

Industry Insight: extended

Johnny Wang, womenswear designer, extended interview

Johnny's interview appears in abridged form in Chapter 2, page 47.

Can you tell me about making fashion films?

I did films way back at university. I made my first film for my interview at Alexander McQueen; it was very much inspired by SHOWstudio and a trip to see Nick Knight's exhibition at Somerset House [London]. That film was a way of showing my work in 3D form and showing my work on a model in a setting. Also, I could create something with music because music is so important. It was a way to show the work as a holistic experience. Then when I worked for Phoebe English we did various films. The idea to make fashion films has been constant. It has always been part of the showcase for me and for quite a few other designers.

You showed film at London Fashion Week (LFW)?

More recently for my own brand I did a film for each collection. We had a bit of budget even though it was tight. We were lucky enough to collaborate with sound engineers, stylists, make-up artists and set designers so we had a whole group of people to work on the film to realise a concept ... also my background in TV production. Before I studied fashion design I did a degree in TV production, so it has always been there and it is part of my background ... it was natural for me to use film. We showed film at Fashion Week for two seasons. I had shown with BFC (British Fashion Council) for a season before. The second season, they invited me to show on the digital schedule. That was a very spontaneous, organic progress for us.

What do you get out of being on the digital schedule?

There has been a change in the digital schedule. Presentations were on the digital schedule instead of the main calendar. Being on the official schedule means your work being exposed to the entire BFC contacts list; designers, stylists, everyone. For young start-up designers, catwalk is too expensive. In London for start-ups the outcome doesn't always reflect the amount of effort that was put in. I feel that there have been a lot of changes in structure and the way of showing fashion. The BFC is supportive generally and they are especially supportive of British designers as well as international.

What are the outcomes of showing at London Fashion Week?

London Fashion Week is unique amongst all four fashion weeks. The designers who show in London are aiming to expose themselves to press. Not many designers make sales at London Fashion Week, whereas we show in Paris as well, and that is where the sales take place. We sold the first and second seasons in Paris which is quite rare for a young designer. Paris Fashion Week is more important for sales.

Where do you show in Paris?

I worked with a sales team (a showroom) there, one of the best known, I was lucky to work with them. I worked with an amazing team of people and my PR person was brilliant. I had a

really good platform for exposure and sales. I sold to Taiwan, Tokyo ... the last season, right after the Paris attacks, that affected the designers quite badly because a lot of buyers didn't go that season. The friend I am working with at the moment, they have decided to skip London Fashion Week and just show in Paris.

Do you think it is becoming rarer for small designers to do shows?

Yes, the super brands always do catwalks. I still believe that even the super brands are exploring new ways of showing; of showcasing their work, taking shows to a new level, showing in exotic locations. Dior building a venue for each collection, creating a holistic experience each time for all of their guests. They have a very healthy budget to do a show that creates that PR moment, whereas the younger, smaller brands have a lack of financial support and resources to experiment with new ways of showing. That is why they use more digital, small gatherings.

Digital platforms keep offering new ways of showing and of interacting with audiences, all of the power has been diverted. You can get straight to the consumer. Younger brands have a lack of financial support and resources which has forced us to experiment with new ways of showing which is why lots of new designers opt for digital presentations and more gatherings. You can get to the consumer now.

You can watch Johnny Wang discuss showing his collection by clicking through to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBlx7dj9eyQ&t=36s>