

NEW YORK FASHION WEEK REVIEW: A LOOK AT TRENDS FROM 1950 TO
2020

by

Taylor Reese Green

HONORS THESIS

Submitted to Texas State University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
graduation in the Honors College
May 2022

Thesis Supervisor:

Peggy Blum

COPYRIGHT

by

Taylor Reese Green

2022

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Taylor Reese Green, refuse permission to copy in excess of the "Fair Use" exemption without my written permission.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom for supporting me throughout my education and always pushing me to do my best.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	vi
CHAPTER	
I. THE BEGINNING OF NEW YORK FASHION WEEK	1
II. 1950s	2
III. 1960s	3
IV. 1970s	4
V. 1980s	5
VI. 1990s	6
VII. 2000s	6
VIII. 2010s	7
IX. 2020s	8
X. CONCLUSION	9
REFERENCES	10

ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore the correlation between women's fashion on the runway of New York City Fashion Week and the popularity of fashion of the average woman. Each decade from New York City Fashion Week will be explored starting with 1950 until 2020. Each decade there were multiple ways in which New York Fashion Week designers influenced certain styles, colors, silhouettes, and patterns in American fashion. As a result, it is concluded that New York Fashion Week impacts the fashion industry and has so since 1950.

I. THE BEGINNING OF NEW YORK FASHION WEEK

New York Fashion Week is an annual event that is held to show the public, buyers, and the press popular high-end designers' upcoming collections. New York City was the first city to host an annual fashion week and is now considered the fashion capital by many because of it. Before New York City fashion week was created, companies would host fashion shows throughout the year, only for designers and high-end New Yorkers, but the shows would not get the attention that fashion week gets today. The idea of fashion week was created by publicist Eleanor Lambert in 1943 but was called "Fashion Press Week" until 1990 ("Fashion Week Online," n.d.). The first Fashion Week consisted of just bridal dresses and gowns, which is much different from what New York Fashion Week is today. Fashion Press Week was held in the Fall and the Spring and had multiple locations, unlike New York City Fashion Week, which is only held mainly in one location during the Spring. Fashion Press Week was inspired by the changes in fashion caused by World War II. The occupation of France by the Nazis caused the United States to be cut off from the fashion world for the first time, so New York City Fashion Week was created to help boost American fashion (Shockman, 2016). People living in the United States that were a part of the fashion industry could not travel to France, so for the first fashion week, designers were forced to use locally designed clothes. In the early 1990's it was decided that Fashion Week would be held in Bryant Park. Initially, there were different fashion shows all over the city, and the press and buyers were tired of traveling all over New York for different shows (Jana, 2019). Since then, New York Fashion Week has been mainly located at Spring Studios, but smaller shows have other locations. Throughout the years of New York Fashion Week evolving,

we have seen many changes: different names, changing locations, adding supermodels to the runway, and inviting celebrities. Since the beginning of Fashion Week, models used to make facial expressions and dance down the runway, seeming to be having fun. Today, models walk straight down the runway with their shoulders back with no expression. The way supermodels walk down the runway changed so that the clothing, shoes, and accessories get the attention, not the model.

II. 1950s

Throughout the 1950s, women were seen on and off the runway in ankle-length skirts and cinched waists. This decade was post-World War II, when women could finally experience different styles. Despite the shortage of fabrics due to WWII, Christian Dior and Balenciaga's New York Fashion Week collections influenced women's and other designers' collections with their couture gowns that emphasized an hourglass silhouette (Luxtailor, 2021). These gowns were popular and worn across America because they created a new feminine look that could be worn by women who stay at home or go to work. This was the first decade that nylon was used on the runway and became popular for women to wear for hose, lingerie, blouses, and sportswear because nylon was no longer being used for parachutes in war (Monet, 2021). During the 1950s, it was scarce for New York Fashion Week Collections to have patterns or bright colors on their designs. The lack of bright colors and designs in New York Fashion Week Collections affected fashion during this decade because bright clothing and patterns, besides stripes and polka dots, were not popular. Bright colors and patterns were not popular among the average American woman at this time because a lot of women made their own clothing and they tried to pick basic fabrics that could be reused for other items (Vintage Dancer,

2016). The designer, Charles James, is known for his elegant ball gowns that were a part of his New York Fashion Week collections throughout this decade that influenced fashion for the upper class in America. Charles James became popular and influential because of his ball gown designs, unique and exaggerated silhouette, and shapes (Cohen, 2018). These gowns were influential to fashion and other designers because no one had ever taken the architectural and innovative approach to ball gown dresses like James Charles. After James Charles released these elegant, unique, and expensive ball gowns, other designers began making knockoffs for people who could not afford the high-end dresses.

III. 1960s

New York Fashion Week throughout the 1960s had the most experimental and unique fashion trends. This decade's most revolutionary design from New York Fashion Week was the miniskirt and minidress, which was very popular with young women in America (Hello BigApple, 2020). The miniskirt and minidress were so revolutionary to the fashion world because before 1960; women had only worn skirts and dresses that passed their knees. Once the miniskirt and minidress took off across America, designers made women's clothing more creative and playful. The unique fashion pieces that women started integrating into their wardrobes stemmed from the people that participated in the counterculture movement of this era and the rise of psychedelic rock. The counterculture movement was anti-war, pro-marijuana, and created a new openness toward sexuality (Exhibits, n.d.). Women on and off the runway began wearing more neon colors, sparkles, and patterns. In 1964, Pierre Cardin and André Courrèges released a spring collection on the runway in New York and France where the women were wearing space-

inspired minidresses, without defined waists, and tall white boots (Hello BigApple, 2020). This collection helped popularize the "go-go girl" outfit, short straight dresses with tall white boots, among celebrities and the average American woman. In 1969, New York Fashion Week designers included a lot of maxi skirts, suede, and headbands which is more of a "hippie aesthetic" that we will eventually see become popular in the 1970s (Hello BigApple, 2020).

IV. 1970s

This decade was the birth of denim and the rise of Calvin Klein. Americans started to see denim jackets, skirts, and flared bottoms on the runway, in every store, and being worn by everyone. (Harris, 2019). Calvin Klein became popular in the early 1970s, but it was not until 1977 that Calvin Klein was included in New York Fashion Week. This was the decade of ready-to-wear casual which helped normalize wearing denim. Music was very influential to fashion during the 1970s, with Woodstock being in August of 1969, American women continued to dress like hippies during the beginning of the decade but throughout the years' disco became popular. One of this decade's most popular New York Fashion Week collections was in 1975 when Ralph Lauren had their models walking down the runway in all plaid, vests, and the color palette was different browns and oranges (Crenshaw, 2019). This was a popular collection because, during this decade, vests, plaids, and flair pants were becoming trendy. The 1970s was also when Diane Von Furstenburg released her iconic printed wrap dress for the first time on the runway in New York. Some people argue that Diane von Furstenburg's wrap dress is an essential clothing item of the decade because women could wear it to work or the nightclub, and it was easy and comfortable (Ellsworth, 2020). Furstenburg's wrap dress was an iconic

moment for the fashion industry because this was one of the first designs that prioritized women and not men. Christian Dior started the fur trend in 1970 after having multiple collections in New York and France wearing fur boots, jackets, hats, and scarves (Fisher, 2019). During this decade, New York designers were struggling to stay relevant because Americans were obsessing over the Battle of Versailles, an iconic fashion show that mixed American and French fashion with all the best designers in France.

V. 1980s

This decade was the first time New York Fashion Week included supermodels on the runway. Having well-known supermodels walk the runway helped influence Americans on the trends that the designers were trying to start. Betsy Johnson and Issey Miyake, designers who were well known for their over-the-top designs on the runway, began including women's athletic apparel on the runway. In 1983, Betsy Johnson launched a line on the runway that included spandex, lycra, and leg warmers (Carleson, 2013). Integrating women's athletic apparel onto the runway helped the trend of athletic wear because it was not common for women to wear leggings or spandex. Towards the end of the 1980s New York Fashion Week designers like Alexander McQueen, Ralph Lauren, and Marc Jacobs began releasing collections that were considered a preppy look. These designs consisted of cardigans tied around a woman's shoulder, polos, and pastel colors. Tommy Hilfiger was created during this decade, although Hilfiger was not popular until the 1990s, Hilfiger's designs consisted of yuppie fashion that was popular at this time.

VI. 1990s

During this decade, it was difficult for designers to try to create trends because of the anti-fashion movement. Because of the movement, there was a period in fashion where everyone wanted to have a minimalist style. The women's fashion of this decade on the runway was very grunge and made grunge become mainstream throughout the country. It was trendy among women in America to wear platform shoes, cropped tops, flannels, and animal print. The 1990s was the first time New York Fashion Week had supermodels walking on the runway in Doc Martens and Converse. This was groundbreaking to the audience and the press because both shoes were affordable, unlike everything else on the runway. Doc Martens and Converse were two of the most popular shoes during the 1990s, so it made sense why they were included in the show. In 1992, Marc Jacobs released his "grunge collection" on the runway, which consisted of ripped jeans, layered flannels, beanies, leather jackets, and baby doll dresses (Chochrek, 2019). There were a lot of similar collections to Jacob's on the runway during this decade because grunge was trendy among teenagers and young adults. Jacobs was publicly fired because the press accused him of killing the grunge movement (Callahan, 2014).

VII. 2000s

During this decade, it became more prominent for celebrities to show up as guests on the runway. Including celebrities in New York Fashion Week, helped influence the audience with what they were wearing and made more people want to watch the fashion shows. The rise of the internet allowed New York Fashion Week to influence fashion faster than ever because now people could see in real-time what designers were coming out with on the runway. Throughout this decade, many designer's collections had similar

pieces like wide belts, big bags, low rise jeans, and dresses worn over jeans. These collections helped influence trends for younger women around the country because the style was so different from what was popular in 1990. The collections' silhouettes during this decade were very sleek and streamlined (Borrelli-Persson, 2020). Designers tried to create luxury but minimalist collections because the style was starting to get popular. Miguel Adrover, a Spanish designer, made a statement on the runway by wearing a repurposed Burberry coat with a New York Yankees hat (Borrelli-Persson, 2020). Adrover's outfit on the runway received a lot of press because it created the trend for higher-end brands to repurpose garments and helped boost the idea of thrifting. Many writers for Vogue explained that Adrover's repurposed line was a critique of capitalist consumerism (Hawkins, 2016). Rent the Runway, a company that allows you to rent couture fashion pieces just by paying a membership fee, launched in 2009 (Lamare, 2020). This was a good business for people who cannot afford to buy an \$800 dress but not so good for designers because their sales on high-end pieces decreased.

VII. 2010s

Throughout this decade there were not as many women walking down the runway in over-the-top couture gowns as seen in previous decades. Instead, models were walking down the runway in everyday outfits you would see someone on the street wearing. Towards the beginning of the 2010s, skinny jeans and tight pants became very popular among women of all ages and were being sold in almost every store. In the fall of 2010, Justin Timberlake and Thakoon's collections both included designs of various forms of skinny pants and oversized bomber jackets (Keltner, 2010). There was a rise of unfitted silhouettes on the runway in the 2010s which was followed by it becoming a trend in

women's fashion. In the fall of 2013, Designers including Rag and Bone and Alexander Wang had their models walking down the runway in leggings and oversized sweaters creating an unfitted look (Cosmopolitan, 2013). The unfitted silhouettes influenced women's fashion throughout America because this is the decade that women popularized wearing leggings every day with oversized sweaters, t-shirts, and sweatshirts. Couture designers began creating their version of leggings during the 2010s after the overnight craze American women had for the leggings released by the athletic brand, Lululemon. Karl Lagerfeld and Dior released collections in 2011 which included leggings to style when layering in various colors (Singer, 201). With New York Fashion Week now consisting of more casual apparel designers begin incorporating streetwear into their designs. In 2014, Chanel had their models on the runway in sneakers, matching sweat sets, and trench coats (Ilchi, 2019). Celebrities and social media influencers like Kim Kardashian, Gigi Hadid, and Indy Blue began posting on social media in streetwear like Off-White and Yeezy after designers began creating streetstyle lines. In 2017, designers began creating streetwear collections to help mainstream couture. Louis Vuitton collaborated on a collection with Supreme and Marc Jacobs created a line of bags that were graffitied (Diderich, 2017).

IX. 2020s

At the beginning of 2020 the world was put on lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused New York Fashion Week to take place virtually until 2022. The runway during this time exploded with colorful collections including Marc Jacobs neon knit sweaters and the Zendaya x Hilfiger bright colored blazers. It is hard to compare collections from the runway to popular women's clothing during this year because most

Americans were working from home and not going out. This was the first time in a while that New York Fashion Week was just about fashion and designers created colorful and exciting collections to help brighten the audience's mood since it was the first time Fashion Week was virtual. After two years of patiently waiting, in 2022, New York Fashion Week became in-person again. The past couple of months of 2022 we have seen nude colors and unique silhouette tops become popular among women. On the runway, Proenza Schouler had multiple designs that included various shades of brown, puffy sleeves, and cinched waists (Prant, 2022). There have been multiple brands following the runway trends including Kim Kardashian's company Skims where clothing mainly consists of shades of nude and Zara which has recently become popular on Tik Tok for their unique women's tops.

X. CONCLUSION

New York Fashion Week, created by Eleanor Lambert almost 80 years ago is an annual event that continues to be a highlight in the fashion industry. As the host city for this event, New York City has become the fashion capital. Over the years, New York Fashion Week has evolved from bridal dresses to a showcase of innovative designs and trends. More specifically New York City Fashion Week has seen many changes: different names, change in locations, an addition of supermodels, and celebrity audience members. Despite the changes, New York Fashion Week continues to be an iconic event. In the words of the New York City Week ad, "We are more than just a fashion show, we are an experience" (New York Fashion Week, n.d.).

REFERENCES

- Borrelli-Persson, L. (2020, February 6). *TBT: This Is What Fall 2020 New York Fashion Week Looked Like*. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.com/slideshow/this-is-what-the-fall-2000-nyfw-season-looked-like-from-the-archives>
- Callahan, M. (2014, September 10). *How Marc Jacobs nearly destroyed his career*. New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2014/09/10/how-marc-jacobs-nearly-destroyed-his-career/>
- Carleson, J. (2013, February 12). *Videos: Scenes From New York Fashion Week In The 1980s*. Gothamist. <https://gothamist.com/arts-entertainment/videos-scenes-from-new-york-fashion-week-in-the-1980s>
- Chochrek, E. (2019, August 16). *Why This Groundbreaking Runway Show Got Marc Jacobs Fired*. Footwear News. <https://footwearnews.com/2019/fashion/designers/marc-jacobs-perry-ellis-spring-1993-collection-runway-1202810289/>
- Cohen, D. (2018, July 18). *Charles James' Most Ladylike Vintage Designs*. CR Fashion Book. <https://www.crfashionbook.com/fashion/g22129622/charles-james-best-vintage-designs-dress-birthday/?slide=2>
- Cosmopolitan. (2013, February 11). *Looks of the Day: New York Fashion Week Fall 2013*. Cosmopolitan. <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/style-beauty/fashion/advice/g2830/fashion-looks-new-york-fashion-week-2013/?slide=11>
- Crenshaw, M. (2019, September 9). *From the Archives: New York Fashion Week Through the Years*. Footwear News. <https://footwearnews.com/gallery/nyfw-over-the-years-photos/>

Diderich, J. (2017, January 19). *Louis Vuitton to Unveil Supreme Collaboration at Men's Show*.

Women's Wear Daily. <https://wwd.com/menswear-news/mens-fashion/louis-vuitton-supreme-collaboration-10754981/>

Ellsworth, K. (2020, December 31). *Diane von Furstenberg's Wrap Dress: '70s Disco-Ready Feminist Fashion*. Groovy History. <https://groovyhistory.com/diane-von-furstenberg-wrap-dress>

Exhibits. (n.d.) *Counterculture Movement*. The Wilson Center University of Georgia. <https://digilab.libs.uga.edu/exhibits/exhibits/show/civil-rights-digital-history-p/counterculture>

Fashion Week Online. (n.d.). *History of Fashion Week*. Fashion Week Online. <https://fashionweekonline.com/history-of-fashion-week#ny>

Fisher, L. (2019, February 8). *A Look Back at the Evolution of Fashion Week in Photos*. Harper's Bazaar. <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/fashion-week/g26238514/old-fashion-week-photos/?slide=32>

Harris, H. (2019, March 18). *What Was Denim Fashion Like in the 1970s?* Beyond Retro. <https://www.beyondretro.com/blogs/news/1970s-denim-fashion>

Hawkins, L. (2016, September 5). *When Miguel Adrover Became the Downtown Doyen of New York*. AnOther Magazine. <https://www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/9017/when-miguel-adrover-became-the-downtown-doyen-of-new-york>

Hello BigApple (2020, February 4). *NYC Fashion of the 1960s*. Medium. https://medium.com/@info_28452/nyc-fashion-of-the-1960s-gallery-15265e105f67

- Ilchi, L. (2019, December 19). *7 Fashion Trends That Helped Define the 2010s*. Women's Wear Daily. https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/2010s-fashion-trends-that-defined-decade-1203393941/?sub_action=logged_in
- Jana, R. (2019, September 12). *A Brief History of New York Fashion Week*. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/article/history-of-new-york-fashion-week>
- Keltner, J. (2010, February 24). *The Ten Best Collections from New York Fashion Week: Fall 2010*. Teen Vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/gallery/top-ten-new-york-fashion-week-fall-2010-collections>
- Lamare, A. (2020, August 28). *A brief history of Rent The Runway: Can the clothing rental company survive COVID-19 shutdowns?* The Business of Business. <https://www.businessofbusiness.com/articles/history-rent-the-runway-le-tote-coronavirus-data/>
- Luxtaylor. (2021, March 26). *History of Fashion: 1940s to 1950s Dior's New Look & James Charles*. Luxtaylor. <https://luxtaylor.com/history-of-fashion-1940s-to-1950s-diors-new-look-charles-james/>
- Monet, D. (2021, March 15). *Fashion History: Women's Clothing of the 1950s*. Bellatory. <https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/Fashion-History-Womens-Clothing-of-the-1950s>
- New York Fashion Week. (n.d.) *New York Fashion Week*. New York Fashion Week. <https://www.nyfw.net>
- Prant, D. (2022, February 18). *11 Breakout Fall 2022 Trends From The New York Fashion Week Runways*. Fashionista. <https://fashionista.com/2022/02/new-york-fashion-week-fall-2022-trends>

Shockman, E. (2016, June 19). *Beyond Paris: New York Fashion Week created American style.*

The World. <https://theworld.org/stories/2016-06-19/beyond-paris-how-new-york-fashion-week-created-american-style>

Singer, M. (2019, July 18) *The 2010s Will Be Remembered as the Decade of Leggings– And*

We're Okay With That. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.com/article/2010s-fashion-leggings>

Vintage Dancer (2016, October 25). *1950s Fabrics & Colors in Fashion.* Vintage Dancer. <https://vintagedancer.com/1950s/1950s-fabrics-colors-in-fashion/>