

Nelema Cona

The exhibition Africa's Fashion Diaspora at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) highlights the significant contributions of Afro-inspired fashion to worldwide trends. The exhibition features designs by diverse African Diasporan designers, and curator Lamine Kouyaté is one of the featured designers, sponsored by the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). One of the interesting items is Lamine Kouyaté's acrylic sweater dress with a nylon top, produced for his label *XULY.Bet* in the 1990s. Kouyate's unique use of second-hand fabrics and his mix of African and French fashion traditions show the cultural exchange between Africa and Europe. The exhibition shows how fashion reflects personal identity as well as societal history. The impact of African fashion set a worldwide trend despite being based on gender, religion, or region.

In the article News, Fashion Unraveled Fashion and Textile History Gallery, Cheri Fein (2018) states that Lamine Kouyaté, a modern designer, creates unique designs for his label *XULY.Bet*. Using recycled materials like discount thrift sweaters and abandoned clothes illustrates his vast creativity in a distinctive style, and he helps the economy by reducing waste. He repurposes second-hand materials into high-fashion pieces, demonstrating his innovative approach to sustainability. This unique method displays his ability to combine sustainability and creativity, employing things that would otherwise go to the trash to create fashion statements. The colors that defined Lamine Kouyate's 1990's acrylic sweater dress were black and green. In West African culture, the color of the clothes has symbolic meanings; black means spiritual maturity, and green represents growth.

The vibrant yarns in yellow, red, and blue along the seams show dynamism and attention to the piece. While the contrast between textured yarns and smooth acrylic gives visual appeal, the mix of light and dark tones adds depth. The design includes the eight components of fashion: the vertical line seams that extend the body symbolize line, rhythm comes from the repeated colorful yarns, and the shape combines flowing sweater fabric with acrylic rigidity. The dress's balance is asymmetrical, yet the materials and colors combine to make it appear steady. The difference between the rough and slick acrylic yarns creates contrast, yet the vibrant yarns that

draw attention are dominant. The proportions between the top and bottom components are beautifully balanced, and the yarn patterns are repeated throughout the design. The overall effect of Kouyate's 1990s garment is strongly influenced by its texture. The garment has a modern, even futuristic appearance because of the acrylic fabric's smoothness, shine, and lightweight. The softer, matte finish on the nylon top, on the other hand, balances the acrylic's smoothness and adds a unique texture. The colorful yarns around the seams give the garment a rougher, more textured feel, adding diversity.

Kouyate addresses significant cultural and societal concepts, such as postcolonialism, sustainability, and identity. He addresses the wastefulness of quick fashion by employing recycled materials, demonstrating how sustainability can be integrated into high-end design. His work combines African and French inspirations, reflecting local pride while still preserving traditional craftsmanship and embracing current fashion trends. African-inspired design is gaining popularity, with singers like Beyonce and Rihanna incorporating African elements into their music videos and performances. This demonstrates how fashion can be a powerful tool to express culture, build self-confidence, and reflect societal values. African-inspired clothing is viewed as both a form of resistance and a celebration of ancestry, especially in conversations concerning racial inequity and immigration. Designers like Kouyate are influencing worldwide fashion by incorporating African traditional components into mainstream designs, therefore encouraging inclusion and diversity. This demonstrates how fashion can be an opportunity for cultural interaction and societal commentary.

In conclusion, Lamine Kouyate's acrylic sweater dress for *XULY.Bet* demonstrates how fashion blends cultural history with creativity regarding established norms and contributes to social change. The outfit demonstrates Kouyate's creative use of materials while also highlighting the cultural significance of African Diaspora fashion. By combining African traditions with modern design, he produces a garment that addresses identity, heritage, and societal transformation. The works of art demonstrate that fashion is more than simply apparel; it is also a form of cultural expression and an opportunity for social change.



Lamine Kouyaté gained recognition for his one-of-a-kind designs created from second-hand clothing during the early-1990s. This example re-uses pantyhose and sweaters with bright yarn at the seams to draw attention to the construction. His approach was pioneering in Paris where he was based, but commonplace in Mali and Senegal where he was born and raised. Kouyaté's early designs reflected his postcolonial perspective, embracing West African clothing practices and French aesthetics.

**Lamine Kouyaté for XULY.Bët**  
Acrylic sweater dress with nylon  
top, fall 1994  
France  
*The Museum at FIT, 95.7.2*  
*Gift of Xuly-Bet*

**Reference:**

Silent Selling by Judy Bell & Kate Ternus, 2017. 5th Edition

Fashion Institute of Technology. (n.d.). *Africa's Fashion Diaspora exhibition*. Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology

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