

Internship Midterm Essay

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Significance of Hip-hop

In 2023, we celebrate 50 years of hip-hop dress. Hip-hop dress has been a significant aspect of the hip-hop culture since it began in the 1970s (Museum at FIT, 2023). At first, the formation of hip-hop dress began with key accessories or key touches to one's garment, such as shearling or leather jackets, Kangol or snapback hats, creases on jeans, graphic designs, and huge hoops were worn to style and develop your look (Museum at FIT, 2023). Over time, the hip-hop style flourished and was embraced by people around the world. Hip-hop had begun to take over the fashion industry by entering the runway (Museum at FIT, 2023). Many hip-hop artists started to collaborate with fashion designers to create apparel lines that reflected their unique styles and personalities. According to The Museum at FIT, collaborations with fashion designers such as Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, and Dapper Dan had begun to incorporate hip-hop elements into their designs by mixing luxury logos with modern silhouettes and creating customized pieces. Hip-hop had revolutionized into other styles such as baggy jeans, oversized shirts or jackets, sweatshirts, tracksuits, sneakers, hair, and even accessorized nails.

The development of hip-hop dress has played a significant role in the growth of hip-hop culture and its influence on the fashion industry. From its roots in the streets of New York City to the runway and onto today, as one of the most globally recognized fashion trends. Today, hip-hop dress can be found in many different styles, from streetwear to more polished and sophisticated looks. It has become a symbol of pushing boundaries to display individuality and self-expression. Hip-hop dress is one of the most persuasive and visible manifestations of the culture that continues to inspire, evolve, and its impact on fashion is undeniable.

Elements of Design

One of the most iconic pieces worn in the 1990s was the Tommy Hilfiger ensemble of a bandeau, branded underwear, jeans, socks, and athletic slides seen in *Figure 2* (Museum at FIT, 2023). These iconic pieces were worn by R&B singer Aaliyah who passed away early in their career. This piece was used in Aaliyah's ad campaign for Tommy Hilfiger's, Tommy Jeans back in 1997 (Museum at FIT, 2023). Aaliyah's styling had brought exposure to branded menswear underwear and impacted American fashion for the upcoming years with low-rise loose jeans, accentuation of the feminine silhouette with a bandeau, and accessories such as belts and bold hoops. The colors used for this garment were red, white, navy, black, and a hint of grey, which was very on-brand for Tommy Hilfiger and its logo. The significance of the *color* choice was for people to know exactly what and who Aaliyah was wearing, it was to bring more exposure, new clients, and awareness to Tommy's brand and his Tommy Jeans (Bell 2022). The red and navy *contrast* against one another to make a statement (Bell 2022). Red can be stimulating, assertive or even demanding against the navy which gives off a cold mood (Bell 2010). The red color on the pants portrays *dominance* over the navy color (Bell 2010).

Tommy Hilfiger uses *vertical and horizontal lines*, which creates self-contained movement from element to element known as *rhythm* (Bell 2010). He repeats his colors and words on the garment to create *repetition* and offers asymmetrical *balance* (Bell 2010). On the pants, there is a theme of red and navy color. Tommy creates *repetition* with the colors, you see navy on the left side of the jeans with the vertical lettering of "TOMMY" in red (Bell 2010). Vice versa, on the right side of the pants you see the red color and in vertical lettering "HILFIGER" in navy. Using the same font, size, symmetrical colors, and vertical lines, creates a unified presentation, which is known as *balance* (Bell 2010).

The croquis is a three-dimensional *form* displaying a white bandeau with the Hilfiger logo (Bell 2022). At the top and bottom of the bandeau is a horizontal rectangular-shaped navy-colored strip that has white lettering seen on Figure 2. For the top strip, it states Tommy and for the bottom, it states Jeans. In the middle, there is a white rectangle on the left and a red rectangle on the right side with black scripted words spelling “Tommy Hilfiger” (Museum at FIT, 2023). Moving downward, we see the feminine hourglass silhouette until we reach the hips. At the hips, the top strip of underwear is displayed with a horizontal cool grey line with the Tommy logo. After that, we move down to the loose-fitted jeans, which are held at the hips with a belt, following the same color scheme as the pants except the lines are horizontal. In following the form starting from the top to bottom, we get a sense of *rhythm* and *proportion* (Bell 2022). The *rhythm* allows the viewer’s eyes to follow the lines down from the bandeau to the underwear and then to the pants (Bell 2010). While the *proportion* of the pieces goes from small to large, which creates emphasis and again asserts *dominance* on what the focal point is, which would be Tommy Jeans (Bell 2010). From a distance, the texture of the jeans looks rough, while the bandeau can be depicted as giving a smooth texture. These pieces are a staple of the hip-hop style.

Hip-hop Influence

The Hip-hop Style influences life on many levels and in many different forms. It has altered streetwear, and apparel such as tracksuits, sweatpants, hoodies, nails, hair, glasses, and footwear. The changes in Hip-hop have altered Hip-hop style, which has become reflective of the general population of people and their cultural expression. We tend to see artists wear a certain style in a music video or on a red carpet or at an award show, and we immediately have thoughts about whether we like what we see or not. For example, if we see a new hairstyle with many

accessories, the mass population will try to recreate this idea in their own way. Hip-hop style will continue to influence many more people in the upcoming years.

Hip-hop artists should be celebrated for their influence on hip-hop style. Artists such as Aaliyah, Rihanna, and Rick the Ruler all contributed and/or still contribute to the hip-hop style and what it has become. Aaliyah is known for wearing baggy or oversized jeans and jackets with a cropped top or a bandeau styled with shades or hooped earrings and sneakers. She has influenced many people to mix and match what is considered feminine and masculine and make it their own. It was diverse for its time, women throughout history have been told how to dress or how to be and Aaliyah assisted in breaking those boundaries. Rihanna is known for making a statement, making something work that you would not think would go together and she has the confidence to pull anything off. According to DeLeon and Director (2018), "Hip-hop culture has had the biggest influence on street culture, informing plenty of the style trends and clothing brands that rose to prominence. In just a few decades, it evolved from fringe subculture to the most dominant force in pop culture." Hip-hop culture has aided in influencing streetwear and inspired trends. DeLeon and Director (2018) suggests that artists such as Rick the Ruler who wore layered chains, rings, Bally shoes, and Kangol hats are just one of the many hip-hop artists that have made an impact on hip-hop culture and fashion. Thus, hip-hop artists are being acknowledged for their contribution to the history of the hip-hop style.

Figures



Figure 1. Is “Emily Garcia” at the entrance of the *Fresh, Fly, Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-hop Style* exhibit. Located at The Museum at FIT. (2023). New York City, NY: Fashion Institute of Technology. Taken on Sunday, March 26, 2023.



Figure 2. Is “Tommy Hilfiger’s bandeau, underwear, jeans, socks, and athletic slides” from 1997 that was lent to FIT by PVH Archives. The jeans are low-rise and held up with a belt. Paired with a bandeau and matching branded underwear. Currently, this piece is being showcased at The Museum at FIT. (2023). *Fresh, Fly, Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-hop Style* exhibit. New York City, NY: Fashion Institute of Technology. This image was taken by Emily Garcia on Sunday, March 26, 2023.

References

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- Bell, J. A. (2022). *Silent selling: Best practices and effective strategies in visual merchandising*. New York: Fairchild Books.
- DeLeon, W. B. J., & Director, J. D. L. E. (2018, October 2). *How hip-hop left a lasting influence on Streetwear & Fashion*. Highsnobiety. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/hip-hop-streetwear-fashion-influence/>
- Figure 1. (2023, March 26) Emily Garcia. *Museum at FIT: Fresh, Fly, Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-hop Style exhibit*. (2023). Photograph.
- Figure 2. (2023, March 26) Tommy Hilfiger's bandeau, underwear, jeans, socks, and athletic slides 1997. *Museum at FIT: Fresh, Fly, Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-hop Style exhibit*. (2023). Photograph.
- The Museum at FIT. (2023, March 08) *Fresh, fly, and fabulous: Fifty Years of hip-hop style*. New York City, NY: Fashion Institute of Technology. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions/hip-hop-style.php>