

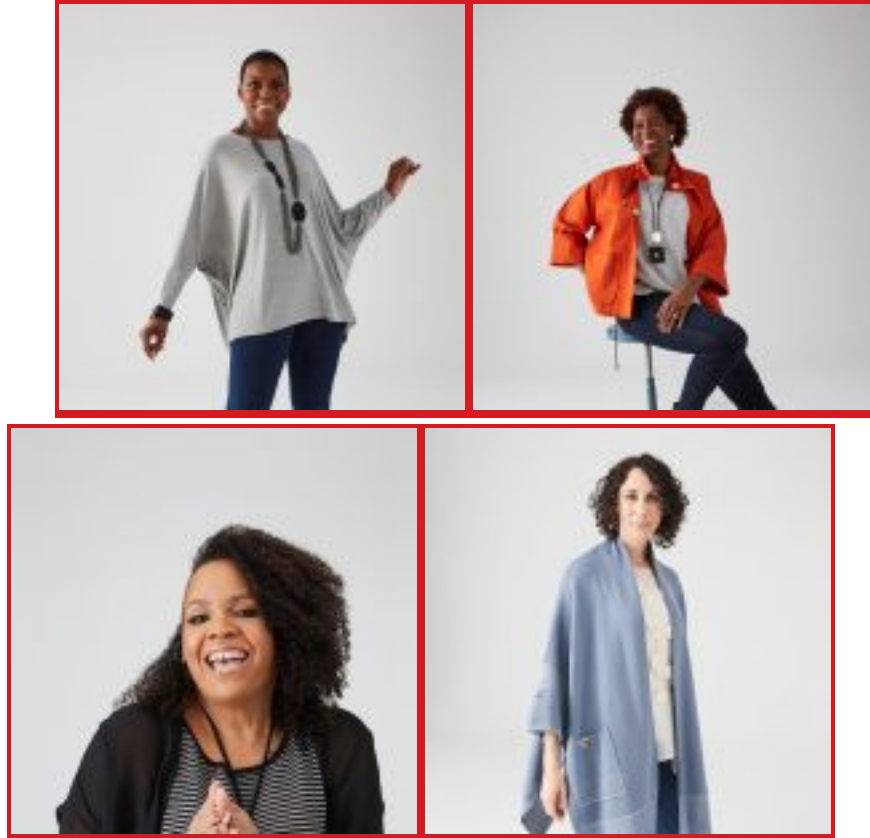


# Marla Wynne Ginsburg Builds Boomer Following on HSN and QVC

Starting this fall, MarlaWynne will be available for worldwide distribution for the first time on QVC in Italy and Japan.

By [Lisa Lockwood](#) on May 17, 2019





Marla Wynne Ginsburg, whose MarlaWynne business has been a top seller on [HSN](#) and QVC catering to the Baby Boomer customer, has her eye on expansion.

Starting this fall, the MarlaWynne Collection will be available for worldwide distribution for the first time in Italy and Japan. The line will be available on QVC in Italy in September and QVC Japan in October. It will be offered on QVC Germany in 2020.

In 2018, Ginsburg's lines of apparel, jewelry and totes generated in excess of \$2.6 million in global licensing revenues from \$23 million at wholesale and approximately \$45 million at retail worldwide. This is Ginsburg's 10th year on the network, and she continues to build a big TV and online following for her stylish separates for women over 40 and her funny, blunt and outspoken nature.

A former TV producer, Ginsburg reinvented herself after a successful entertainment career. After noticing that there were no fashion brands speaking to women like herself in search of quality and effortless style in size-inclusive silhouettes (XS to 3X), that fit her changing body and lifestyle, she set out to become a fashion designer.

"Who I make these clothes for is the most underserved, ignored customer. And this I know because I am this customer," said Ginsburg.

Tess Giberson, creative director, collaborates with Ginsburg on design, marketing and merchandising. Giberson, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, previously had her own eponymous designer collection and designed for Calvin Klein Men's Wear, Tse Cashmere and Lane Bryant.

"It was so impressive that someone with her background, which is very elevated and high-fashion, gave a s-t about this customer and understood this customer," said Ginsburg. In her former life, Ginsburg used to attend Paris fashion shows and never understood who wore these clothes. She lived in Paris as head of international TV coproduction for the French film company Gaumont, where she worked on shows such as "La Femme Nikita" and "The Highlander." She moved back to Los Angeles to work for ABC/Touchstone in 2006, and then came the writers' strike.

"The writers' strike froze the economy in L.A., and then we had the economic meltdown, and that froze many bank accounts, and mine couldn't have been in worse shape if Madoff had managed them. I got caught in the middle of that financial storm." She was a single mom with two kids, and went out and bought a sewing machine during the writers' strike and started sewing in her garage.

Had she ever sewn before?

"I'm so old I took home ec," said Ginsburg.

During "The Highlander," she spent a lot of time in the wardrobe trailer and always loved that part of doing the show. "When I was dealing with really difficult actors, or actresses and directors, it can get really difficult and emotionally draining. And you have all this responsibility, and at times I wanted to cry. But in a leadership position, it's not a smart thing to do. So I'd go to my trailer and in lieu of crying, I'd make jewelry which I'd give to various people. The ideas peppered through there that someday I would do this, but the writers' strike was a perfect opportunity. By the time the strike was over, I had sold my first collection to [HSN](#), to Nordstrom, and specialty stores across the country."

It was Creative Artists Agency, which had once represented her as a TV producer, that introduced her to HSN and a Montreal-based manufacturing company, and she gave up ownership altogether. She eventually was able to negotiate back the rights of her company and today owns 100 percent of all trademarks and her company. She licenses production to several firms. MarlaWynne Collection is produced by Nation Design, WynneLayers is produced by KBL, and R.J. Graziano and NES do MarlaWynne Jewelry.

Richard Graziano, president of R.J. Graziano, said, “Marla has a great eye. She knows what she stands for and is very, very focused and is behind her style and the woman who she focuses on. She’s very chic and has a lot of style.”

When Ginsburg got started she said she was operating instinctively on what she wanted to wear. “I had spent my life wearing Prada and Dior and Gucci. I decided if I was going to make a clothing line that it had to be so good, I would wear it. I will tell you, after ending up last year at \$44 million at retail, I could buy anybody’s clothes that I want to. And I do wear my own clothes every day,” said Ginsburg.

She will wear her own brand to the office, to dinner parties, award shows and events. “I wear what I make because I love what I make,” said Ginsburg.

She recalled the first time she went on HSN and her mother came with her. Her TV producer head kicked in and she created this thing that could be worn as a cowl neck, or slipped down to make short tops a little longer. “I said to my mother, this is the dumbest thing and I’m going to go on national television. And my mother, said, ‘No, get out there!’” Ginsburg did her hour with six or seven things. “There’s a bunch of people standing around. Lynne Ronon [chief executive officer of Nation Design] is one of my manufacturers. She said, ‘Hi. I’m Lynne Ronon and I have good news and bad news. We have to cancel your next two hours.’” Ginsburg asked, “What’s the good news?” She said, “You’re completely sold out.”

“I couldn’t believe it. I was crying, my mother was crying. Then the reality set in. They were testing me. There would be no more for nine months. We came on full board in 2009.”

Ginsburg travels to HSN in Saint Petersburg, Fla. twice a month, and makes frequent trips to TSC in Canada and QVC in the U.K. to personally sell her collections. Other times the line is featured and handled by a guest presenter. The line just opened in Australia, and will be in Italy and Japan in the fall.

“I’m a hot mess on TV. I say what I think, and I’m unfiltered. I’m sure you’re shocked by now. I am the most bleeped person to ever be on TV. I’m honest about what I’ve been through in my life. It’s been up and it’s been down. I’m honest about my ‘icky bits.’ I’m honest about being 63 and how much I love this time of life,” she said.

Ginsburg flitted around the office showing off some of the pieces, while taking them on and off. “This is like an Italian knit. We do a lot of chiffon pieces. I talk about ‘icky bits,’ and know when women hit menopause. I sat down so everyone could see how big my stomach is, but then I put this on this (drama kimono) and I hide it. You can go to the gym and give up eating, or you

can just wear my clothes,” she said. “I just try to make it fun and honest and don’t try to be something I’m not. I’m not about being a glamour puss. I’m not about pretending to be Tess or a famous designer. I am what I am,” said Ginsburg.

“We try and do things that are easy. We don’t think about age-appropriate. We think about having clothes that will include all shapes and sizes. I think all women should have clothes, and it shouldn’t be plus sizes or straight sizes. This whole conversation annoys me that we are even having it. We come in all sizes and shapes and we should have clothes to fit us. You shouldn’t feel horrible as you go through these stages of life. This business hit me like a hot flash. Everything is changing and rapidly,” she said.

She said the company does better with colors. “My palette is never screaming orange. It’s more subdued,” she said.

Once Giberson came on board, she began looking at different proportions. “Because Marla wears them all the time, sometimes it becomes personal [for her], does this look good on me or not? I pay attention to the customer. She writes in all the time. We have this incredibly engaged customer,” said Giberson. She noted that stretch is really important. “Some women like things skinny, some women only like things wide and cropped. Some women hate cropped. They like long. We have to make sure we’re listening to them and incorporating different proportions,” said Giberson.

Ginsburg’s web business on HSN is much bigger than what she does on TV. (Sixty-seven percent of the business is digital). She said as far as their engagement rate right now, on their Facebook page per post is 12.5. percent. “That is really high. On Instagram, we’re at 3.8 percent. Also the conversion rate is really high,” said Ginsburg.

In addition to MarlaWynne, the company launched WynneLayers in 2017. “It’s more minimal and has a lot of ease to it. There’s a lot of black and white and muted colors that layer beautifully together,” said Ginsburg. “It’s a system of layering. It starts with a core. [I’m wearing] two chifony things, feel the hand on the fabric. We’re very good at engineering into price and fabrication. We do all French seams. We will spend more on a chiffon, but it’s still very inexpensive fabric. We bind everything. Layers were borne out of the idea of how I like to dress. I wanted things that allowed me to travel all the time,” she said.

Seventy percent of the apparel and jewelry is produced in Asia, and 30 percent is made in the U.S.

When they launched WynneLayers, they gave a party for 30 women. With eight Facebook posts, they did \$250,000 in sales in two weeks without having been on the air. “Our average conversion rate today is 15.2 percent. Thirty-seven percent of our customers are repeats. The average customer buys 3.9 units a year,” she said.

WynneLayers has seen double-digit increases every year.

For the company’s look books, they always feature real women wearing the clothes and not models. And she likes to make bold accessories that make a statement.

The average price point on Collection is \$80, and \$60 on Layers.

“We love our partnership with Qurate [parent company of HSN and QVC], but we’re also looking at the future,” said Ginsburg. “We intend to expand our reach. We’re looking at a variety of different things, so we’ll distribute under a different label,” Ginsburg said. Doing a separate collection for wholesale distribution would require new investors, she said.

Right now, MarlaWynne is the second or third largest apparel brand after Diane Gilman on HSN, and the number-one apparel brand on QVC in the U.K and The Shopping Channel in Canada. Nick Chalkley, director of fashion at QVC UK, said, “Since 2012, MarlaWynne has become a well-loved brand by our customers at QVC UK. It’s not every day that you can shop with the designer behind a product, and Marla’s regular appearance on QVC is just one of the reasons our audience has grown to know and love her fashion and accessories.

“The volume of sales we are seeing speak volumes alone: only last month our customers snapped up over 3,000 dresses in the space of nine hours during one of our Today’s Special Value promotions. Due to the tremendous success in the U.K., we are now rolling the brand out to our international customers including Japan, Germany and Italy, which we’re really excited about,” he said.

Addressing MarlaWynne’s performance at HSN in the U.S., Rachel Ungaro, vice president, apparel buying, QVC and HSN, said, “Over the past decade, Marla Ginsburg has continued to deliver to the HSN customer, stylish easy-care, easy-wear separates under the exclusive MarlaWynne label. MarlaWynne apparel boasts versatility paired with sophisticated comfort, and is among our top performing apparel brands at HSN. As a result, the brand has shown significant growth since its inception, with an expansion into the jewelry category four years ago.”

“It’s been a wonderful adventure. I went from a business that eats its young to an industry that likes to ignore this market. I have insights into a market that refuses to be ignored,” said Ginsburg.