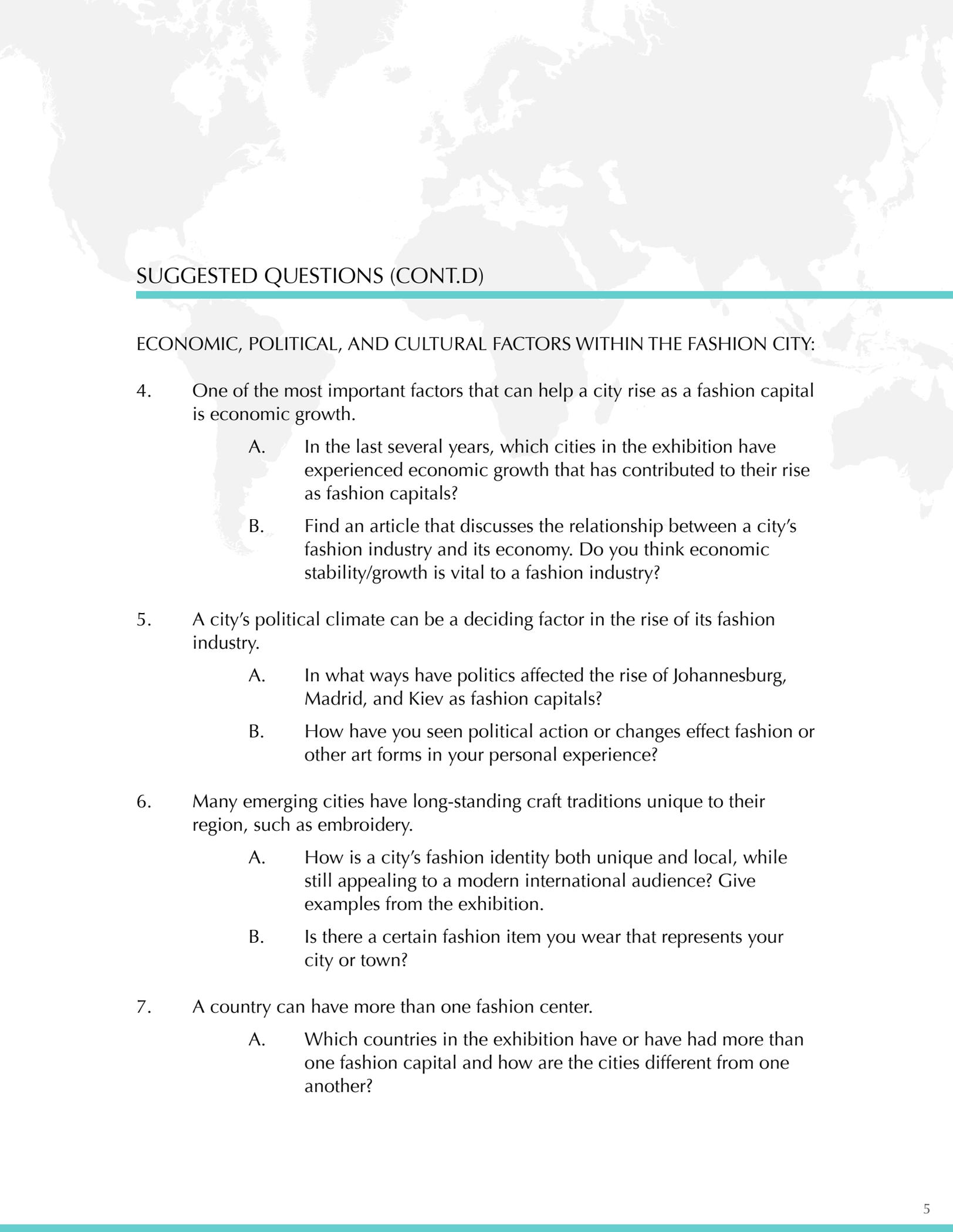
The following questions are not in a specific order and are grouped by subject. The questions can be used individually or as a whole.

THE ROLES OF DESIGNERS AND ORGANIZERS:

1. Paris is the oldest fashion capital, and some of its earlier designs featured in the exhibition are by Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895), Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel (1883-1971), and Christian Dior (1905-1957).
 - A. How would you describe the role each of these designers played in reinventing Paris as a fashion capital?
 - B. In your own experience, what types of art, culture, and design have influenced the style or character of your own home town or city? Who are the people leading these fields?

2. Several of the designers featured in the exhibition incorporate aspects of their home countries’ traditional cultures into their contemporary designs.
 - A. Give examples of a few of these designers and how they reference their traditional cultures.
 - B. Can you think of examples of other designers or brands that reference traditional cultures? Would you purchase those products? Why?

3. Producing a fashion week requires the orchestration of many key players.
 - A. Can you think of a few of these professionals (people who have founded fashion weeks, promoted national fashion, played an important role in fashion education, etc.) from the different cities and discuss the role they play in the fashion industry as a whole?
 - B. Would you be interested in pursuing one of these “behind-the-scenes” careers?



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS (CONT.D)

ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL FACTORS WITHIN THE FASHION CITY:

4. One of the most important factors that can help a city rise as a fashion capital is economic growth.
 - A. In the last several years, which cities in the exhibition have experienced economic growth that has contributed to their rise as fashion capitals?
 - B. Find an article that discusses the relationship between a city's fashion industry and its economy. Do you think economic stability/growth is vital to a fashion industry?

5. A city's political climate can be a deciding factor in the rise of its fashion industry.
 - A. In what ways have politics affected the rise of Johannesburg, Madrid, and Kiev as fashion capitals?
 - B. How have you seen political action or changes effect fashion or other art forms in your personal experience?

6. Many emerging cities have long-standing craft traditions unique to their region, such as embroidery.
 - A. How is a city's fashion identity both unique and local, while still appealing to a modern international audience? Give examples from the exhibition.
 - B. Is there a certain fashion item you wear that represents your city or town?

7. A country can have more than one fashion center.
 - A. Which countries in the exhibition have or have had more than one fashion capital and how are the cities different from one another?

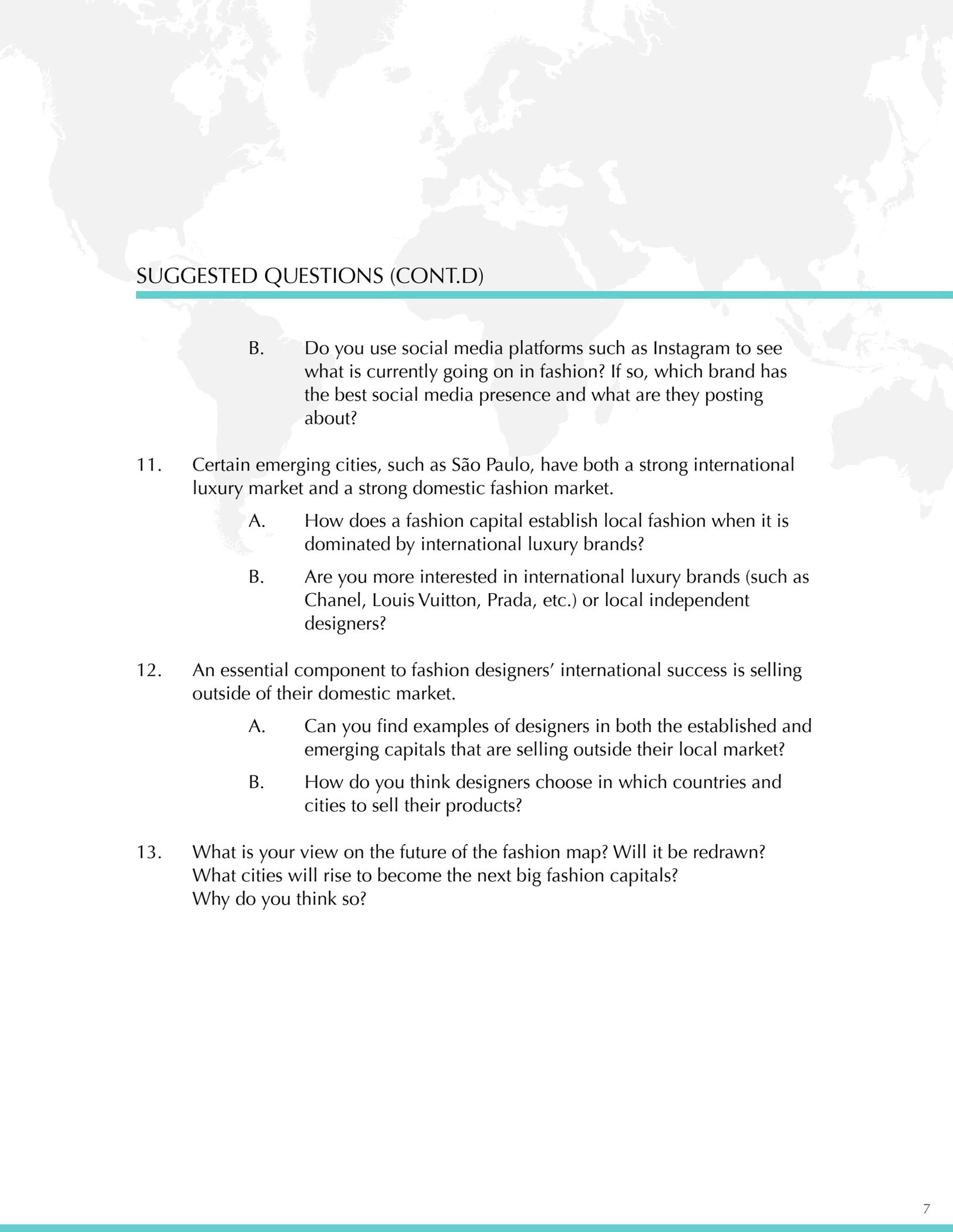


SUGGESTED QUESTIONS (CONT.D)

- B. Can you think of multiple fashion cities that could exist in your country? How could these cities have interacted, co-existed, or risen beyond each other to become your country's fashion capital?
8. Many governments have recognized the important role fashion can play in branding a city.
- A. What are some of the different government initiatives mentioned in the exhibition?
 - B. Do you think it is important for governments to get involved in fashion and other areas of art and business? In what ways can this involvement be beneficial and in what ways could it have negative effects?

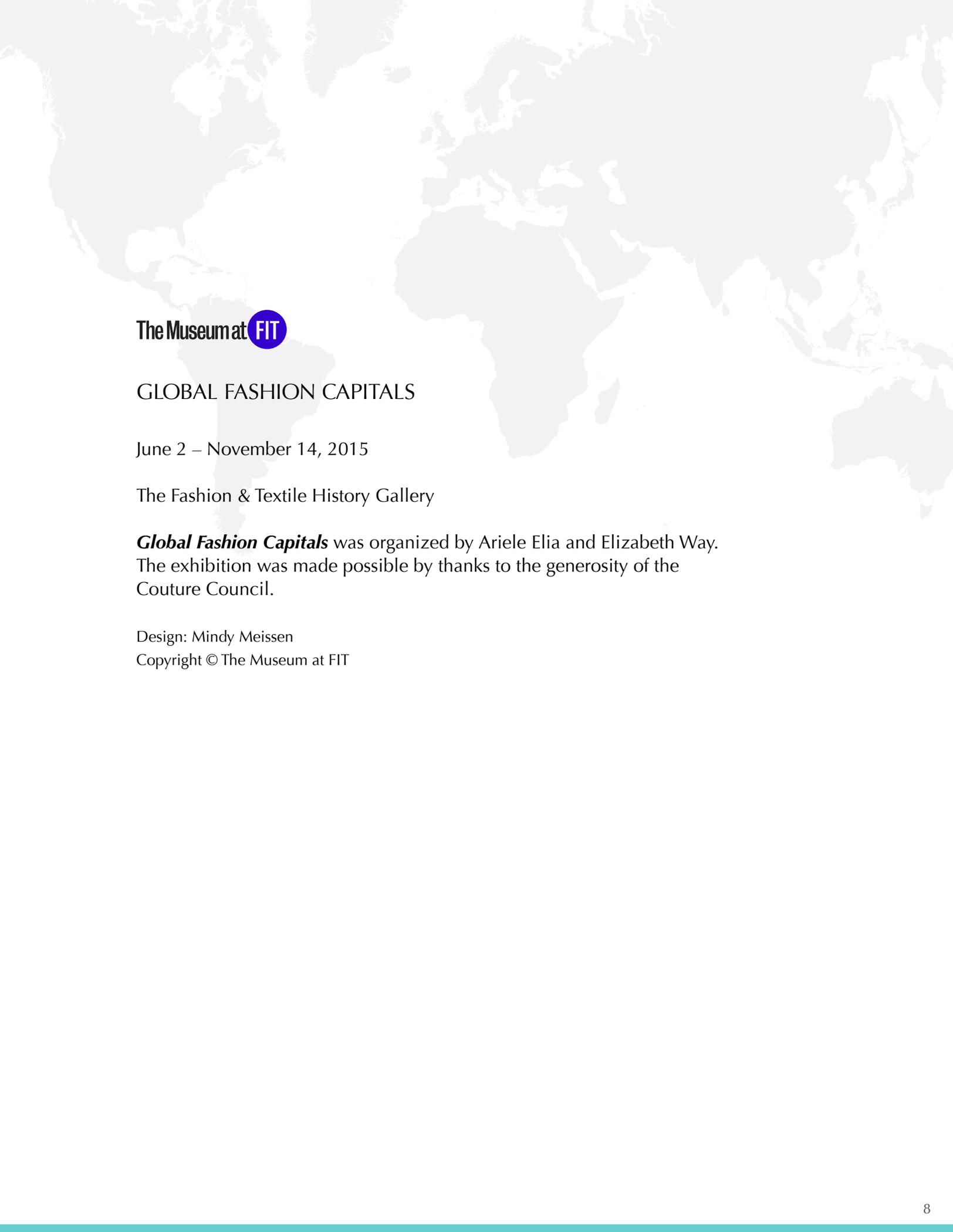
THE GLOBAL FASHION INDUSTRY:

9. The established capitals play a dominant role in the global fashion design industry and interact in many ways with the emerging capitals. For example, a number of the international designers featured in the exhibition attended the fashion program at Central Saint Martins College in London.
- A. What are other ways that designers from the emerging fashion capitals interact with established fashion cities?
 - B. Who benefits more from interacting with the established fashion capitals, the emerging fashion cities or the established capitals themselves?
10. Many emerging designers are using social media to expand their brand internationally.
- A. What role has the internet, social media, and media play in communicating a cities identity internationally? Are there certain capitals that emphasize these technologies more than others?



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS (CONT.D)

- B. Do you use social media platforms such as Instagram to see what is currently going on in fashion? If so, which brand has the best social media presence and what are they posting about?
- 11. Certain emerging cities, such as São Paulo, have both a strong international luxury market and a strong domestic fashion market.
 - A. How does a fashion capital establish local fashion when it is dominated by international luxury brands?
 - B. Are you more interested in international luxury brands (such as Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Prada, etc.) or local independent designers?
- 12. An essential component to fashion designers' international success is selling outside of their domestic market.
 - A. Can you find examples of designers in both the established and emerging capitals that are selling outside their local market?
 - B. How do you think designers choose in which countries and cities to sell their products?
- 13. What is your view on the future of the fashion map? Will it be redrawn? What cities will rise to become the next big fashion capitals? Why do you think so?



The Museum at **FIT**

GLOBAL FASHION CAPITALS

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The Fashion & Textile History Gallery

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