



# INNOVATION

at CREATIVATION



**By Kristen Farrell, Manager of Marketing & Public Relations, AFCI**

If you ask a bunch of people what their definition of "innovation" is, I bet you'll get a bunch of different answers. Innovation can mean something different to everybody in different industries, but at Creativation, The Ultimate Pitch

judges' definitions of the concept matter most to the creative entrepreneurs featured in the Innovations Center.

The Innovation Center spotlights innovation and provides entrepreneurs with a platform to launch their inventions. This year, the area on the trade show floor highlighted 12 innovative products and techniques. The Ultimate Pitch

judges narrowed the field to four finalists, who then competed in the annual pitch competition so one could be crowned the Top Creative Innovation of 2018 and win the \$10,000 grand prize.

So how did the judges define "innovation," and what did they think of this year's Innovations Center participants? Create and Craft interviewed a few of them right after they chose the BowVy Cutter as the winner. Read what they had to say and learn if your creative idea has the potential to be the next big thing in the creative marketplace.

#### **Create and Craft: "What was the lineup like this year?"**

**Victoria Katsarou, Walmart.com/Jet.com:** "I thought the lineup was really impressive. There was a ton of variety, which was amazing, from products that appeal to millennial customers to products appealing to more traditional crafters. I loved that there was a lot of incorporation of technology but also product innovation alike."

**Brigid English, The Michaels Companies:** "I thought the lineup was very good this year. I thought that it was diversified, which is really important, because it gives us a variety of products that are meeting or that are trying to address different needs in different types of crafts."

**Christopher DiTullio, JOANN:** "The lineup was great. It's always tough. This is the second year that I've judged, and we had the same problem this year as we had last year, which is so many good ideas and new concepts."

#### **Create and Craft: "How do you as a judge come to a decision?"**

**Victoria Katsarou, Walmart.com/Jet.com:** "One factor was pure innovation, like is this truly something different from what exists in the

## The Winner

**The BowVy Cutter** (see ad on page 2) is a handheld, cordless, hot filament cutting tool with interchangeable tips. It makes a decorative V-cut and seals the ends of most ribbon and polyester fabric in one step. Karyn Ranzau, inventor and owner of the Little Pink Ladybug ([littlepinkladybug.com](http://littlepinkladybug.com)), was asked how she planned to use the \$10,000 prize. "We've got a notebook full of ideas," she responded, and they include developing and testing prototypes for accessories.

## The Finalists

- **The Folklore Company** ([folklorecompany.com](http://folklorecompany.com)) is an inspiring website where people can design a personal cross-stitch pattern in a unique, easy and modern way. It makes embroidery more accessible to more people.
- **Flex Knit** ([flexknitneedles.com](http://flexknitneedles.com)) is flexible, straight knitting needles with ergonomic benefits to improve comfort during knitting activity.
- **The DIY Frame Art Drawing Pad** by Blissfu Studio ([blissfustudio.com](http://blissfustudio.com)) is a product that turns flat drawing paper into 3D framed art ready for display.

## The Judges

- **Brigid English**, The Michaels Companies
- **Christopher DiTullio**, JOANN
- **Victoria Katsarou**, Walmart.com/Jet.com
- **Christine Stoelting and Karen Waters**, Crayola, LLC
- **Danica Lichtenwalner**, Home Shopping Network (HSN)

To read about all 12 innovations, visit [CreativationShow.org/2018-moments](http://CreativationShow.org/2018-moments).

market. The second factor was... is this a product that has good economics, and is this a product that has a wide enough appeal to be very successful? And I think our winner really checked all the boxes."

### Brigid English, The Michaels

**Companies:** "From a retail perspective we're going to look at the product through that lens. Is this something we can sell in our stores or sell on our ecommerce channels? Is it marketable? The price point of the product – is it consumer-friendly enough that we think we can sell it at the price that the inventors are proposing it be at their suggested retail? Do we think it's something that influencers would be willing to

talk about and help promote these brands and help build the following that these companies need?"

**Christopher DiTullio, JOANN:** "We talk about, is the item ready for market? Does it fill a need that is big enough in the marketplace? Can it be sold at retail?"

**Create and Craft: "What does it take to come up with a really good, sellable product?"**

**Victoria Katsarou, Walmart.com/Jet.com:** "Something truly innovative and unique is important. But you also have to think about the customer. Are there enough people who are going to gravitate toward your product? And

you also have to think about potential partnerships, both with other brands and other retailers that are going to be the economics of your product. Is this a product that can sustainably be sold again, and again, and again, and again in the market?"

### Brigid English, The Michaels

**Companies:** "What it takes is a lot of market research. You have to find the void of what the consumer is looking for that would make their crafting easier or more affordable ...What is the white space? And also just making sure you're jumping on the next big trend ... as fast as you can."

**Christopher DiTullio, JOANN:** "To come up with that great mix of idea and commercialism. I think you have to have a blend of art and science. So, you have to do market research. You have to determine what the potential is, and is there a need? But from an arts standpoint, a lot of times people aren't going to tell you what needs to come into the market; you have to anticipate where the customer is going to be and use your information to design something that they don't even know they need yet, but once they see it, it creates the 'wow, I need this,' so that's where you need to blend both pieces.

Watch The Ultimate Pitch documentary, produced by Create and Craft, on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PKEuyTtPk4>



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