

# New date and locale for Fashion Week

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From this year, Singapore Fashion Week (SFW) will take place in October instead of May.

It will also feature six months worth of fashion-related activities in the lead up to the main five-day fashion show-filled event, which will run from Oct 25 to 30.

Ms Tjin Lee, chairman of the festival, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, says: "We need to evolve the fashion week. A five-day event once a year does not give enough substance and breadth to what we need to do for the local fashion industry. A six-month long calendar of events will help to sustain awareness of the industry."

To engage the public from May, she plans to organise designer-helmed styling sessions, as well as talks by international designers and industry professionals. This will give partners and designers more opportunities to engage and interact with consumers, says Ms Lee, who is also founder and managing director of Mercury M&C, the marketing and communications agency that organises the festival. Talks will be ticketed, while the styling sessions will be open to the public. More details will be released at a later date.

Also to be revealed – a new location for the festival. Ms Lee says a new venue has been decided on, but she cannot reveal more details as the contract with the venue partner is yet to be signed. Since it started, the festival has been held yearly at Ngee Ann City's Civic Plaza, except for 2013 when it was held at the F1 Pit Building.

To up the glam factor in the lead-up to the festival, Ms Lee is also



Models strutting their stuff at last year's Singapore Fashion Week's opening show held at the Tent@Orchard in Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza.

PHOTO: ST FILE

planning to stage at least two gala dinners, compared with one in previous years.

International designers and celebrities will be invited, "with more emphasis on Asian celebrities and influencers than previous years", says Ms Lee. Some dinners will be invite-only, while others will be open to the public as part of a new Patrons Program.

The Patrons Program is a new initiative that will give supporters of the home-grown fashion industry access to privileges such as VIP access and seating at shows, private shopping events, and dinners with designers.

"This is one way of inviting people who want to support the local fashion industry and get invited to shows," says Ms Lee, who is still working out the details of the Patrons Program, such as how much one must donate to become a patron and the different tiers of donors.

Regular features such as fashion trade and consumer event Blueprint and the Fashion Futures programme will continue. However, Ms Lee says that Blueprint will take on a more intimate concept this year and

replicate the trade showrooms at Paris Fashion Week where retail buyers can engage directly with the designers. She declines to give more details, such as whether it will still be open to the public as it was previously, and where it will be held.

The Fashion Futures programme aims to equip Singapore designers with the skills and experience to make the transition from a local to global brand by providing a network of global buyers and international designers such as Diane von Furstenberg and Council of Fashion Designers of America chief executive officer Steven Kolb, who can provide advice.

Last year, designers Chelsea Scott-Blackhall of Dzojchen, Priscilla Shunmugam of Ong Shunmugam and Sabrina Goh of Elohim By Sabrina Goh went to New York as part of the programme.

To give a further boost to designers here and in the region, Ms Lee is working on developing the SFW International Program, which aims to promote the exchange and engagement of designers and fashion industry professionals from countries such

as Indonesia, Thailand, Australia and South Korea with Singapore.

"I want to bring Singaporean designers to Australia or Seoul Fashion Week, for example, and create a community and foster exchange with the regional designers and industry professionals.

"It is about seeing Singapore as being a part of the ecosystem that is Asia. Working collaboratively with the other markets is the best way to help our local fashion industry. It is a mutually beneficial exchange."

Designers here welcome the festival's move to October since it will allow them to showcase their Spring/ Summer collections instead of their Fall/Winter collections, which they previously showed when the festival took place in May.

Designer Velda Tan of womenswear label Collate says: "The date change is a sensible and timely one. The Spring/Summer designs and silhouettes are more relevant among the local and regional markets."

Ms Lee adds: "This will align with the international fashion weeks showing designers' Spring/

Summer 2017 collections, which is more suited to South-east Asia's tropical climate.

"This will also give Singaporean designers more time to plan for it."

By moving the festival to October, the event will also coincide with the Singapore Biennale (Oct 28 to Feb 26 next year) and BNP Paribas Women's Tennis Association (WTA) Finals Singapore (Oct 23 to 30). But Ms Lee is not worried about the festival being overshadowed.

"There is a lot of room for cross-collaboration. For example, you could have the tennis players attending SFW and the fashion designers attending WTA," she says. "We see them as complementary and not competing events, because one is sports, one is fashion and one is design."

Although Ms Lee says it is too early to reveal the names of specific designers and celebrities coming for the festival, she shares that she is in talks with an overseas entertainment company to bring in their roster of talents for the festival.

She says: "Singapore will look so buzzy with all these activities happening at the same time."