

**Vagabond: Shadows of the Soul Exhibition Essay**

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## **Theme and its Relevance**

Themes are significant for exhibitions because they can improve people's mood, attention, and attraction. The theme of this exhibition is to show different Asian and Native American contemporary fashion designer's work, creativity, individuality, and community alike in the fashion industry. Contemporary fashion designers are consistent innovators and influencers in the fashion industry and they have an artistic vision and aesthetic taste. Every piece of clothing and design they create expresses their identity, ideology, culture, and values. Five contemporary fashion designers of Asian, Native American, or Asian descent Yohji Yamamoto, Rei Kawakubo, Dorothy Grant, Anna Sui, and Prabal Gurung whose work will be displayed in the exhibition to show others how they challenge fashion norms in the fashion industry. This theme is relevant because this exhibition is showcasing contemporary designers who are of Asian descent, Asia American, and or Native American stick to their values, beliefs, and their ethnicities making their creation speak for them in the fashion industry.

## **Designers and their contributions**

The selected contemporary designers for this exhibition are Yohji Yamamoto, Anna Sui, Rei Kawakubo, Prabal Gurung, and Dorothy Grant. These contemporary fashion designers are selected because they are Asian and one is Native fashion designers that fits the fashion exhibition theme. One of the significant contemporary fashion designers, Yohji Yamamoto, a Japanese established in Tokyo and Paris (Wong, 2020). He is known for dark luxury wear, tailoring avant-garde, and Japanese designs. Yamamoto put a twist on traditional ladylike designs and the avant-garde designs feature colossal silhouettes and monochromatic ranges (Arambulo, 2022). Yamamoto's creation helped bring recognition to Japan's fashion. Yamamoto's knowledge of volume, tailoring, and the color black also helped people comprehend volume, tailoring, and color in their own wardrobe (Johnson, 2023). Rei Kawakubo who is also a known Japanese fashion designer established in Tokyo and Paris. She is known for irregular designs and is knowledgeable in fine arts and literature (Rei Kawakubo, n.d.). She would voice her ideas to her dressmakers instead of drawing down the ideas. Kawakubo also makes avant-garde garments and designs that are dark, huge, and asymmetrical. Kawakubo's experiments in deconstructing garments inside out make the garment look abnormal (Horyn, 2020). Dorothy Grant is a well-known indigenous fashion designer who has been embodying Haida art and culture in clothing (Canada, 2021). Her work got recognized and Haida people felt represented. Anna Sui is a Chinese American, her childhood was spent in Detroit Michigan in the 1960's and 70s (La Torre, 2022). Sui is known for making original contemporary garments with countless researches with vintage manners and culture (*About. Anna Sui*, n.d.). Prabal Gurung was born in Singapore and grew up in Nepal. Gurung is a Nepalese American fashion designer known for implementing colors and meanings in his designs that knowledge individuality. Gurung is an activist and

advocate for social justice where he used his platform to express his voice against racism, sexism, and any forms of discrimination (Phelps, 2021). For an influencer and fashion designer who use their platform to vocalize on issues, it can bring negative but also positive feedback to Gurung. Gurung always vocalizes on greater diversity and inclusivity especially in the fashion industry. These contemporary designers are great examples to be selected because they each put their own values and culture within their creation but also test against the norms that are already existing.

## **Staging and layout**

Staging and layout is significant to any exhibition that is presenting but, this exhibition staging and layout are simple and the garments speak for itself. On a bird's eye view the museum layout is shaped like the upside down letter U which is simple and easy to navigate around. There are three gallery spaces for five contemporary fashion designers in the Museum of the City of New York. The fashion exhibition will take place on the third floor. After the staircase or elevator door opens to the 3rd floor, people will first see an opening gallery of Dorothy Grant's designs that are displayed on five white mannequins. There is one gallery room to the right and the left side. One room contains Yohji Yamamoto and Anna Sui designs while the other room contains Rei Kawakubo and Prabal Gurung designs. In Yohji Yamamoto, Anna Sui, Prabal Gurung, and Rei Kawakubo gallery, there will be short films of these designers showcasing the behind the scenes of how few garments are created and what they value. Each room contains six mannequins and three mannequins wore three designs of one contemporary designer's creation. All mannequins are in the color white standing on white display platforms. There are two male mannequins and there are fifteen female mannequins. The total cost of the mannequins are \$2,241.83. There will be seventeen platform displays and the total costs are \$719.97. The main focus is the garments, designs of the mannequins, the short films showcasing the behind the scenes of each fashion designer.

## **History and culture**

For a while it had been significant for Asian culture to influence the fashion industry. Back in the 2nd century, the Roman Empire and China exchanged materials and garments through the use of trade routes connecting the regions called the Silk Road (Asian impact on western fashion, 2020). Europeans were fond of the materials jade and silk where it originated in Asia. With valuable materials that other countries seek, Asia became a potential and good resource but also in the fashion industry. Asian influence is universal in the fashion industry where Asian concepts and styles are used by the west that shaped the Western fashion. For example, in the documentary, China: Through the Looking Glass, taken place in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's, curator Andrew Bolton created an exhibition that explores the Western fashion that was inspired by China. Asian history and culture should not be put aside, it should be recognized because they help shape the fashion industry.

## **Goals and objective**

The Museum of the City of New York is located in New York, NY with a diversity of different ethnicities making New York a melting pot full of different cultures. Our mission is to educate others on not only different Asian and Native American ethnicities and culture but how these Asian and Native American descent contemporary fashion designers impacted the fashion industry and the world. In the fashion industry there are many designers who are of Asian descent and the discovery of silk originated in Asia. Asia is the birthplace for countless significant technological advancements (Fox-Suliaman, 2023). We wanted to represent marginalized groups that failed to be represented in the fashion industry. The word "Asian" also failed to express diversity of ethnic groups and cultures, although this can be subjective. We do not want Asian, Native American, and Asian descent original ideas and designs that impacted the fashion industry to be forgotten.

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