

Who's Who In Fashion?

Willi Smith

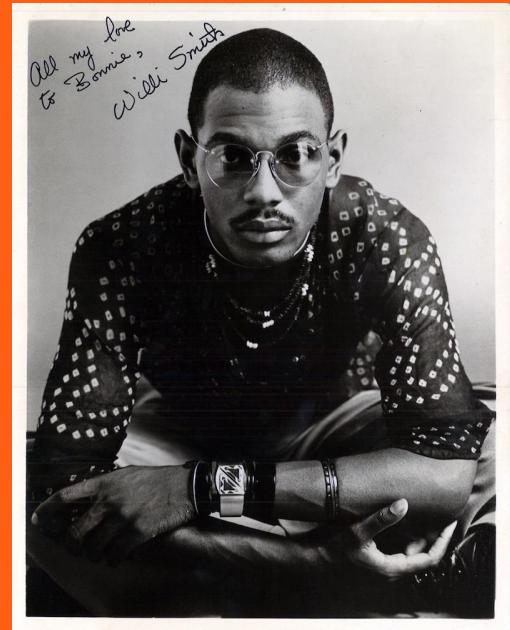
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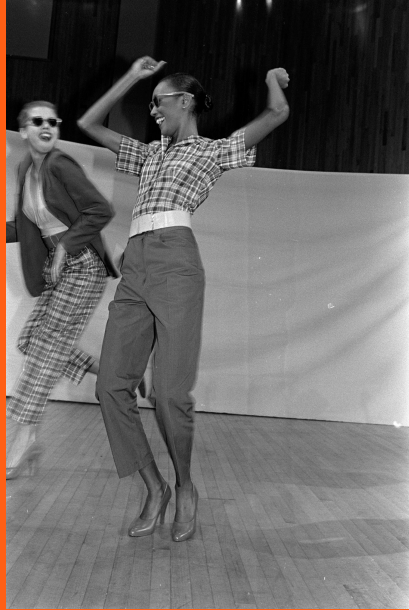
Willi Smith

Willi Donnell Smith was one of the *most* important African-American fashion designers who rose to prominence in the late 1960s. Smith was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania which he then later on moved to New York City to attend The New School for Design in the late 1960s. With his experience in Parsons, he later on pursued a career designing on his own. When moving to New York City, Willi sought inspiration from what people would wear on the streets. After various startup attempts with his designs and creations, Williwear was established in 1976. Within this fashion brand, Smith would be vice president and designer, while Laurie Mallet was president. His clothing was an inspiration to today's fashion as what we know as streetwear.





Willi Smith for WilliWear, Spring 1986 Collection



Willi Smith for WilliWear, Spring 1979



WilliWear Fall 1985

Designer's Aesthetic

Willi Smith's clothing was described as *free spirited* and "*classic, with a sense of humor*". The clothing was fun to wear which had a moderate price range, or affordable. "WilliWear's adaptable, affordable basics diverted power to people who wanted to fashion unique identities, a message that resonated widely and led to Smith's commercial and popular success". Smith layered his clothing, with things that don't usually go together, on his models which represented a look that people would describe as unusual.

Personally, I feel that Willi Smith's use of oversized clothing appeals most to me. I feel most comfortable and content with clothing that is bigger than my usual size. For example, Smith's spring 1986 collection really stands out for me. For this collection, he used oversized clothing on his models like blazers, blouses, t-shirts, and slacks. He used layers and different colors that compliment each other.

Money Not Being An Issue

Williwear was affordable and easy to get your hands on any of his pieces. This clothing brand was mostly found in Bloomingdales and T.J Maxx. As an openly gay African American fashion designer, Smith wanted his clothing to be solely for *every body*. He designed pieces that favored a multitude of silhouettes, bodies, and gender identities. His designs were all gender neutral which stood out to me.

Smith ended up being a lead designer for the junior sportswear label Digits from 1969 until 1973. His designs for the 1972 fall/winter collection was one of my favorites. I would definitely wear everything that was out for this collection. You see a lot of high waist wide leg pants, flare jeans, two piece blazer sets, leather jackets, and knit sweaters.



Alter or Accentuate

For Williwear, I would definitely accentuate the brands aesthetic.. As mentioned before, Smith would use different types of clothing that you wouldn't normally layer with each other, especially if they're way oversized. He would layer large/long cardigans with blazers and oversized skirts. He would used different types of colors, which compliment each other and complete the look.

In this case, I feel that if there were to be some kind of collaboration with Balenciaga, in terms of catering to a more luxurious group, and working alongside Denma Gvasalia, who is the creative director of Balenciaga, this would be great to bring out some looks onto the runway for a certain season! Additionally, a collaboration with Supreme would definitely make the brand more noticeable. Both were/are big streetwear brands. Working on t-shirts, jackets, trousers, and even shoes!

Modern Day Line

If I had the chance to create my own modern day line clothing based on Willi Smith's work, I would add some staple items.

These staple items include:

- Belts
- Shoulder & Tote Bags
- Jewelry (specifically necklaces, earrings, and rings)
- Sunglasses/Glasses

In order to finish off an outfit, staple items are a must! Especially since Willi Smith's aesthetic was free spirited and mainly streetwear.

Outer and Inner Beauty

Outer Beauty

When it comes to viewing Willi Smiths' clothing and his aesthetic, I get inspiration on combining colors and patterns that do not really look well together. This is what makes an outfit and an individual unique. This also inspires other individuals, and myself as well, to *wear whatever you want* despite what anyone else says.

Inner Beauty

What had caught my eye was the description on Smiths' clothing. "*Free spirited and "classic, with a sense of humor"*". Personally, this gives me a boost in confidence and a boost in my mood knowing that I can dress the way I want to.



The image features a central orange rounded rectangle with a yellow border. The text 'The End' is centered within this rectangle in a white, bold, serif font. The background outside the orange rectangle consists of diagonal stripes in pink and light blue. At the bottom center, there is a sunburst or fan-like graphic with lines radiating upwards.

The End