In the midst of the lockdown, designers are clamoring for a radical change in the fashion system; for less seasons and shows and later fashion week dates. But Carlo Capasa, president of the Camera della Moda, which controls the Milan runway season, still expects to have four Fashion Weeks per year in the future. And he wants to maintain their traditional calendar.

"I continue to believe we should have separate menswear and women’s weeks twice a year, as they are different
industries. Generally speaking, I think that this is the best way to keep the proper balance for these two divisions. They are two different industries, with different buyers, retailers, manufacturers. That’s true even if some specific brands may want to be different and stage co-ed shows, which is fine for them,” explained Capasa to FashionNetwork.com.

Due to the Covid-19, Capasa took the executive decision in April to cancel this June’s menswear season, partly replacing it with Milan Digital Fashion Week, which will take place from July 14 to 17.

Within the past month, a group of designers led by Dries Van Noten, and including Craig Green, Tory Burch and Thom Browne have called for a slower approach to fashion, and a different calendar. While Gucci’s Alessandro Michele this week called for major reformulation of fashion. All of them suggesting that runway shows should be staged far closer to the actual dates when collections go into boutiques. However, Capasa insisted that Milan currently plans to maintain its usual runway dates for 2021: menswear in mid January and June; women’s ready-to-wear in late February and September.

“Of course, everything depends on controlling this terrible virus. But we hope to go back to those usual dates next year,” explained the president of the Camera, the latter being the body that decides of the official Milan calendar.

“Right now, everyone is very anxious to change everything. But change should be from inside ourselves. Let’s not forget, our business has been historically been working very well. Look at the number of young designers who are successful today. So as we say in Italian: Non buttare il neonato con l’acqua sporca. Meaning, don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”

The Camera president gave multiple reasons for not changing dates.

“I totally disagree with the idea that you should hold shows right before you begin retailing the collection. First of all, it means that you show a collection that has been sold six months before. The show becomes a merchandising project not a creative expression. So, you will need a stylist and merchandiser to prepare it and you lose the importance of the designer,” he said.

“Secondly, if you milk the system, based on what you sold six months before, you become far less free in terms of creativity. We also believe that it is important to give magazines time to shoot collections and present new trends and inform the customers. And for the consumer to digest the new ideas. Magazines remain an important part of our community. If we help kill this market, there will only be Instagram left. Which is not a good idea,” he added.

“We do not believe in pure marketing. And, I think our French friends in Paris think the same. The future is not marketing, marketing and marketing. It is creating dreams. Plus, we do not accept the see now buy now idea, even if it can work for a few brands. When Burberry or Tom Ford tried this, it didn't work very well, did it?”

Capasa did, however, accept complaints by Van Noten and others that markdowns were having a very negative effect on fashion.

“Yes, stores were anticipating the season too much. There were too many markdowns. Look at what happened to Neiman Marcus. We need to reestablish the idea that our product has a value. Maybe, yes, there was too much overproduction in fast fashion. And, in our high quality world, we have unfortunately followed fast fashion too much,” he opined.

Capasa was gratified that Gucci has committed to participating in Milan’s July edition, even if it plans to skip the September season in Milan, which is expected to feature some live runway collections.

“Our goal is to try to create the best opportunity for designers and brands to express themselves. Whether it is digital or physical," stressed Capasa.

He noted that the novel July online season would in part be modelled on the Camera’s own path-breaking project back in February. When, due to the impossibility of Chinese buyers and editors coming to Milan, the Camera improvised the China, we are with you campaign, which provided live-stream shows, backstage interviews and commentary to fashion fans in China.
commentary to fashion fans in China.

“Last season, our own digital version for China managed to reach 25 million people, which I think is a pretty good result,” said the Camera president.

Capasa also took pains to underline that in his view, grouping multiple collections into a fashion season in one city reduced the negative environmental impact.

“Showing 50 runway shows all together means that you reduce the carbon footprint, rather than everyone going off and staging their showing in multiple locations on many different days. That’s logical,” Capasa said.

Besides Gucci, Zegna has also confirmed that it will present a “phygital” show in Milan in July. Capasa expects there to be “probably between 30 and 40 brands” participating in the summer season. Looking ahead, he expects September to be a mix of physical and digital.

“I believe in freedom; and that’s why we have to expect the world to be fluid. Where brands are free to do whatever they want. Some will have shows with a little audience; others a virtual show; or a fashion movie, or just a video walkthrough of the collection. Whether it takes one minute or 30 minutes to express your ideas, then that is your choice.”

By Godfrey Deeny

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