

Fashion production in the structure of a fashion show: historical origins and theatricalization of the runway

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Abstract: The paper examines the historical prerequisites for the emergence of fashion shows and the main stages of their transformation. Special attention is paid to the role of C.F. Worth in the formation of the fashion show as a professional practice: he was the first to systematically demonstrate seasonal collections, use models instead of dolls, and actually laid the foundation for the fashion show as a presentation format. It is shown how the organization of shows, their scale, locations, technical infrastructure, and goals changed with the development of the fashion industry — from a demonstration for private clients to a public show. The article reveals the concept of fashion production as a complex of processes that transforms a collection into an event: concept, production, team, light/sound, scenography, and media support. It is concluded that the theatricalization of the runway and the development of production approaches are key factors in modern changes in fashion shows and support their relevance in the fashion industry.

Keywords: fashion; fashion show; runway; couturier; fashion production; show production; scenography; staging; location; media content; fashion week.

I. Introduction

It is safe to say that almost everyone has heard of fashion shows. Fashion shows are important both for a particular designer and for Fashion Houses, for the fashion industry and the economic development of individual countries, as well as for the world economy as a whole. From a historical perspective, fashion shows have a relatively recent past, but it is filled with fateful events, revolutionary discoveries, and the emergence of the greatest personalities.

The word “fashion” is central in the phrase “fashion show”. What is fashion, when did it arise, and what role does it play in the development of society - there is no consensus. Fashion is a multifaceted phenomenon that is the subject of study by specialists in various fields who study social phenomena.

A.B. Hoffmann in his work “Fashion and People” notes that “fashion means the fleeting popularity of something or someone. If this word is used in the plural, it usually denotes clothing samples that are most popular at a certain time period” [1]. In cultural studies, there is also the statement that fashion is a way of interpreting important political, economic, social and cultural events taking place in the world [2]. You can also find the following definition: fashion is something that is most widespread at the moment, enjoys the greatest popularity and recognition by the majority [3]. That is, fashion is considered in a wide range of problem areas of social and human sciences, and each discipline interprets it in its own way, based on its subject.

There is no consensus on the time of the emergence of fashion. Some experts believe that the birth of fashion is difficult to associate with a specific period or event. Cultural historians hold the opinion that fashion was born in the 12th–13th centuries, when elements began to appear in the costume, the use of which cannot be explained by necessity or the development of aesthetic taste [3]. Art historians date the emergence of fashion to

the late Middle Ages, or rather, the end of the 14th - the beginning of the 15th century [4]. This concept was also used by historians who wrote about the “flowering of fashion” in Imperial Rome, at the bourgeois court of the 15th century, in the circles of the European nobility of the 18th century. However, according to A.B. Hoffmann, these were “fertile forms, embryos of the phenomenon that later developed into what we call fashion today”. And only in the 19th-20th centuries did fashion emerge in European society on a socially significant scale and become one of the social regulators of the behavior of broad segments of the population [1; 5–7].

Thinkers from different countries and eras assessed the impact of fashion on society in different ways. Leonardo da Vinci in his “Treatise on Painting” expresses a negative attitude towards fashion, calls for preserving the natural beauty of a person, and not for searching for external effects in clothing. Negative statements can also be found in the works of J. Baudrillard, N.Ya. Danilevsky, K.S. Aksakov, F.M. Dostoevsky, N.V. Gogol, L.M. Tolstoy, N.A. Berdyaev, I.A. Ilyin, etc. [7; 8]. A positive assessment of fashion is noted in the works of V.F. Hegel, R.B. Fishman, R.M. Kirsanov, E.V. Kireev, M.M. Mertsalova, F.M. Parmon, etc. [3; 9]. But, despite the contradictory assessment of the influence of fashion on social life, the modern world is inseparable from fashion, which is characterized by dynamism, novelty and variety of manifestations.

By nature, a person always strives for novelty, new impressions, changes in the objects of his preferences. A person is interested in being up to date with innovations in various spheres of life, including fashion. The transmission of fashionable novelties in the socio-cultural environment in the historically accessible time was carried out in various ways. In the Roman Empire, small painted figurines made of baked clay were used for this purpose. Later, when Paris became the center of fashion, Pandora dolls with a set of clothing items were used to demonstrate fashionable clothing styles. The dolls' clothes were carefully studied and then made in life-size for women of the upper class. This method of transmitting information about new things in the world of fashion can be considered the initial form of fashion shows.

Until the end of the 18th century, the authorship of innovations in the field of fashion was attributed to those who demonstrated them - monarchs, favorites, noble ladies. They set fashion trends with their new styles of dresses, which they “showed” at balls, masquerades and holidays. And this was also a fashion show. At the same time, the personality of the creator of the fashionable pattern (tailor, milliner, couturier) often remained in the shadows.

A revolutionary change in the concept of demonstrating fashionable clothing trends belongs to the couturier C.F. Worth. He began to dress attractive saleswomen of the Fashion House, where he worked, in his dresses and accessories. The girls elegantly presented the models, giving them a special shine. Such fashion shows attracted clients and increased sales [10].

Today, fashion shows have become an integral part of the fashion industry. They are a culturally and socially significant phenomenon of modernity and are the subject of research by many scientists. In the work [11] it is noted that in the 21st century, theatrical fashion shows have become a kind of mediator between current art and clothing design; it is emphasized that a runway show is not just a demonstration of clothes, but a full-scale show with its own idea, figurative system and reproduction methods. In the work [12], a fashion show is considered from the point of view of artistic and entertainment technology, which includes a complex of interconnected actions and has evolved from an elite culture to a grand show and penetrated the mass consciousness. Runway fashion shows are becoming not only a broadcast of fashion trends, but also a cultural phenomenon - complex theatrical findings of designers that form a new reality and models of the future [13].

Fashion shows allow the designer to find new images and creative solutions, show them to the audience and make sure that the proposed form of presentation really works. By determining trends for the coming seasons, they give impetus to the development of the fashion industry and stimulate other sectors of the economy.

The technologies of fashion shows are constantly transforming. The demonstration method, interior, decorations, venue are changing. The digital environment is being used more and more actively, new channels of communication with the audience are emerging. In this regard, studying the history of the emergence of fashion shows, their features and transformations in modern times is relevant.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the prerequisites for the emergence of fashion shows, the stages of their development, the features of transformation and implementation in modern conditions with an emphasis on the role of fashion production and theatricalization of the runway.

II. Research methods

The methodological basis of the study was a systematic approach to the study of fashion and fashion shows. The theoretical basis was formed by the works of domestic and foreign scholars in the field of costume and fashion history, cultural studies and sociological research in design. The work uses an art historical analysis of the work of couturiers and clothing designers from the mid-19th century to the beginning of the 21st century, their contribution to the development of fashion shows.

Fashion production in a fashion show: what it is and what it consists of Fashion production in a fashion show is everything that helps to turn a collection into an understandable and effective event for audiences. It is not only about the appearance of models, but also about how the overall impression is created: idea, staging, light, music, location, team and how the show then “lives” in photos and videos.

Fashion production can be divided into three stages: preparation, show delivery, and post-show work. At the preparation stage, the purpose of the show is determined (for the press, for buyers, for a wide audience, for social networks), the format is chosen (classic runway, performance, showroom, online or hybrid) and a work plan is drawn up.

An important part of the preparation is the concept. This is the idea that unites the collection and the show: the theme, mood, images, music, sometimes the plot or “message” that the brand wants to convey. It is good when the concept enhances the clothes, not distracts from them.

Next, the show script is formed: the order of exits, the pace, the logic of transitions, the finale. Even if the show looks “easy”, there is a clear structure behind it. The script helps keep the show structured, concise, and memorable.

Working with models is not only about casting. It is also about rehearsals, the pace of walking, trajectories on the runway, photo moments, and behavior in space. If the show is theatrical, then the model plays a role, and the fashion show becomes a production with specific tasks.

Styling and beauty (hair and makeup) affect how the collection will be read. They bring the image together, add character and help maintain one style throughout the show. Styling is also important for the media: many people first see the collection in photos and videos.

Scenography and location are what make the show an event. The space can support the idea of the collection and give it meaning: a historic building, an industrial space, an open area, a non-standard runway. But the location is also about practical things: logistics, security, permits, sound, light, places for guests and film crews.

The technical unit of the production is light, sound, music, video screens, special effects, projections. It is the technology that sets the rhythm and atmosphere, makes the show “put together”. This requires rehearsals and technical runs, because even a small mistake can ruin the overall impression.

The production team usually includes a producer/organizer, director or creative director, stage manager, technical director, stylist, model coordinator, guests and press officers, and a PR team. A clear division of roles reduces chaos and allows you to control the timing, which is critical for a show.

A separate part of modern production is media coverage. A show is often done so that it looks good on camera: shooting points are needed, lighting for video, backstage, short videos for social networks, sometimes live broadcast. As a result, the show exists not only “in the hall”, but also in the digital space, where it is seen by many more people.

The effectiveness of fashion production is assessed not only by emotions, but also by results: media coverage, audience reactions, citations, buyer interest, impact on sales. At the same time, today it is important to take into account ethical and environmental issues: participant safety, responsible use of locations, minimizing environmental damage. This is gradually becoming part of the professional standard in the preparation of shows.

III. Fashion shows: main features and development trends

Why and when did the need for fashion shows arise? How and for what purpose were fashion shows organized? The study of historical and cultural-sociological aspects of the creation and promotion of new clothing models in the past and present helps to answer these questions.

People have been engaged in the manufacture of clothes since ancient times, using improvised natural materials. Clothing protected from cold, rain and sun. Gradually, with the development of civilization, the functions of clothing are expanding, the technologies for manufacturing materials for clothing are becoming more complicated. Tailoring crafts arise. An interesting fact is that until the end of the 17th century, mainly male tailors were engaged in the manufacture of women's dresses. The creations of their hands were limited by the framework of corporate laws, and the cut was performed according to inviolable rules.

The duties of finishing dresses were often entrusted to maids who knew a lot about cutting and sewing and had good taste. Only in 1675 did women dressmakers actually "consolidate" the right to the profession [10]. References to tailors in historical literature are relatively rare; if they do occur, the emphasis is not on the style of the dress, but on its decorations. The most famous tailors of the court of Louis XIV Langlet and the tailor of the reign of Napoleon L.I. Leroy set the tone for court fashion.

During the regency of Anne of Austria (1643–1660), a new profession emerged in France: the milliner, who was considered an "authority that governs taste." In her work, the milliner was guided by inspiration: she created hats, decorated dresses with ruffles, lace, and flounces, and gave an image individuality. The imagination of milliners was limitless, as confirmed by a guide published in 1799: the number of fashionable styles of women's hats was about two hundred, and the types of decorations were about one hundred and fifty, each of which had its own name [10]. Milliners began to be perceived as active creators of fashion, working with decorative elements of dresses. The most famous among them was Rosa Bertin (1747–1813), who was responsible for Marie Antoinette's outfits.

The growing prestige of tailors and milliners was largely determined by the status of their customers. Charles Frederick Worth (1826–1895) is considered the first to step out of the shadow of his clients. C.F. Worth began his career in the fabric trade, but positioned himself as a representative of a creative profession and sought to be perceived as an artist [14]. He is called the "first couturier" and the "father of the fashion show". Worth is the author of many innovations: the introduction of a label with his name, the use of young and beautiful girl models (instead of Pandora dolls) to demonstrate to customers in the salon, the demonstration of seasonal collections, as well as new constructive solutions in women's costumes [15].

C.F. Worth was one of the creators of the Paris Syndicate of Haute Couture, which united salons where representatives of the highest circles of society dressed. Using the cyclical nature of fashion and its tendency to renewal, he created new collections and actually set a certain rhythm for the industry [6; 15]. Worth "emancipated" himself from the power of clients and did not allow them to dictate the design: clients chose a model, which was then sewn from fabrics of their own choice and taking into account the parameters of the figure.

In 1860, Charles Worth organized a fashion show during the jumps at the Longchamp racecourse, establishing a tradition of demonstrations in public space for advertising and promotional purposes.

Fashion designer Jeanne Paquin (1869–1936), who headed the Syndicate of Haute Couture after Worth's death, continuing his innovative idea, took models in new outfits to places visited by the Parisian fashionable public: in the spring - to the opening of the vernissage, in the fall - to the horse races. In 1900, Madame Paquin headed the fashion department of the World Exhibition in Paris; The Pavilion of Elegance featured the work of most of the leading couturiers of the time [15]. The outfits were displayed on wax mannequins and in lavishly decorated albums. In 1914, a fashion show by the House of Jeanne Paquin was held at the London Theatre Royal, with musical accompaniment for the first time.

The first shows were held to allow customers to choose an outfit and then buy it. Couturiers worked for their audience and did not set the main task of shocking the public with outrageous things.

The beginning of the 20th century was the heyday of fashion shows, which gradually turned into shows. In 1905, one of the first fashion shows, reminiscent of modern runway formats, took place in London. Its organizer was the designer Lucille (Lady Duff Gordon, 1863–1935), one of the leading British fashion designers of the late

19th and early 20th centuries. She offered more comfortable underwear instead of rigid corsets, used musical accompaniment, allowed models to move more freely and even dance so that the audience could see how the dress “comes alive” in reality.

Lucille laid the foundations for working with the audience and publicity of the show: inviting customers, paying attention to the atmosphere, an orchestra and refreshments after the program. She also began to give models poetic names, in fact forming early naming practices in fashion.

A significant contribution to the development of shows was made by fashion designer Paul Poiret (1879–1944). He used an improvised runway that occupied the entire room for the show, and guests sat along the walls (Fig. 1). A room for changing models was added to the runway, which increased the organization of the process.



Figure 1. Paul Poiret's collection presentation, Paris, 1925.

Paul Poiret attached great importance to spectacle and organized shows in the form of a masquerade. Thus, on June 24, 1911, a theatrical show “1002 Nights”, or “The Persian Celebration” [15] was held in the garden of his house, where the atmosphere of “Scheherazade” was recreated, and guests and models appeared in oriental images (Fig. 2). Poiret also introduced the format of shows with the invitation of photographers, which was an important step towards the mediatization of fashion.



Figure 2. Paul Poiret, theatrical show “1002 Nights”, or “The Persian Celebration”.

Later, fashion shows gradually expanded their functions: from a salon presentation they moved to a public spectacle, working with new locations, music, staging, light and media. In the second half of the 20th century, the role of fashion weeks, international platforms, as well as the criteria of theatricality and uniqueness of the venue grew. In the 21st century, the show is increasingly designed as a media event, where live broadcasts, backstage content, videos for digital platforms and work with influencers become important, which is directly related to the development of fashion production.

Table 1
 Main stages in the development of fashion shows (compiled by the author)

Time period	Features of the fashion show	Purpose of the show	Designer-innovators
Mid-19th century	use of female models (instead of Pandora dolls) to present new garments to clients in showrooms; application of a “prototype” of runway presentation	presentation of garments to private clients; increase in sales	Charles Frederick Worth
1860s	emergence of fashion shows in public spaces	advertising and promotion of collections	Charles Frederick Worth, Jeanne Paquin
Early 20th century	organization of shows in significant public venues; use of musical accompaniment during fashion shows	advertising and promotion of collections	Jeanne Paquin, Lady Duff-Gordon
Early 20th century	freer movement of models during runway shows; formation of public relations practices (invitation system for	increasing interest in fashion shows; attracting and retaining	Lady Duff-Gordon

Time period	Features of the fashion show	Purpose of the show	Designer-innovators
	clients); foundations of naming strategies	clients; enhancing brand recognition	
Early 20th century	improvised runway occupying the entire space; dynamic presentation of the collection; emergence of fashion photography traditions	increased spectacular effect of the show; advertising and promotion of collections	Paul Poiret
Mid-20th century	“Press Week” in New York as a prototype of global Fashion Weeks; coverage of American fashion innovations in fashion magazines	diverting attention from French fashion; presentation of American designers’ works; advertising and promotion of collections	Eleanor Lambert
Second half of the 20th century – early 21st century	first official Paris Fashion Week; informal shows; fashion weeks in major cities and capitals; growing public visibility of shows; increased importance of theatricality and location; technological complexity; use of digital environments; new channels of audience communication	presentation of diverse national cultures, traditions, and perspectives; formation of trends for upcoming seasons; expressive presentation of collections; audience engagement; advertising and promotion of collections	Eleanor Lambert, Gaby Aghion, Martin Margiela, Alexander McQueen, Pierre Cardin, Domenico Dolce, Stefano Gabbana, et al.

Modern examples confirm that production and location have become part of the language of fashion shows. For example, designer Yana Nedzvetskaya managed to create an underwater fashion show in real time, combining online filming and broadcasting. On August 29, 2021, in the heart of Venice, in St. Mark's Square, the show of the new Dolce&Gabbana couture collection — Alta Moda 2021 took place: a hundred models arrived from the lagoon on a hundred gondolas, and the event was built as a large-scale performance tied to the cultural heritage of the city.

Simon Porte Jacquemus presented the spring-summer 2021 collection L'Amour in a wheat field an hour's drive from Paris. The show in an open landscape was an example of how space and staging create a unique impression: the models moved along a wavy runway that “dissolved” in the field.

Despite the presence of traditional venues, many fashion designers choose unexpected and exotic locations: subways, race tracks, central streets and squares, ocean coasts, shipyards, airports, museum courtyards, chapels, palaces, restaurants, etc. Shows can be accompanied by dances, performances, special effects, projections, holographic elements.

One of the key goals is often to effectively present the work and attract the audience. At the same time, possible negative consequences are sometimes ignored: risks to historical monuments, disruption of the ecosystem, injuries to participants. In the professional environment, there is an opinion that the traditional format of shows may be unecological or not in line with modern principles. Alternatives are offered: short films, thematic decorations, online shows, digital collections, a return to chamber showrooms. In fact, each brand chooses its own model, but any format requires production logic that ensures the quality of implementation.

According to the results of the study, the main stages in the development of fashion shows and their modern transformations can be named (Table 1).

IV. Conclusion

The conducted study allows us to conclude that fashion shows have been significantly transformed, having undergone both evolutionary and revolutionary changes.

In the 1860s, C.F. Worth introduced an innovative element into the fashion industry by starting to demonstrate his outfits on model girls in showrooms. In the same years, in order to advertise and promote his collections, he organized a fashion show in public space, establishing a tradition that is still relevant today.

Throughout the history of the development of fashion shows, one can observe changes in the forms and methods of demonstrating collections. Each stage is characterized by innovations in solving the problems of presenting and promoting fashion trends. Over a century and a half, shows have gone from salon private demonstrations to large-scale shows broadcast all over the world.

Today, fashion shows have become not only professional events, but also media events. The theatricalization of the runway, work with space, light, music and content are directly related to the development of fashion production, which ensures the integrity and manageability of the show as a project. Despite the opinion that fashion shows are supposedly losing relevance, they continue to change, maintaining their attractiveness, supporting the professional development of designers and stimulating the fashion industry.

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