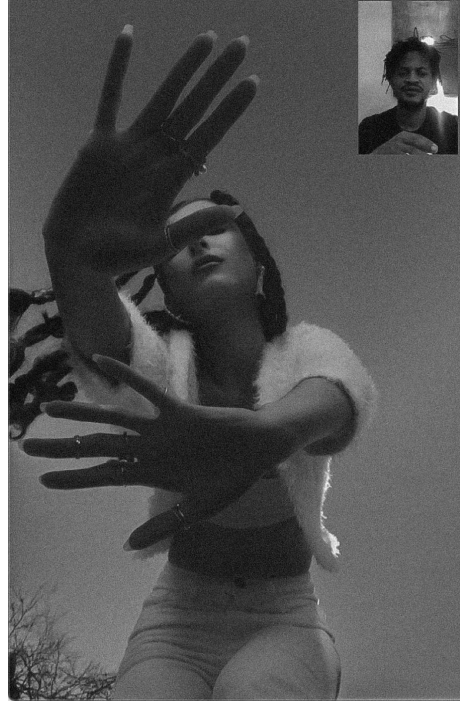


Covid Digitalizes Modeling and Fashion

Written and Designed by Maddie Moreland

When COVID-19 hit, everything in the world was a standstill, and the modeling industry was no exception. Most models are not like Kendall Jenner or Naomi Campbell, who have a constant flow of money, and are not drastically impacted by the changes to the industry as a result of the pandemic. Many photographers, models, makeup artists, and any other freelance individuals that play a role within this realm heavily



rely on jobs to make ends meet on top of usually having an everyday job. Although the pandemic

has caused the modeling industry to have a more digital presence and has minimized the in person networking, within it has emerged new opportunities for photographers and models to push their boundaries and overcome the obstacles of travel bans, social distancing, and the risk of contracting the virus. Many of the changes seen today had been beginning to appear prior to the pandemic, however, the pace in which

digital intervention has embedded itself into the industry has significantly accelerated.

The modeling industry is so vast and relies on an abundance of individuals in order to create a single advertisement or image. There are a lot of components at play, and the pandemic has made it harder to find work and individuals to fill all the necessary roles in a specific location within a set timeframe. However, when social distancing was implemented, many photographers and models found innovative ways to continue work from their own homes.

They used alternatives such as Facetime photo-shoots and other forms of remote photography. One really great thing about this digital transformation is that unlike modeling shoots prior to the pandemic, this option requires no flights, no hotels, and no other travel expenses.

A significant number of models rely on travel to different cities, states, or even countries for paid work, and with the restrictions on traveling within the U.S. and travel bans issued for other countries, it poses a significant difficulty for both models and companies to find ways to work together to create

ifa Mvuembe, the founder of Hanifa, a women's apparel line, was largely successful in captivating her audience through an online platform. She was not able to reveal her line at the New York Fashion Week because of the pandemic, and decided to launch her products on her own. Mvuemba creat-



high-quality images, ad campaigns, or even fashion shows. Many companies rely on live individuals to present their products in order to better appeal to the public and connect to the audience on a more emotional level. Despite many of these aspects being online and losing the personal connections, An-

ed a virtual 3-dimensional runway show to unveil her Pink Label Congo collection. The virtually rendered models had pleated minis and floor-length skirts wrapped onto invisible, yet surprisingly, realistic bodies that strut across a black void that functions as the runway. Although the public had



a resounding positive response to this debut, the “digital shows, videos, and presentations” on average “generated less than one-third as much online engagement as [in real life] shows” (Basu). It is clear that the virtual options

cannot yet reach or entice the same audience as when in person, because modeling, fashion shows, or photoshoots are not solely about the end product, but it also takes into account the individuals’ experience though the making

and viewing of the piece. A fashion show in real life can be captivating, lively, and chaotic, and that same energy cannot simply be replicated through a 3-D rendering.

At the peak of the pandemic, magazines had to create a new mindset centered around technology in order to continue editorial shoots and other publications. A well-known fashion company, Jacquemus, paved the way for Facetime photoshoots, with many other models and photographers following suit. The company released their Spring 2020 campaign, which was composed of images of model Bella Hadid, shot via FaceTime. Photographer Pierre-Ange Carlotti and designer Simon Porte Jacquemus were the two only individuals involved in the making of the images, and Bella Hadid was responsible for her own hair and makeup. Despite so few resources, they managed

to capture impressive images that are energetic and do not suggest they were taken through FaceTime. There is a significant amount of variety in the styling, looks, and backgrounds for the images, and it speaks highly to the talents of the three individuals involved in this creative process. Rather than being able to direct a model visually, photographers have to put in more effort to describe the desired stances and movements. Although this does not capture models within the same essence as during an in-person shoot, it does have a more natural energy to the images, and pushes photographers and models to be more self-reliant and know how to move with less guidance.

Given that Mvuemba completely replaced models in her version of a digital runway show, it is interesting to see whether or not this platform will continue to grow or if it will be phased out once things begin to settle down from the pandemic. There is no perfect replacement to the in-person versions of these mediums or professions because they provide another element of interactivity and emotion between the viewer and the image or product. However, these steps towards developing 3-D runways and resorting to Facetime photoshoots shows how far the modeling industry has come and how this accelerated pace of growth will not cease.

Basu, Ritupriya. "As COVID-Era Fashion Shows Go Virtual, New Opportunities for Designers Emerge." *Eye on Design*, 1 Dec. 2020, eyeondesign.aiga.org/as-fashion-shows-go-virtual-in-the-covid-era-new-opportunities-for-designers-emerge/.

Salaudeen, Aisha. "Fashion Designer Showcases the Future of the Runway with 3D Models." *CNN, Cable News Network*, 25 May 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/05/25/africa/3d-model-congo-fashion/index.html.

Allaire, Christian. "Bella Hadid Stars In the First Big FaceTime Campaign." *Vogue, Vogue*, 23 Apr. 2020, www.vogue.com/article/bella-hadid-jacquemus-facetime-campaign.

Renjen, Rupali. "The 'FaceTime Photoshoot' Collab Request Is Now Trending On Dayflash." *Medium, Dayflash Blog*, 15 May 2020, medium.com/dayflash-daily-blog/the-facetime-photoshoot-collab-request-is-now-trending-on-dayflash-2577c63abc02.