

Going out of style? The cancellation of Toronto Fashion Week and the evolution of trans-local anchors in the digital age.

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In the fashion world, fashion weeks have traditionally served as key anchors and field-configuring events which create and communicate value(s), structure the industry and reinforce its global hierarchy. Indeed, along with events in emerging fashion centers, the bi-annual 'big four' fashion weeks in New York, London, Milan and Paris showcase top designers for the press, buyers and bloggers. Recently, however, the economic and symbolic supremacy of these local anchors has been challenged. In the age of Instagram and 'see now, buy now' fashion marketing and consumption, the relevance of fixed-calendar events, 'seasons' and production cycles is being tested. To contribute to this session's focus on the role of physical anchors in trans-local knowledge communities, this presentation will consider the evolution of fashion weeks as physical yet temporary anchors. It will trace the rise and recent cancellation of Toronto Fashion Week (TFW) to demonstrate that a combination of local and global factors can create failed anchors. It will also highlight the implications of this failure for designers, Toronto's position within the global fashion system and the Canadian fashion industry more broadly. In doing so, this presentation seeks to nuance our understanding of the evolution of anchors, trans-local dynamics and the interplay between 'the global' and 'the local' as well as 'physical,' 'virtual' and 'temporary' spaces.