

MOVING FASHION FORWARD



A LOOK INTO SOCIALLY-INFORMED TRENDS SHAPING OUR FUTURE

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Our planet is being consumed by fire, so unsustainable and missionless brands are falling behind; materialism is being turned on its head, so celebrities are re-wearing couture and vintage pieces to award shows. The world is changing, and we're responding.

HOW IT WORKS

Fashion takes inspiration from global norms and social issues, transforming abstract values into tangible, wearable representations. Everything from politics and tragedy to environmentalism and technological innovation directly influence people and the fashion industry. Through a design lens, social issues have an impact on the materials used, aesthetics produced, and macro trends created. Through a production lens, practices also change under design houses and print magazines for the purpose of social consciousness and being transparent with the consumer.

In addition to this trickle-down process, the mindsets and values of consumers affect their consumption preferences. There is more demand that the brands consumers buy from pay attention to their personal needs and shared challenges. According to trend forecasting company WGSN, nine out of ten Gen Z consumers believe brands “have a responsibility to detail their beliefs on social and environmental issues.” We are asking them to wake up, propose a solution, and speak out when necessary so we can proudly wear their products and make our own statement.

It is clear that companies and fashion brands are becoming more adamant in sharing their core beliefs and values with their audiences. Whether it's by calling out injustices on the runway, altering their own ethical practices, or sharing social commentary through their Instagram feeds, brands are using their voices to turn the larger social climate into an accessible conversation. And while this is not particularly new, consumers are pushing to ensure that brands' ethical practices have longevity and are not just trends.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

For its January 2020 issue, *Vogue Italia* went photography free. In lieu of expensive, extensive, and environment-tolling photoshoots, they opted for seven illustrated covers and spreads. In an interview for Condé Nast, *Vogue Italia*'s Editor in Chief Emanuele Farneti shared the unsurprising necessities used to produce the September 2019 editorials, which included, “Sixty international deliveries. Lights switched on for at least ten hours non-stop, partly powered by gasoline-fueled generators. Food waste from the catering services. Plastic to wrap the garments.” This illustrated issue is a simple yet radical approach to using fewer resources, creating a sustainable model for other magazines to follow.

WILL WE MAKE CLEAR TO OUR POLITICAL LEADERS THAT WE WANT TO PROGRESS INTO A LIBERAL-MINDED, EMPATHETIC, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-CONSCIOUS UNIT?

The recent Coronavirus outbreak has dramatically shaken the world, to put it mildly. The lives lost are tragic and have demanded a response in the form of constant assurance. In an unexpected turn of events, it has inspired, attracted, and impacted the fashion industry. The Blonds Fall/Winter '20 NYFW runway adorned several models in facemasks. Were they crystalized and bejeweled masks a reaction to the Coronavirus outbreak? There has not been an explicit comment by The Blonds; however, one cannot mistake the timely connection between the global epidemic and the fashion statement produced.

Beyond this, Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks had many Chinese designers cancel their shows, and Beijing and Shanghai Fashion Weeks are pushed back for safety purposes. Despite their many controversies, in a statement via Instagram, Dolce & Gabbana have committed to funding research for the Coronavirus. The brand is teaming up with Humanitas University to develop interventions for this issue. This is an instance of a brand standing up and using its platform to execute something more critical than a runway show.

WHERE WE CAN BE

A globally inclusive and influential spectacle such as the Olympics can affect fashion and vice versa. The upcoming Summer Olympics will be held in Tokyo, a city full of experimental fashion and eccentric subcultures that will be on full display. This has great potential to spark Japanese clothing sales and global trends.

On this stage, Team USA has partnered with Nike yet again. However, this time around, the duo is committing to using recycled materials for podium uniforms and sneakers for the approximated 300 athletes. Jackets will be composed of 100% recycled polyester, pants of recycled nylon, and sneakers of recycled waste.

2020 is the start of a fresh decade teetering between evolution and deterioration. In November, the American people will go through the motions of a presidential election. It will bring fashion-turned-armor power dressing back for female politicians and their dotting celebrity supporters. Hopefully, it will also bring change. Will we make clear to our political leaders that we want to progress into a liberal-minded, empathetic, and environmentally-conscious unit? Will these desires be met?

Some collective desires include “dematerialization.” The term and preference was brought forth by WGSN for 2022 and beyond. Considered design and consumption stems from the preference to reuse. So more functional pieces should and will require fewer frequent garment purchases. In alignment with the desire to cut back on materialistic collecting, there will always be a desire for accessibility. That being said, another solution for “dematerialization” is the predicted expansion of accessible renting platforms. In addition to companies like Rent the Runway and Stitch Fix, there are new platforms for wider needs. For instance, startup Gibbon allows travelers to rent garments from brands with overstock pieces near their destination and then return the clothes through their hotel accommodations for easy access, lighter consumption, and lighter suitcases.

According to WGSN's “Shopper Forecast 2020” report, it is also predicted that “localists” will be the key consumers of 2020. These consumers, who are already among us, desire the convenience of purchasing locally as opposed to shopping online from distant places. Accessibility is a desirable commodity. As consumers, we expect resources in the forms of information and clothing alike to be at our disposal. Function over aesthetics. Quality over aesthetics. Accessibility over aesthetics.

There are many sustainable advancements and groundbreaking innovations that will be normalized within the next few years. The desire for sustainable goods has transcended the hype and has led to an avalanche of demand. WGSN's proclamation is “forget about being made in a specific country, products ‘made in nature’ will be the next luxury item.” The forecasting agency has predicted the mainstream use of biodesign. This nature-based production uses various natural resources and processes to create everyday garments.

It has been discovered that wood-based pigments combined with nanocellulose can create non-toxic iridescent effects. This innovation stems from its environmentally-conscious effects and is timely because of the intergalactic trend conveniently on the rise. Another fabric in fruition is Biogarmentry, a “living fabric” composed of algae that uses photosynthesis and requires the owner to keep it alive. This supersedes the current conventional materials used, especially in regards to fast fashion's man-made fabrics. And while this may not be the most accessible and practical, it is an innovation that may be the first unique idea in a long time.

It turns out that something seemingly trivial and separated from sociopolitical and geopolitical issues like fashion is actually interconnected. It generates markers for societal norms, practices, and values. It has the capability to go beyond ego and profit. It has the power to represent and spark movements that define decades.