TOM FORD AND THE LIVE FASHION SHOW AS A MEDIATIZED SPECTACLE

Abstract
In the past decade, the fashion show has mutated into a mediatized spectacle, live streamed and circulated across multiple platforms. As Agnès Rocamora has observed, online access to fashion shows reduces the exclusivity of the events; however, ultimately only members of the field of fashion are permitted to see the collection in its original space. This article contends that the fashion show manifests high fashion as an exclusive social realm, while refocusing attention onto the live event to incite consumer desire. The argument draws upon Auslander’s definition of mediatization – as the infiltration of electronic media into live performance – as well as his matrices model of spatial and temporal co-presence, which it interweaves with White’s study of Internet spectatorship in order to evaluate online spectator positionalities. Following a historical overview of fashion shows on film and television, it employs the case studies of Tom Ford’s Spring/Summer 2011 and Autumn/Winter 2016 New York Fashion Week presentation to examine how the online fashion show addresses consumers. In September 2010, Ford showcased his collection to 100 invitees at his atelier; he later released a short film that, this article contends, re-articulates the glamour and intimacy of the live performance. In September 2016, Ford followed other prominent fashion companies by adopting an ‘instant fashion’ model, overlapping the timing of the fashion show with the in-store release of the collection. Ford launched his in-season collections at an elite dinner that was transmitted in both pre-recorded and live-streamed sections. This article concludes however that the fashion show component was nevertheless produced for Ford’s live audience, without due technical consideration of how the clothes translated via spectators’ screen interfaces.

Keywords
Fashion show; mediatization; live streaming; luxury; Tom Ford.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tom Ford is famous for tenures at the creative helms of Yves Saint Laurent and Gucci; Ford revived Gucci’s fortunes in the 1990s through an aesthetic of richesse that incorporated “high-profile advertising combined with dynamic show presentations”1. On September 12, 2010, Ford presented his eponymous label’s Spring/Summer 2011 womenswear collection – his first collection after a six-year hiatus – at New York Fashion Week. To mark the occasion, Ford sent out 100 invitations to fashion’s established journalists, excluding lesser intermediaries. The late 2000s witnessed companies’ first attempts to

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live stream fashion shows – a practice that offered consumers unprecedented temporal access to collections\(^2\). Ford’s control over his collection’s dissemination constituted a response to fashion’s apparent democratization: while the move was calculated to build consumers’ anticipation, it also amplified press attention. Sarah Mower dubbed Ford’s decision “the anti-publicity coup that threw bloggers, Twitterers, and reporters into a quagmire of frustration”\(^3\). On January 3, 2011, Ford released a three-minute film of the affair on his website\(^4\). Its instant circulation confirmed the public impatience that his ultra-exclusive presentation had incited.

In 2016, Ford joined Burberry, Tommy Hilfiger and Paul Smith in the adoption of a consumer-oriented ‘See Now Buy Now’ model that coordinates presentations with the retail season, collapsing fashion’s standard six-month press and production timelines. Ford presented his Autumn/Winter 2016 womenswear and menswear collections on September 7, at New York’s Four Seasons restaurant: the affair was covered as part of New York Fashion Week but held before its official start date\(^5\). The event consisted of a dinner, the fashion show, and a concert from musician Leon Bridges. Edited footage of celebrities’ arrivals was broadcast online, while the fashion show and concert were live streamed; the combined feature runs at 55:30\(^6\).

In the past decade, the fashion show has become a mediatized spectacle: presentations on the ready-to-wear Fashion Month circuit are live streamed; several companies create concurrent social media initiatives; images and videos circulate across applications; and pieces are released for immediate sale via e-commerce platforms\(^7\). These fundamental communication shifts have prompted a reevaluation of luxury retail models. Agnès Rocamora states that the instant transmission of media representations “puts one more nail in the coffin of the [fashion] show’s elitism”\(^8\). However, I seek to problematize scholars’ implications that the fashion show has become democratized, as an elite audience, members of what Rocamora and Joanne Entwistle, pace Bourdieu, term the field of fashion, remains permitted to enter the performance space\(^9\). Fashion shows must communicate luxury fashion as an exclusive social realm: to this end, companies promote insiders’ spatial access as an experiential distinction to build consumer desire. Live streams and related representations often reinforce online spectators’ exclusion via aesthetic and performative distancing, refocusing attention onto attendees, or failure to make presentations as immediate as claimed. This article compares Ford’s 2010 and

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\(^7\) The production of digital fashion films in lieu of fashion shows, or the use of technologies in fashion shows, are additional important practices but lie outside the scope of this article. See M. Uhlirva, “100 Years of the Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories”, *Fashion Theory*, 17, 2 (2013): 137-158. DOI: 10.2752/175174113X13541091797562.


2016 New York Fashion Week presentations to examine online spectators’ positionali-
ties in relation to the live performance, specifically our measure of spatial and temporal
inclusion as offered or denied via interfaces. Ford’s Spring/Summer 2011 film builds
desire through temporal distance, even as the spectator perceives an intimate level of
access; while the Autumn/Winter 2016 fashion show was live streamed, it instead offers
consumers an inferior look at a presentation aimed at a live audience.

Ford’s presentations offer productive comparative case studies. First, because the
online content derives from one fashion house, the films bear similar aesthetic signa-
tures, from the presence of specific models and celebrities, to the luxurious eveningwear,
to the scenic and mood elements and camera focus. Second, Ford’s decision to locate his
house at the forefront of the ‘instant fashion’ movement represents an about-face from
his earlier mindset. Therefore, these two productions represent extreme positions, as
one utilizes temporal manipulation, while the other seeks to manifest (and fulfill) want
in an immediate timeframe. Furthermore, Ford’s aesthetic and commercial maneuvers
encapsulate the fashion industry’s polarized responses to online, digital and social me-
dia’s inescapable presence.

2. THE MEDIATIZATION OF THE FASHION SHOW

This article utilizes a methodological framework that combines mediatization (here
founded in performance studies) and film theories as applied to Internet spectatorship,
in order to consider the manner in which Tom Ford’s film and live stream broadcast ad-
dress an online audience. Rocamora calls for the application of mediatization theories to
the field of fashion: citing Andreas Hepp, she operationalizes mediatization as a lens to
assess social formations constructed via media, and the manner in which material prac-
tices are instantiated (in Hepp’s words, “moulded”) according to media affordances\(10\).
Mediatization is a historical process not limited to the Internet era; however, the term
has garnered enhanced scholarly attention in the past decade\(11\). Rocamora observes that
fashion shows have become “mediatized events – that is, events produced and staged
with a view to being consumed online, on a digital screen”\(12\). Producers direct models’
movements and construct sets with attention to camera placement and how elements
will read across interfaces\(13\). Philip Auslander defines mediatization as the historical
infiltration of electronic media into live performance’s economies\(14\). Auslander asserts
that the live as a construct (as liveness) cannot be separated from the mediatized: rather,
the dialectical distinction between these realms must be reconceptualized as “historical
and contingent, rather than determined by immutable differences”\(15\). The fashion show,
in Rocamora’s formulation, exemplifies a condition in which, as Auslander describes,
“the live event exists as much to serve as the basis for a mediatized representation as to
be an end in itself…”\(16\). Following Benjamin, Auslander observes that liveness functions

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11 Ibid., 3-5.
12 Ibid., 6.
13 Ibid., 6-7.
14 P. Auslander, Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture, 2nd ed., London-New York: Routledge,
2008: 11. Auslander here references Baudrillard’s and Jameson’s observations on postmodern representation.
15 Ibid., 11.
16 Ibid., 30-31.
as a precondition of aura\textsuperscript{17}. The fashion show maintains its cultural cachet insofar as it permits insiders to witness the debut of the (authentic) collection in person, as witness to “its presence in \textit{time and space}, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be”\textsuperscript{18}. Auslander proposes an examination of performance based on matrices of \textit{spatial} and \textit{temporal co-presence}. Their combination establishes \textit{classic liveness}, a “default” condition of performance that contains the potential to deliver a more affective audience experience\textsuperscript{19}. Nonetheless, one’s appreciation for the experience of \textit{liveness} is predicated on prior interaction with mediatized representations. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin similarly observe that the spectator’s perception of immediacy in online or virtual environments results from the collusion of multiple interfaces\textsuperscript{20}.

Michele White posits the term \textit{spectator} to incorporate the Internet’s multi-directional interactions, and to consider users’ positionalities and subjectivities\textsuperscript{21}. Film analysis, predicated on psychoanalytic theories, remains applicable to Internet studies, as content is transmitted via screen interfaces that prescribe, facilitate and resist particular modes of “looking”\textsuperscript{22}. An historical overview of fashion shows’ transmission, below, demonstrates that scholars have traditionally read fashion show footage in terms of its manipulation of processes of gazing, often harnessed in the service of consumer desire. Examination of Tom Ford’s online content necessitates a similar qualitative, aesthetic film reading. However, a mediatization rubric accounts for the embodied spatialities that underlie the fashion show as performance and social construct.

Fashion shows’ imbrication with electronic media can be traced to the introduction of cinema. Following Bolter and Grusin’s concept of \textit{remediation}, in which new media “refashion” their predecessors, one can locate Internet streaming as a remediation of film and television\textsuperscript{23}. While film documents live performance, its technical capabilities and accessible format led it to overshadow the theatre as an artistic medium; while television remediated film, its earliest incarnation functioned as an audiovisual transmission of live enactments for studio audiences\textsuperscript{24}. Marketa Uhlirova demonstrates that fashion’s communication in film reflects a societal fascination with “temporal experience and greater mobility” that has existed since modern industrialism\textsuperscript{25}. Film became an appropriate medium to “promote fashion” as it “recast consumption as seductive visual entertainment”\textsuperscript{26}. Couturier Paul Poiret made films of his mannequin parades in 1911 to use as a promotional tool for a US tour, while similar films were produced for Charles

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 5-11.
\textsuperscript{24} Auslander, \textit{Liveness}, 12-13, 60.
\textsuperscript{25} Uhlirova, “100 Years of the Fashion Film”, 138.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 140.
Worth and Jeanne Paquin’s 1915 US tour. In the 1910s, cinema audiences in “Europe and the United States” watched newsreels of Parisian (and later New York) fashion presentations: Caroline Evans remarks that such films “brought the image of haute couture to a wider audience through the very process of promulgating its mystique and aura of exclusivity.” In addition to newsreels, Pathé-Frères later produced short promotional films on current fashions, an initiative that continued into the 1930s. A subset of North American films depicted the sphere of fashion retail and incorporated fashion show scenes into the fictional narrative. Charlotte Herzog terms this the “fashion show film” and describes its commercial method as “powder puff” or “soft promotion”, that couched “subtle, illusive” advertisements for current trends in the cinematic feature. The films utilized a series of “long, lingering, scrutinizing” shots, via which the camera replicated the on-screen audience’s view of the procession: these permitted the cinema audience to discern clothing details whilst creating a doubled process of vicarious identification with the models and the attendees of the fictional event. Contemporary fashion show sequences are found in films such as Robert Altman’s satire Prêt-à-Porter (1994) and the documentary Dior and I (2014). In the late twentieth century, broadcast fashion-themed television programs such as Style with Elsa Klensch (1980 - 2001), Fashion Television (1985-2012) and Fashion File (1989-2009) brought international runways into consumers’ homes. While footage was edited, the programs utilized the familiar, cinematic, continuous, toe-to-head shots. RAW, an offshoot of Fashion Television, contained unedited, prerecorded footage using the same camera placements. This unedited broadcast television premediated the live stream.

Historical representations of fashion shows have thus informed consumers’ expectations of live streams. For Auslander, even persons seated in the back row at a fashion show would read the clothes in relation to media representations. Nonetheless, fashion companies promote consumers’ temporal co-presence at fashion shows as a value-added offer intended to create “the sense of a continuous perceptual experience unfolding in real time.” Technical and aesthetic similarities between live streams and filmed footage, however, remind spectators of their position in front of a screen. Whereas spatial co-presence permits audience members to “direct their own vision”, cameras determine the online spectator’s focus. Live streams utilize continuous model shots, but the camera can still cut to alternate perspectives. Moreover, potential moments of “failure” or

28 Ibid., 285.
30 For a “partial list”, see Berry, Screen Style, 56.
32 Ibid., 154-159.
36 Auslander, Liveness, 39.
37 Ibid., 19.
38 Even as actual fashion show attendees frequently film or photograph the live performance with the use of handheld media devices.
39 Auslander, Liveness, 19.
“interface breakdown” interrupt consumers’ identification. Prior uses of electronic media to transmit fashion show content therefore contextualize consumer interactions with online content, remediated from familiar screen-based aesthetics.

3. Tom Ford Spring/Summer 2011 Womenswear Collection

In 2010, Tom Ford complained that consumers’ immediate access to content diminished fashion lines’ auras and his customer’s class status: “You see the clothes, within an hour or so they’re online, the world sees them. They don’t get to a store for six months. The next week, young celebrity girls are wearing them on red carpets. They’re in every magazine. The customer is bored with those clothes by the time they get to the store.”

Ford’s outlook also came out of his 2004 parting with Gucci Group after the house’s corporate acquisition by Pinault-Printemps-Redoute (now Kering). Ford vowed that the public would not see his latest collection until its in-store release – a strategy tailored “to put the X (as in X, you’re out) back into the notion of exclusivity.” Ford wanted to invoke the antiquated glamour of the modern period, in which the time lag before print media publication allowed couturiers to position fashion as rare art: “the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later.” In establishing a distance between his collection and the public, Ford would reassert his brand status.

Ford’s presentation took place at his Manhattan atelier; his set consisted of a fireplace and gold-framed mirror with orchids, crystal chandeliers, marble floors and stanchions with velvet cords. Ford performed the role of emcee. Ford requested the participation of a roster of personal muses from fashion, film, music and culture – the list was kept secret. Ford wanted attendees to describe the collection in print but forbade photographs. Instead, Ford hired photographer Terry Richardson and his crew to film the proceedings; Richardson, in his trademark plaid shirt, becomes an additional performer within the frame. The visible camera apparatuses reinforce that this performance was intended, like the collection, to enter an “economy of repetition”, though its circulation is branded via Tom Ford’s online presence.

Infusing an “intense” glamour into both the garments and their presentation, Ford’s

40 See White, The Body and the Screen, 85.
42 Mower, “Mr. Ford Returns”.
43 Foley, “Tom Ford Disses Fashion World’s Cult of Immediacy”.
45 Ford, cited in Foley, “Tom Ford Disses Fashion World’s Cult of Immediacy”.
46 Foley, “Tom Ford Disses Fashion World’s Cult of Immediacy”.
47 Veteran models included Karen Elson, Liya Kebede, Carolyn Murphy, Anja Rubik, Stella Tennant, Amber Valletta, Natalia Vodianova, and Daria Werbowy. Ford also cast icons Farida Khelfa, Marisa Berenson, and Lauren Hutton; actresses Lou Doillon, Lisa Eisner, Rinko Kikuchi, Julianne Moore, Emmanuelle Seigner, and Rita Wilson; artist Rachel Feinstein; It-Girl Julia Restoin-Roitfeld; R&B superstar Beyoncé Knowles; and heiress Daphne Guinness.
48 A handful of headshots and smart phone photos leaked online. Steven Meisel later photographed the collection for Vogue’s January 2011 issue.
49 Richardson’s intimacy assumes sinister connotations in light of accusations of his sexual exploitation of models. On Ford’s controversial depictions of women, see Church Gibson, Fashion and Celebrity Culture, 95-96.
50 Auslander, Liveness, 55.
production invoked for critics a combination of 1920s couture presentations and 1970s sheen. Ford’s film, set to down-tempo blues-rock, conveys the glamour inherent in the live performance to the online spectator, whilst it replicates Hollywood red carpet spectacles via an aestheticized bombardment of camera flashes, combined with a soft focus. Audience members are seated close to the narrow runway, and to each other, and the intimate relations felt between the models and audience are rendered palpable. The audience members demonstrate an affective thrill upon the appearances of certain celebrities. The parties appear to take pleasure in “the immediacy, the chemistry, the sense of personal contact” fundamental to the experience of classic liveness in its most idealized form. The professional models glance seductively at audience members, and some walk in a casual manner; the celebrities grin at the audience or enact theatrical poses. Ford thus creates a more experiential, intimate presentation for his audience in comparison with the standard fashion show format that does not permit model-audience interaction.

Ford manipulates an illusory immediacy between online spectator and performance. Each shot, even wide crowd shots, permit the online spectator to feel a sense of presence. Close-ups capture models and audience members clinking champagne glasses and exchanging air-kisses. Benjamin stated that the close-up offers the film spectator the perception of physical immediacy despite actual distance. Nonetheless, Ford’s extreme close-ups remind the spectator that he or she is watching a film record. Behind-the-scenes peeks at backstage preparations provide an insider’s look at the (still opulent) conditions of production. Nonetheless, such shots also indicate fashion’s constructed, theatrical artifice. Ford denies all chance of identification: counter to the standard, continuous fashion show shots, Ford inserts a series of rapid shots within each model’s stroll, from audience reactions to glimpses of other models backstage, and the incessant camera flashes increase our disorientation. The film’s three-minute runtime reveals a mere fraction of the actual presentation, or, rather, the presentation in fractions. Nonetheless, Ford creates a pleasurable spectator experience as the film displays such a quick succession of images that the spectator feels excitement to behold so many discrete moments, and interactions between influential persons. Ford offers us just enough of an insider’s look to incite desire and then proffers his brand name on the screen as the tool to fulfill it. The Business of Fashion interpreted the film as a reminder that online interactions cannot substitute for real contact, positing that “one thing that people crave even more than immediacy is a feeling of intimacy”, and demonstrating fashion’s privileging of classic liveness, or the need to be there. The ‘real’ intimacy exists,

52 Ford’s fashion proclamations have coincided with his directorial film efforts. Reports on both the 2010 and 2016 presentations mention Ford’s collections within the context of the films; Tim Blanks described the latter event as “fashion in cinemascope”. A Single Man was released earlier in 2010, but is considered a fashion film. Ford held his latest presentation during the festival circuit for Nocturnal Animals. Ford’s film ventures recall Poiret’s cross-pollinations with theatre and art. On Ford as wannabe auteur, see Church Gibson, Fashion and Celebrity Culture, 93-102. On Poiret, see Troy, Couture Culture.
54 See Mower, “Mr. Ford Returns”.
55 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”.
56 While the earliest couture houses separated the realms of presentation and production, backstage scenes have now become a routine element of fashion shows’ mediatization. See C. Evans, The Mechanical Smile: Modernism and the First Fashion Shows in France and America, 1900-1929, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.
however, between those persons co-present in the space. Ford’s film emphasizes that, despite the fashion show’s informational function, its communicative function is still to manufacture glamour. The beautiful, shimmering clothes offer an aesthetic focus, but the controlled spectacle is Ford’s raison d’être. Ford could have documented the event solely via print and photographs, but the consumer needed to witness the performance, in particular its luxurious milieu. However, film’s nature as document renders the performance as past. Ford presents continuous flashes of fashion’s aspirational dream, but it is already nostalgic – our desire is to have been present.

4. TOM FORD AUTUMN/WINTER 2016 WOMENSWEAR AND MENSWEAR COLLECTIONS

Ford’s Autumn/Winter 2016 presentation demonstrated a transition to an ‘instant fashion’ model that catered to consumer demand. Though the presentation’s aim still remained “sales, sales, sales”, the designer chose to achieve this through enhancing consumers’ access, musing that “no one understood” his motivation for his private fashion show in 2010. The instant fashion model, of which the live-streamed fashion show is a central mechanism, united Ford’s authorial control with market dictates. The mediatized presentation contained three components: prerecorded footage of pre-dinner arrivals; the fashion show live stream; and the musical performance. Though the fashion show comprised one-fifth of the runtime, it formed the focus of consumer and press interest: however, it was produced without sufficient consideration of camera translation, and therefore constituted the spectacle’s least evocative component.

The broadcast opens with a 30-second shot of a red carpet backdrop emblazoned with the Tom Ford logo, followed by a perspectival shot of the Manhattan streetscape lined with black town cars and yellow taxis – an image that reinforces New York’s fashion capital status. The Four Seasons, closed for renovations, has been rebranded with Tom Ford plaques. The arrivals of celebrities and fashion’s formidable persons comprise the first 20 minutes. The cameras cut between a red carpet outside the restaurant (flanked by press photographers), and the backdrop inside, where brand photographers snap additional pictures. The first component remediates televised awards presentation preshows, though the footage is evidently pre-edited, as certain celebrities are shown inside then later outdoors. The camera places the spectator on the outdoor red carpet – close enough to the celebrities to feel discomfort at the visual assault of two-directional, strobe-like camera flashes. Like the 2010 film, there are no interviews, or conversations heard over the ambient music, and few attendees acknowledge the cameras. The spectator does however witness celebrities’ mediatized interactions, as they take selfies and collection photographs on their personal handheld devices. The interior shots – of a promenade, and the bar and restaurant – are low-lit with blue tones. Wide shots reveal the spacious area, with massive chandeliers of vertical, lit columns, while close-up shots position the

39 Auslander, Liveness, 43.
41 Blanks, “‘See Now Buy Now’ in Cinemascope at Tom Ford”. 
spectator as an eavesdropper to celebrities’ conversations. A 45-degree overhead shot showcases the round tables with white tablecloths, on which candles are placed around “white orchid” centerpieces, illuminating filled champagne glasses. In the final shot, the room is darkened save for the candles, creating an ethereal, romantic atmosphere.

Despite the imperative for such an anticipated event to be rendered, in Auslander’s words, “camera-ready”, the fashion show component, which happens in two parts, suffers from a discord between the audience-performer setup and the technical demands of the mediatized runway. The elevated runway architecture consists of a narrow upstage focal point, to which the models step from an entrance to the left; the models proceed down four stairs to a narrow runway, before reaching a wider, rectangular section. In the first part of the fashion show, models enter and are revealed with a frontal light that draws focus and then tracks their movements onto the narrow runway. The models then walk to and stand at the four corners of the main section, each with another dedicated light. Overhead shots reveal the mechanics of these apparatus, which illuminate the models at the four points, but create a criss-crossed shadow pattern visible to the online spectator. The entrance light illuminates the models’ bodies in the room, but the circumference appears narrow to the online spectator, and models’ heads are in shadow as the camera tracks forward. The stream relies on shots from the waist up, which translate the fabrics, textures and colours on the screen, but prevent spectators from seeing complete looks. Close-up shots of footwear should offer spectators a more detailed perspective than an audience member in the room would see, but the footwear appears in shadow whenever the camera zooms in. The more famous models appear in the second part, which is dedicated to eveningwear. Here, models walk the length of the runway, tracked by the primary light, and the resultant continuous shots, not to mention the illuminated opulence of the sequins, creates a far more pleasurable mode of looking. During the concert, the final component, the musicians stand on the wide section under a blue wash: their vibrant appearance confirms that the runway lights were ill-suited to showcase the models and clothes for the screen.

In 2012, Ford commented that, despite the need to plan fashion shows for screen transmission, “watching a filmed fashion show can be like watching a filmed play.” While Ford couches his fashion show within a grander event, the result is far from cinematic: Vanessa Friedman described the presentation as “dinner theater.” Nonetheless, the stream affords the spectator immediate close-ups of the reactions of iconic celebrities such as Julianne Moore, Rita Wilson and Lauren Hutton, captured as the runway lights spill onto the front tables; in other moments, however, celebrities’ faces remain in shadow. Friedman articulated the stream’s intent to produce desire in “the people who weren’t in the room but really, really wished they could be in the room. The people, in other words, watching (on Instagram and Facebook and so on) the people in the room, and for whom the second-best way to maybe get a bit of the experience of being in the

63 Auslander, Liveness, 30.
65 Friedman, “Glam vs. Sham”.
room will be to get a product that was in the room. Immediately™. The spectator is addressed in a manner that emphasizes their lack of spatial co-presence. There remains a tacit comprehension that consumers’ actual presence would undermine the event’s exclusive aura.

5. Conclusion

Tom Ford’s presentations demonstrate that, in the Internet era, the fashion show has become one of the last tools through which companies manifest the opulence traditionally associated with luxury brands. The commercial efficacies of ‘instant fashion’ remain to be calculated, and several companies maintain that the approach bears prohibitive financial and creative considerations in producing both collections and presentations67. Luxury business models nonetheless presuppose a consumer that can afford the clothes, online or in-store, and fashion shows continue to enhance brands’ status, which translates into the sale of licensed commodities68. While the Internet era has called the fashion show’s industrial function into question, a comparison of Ford’s presentations reinforces that its social role remains predicated on an exclusive condition of liveness.

This article is part of a broader examination of transformations to the fashion show, in a mediatized consumer culture, that aims both to document mediatization’s effects on fashion shows’ social and technical mechanisms and to situate the fashion show as a microcosm of mediatization as a historical and cultural process. Cross-fertilizations of audiovisual studies and fashion studies serve to document a climate in which consumers access fashion via an unprecedented plethora of media, whose representations and simulations assume evermore material properties and modes of interaction. Nonetheless, studies of fashion’s mediatization must consider the fundamental spatial, embodied relations between performance and spectator.

66 Ibid.