Fashionistas will be turning to their screens to see the latest designer trends this fashion week as the traditional autumn/winter catwalk calendar kicks off virtually in New York on Sunday.
With COVID-19 restrictions in place, the usual celebrity-packed front rows, snapping street photographers and exclusive parties are gone, replaced with virtual or, in a very few cases, socially distanced shows.

Designers will show more than 100 “pieces of content” from their autumn/winter 2021-2022 collections in a film, live event or lookbook, said IMG, which runs New York Fashion Week: The Shows.

“There’s a lot of hope coming out of this year and the past month with the momentum of (the U.S. presidential) inauguration and the vaccine,” said April Guidone, global senior vice president for marketing and brand strategy at IMG, in an interview.

“I think everyone has a hopeful outlook for the rest of the year but also excited to be able to show in any form that they can in creative ways.”

Brands such as The Blonds and Badgley Mischka will share video streams while big names Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren are absent from the show schedule. The few live events include shows by designers Jason Wu and Rebecca Minkoff, Guidone said.

“We’ve been working very closely with the governor and health officials to make sure that our protocols are in place,” she said, adding a new fashion week podcast would also debut.

Earlier this month the Council of Fashion Designers of America unveiled its American Collections Calendar, a renamed and expanded New York Fashion Week, with added presentations from U.S. designers showing at later dates.

The fashion and luxury goods industry has been hit hard by the global pandemic with store closures and travel restrictions shrinking demand.

Worldwide personal luxury goods sales fell 23% to 217 billion euros ($262.42 billion) in 2020, the first drop since 2009, according to consultancy Bain.

“It’s been a tough time for everyone in the business. Fashion is all about looking good, and if no one is really looking at you there’s not much point. ... Spiritually it’s a very difficult moment,” said Godfrey Deeny, global editor-in-chief of FashionNetwork.com.

“A number of younger designers sadly will go through the wall, but in a curious way the fact the season went digital helped a few of them because it’s cheaper somehow to shoot video in a studio or out in the street rather than stage a runway show.”

New York Fashion Week runs until Feb. 18. London will follow, also in a digital version.

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