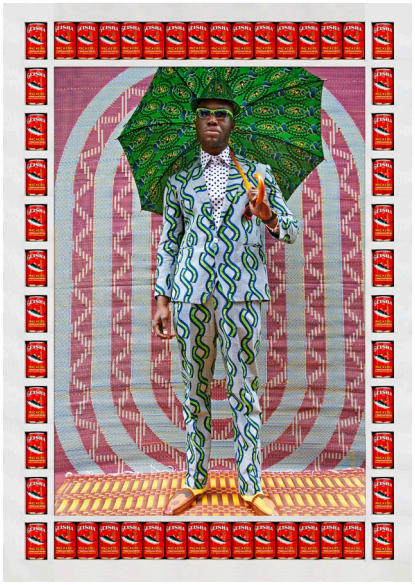
Fowler
MUSEUM AT UCLA

Press Release

African-Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste, Globalization and Style
March 26–July 30, 2017



Organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA, *African-Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste, Globalization, and Style*, introduces audiences to the dynamic traditions of African dress featuring colorful, boldly patterned printed cloth. The exhibition highlights the interplay between regional preferences and cosmopolitanism that has long flourished on the continent, while highlighting the expansiveness of 21st-century African-print fashion.

The works featured throughout the exhibition demonstrate the vital role that African-print has played in the expression of beauty, fashion, and heritage, while creating transcultural connections across Africa and into the larger world.

The exhibition is organized into four distinct sections: “It All Starts with Cloth,” “Portraits in Print,” “Regional Styles, Fashion Preferences,” and “New Directions.” Collectively, the installation includes sixty tailored fashions, one hundred archival and contemporary cloths, twenty black-and-white studio portrait photographs from the 1960s and 1970s, a series of runway videos, and seven works by contemporary visual artists. Ensembles on view draw from the Fowler’s collections, private loans, and the extensive archives of the Dutch textile manufacturing company Vlisco.

Several themes weave their way throughout the exhibition, mimicking the cyclical nature of fashion trends and the ripple effects of politics and technology on the formation of identity. One theme is consumer agency, both in determining designs and patterns through purchasing power and by commissioning unique ensembles from seamstresses and tailors. Another theme is the theatrical power of fashion, and its ability to express individualism or collective solidarity, whether in a family portrait or Women’s Day Marches in communities across the continent. Finally, a link between imaging and fashion surfaces in each section of the exhibition. From formal portraiture to visual arts to ubiquitous African fashion calendars to street style photos shared by cell-phone, it is clear that representations of fashion have always been a nuanced form of communication.

Fashion subtly communicates about place, heritage, and belonging through such means as appropriation, pastiche, and revival. Throughout the exhibition, African-print fashions are considered to be creative responses to key historical moments and empowering projections about Africa's future.

About the Exhibition

"It All Starts with Cloth" addresses the history of African-print textiles, originally inspired by batik or wax-resist cloth from Indonesia. A dense grid of more than 60 cloths manufactured in Europe, Africa, and Asia evokes the vibrating colors and designs stocked in open-air markets and cloth shops across the African continent. A visual timeline of production across these regions outlines the history of the cloth trade in West and Central Africa from the 1800s to the present. Archival photographs and dramatic film footage of the Vlisco factory in operation transport audiences to the production of cloth in the Netherlands.

"Portraits in Print" leaves behind the brightly colored world of African-print fashion and enters an intimate black-and-white space of memory. A gallery introduces four photographers from Africa's "golden age" of black-and-white photography in the1960s and 1970s: Francis K. Honny (Ghana, 1914–1998); Jacques Toussele (b. Cameroon, 1935); Omar Ly (Senegal, 1943–2016); and Mory Bamba (b. Mali, 1949). Their photography studios in newly independent West African countries provided a platform for an ascending middle class to see themselves and be seen by one another. The portraits are indicative of a historical moment when local African-print ensemble styles gained new significance as expressions of national and Pan-African pride and identity.

"Regional Styles, Fashion Preferences," takes an in-depth look at localized contemporary African-print fashion whereby stylish dress is a feature of daily life. Ensembles on view from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivore, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal reflect an array of styles, all of them customized and individually made to order. This section presents a case study from Kumasi, Ghana to illustrate the interactive commissioning process between seamstresses or tailors and their fashion-conscious clientele. The bold patterns of the cloth engineered with subtle and striking variations in style reveal the ingenuity and flair of regional designers.

"New Directions" bridges regional cultures with transnational art and fashion networks, beginning with African-print styles on global runways in Paris, New York, Dakar, and other cities. Designers in this section include Titi Ademola (b. London, based in Ghana), Ituen Bassey (b. Nigeria), Afua Dabanka (b. Germany, based in Ghana), Lisa Folawiyo (b. Nigeria), Adama Amanda Ndiaye (b. Democratic Republic of the Congo, based in Senegal), Alexis Temomanin (b. Côte d'Ivoire), Gilles Touré (b. Côte d'Ivoire), and Patricia Waota (b. Côte d'Ivoire). Ensembles on view feature full-length gowns and men's blazers, metallic wax print and architectural pleating and boning—all of which harmoniously marry the drape of the fabric with the strategic construction of print patterns for stunning results.

Juxtaposed with these glamorous designs are contemporary works by photographers and other visual artists who incorporate print-cloth imagery to convey evocative messages about heritage, hybridity, displacement, and aspiration. Works by photographers Omar Victor Diop (b. Senegal, 1980), Hassan Hajjaj (b. Morocco, 1960), and Leonce Raphael Agbodjelou (b. Benin, 1965) reveal the complex dialogues about aesthetics, identity, and globalization across history and geography.

"New Directions" also presents contemporary paintings by Njideka Akunyili Crosby (b. Nigeria, 1983) and Eddy Ilunga Kamuanga (b. Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1991), both of whom incorporate images of print cloth in their work. The mural *Johannesburg 2081 A.D.* from fashion designer Walé Oyéjidé (b. Nigeria, 1981) working with muralist Lekan Jeyifo (b. Nigeria, 1981) is a futuristic rendering of the cityscape in which self-assured men of the future, stylishly attired in Ikiré Jones African-print jackets, stand before a mural of the South African flag, composed of images of anti-apartheid struggles. Oyéjidé reflects on cloth's heavy task as a medium but presents his *ankara*-inspired fashions within a larger-written and imagistic narrative of history, asserting a revolutionary image of Africa moving forward: "There is elegance; even in the way we carry burdens that would bury most men."

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated volume generously funded by the R. L. Shep Endowment Fund at the Fowler Museum. The publication includes essays authored by exhibition co-curators Suzanne Gott, Kristyne S. Loughran, Betsy D. Quick, and Leslie W. Rabine with additional essays contributed by Kathleen Bickford Berzock, Boatema Boateng, M. Amah Edoh, Helen Elands, Anne Grosfilley, Karen Tranberg-Hansen, Helen Jennings, Sandra Klopper, Stephan F. Miescher, Hansi Momodu-Gordon, John Picton, Elisha P. Renne, Victoria L. Rovine, Ken Aïcha Sy, and Nina Sylvanus.

Related Programs

For a full calendar of exhibition-related programs, please visit www.fowler.ucla.edu/events

Curatorial Talk | Saturday March 25, 2017, 6–7pm
Exhibition co-curator Suzanne Gott presents the dynamic story of this cloth: its inspiration in Indonesia, its manufacture in Europe, its African identity, and its current status in the global marketplace. Then co-curator Betsy Quick will converse with Ghanaian-Nigerian fashion designer Titi Ademola (KIKI Clothing) and British-Ivorian designer Alexis Temomanin (Dent de Man). Runway models will show off some of their recent designs.

Opening Party | Saturday March 25, 2017, 7–9pm
After the opening program in the Fowler's Lenart Auditorium, join us for a festive Opening Party. There will be informal modeling of African designer fashions along with African music from DJ Nnamdi, dancing and much more. RSVP by March 20 at fowlerRSVP@arts.ucla.edu or 310-206-7001.

Gallery Tour | Sunday March 26, 2017, 12pm
Join us for a guided walkthrough of the exhibition with curatorial team members Suzanne Gott, Tina Loughran, Betsy Quick, and Leslie Rabine. Enjoy a rare opportunity to learn from the research team behind this show—the first major museum exhibition to focus on fashions from the continent and diaspora that feature African-print cloth.

Kids in the Courtyard: Prints & Patterns | Sunday March 26, 2017, 1–4pm
What does our clothing communicate? Be inspired by the dazzling and colorful prints in African-Print Fashion Now! and create your own textile design. Take a selfie of your design creations in front of an African-print cloth backdrop. No reservation required. Kids in the Courtyard is free of charge.

ZUVAA Pop-Up Shop & Marketplace | Friday March 24 and Sunday March 26, 2017, 12–5pm
Zuvaa is a premier online destination for African fashions, working directly with emerging designers around the world to bring you the best selection of high quality to find unique and one of kind African-Inspired pieces. Join us for this two-day event as Zuvaa sets up shop inside the Museum with clothing and accessories from vendors such as Rahyma, Ofuure, and Cee Cee's Closet NYC.

Credit

African-Print Fashion Now! A Story of Taste, Globalization, and Style is organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA in association with Vlisco Netherlands B.V. It is guest curated by Suzanne Gott with Kristyne S. Loughran, Betsy D. Quick, and Leslie W. Rabine. Major funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts with the additional support of R. L. Shep, DutchCulture, the Anawalt Program for the Study of Regional Dress, the Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director's Discretionary Fund, the Pasadena Art Alliance, Lee Bronson, and the Fowler Textile Council. Special thanks also go to V. Joy Simmons M.D., Michael Gallis, and the many other donors who made gifts to the Fowler Museum's 2016 UCLA Spark crowdfunding campaign. Educational outreach activities are made possible in part by the Eileen Harris Norton Foundation. In-kind support is provided by South African Airways. Media sponsor Koshie Mills is Founder and CEO of K3PR, a multi-media and publicity firm in Los Angeles.

ART WORKS. | National Endowment for the Arts arts.gov | DutchCulture centre for international cooperation | SHARED CULTURAL HERITAGE | K3PR | Pasadena Art Alliance | South African Airways

About the Fowler Museum

The Fowler Museum at UCLA explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on works from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas—past and present. The Fowler enhances understanding of world cultures through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs, informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. Also featured is the work of international contemporary artists presented within the complex frameworks of politics, culture, and social action.

Fowler Museum at UCLA

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fowler.ucla.edu

Admission to the Fowler is free.
Hours: Wednesday 12–8pm and Thursday–Sunday 12–5pm
Parking available in UCLA Lot 4, 221 Westwood Plaza at Sunset Blvd. $3/hr (maximum $12/day).

Press Contact

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#AfricanPrintFashion

Captions and Courtesy:

Ituen Bassey, designer (b. Nigeria)
Ituen Basi, based in Lagos, Nigeria, and London, United Kingdom
Ngozi Dress, 2010
African-print cloth
Courtesy Ituen Basi
Photo: Joshua White

Hassan Hajjaj (b. Larache, Morocco, 1961)
Afrikan Boy, 2013
Metallic Lambda print on Dibond with wood and found objects
53.5 x 37 in
Courtesy Taymour Grahne Collection

Ken Traoré, designer (b. Senegal)
Kenya's Style, based in Dakar, Senegal
Pagne et marinière, 2016
African-print cloth
Courtesy Fowler Museum at UCLA
Photo: Leslie W. Rabine

Francis K. Honny (b. Elmina, Ghana, 1914–1998)
Portrait of man and woman, Elmina, Ghana, circa 1975
Black and white photograph
Courtesy Tobias Wendl

Njideka Akunyili Crosby (b. Enugu, Nigeria, 1983)
Nyado: The Thing around Her Neck, 2011
Charcoal, acrylic, colored pencil, lace collage, and Xerox transfers on paper
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, London
© Njideka Akunyili Crosby

Inge van Lierop, designer (b. the Netherlands)
Designed for Vlisco, the Netherlands
Dress
"Hommage à L'Art" collection, 2013
Vlisco wax print cloth
Courtesy Vlisco Museum, Foundation Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen, Helmond, the Netherlands