

A Brief history of fashion shows: Past & Future



Fashion shows or runways are an integral part of the pop culture and entertainment. With the small devices we carry, anyone can see the latest fashion shows that are happening around the world. All the shows are extravagant. Celebrities line up to watch the latest line up by designers on the front seat. Loud music, super models, and scenic background effects have become a norm in fashion shows today.

While fashion shows have become a phenomenon these days, it was not like this before. Actually it had a very humble beginning. Let's go back in time to the origin of runways

The first fashion show

Before 1860s, designers used mannequins to showcase their new designs to a closed group of people that was invited to attend the shows. Prominent buyers, members of the royal family and other elite group of people were only allowed to such events.



It was Charles Frederick Worth, a pioneering English fashion designer who used live models instead of mannequins for the first time for his new designs in Paris. Unlike a fashion show, it was called as “fashion parades” in those times. Still these parades were only accessible to a closed group of people. There was a lot of fear among the designers for someone stealing the designs and ideas.



Slowly, these fashion parades started to spread to New York and London from Paris. ***The first American fashion show took place in 1903 in the New York City store of the Ehrlich Brothers.*** This trend quickly got popularity and in a few years, other popular department stores also started to host such fashion shows. In most of these shows, the designs were mostly gowns for female shoppers, redesigned or a copy of the style that were shown in Paris. It was in 1918 when fashion houses established fixed dates for runway shows to occur. In a year, these shows took place twice to attract buyers from abroad. During this period, fashion shows were based on themes like Chinese, Russian, etc.

Role of World War 2 in fashion shows

After the World War 2, there was huge demand for clothes. People had suffered enough with shortages of clothes and endless view of military clothes. Fashion houses also started seek publicity and popularity for generating huge sales and profits. A new era of fashion was ignited by the designer Christian Dior in 1947 at a fashion show named “New Look”. Christian Dior introduced a new look for the female shoppers with rounded shoulders, a cinched waist, and very full skirt.



Christian Dior played a major role in restoring Paris as the capital of fashion. Throughout his career during this period Dior showcased several fashion shows with themes and ventured into other businesses like fur, stocking and perfumes. The House of Dior is still a thriving business. But his untimely death in 1957 left the fashion world without a dictator.

Incorporation on Music in Fashion Shows

Even though the fashion shows began to get more lively and colorful, it was in the 1960s music was incorporated to fashion shows. Models were encouraged to show their personalities on the ramp. With time, fashion shows slowly started to become grand productions with embellished lightings, sound effects and elaborate staging.



1988, Yves Saint Laurent runway show in a sold out stadium that was staged one hour before the France and Brazil soccer World Cup Final. 300 models, 900 backstage hands and 4000 stadium staff were involved in the production of this runway show. It was televised to more than 1.7 billion people.

Fashion shows now

Fashion shows have become the ultimate example of wasteful consumerism in the modern age. There is an obsession in the fashion world for creating larger than life events for the world to see. Fashion shows have literally gotten out of hand. Brands are spending huge amounts of money to produce these types of fashion shows.

FENDI, Autumn/Winter 2007 Ready to wear

The 2000 year old world heritage site was taken over by the brand Fendi for its 2007 Autumn/Winter ready to wear show. The genius behind the show was the German designer Karl Lagerfeld. He was the creative director of Fendi for more than 52 years. The production cost for this show was over \$10 million dollars and took over a year of planning. Watch the video below.

<https://youtu.be/gWbeTuFSpSQ> {EMBED}

The Rebel against environmental pollution

Fashion shows typically have a duration up to 20 minutes. But the amount of carbon foot print it generates is enormous. Invitations are sent out to people

around the world. Guest are flown from various parts of the world, elaborate lighting and set up with huge electricity spent are some reasons for the wakeup call to rethink fashion shows. Fashion week was eight days, but it is now being reduced to five days.



There have been several attempts by activists to jeopardize fashion shows and spread the word.

“Fashion shows are supposed to point to the fact that we live in incredibly dangerous times... what are they saying about the future?” – Tamara Cincik

How do you think the future of fashion show would turn out like? Will it get more digitized or it would get even grand? Comment below.