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Tom Ford disrupts live-streaming trend with cinematic runway presentation

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Still from Tom Ford's spring/summer 2016 runway collection film

By JEN KING

U.S. fashion label Tom Ford has gone against the grain by choosing not to stage a live runway presentation for its spring/summer 2016 collection.

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Live-streaming fashion shows has become commonplace whether they are filmed from above by drones or documented by models through the use of streaming and live action applications such as Snapchat and Periscope. Tom Ford has dismissed the aforementioned marketing techniques, opting for a social video adaptation of a runway presentation, but is the designer's statement a reflection of where the future of fashion shows lies?

"The runway experience is about seeing the line, how it connects with other pieces and how it creates a call-to-action whether it's pulling it for shoots/celebrities, placing in stores or simply seeing how it connects you to the designer," said Kimmie Smith, co-founder/creative director of [Accessory2](#), New York. "The runway experience is 80 percent about the show and 20 percent about the ability of being at the show and getting the excitement.

"From the runway experience perspective, this video allows you to get the spirit of spring/summer 2016 for Tom Ford, for those that have their favorite model in the video you get to see their personality and more importantly, I believe that you see more movement of the clothing than you would if you were able to see the show in person," she said. "The tight shots of the camera, the models having a party and Lady Gaga being utilized throughout the video is definitely something that is highly engaging to watch.

"From the perspective of being at the show, I think due to the high energy, you can forget about the fact that you are not physically there although it doesn't replace some of the favorite elements of the show in terms of sitting front row, seeing who is there, etc. But then again it also brings us back to the point of the fashion show, seeing the vision of the designer and placing the models as the celebrity which is always a debate within fashion conversations."

Ms. Smith is not affiliated with Tom Ford, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Tom Ford was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Neither here nor there

The spring/summer 2016 runway collection video was released to coincide with Paris Fashion Week in lieu of physical participation by Tom Ford.

To promote the video, the brand used social media with teaser previews shared on Facebook and Twitter in addition to a sponsored Instagram promotion. On Instagram, Tom Ford included an edited version of the video with the application's latest "watch more" button that directs to the brand's Web site.

For its email push Tom Ford scripts the subject line to appear as if the brand is inviting consumers to watch a streaming of its runway presentation, which many brands have begun doing since live-streaming has become more prevalent. The simple format of the email only shows a model walking down a runway, which consumers unaware of Tom Ford's strategy may think was created for the collection's surrounding campaign.



Email for Tom Ford's spring/summer 2016 women's collection

Instead, when the consumer clicks the "watch now" prompt they are lead to the Tom Ford Web site, where a video automatically begins to play. Starring singer Lady Gaga and a number of male and female models such as Mica Arga, Lexi Bolling, Lucky Blue Smith and Tarun Nijjer, the cast strut and dance down an illuminated runway.

The three-minute video, inspired by the '70s television show "Soul Train," which, according to brand founder Tom Ford was just as much about the fashion as it was the music, is part runway presentation and part dance party. As with many social video campaigns, the film shows the movement of the clothing in a natural way indicative of how a consumer would sport the ready-to-wear pieces in everyday life.

For the soundtrack, Tom Ford tapped American musician and producer Nile Rodgers to collaborate with Lady Gaga on vocals to create a new version of Mr. Rodgers' "I Want Your Love," popularized during the '70s.

The runway film was shot by Nick Knight, with Benoit Delhomme as its director of photography, in Los Angeles. Frames from the video will be repurposed as stills for Tom Ford's spring/summer 2016 look book and ad campaign, as well as being used for the brand's beauty promotions.

Tom Ford womenswear spring/summer 2016

Mr. Ford explained his rationale behind reimagining what a runway presentation should be in a statement: "Instead of having a traditional show this season, I decided to try something new. Having a runway show has become so much about the creation of imagery for online and social media and watching a filmed fashion show can be like watching a filmed play (which is never very satisfying).

"I wanted to think about how to present a collection in a cinematic way that was designed from its inception to be presented online," he said. "It was a great deal of fun to do and I think that the video captures the spirit of the collection in a way that a filmed traditional show would not have."

Despite Mr. Ford's feelings on the matter, live-streaming app Periscope and others like it are furthering brands' capabilities to immerse consumers in their runway shows, placing them in the front row regardless of where they are.

During London Collections: Men, labels including Burberry, Dunhill and Belstaff brought consumers into the action

with handheld live footage, making them feel like a part of the event. This unfiltered access complements the social media mix of photos and video packages and provides more instantaneous gratification for fans ([see story](#)).

Beyond publicity for brands on social media, fashion shows still have a practical use from a business standpoint. Tom Ford reassured those concerned that it may harm visibility for the women's spring/summer 2016 ready-to-wear collection among buyers and fashion editors by holding press showrooms around the world.

"For a dedicated and sought after brand like Tom Ford who truly has permeated the fashion scene, he will not be affected by buyers not attending the show," Ms. Smith said. "In fact, the buyer can truly see the clothing even when it is not on the runway as many of the looks are grouped on the sidelines as they are waiting to hit the runway."

Beat of your own drum

This is not the first instance of Tom Ford using a runway show to stand out from the noise of international fashion weeks.

On Feb. 20 of this year, Tom Ford went looking for a change of scenery from London Fashion Week and held its runway presentation for fall/winter 2015 in Los Angeles instead.

In a move that may have possibly annoyed London-based fashion enthusiasts and editors, Tom Ford took a personal approach and hosted its show in its founder's surrogate hometown for the past 20 years. With the Academy Awards occurring days later on Feb. 22, Tom Ford was able to draw a closer parallel to the allure of Hollywood as reflected in its decision and designs.

Mr. Ford said in a statement that he and his husband have "always felt a deep-rooted connection to the city. Like fashion, film is also a creative endeavor that is extremely important to me. I am excited to bring these two aspects of my life together by presenting the collection in Los Angeles" ([see story](#)).

Mr. Ford may have sparked a new trend among fashion show marketing.

"What makes this video work is the fact that there is a clear focus within showing this collection, everyone is presenting the same energy, they are focused on presenting Tom Ford but if you are a follower of the models - you get a better sense of them and of course Lady Gaga is not a bad element to add in the video," Ms. Smith said. "From a budget perspective, the cost of getting a venue, building sets, sending out invites, spending hours on not only inviting attendees as well as where they will be placed, staff etc. is a major expense.

"This video, although having its own costs associated with it, is actually more cost effective," she said. "In addition, Tom Ford is able to place the looks out the way he wants without having images leaked from the backstage or the first person sitting on the runway.

"I think this is something that more brands will think about implementing but it needs to be a brand that has notoriety and a great brand story. By presenting in this manner, you're really looking to create a viral sensation socially which is a lot to put funds towards if you don't have a strong network."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York