

# SEE NOW, BUY NOW – OR LATER?

Esther Stein / Shamin Vogel

PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR'S PRESENTATIONS HAS BEGUN. THE IDEA: IN-SEASON SHOWS TO PREVENT COPIES AND STAVE OFF BOREDOM. CAN IT WORK?



Burberry

In September **Burberry** and **Tom Ford** will showcase their current menswear and womenswear Autumn/Winter collections. **Gucci** will also be hosting mixed gender shows, as of S/S 2017. **Tommy Hilfiger** will reveal his A/W 2016 womenswear to the press at the same time as showcasing his S/S 2017 collection to buyers. Styles by Tom Ford, Hilfiger and Burberry can be found in store after the show; Gucci will make consumers wait six months. Four brands, three new approaches.

Social media means fashion show images are disseminated instantaneously. Meanwhile styles take four to six months to appear in stores – when the excitement has died down. As many experts are calling for reform in the fashion industry, America's Council of Fashion Designers (CFDA) arranged a study on the future of New York Fashion Week. Private previews for buyers and larger-scale press events at the start of each season were the recommendations.

France and Italy's fashion councils reject the 'buy-now' model. Some designers, such as **Miuccia Prada**, **Raf Simons** and **Karl Lagerfeld**, have voiced their misgivings. Others, such as **Diane von Furstenberg**, **Rebecca Minkoff** and **Jason Denham**, believe it's the way forward. Denham says: "We can't stop progress (and shouldn't). The only question is are we ready to break the routines?"

The shift shouldn't be problematic for large brands with their own stores. Small labels look set for a rougher ride: two events are expensive; producing without any pre-orders extremely risky. Or an opportunity: "They have to stand out from the crowd. The most talented will reinvent themselves," says menswear buyer Alice Feillard at **Printemps** in Paris.

Similarly, many retailers have also welcomed the idea – providing they are able to view and pre-order collections: "The retailer acquiring a surprise package, without being able to return it, won't work," explains Florian Braun, CEO of the fashion retailer **Unger** in Hamburg. CEO of Chinese group **Duier**, Ivan Chan, fears that this will only boost fast fashion's appeal. Buyers should act as facilitators: "Rather than simply buying from brands, we have to provide them with new inspirations gathered from our customers."

This raises numerous questions: are in-season shows as attractive as previews? Will creativity suffer as a result of only sellable styles being presented at end-consumer shows? And how can buyers maintain an overview with so many different types of presentation? Burberry CEO Christopher Bailey notes: "We do not have the answers to everything. We are going to be learning as we go." As will the rest of the industry.