The LVMH Prize has exited its hushed, exclusive milieu to gain visibility with a larger audience. This year, the emerging designer competition, first staged by the luxury giant in 2014, featured a public vote and an extensive social media presence, having been prompted by the pandemic-driven digital boom to adapt and reinvent itself, radically changing the way it communicates. This gave LVMH the opportunity to make its presence felt by young people to a greater degree than in the past, an approach FashionNetwork.com has taken an in-depth look at.
This year, and for the first time since the LVMH Prize was created, its nine finalists were selected also through a public vote, in addition to the deliberations of the 70 experts chosen to whittle down the competition’s longlist. Usually, the shortlisted candidates were revealed in March during Paris Fashion Week, but for the competition’s 2021 edition the organisers instead set up a digital showroom, accessible on lvmhprize.com from April 6 to 11.

The showroom made it possible to view all the candidates’ collections, and to become better acquainted with the designers through video presentations. Over 32,000 people voted for their favourite nominees through a secret ballot, as was that of the experts’ jury. LVMH did not provide details about the public vote, nor about its influence on the finalists' selection.

Another novelty was the competition’s social media presence, notably on the day of the award ceremony on September 7, which crowned as winner London-based Albanian designer Nensi Dojaka, while the Karl Lagerfeld Prize/Special Jury Mention was shared between three designers, Colm Dillane of Kidsuper, Lukhanyo Mdingi and Rui Zhou of Rui.

Indeed, the 2021 LVMH Prize had an extensive online presence, on YouTube and Instagram. The former was used to broadcast, right after the ceremony itself, the formal award presentation, while Instagram was used throughout the competition, and the final especially, as a live window on the proceedings, through multiple posts, pics, videos and interviews from the Louis Vuitton Foundation, the home to the event in the heart of Paris.

It was the chance to glimpse the celebrities that added glitz to the ceremony, like actress Isabelle Huppert, and the jury members, among them Delphine Arnault and designers Virgil Abloh, Jonathan Anderson, Maria Grazia Chiuri, Marc Jacobs, Stella McCartney and Kim Jones. Also, to follow the finalists during the event’s key moments, for example when they were introduced to the jury, or at the actual prize-giving.

According to LVMH, “YouTube and Instagram together generated over 30,000 views,” while the prize’s Instagram account had 168,000 followers. Through targeted communication like this, LVMH is bolstering its image as a directional group, especially with young people, coming across not just as a luxury empire incorporating some of the world’s leading labels, but also as a supporter and champion of emerging designers and avant-garde style.

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