



Supporting Information for Teachers

Black British Style

7 October 2004-16 January 2005

Booking and Programme Information

- Bookings Office: 020 7942 2211
- Entrance to the exhibition is free to pre-booked school groups only. Bookings must be made at least 2 weeks in advance.
- **Free** 45 minute workshops are available which must be booked in advance.
- **Private View** for Educators on 15 October 18.30-21.00. Tickets are free but must be booked in advance.
- Visit <http://www.vam.ac.uk/bbs> for further information about the exhibition and events programme.

Background information

Highlights of the exhibition include traditional African textiles and garments; Jazzy B's outfit for the Back to Life video; Mis-Teeq's outfits from their single 'Scandalous', and clothes and accessories by influential fashion designers Walé Adeyame and Joe Casely-Hayford.

Exhibition themes

The exhibition includes garments, photographs, film, music and styling methods. Six main themes are explored in this exhibition:

- **Arrival and Settlement** looks at the arrival of black people in the UK from the Caribbean and Africa, from the 1950s to recent times.
- **Black Consciousness and Pride** explores the meaning and manifestation of the word 'respect'.
- **Rastafari** displays some of the origins of the religion and style.
- **Religion** focuses on the importance of dressing appropriately for church and mosque.
- **Music and Style** explores music and club based styles, including Hip Hop, Dancehall, Lovers Rock and Two Tone.
- **New Order** examines how individuals draw on varied cultural influences to create their own personal style.

Exhibition images:



1.SUIT, COAT AND HANDBAG



2.AFRICAN OUTFIT, 2004



3.GRAFFITI CAMOUFLAGE VISOR



4.DENIM JACKET



5.KHAKI RASTAFARIAN SUIT



6.'PAID IN FULL' B-BOY FAKE
GUCCI TRACKSUIT TOP

Information about images

1.SUIT, COAT, HAT, HANDBAG

Guyana and London, c.1951

In 1951 Dr Beryl Gilroy migrated from Guyana to England to continue her studies in teaching. She has expressed her passion for clothes during this period, stating, for example, that “I dressed up for lectures”. This cotton-mix suit was made for Dr Gilroy by Nat Gaynes, a local dress maker in her home country. Once in London, she purchased the woollen Krimatex coat, and velvet and scrim hat to counteract the English winter. Dr. Gilroy became London’s first black head teacher in 1968. In 1994 she donated this outfit to the V&A.

2.AFRICAN OUTFIT

2004

Traditional African dress is an important means of identification for people of African descent living in Britain today. This outfit would be worn to a wedding, christening or other important social gathering. The style is one which is traditionally worn in Nigeria, particularly by the Igbo tribe. In this instance, it is made from a Thai silk, known as George, rather than African print fabric. The outfit comprises of a wrapper skirt and heavily embroidered top and worn with a pre-made headwrap, called a ‘gele’.

3.GRAFFITI CAMOUFLAGE VISOR

London 2004

The graffiti on this visor was created by Crymein through a special commission by Mr Gee of the clothing outlet Four Star General. The originality of this work, producing graffiti generally used to ‘tag’ much larger spaces such as walls or tube trains, has been fine-tuned to an art that can fit onto something as small as a visor.

4.DENIM JACKET

2003

Young British designer Walé Adeyemi combines youth culture and fashion with his now instantly recognised trademark graffiti print. The text used to decorate Adeyemi's clothes is a poem called Future which he commissioned from graffiti artist Tudor.

The designer met footballer David Beckham after styling his wife, former spice girl Victoria. Adeyemi gave matching 'father and son' jackets to David Beckham, who wore his to the press launch of his book in September 2003. Pictures of Beckham wearing the jacket were in all of the newspapers and the jacket brought Adeyemi's designs to the attention of a wide public. His trademark graffiti style was subsequently imitated by many high street shops.

5.KHAKI RASTAFARIAN SUIT

London, 2004

This little boy's suit was purchased by the curators of the exhibition from The People's Weatherman Shop, Brixton. The 'Lion of Judah' featured on the back of the shirt is an iconic symbol of the religion. It partly represents the Ethiopian monarch Haile Selassie, who was seen by Rastafarian men and women as the 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords', and was also known as the Lion of Judah. In addition, the African lion was chosen by the movement to symbolise their desire for strength, dignity and pride.

6.'PAID IN FULL' B-BOY FAKE GUCCI TRACKSUIT TOP

Britain, 1988

This jacket refers to the seminal 1986 hip hop album Paid in Full, by African-American rap artists Eric B and Rakim. The men featured on the front of the album cover are both dressed in fake Gucci tracksuits, accessorised with giant gold medallions, Dukie ropes (large chains) and knuckle-duster rings. On the back of the album these symbols of wealth and excess are repeated, alongside a cheque signed by Ronald Reagan, the then President of the United States. The jacket and album signify the desire for wealth, status and a draw to designer

brands by black youths on both sides of the Atlantic, taking the most expensive and conservative desires of coveted labels and adding 'Street Flavour'.

Suggested starting points

Black British Style provides many opportunities for engaging with Art and Design, History, Music, Media Studies, English and Citizenship. Students can explore the many manifestations of Black Style in the UK, tracing how styles have changed and developed over the decades and examining fashion and style as expressions of the creative tensions associated with identity and belonging.

Whilst recommended for Key stage 3 and above (see the curriculum maps pages 11-14, for further information) the following starting points could be differentiated across all key stages for cross-curricular work, or used to support work in single subject areas.

1. Black people in Britain since 1948

Before visiting the exhibition, teachers could find out what students know and understand about the African slave trade and the African diaspora. What are students' views on racial attitudes? They could use the intranet, magazines, past television programmes and interview the people they live with to explore the ways in which black people have been represented in Britain and the diversity of popular culture. In the exhibition, students could explore further how fashion designers, musicians, artists and activists have used clothes to draw attention to political messages from slogans on T-shirts to couture pattern design.

The exhibition reveals the breadth and influence of black style and could be used for a discussion about stereotyping and the effect that the style of black people in Britain has had on the cultural diversity of the country.

2. Traditional and Religious Dress

How are traditional or religious messages conveyed through clothes? This question could be explored by collating different examples of traditional and religious dress. Involve students by asking them to collate photographs, pictures from newspapers and magazines as well as samples of actual items of clothes that they or their families might own. What similarities and differences between different cultural and religious dress can they identify? What can students learn about the relationship between colour, style and fabric as symbols of status in traditional African dress? Does the same apply to contemporary dress?

In what ways can clothes tell us about people's cultural and/or religious beliefs? In the exhibition students can learn about Rastafarianism and explore traditional African dress and textiles. Students could also compare an example of traditional dress with a contemporary outfit and consider the similarities and differences between colours, fabric, texture, shape, motif, detail and structure.

Students could also think about the importance of hairstyles and accessories. What do these tell us about a person's style? In the exhibition, do hairstyles and accessories stand out as much as clothes? What messages can hair and/or accessories convey? Can hairstyles or jewellery signify cultural, traditional or religious beliefs?

3. Music and Style

This exhibition explores an important relationship between music and style which students could investigate further by researching and discussing the styles of dress, accessories and the lifestyles associated with a range of musical genres in the past 50 years such as Jazz, Two Tone, Hip Hop, Reggae, Dancehall, Drum & Bass and UK Garage. In the exhibition students can see an example of Two Tone fashion. This is the name for the multi-racial sounds being produced in the late 1970s by the fusion of Caribbean Ska and the fast tempo of punk. Two Tone fashion was an essential visual representation of the anti-racist message that the

music promoted. Students can also see garments loaned by contemporary style leaders such as Ms Dynamite, Jazzie B, Goldie and Mis-Teeq and think about how the music is reflected in the style of the clothes and accessories and the relationship between dance, music and style.

Students could also investigate how fashion and graphic designers respond to sound to create a visual identity for music, by collating images from magazines, adverts and examples of music packaging. Present students with a design challenge asking them to choose a song or type of music that means something to them or that they enjoy. Can they put together a visual identity that will be used to advertise the music? This should include product designs for a CD cover, poster accessories or full outfit.

Planning Tips

Whether your students are carrying out personal research or working in groups, ensure that students are set clear tasks in the exhibition and that accompanying adults know what you expect them to do. Planning guidelines can be requested from the Bookings Office on 020 7942 2211 or email bookings.office@vam.ac.uk

You could also extend your visit by going to see the following:

Different by Design: Clothes Across Continents

Fashion, Room 40

until 9 January 2005

A display of inspirational clothes from Asia, Africa and Europe highlighting creativity, craftsmanship and beauty.

40 Years of Carnival

Textiles, Room 101

3 October-31 December

Costumes by leading Carnival designers to celebrate 40 years of the anniversary of Notting Hill Carnival. Accompanied by a photographic display representing four decades of carnival.

Further Information

Books

A book, *Black Style*, published by V&A Publications coincides with the exhibition. Edited by Carol Tulloch, Senior Research Fellow in Black Visual Culture at Chelsea College of Art and Design and the V&A, it includes contributions from leading experts on dress and examines the global impact of dress and style of black people. With over 100 illustrations, the book is in paperback price at £19.95. The exhibition continues research by Tulloch for a previous exhibition called *Street Style: from sidewalk to Catwalk*, from 1945 to Tomorrow (V&A 1994-95). This included Black Styles like Hip Hop and Rastafarianism as part of a broad survey of subcultural styles in the West and their impact on culture.

On the Web

Find out about other events linked with this exhibition at
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/bbs>

Free teachers' Packs

Image and Identity. A teachers' pack aimed at helping young people to explore their own identity, understand how others see them and discover how their image can be modified. To request your free copy, contact the Bookings Office on 020 7942 2211 or email bookings.office@vam.ac.uk

The Dfes have produced a free CD-Rom called *Trial and Error* which supports learning about racism through citizenship education, available from www.dfes.gov.uk