

Tanner Jules Gordon-Smith

Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip Hop Style

Since the popularity of Hip Hop struck, fashion has always been an integral part of the culture. It has been a representation and reflection of what one feels, thinks, and identifies as. The roots of Hip Hop date back to the 1970s in South Bronx and over time has only grown and evolved into what we know today (McCollum, 2019). Not only is Hip Hop music but it is a deeply involved culture with many different aspects but is known to be heavily associated with fashion. When Hip Hop dress first originated the type of clothing that individuals were wearing was much more practical and “normal” in a sense. In the 1970s Hip Hop helped shed light on what individuals in these poor urban neighborhoods were wearing which in turn became mainstream fashion (Shackelford, 2022). This would also become the beginning of “streetwear” which again was influenced heavily by what people were already wearing for most of their life. Clothing was usually baggy, oversized, and easy to move in. As the Hip Hop fashion movement began to evolve, more people started to express themselves in several different ways. Individuals were showing their personality, attitude, and creativity through the way that they dress which was not really previously done before. When one is able to effectively express their character through what they wear they are given a sense of pride and freedom that no one can take away from them. It is extremely significant for one to be able to visibly communicate who and what they are even if that may not fall into what society finds socially acceptable. Hip Hop dress is known for being able to show what one stands for or believes in, even if that means stepping outside of the social norm (Witte, 2021). Dress is not only important but its powerful and what makes this style so powerful is the fact that even in the most unconventional ways you are still

free to say who you are. In the more recent years, Hip Hop dress has had a heavier impact and influence on high fashion. Elements of Hip hop dress and streetwear have made its way to high-end fashion runways which has led to a new market of consumers. Clothing is one of the most persuasive and visible manifestations of the culture and as the culture continues to evolve it will only become more integral and essential to it.

After visiting the exhibit and seeing fifty years of Hip Hop style I came across a style done by Virgil Abloh in collaboration with Loius Vuitton (*Figure 1*). The style was a perfect representation of how Hip Hop style has come such a long way and has collaborated with big names like Loius Vuitton. When it comes to high-end fashion brands such as Louis Vuitton, color is extremely important because it is essential to know what is on trend and what the consumers will buy. It also helps paint a picture or tell a story about a garment to help give it definition or make it unique. On this style garment we are able to observe various use of tones, shading, and value to help achieve the desired effect. On the outside we have a denim jacket but when one takes a closer look one can see that tones and shading are used in unison to give the jacket depth and design. The shading used helps make the jacket look as if it was damaged and is revealing the true design underneath. You are able to see value with darker parts being close to the denim and lighter parts the further you get away from the denim. These elements help achieve a unique look with depth and creativity. However, the style displayed used several different elements of design to convey its beauty and innovation. The first element of design that was seen was the use of line that is in the ribbed texture of the denim. Next, we see a dominant use of rhythm and repetition on the garment as Loius Vuittons signature “LV” motif is featured throughout both the jacket and the jeans. This helps draw the viewer's eye across the whole garment because of the sense of movement that has been given. The next element that one can

see being used is form as the garment has a unique silhouette and details. You can see the structure of the jeans by the way it drapes over the shoes. Next, we can see the use of balance being used alongside dominance to draw attention to the details. The garment style is asymmetrical which helps give this damaged look a sense of realism. The rough texture of the edges helps look as if the jacket was ripped apart to reveal the true look. This also helps give the damaged parts dominance to help serve as focal points and emphasize that aspect of the clothing. Contrast is also used to help give focus to the dominance of the damaged part of the jeans and the jacket as it is made from a different material. Lastly, proportion is used in this garment to properly match the size and shape of the jacket with the jeans to create a unique pairing of clothes.

Hip Hop style is a direct reflection of marginalized people and cultural expression because of its origins with people who are known to be oppressed. Their style is to show that they are rejecting mainstream influence and doing their own thing in ways that express who they are (Nordin, 2005). Without realizing it many parts of our lives have been greatly influenced by the Hip Hop style and changed the way people look at fashion. There is a multitude of reasons why Hip Hop artists should be celebrated but I believe the main one is because of their contributions to the culture and to the art. Often times their music is a depiction of what people are going through and artists help become a voice for everyone to hear (Marsh, 2004). Time and time again we see Hip Hop artists push boundaries and break walls as to what people think can and can't be done. Their impact on society is truly empowering and continues to grow stronger.

Appendix



Figure 1



Figure 2

References

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