

## Show must go on: NY Fashion Week weathers #MeToo storm

6 February 2018

New York Fashion Week kicks off the global fall/winter 2018 season fighting to stay relevant blighted by sexual harassment scandals, an industry in chaos, and designers jumping ship.





*Alexander Wang - Spring-Summer2018 - Womenswear - New York - © PixelFormula*

More than 230,000 people flood the US financial capital to attend the style fest that generates nearly \$900 million a year for the city.

It is currently scheduled twice-yearly in February and September.

But as social media influencers wrestle power from fashion editors and buyers, more labels than ever are opting out this season, abandoning New York for Europe or tearing up the runway show altogether.

Here is a look at the top trends expected to dominate when Fashion Week formally gets underway on Thursday, preceded by three days of men's shows.

- #MeToo -

The sexual harassment watershed engulfing the United States and rocking the fashion industry has seen the Council of Fashion Designers of America unveil new guidelines in an attempt to clamp down on misconduct.

"We have zero tolerance for unsafe environments and strongly encourage everyone in our industry to report abuse in the workplace," wrote CFDA chairman Diane von Furstenberg in a letter announcing the guidelines, which also raise awareness against eating disorders and advocate greater diversity.

Misconduct accusations have seen celebrated photographers Terry Richardson, Mario Testino and Bruce Weber barred from collaborating with Vogue and Vanity Fair publisher Conde Nast.

The magazine empire has issued a new "Code of Conduct" to include bans on alcohol on sets, on under-18 models without a chaperone, and for nudity or "sexually suggestive" poses to be agreed beforehand.

But the Model Alliance has demanded "meaningful and lasting change," saying "voluntary standards" without education, proper complaint mechanisms and independent enforcement "are not going to work."

Marchesa, the label of Harvey Weinstein's estranged wife Georgina Chapman, cancelled their Valentine's Day show, still reeling from the fallout of his downfall over multiple allegations ranging from sexual harassment to rape, in favor of "an updated format."

Added to the schedule is a #MeToo fashion show -- named for the movement against sexual harassment -- on Friday to raise awareness.

"The only way to change things is to be united... and stand up and say, 'That is not OK, we are not going to accept this anymore,'" organizer Myriam Chalek told The Daily Beast.

- Period of chaos -

Alexander Wang, the New York king of cool whose urban chic is so adored by off-duty models, is making his swansong before this summer ditching the traditional February-September calendar in favor of June-December.

His departure follows the exit of Proenza Schouler and Rodarte for couture week in Paris on the same schedule, and Altuzarra, which moved to Paris Fashion Week.

"Why do something that's not working?" Stephanie Horton, chief strategy officer at Alexander Wang told a recent industry event in New York. "The business model needs to change because the consumer has changed."

Steven Kolb, president and CEO of the CFDA, predicts that other designers could follow suit.

"I think it'll be a period of chaos, maybe, but chaos always calms down at some point," he told the same event in New York.

- Great escape -

Tommy Hilfiger is taking his see-now, buy-now fashion roadshow to Milan,

Rihanna's Fenty collaboration with Puma is taking a break, and rap superstar Kanye West chose to unveil his latest installment for urban sportswear brand Yeezy last week on Instagram, modeled by his wife Kim Kardashian.

British former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham is marking her last show in New York before celebrating her label's 10th anniversary in London. Spanish label Delpozo is already moving to London and Tome to Paris.

Bucking the trend is Italian luxury house Bottega Veneta, showing at the American Stock Exchange on Thursday as a one-off to celebrate a new boutique on Madison Avenue.

- New York state of mind -

Look out for the influencers -- the breed of bloggers, Instagramers and celebrities whose followings can shift markets and who are particularly dominant in New York.

"We're so embedded in pop culture, in media and entertainment," explains Kolb.

- Model royalty -

Face and figure alone are no longer a guarantor of hitting the big-time. Instead it's genes, having the right name and an Instagram following.

Think 16-year-old Kaia Gerber, look-alike daughter of Cindy Crawford already collaborating on a collection with Karl Lagerfeld, Kendall Jenner, half-sister of Kim Kardashian, and Gigi and Bella Hadid, daughters of "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star Yolanda Hadid.

No longer just the face of brands, their huge celebrity following is a meal ticket for brands and they can monetize that. Think Calvin Klein's recent underwear campaign featuring the Kardashians.

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