

Tyshae Greene
3/29/2023
Buf 4900
Dr. Adomaitis

Fashion Institute Midterm Essay

As one viewed the Sacha Jenkins' "Fresh Dressed. The Evolution of Rap Fashion," it became clear how important fashion was to people's lives. Since it enables people to express their beliefs and ideals, fashion is a sort of art that can be worn. It is a method of communicating. One choice of dress can reveal what area one is from and whether one is trendy or not learned from the Fresh Dressed film. Moreover, one learned that style and fashion played a significant role in African American identity and culture, as the "Sunday Best" church was used to evaluate how well life was on the plantation.

Hip hop culture, which includes dance, music and fashion originated in the Bronx in New York City. It offered an escape from a variety of sociological, economic, political and cultural forces (Shackelford, 2022). The Bronx was in bad shape, the educational system was failing, and there was a lot of police violence at the time as seen in the film. To create an outlaw look, gangs wore trousers and denim jackets that they cut up and placed their gang names in the back. These individuals felt liberated by creating these outfits. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, people started expressing their frustrations and emotions into music, and as a result, the Hip Hop Fashion genre was created. Music inspired hip hop fashion to break the rules. Being "fresh" and dressing in a specific manner were also more important than having money. Wearing nice, clean clothes gave the impression that one was okay, even if one wasn't actually doing well financially. Clothing helped keep issues in their private lives hidden which helped maintain their integrity. According to LATimes, how one presents themselves through fashion choices has carried a certain level of social capital (Berlinger, 2018). Dress gave way to express identity and aspirations. The ability to make it or make it out was demonstrated by your sense of fashion. The American eye is incredibly critical, so even if a person has nothing else to offer, the way one portrays themselves can get one in some places.

Hip Hop artists had a big part in popularizing different fashion as Hip hop fashion has developed through the years. B Boys contributed to the early development of Hip-Hop culture. Run DMC and other artists took the B-boy look, which helped promote Hip Hop fashion, as their inspiration and adopted it as their uniform by wearing tracksuits and laceless sneakers. Following in Run-DMC footsteps, other artists introduced street style to general audiences. As time progressed, hip hop culture started to mirror African history and black nationalist movements in the late 1980s both visually and musically as seen in the Fresh Dressed film by Sacha Jenkins. Artists such as Queen Latifah started to wear a militant style with hues like red, yellow, green and black that are connected to a black nationalist organization.

Midway through the 1990s, a more designer aesthetic became popular in Hip Hop culture. Rap songs about high end labels like Versace and Prada were released by famous rappers like, 2pac, P-diddy and Notorious B.I.G frequently wore street style, which included baggy pants, baseball caps, shoes, and sport jerseys. Designers like Dapper Dan made tailored clothing for clients like LL Cool J looking for street style because high fashion wasn't widely available and wasn't cheap. Famous labels like Gucci and Fendi were being reinvented by Dapper Dan into a new style. Hip Hop fashion immediately took center stage in popular culture and emerged as one of the most significant forces in the history of fashion as seen in the Fresh Dressed film. Hip hop artists are among the most well-known significant figures in fashion, and some have gone on to become outstanding designers. In today's world we see designs from renowned and emerging luxury designers emulating streetwear trends like hoodies, sweatpants, oversized apparel etc which are closely related to hip hop fashion.

One went to the F.I.T museum to learn about how hip-hop fashion evolved over time. It was amazing to observe how designers utilize design components and museums use visual merchandising to produce works of art and experiences that would live long in the memory. As soon as one entered the Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous exhibition, the accent lighting brought attention to Misa Hylton's reused denim creation. It was incredibly unusual and different. It appeared to be deconstructed denim garment that had been turned into a flowy skirt in the style of the 1870's-1880's bustle dress. The garment was composed of cold blue *hues* in various tones and shades, together with white and black. Before size, fit, or price, color also known as hue is the factor that drives the most purchase decisions, as well as sets a mood (Bell, 2022). Due to the visible stitches, the fabric's *texture* appears rough. Texture can refer to how something feels or looks on the surface (Bell, 2022). The denim skirt was cut into vertical *lines* to add height to the mannequin which gave it a powerful appearance. Lines make up a significant portion of compositions; how they are structured impacts how well they are presented (Bell, 2022). The top of the denim skirt was scrunched up to give it a poofy appearance from the mannequin's hips to thighs. Denim underwear made of cutout squares of various sizes and stitched together was seen underneath the mannequin skirt. In addition, to conceal the mannequin's top half, denim fabric was cut into stars and circles shapes. Lastly, the denim head piece was rolled up giving a three-dimensional *form*. Because the headpiece appeared large and heavy it created *dominance* adding to the piece's overall beauty. The garment appeared identical on both sides creating *balance*. Balance can be asymmetrical, which has sides that are equally weighted but not identical, or symmetrical, which is a mirror image (Bell, 2022). The components for the top, bottom and head piece were similar in color, distinct in shape *proportions* and *repeated* but flowed together *harmoniously* to create an attractive piece. Composition is the gathering or structuring of components into a single whole (Bell, 2022).

In Hip Hop fashion, making an impression and being daring are highly valued. People at the time were going through social and economic hardships and had very little to their names, but they made best with what they had. It was not about where they came from but where they were going. Hip Hop fashion served as a platform for individuals to make their presence known to the globe, it encouraged people to stand out, exhibit themselves well and feel proud. In relation to hip hop fashion and what it stood for, Misa Hylton created the custom upcycled denim to celebrate and uplift women. She created a fashion story that praises the power that black women possess as a result of the persistent efforts to discredit them (Hylton 2020). Hylton wanted women to feel comfortable in their skin and be proud. Hip Hop culture evolved into a way of viewing,

experiencing, comprehending, and challenging life and the world (“Hip Hop: A culture of Vision”, nd).

Hip Hop artist should be honored because some of them, like Pharrell Williams, are changing the world for the better in which he previously won a Grammy (Walters, 2014). Pharrell Williams had produced and created music like no other. He also paved the way for most artist we know today. Similar to Hip Hop fashion, he inspired people to be better.



Figure 1: Tyshae Greene, Museum at FIT



Figure 2: Misa Hylton X Diesel custom Denim 2020 worn by Flo Milli

References

- Berlinger . (2018, January 27). How hip-hop fashion went from the streets to high fashion. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-ms-ig-hip-hop-fashion-streets-couture-20180125-htmstory.html>
- Bell, J. A.(2022). Silent Selling: Best Practices and effective strategies in Visual Merchandising. United States: Fairchild Books.
- Fashion Institute of Technology. (2023, March 24). Fresh, Fly, And Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-Hop Style.
- Figure 1. (2023, March 24) Tyshae Greene. Museum at FIT: Fresh Fly & Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-Hop Style.
- Figure 2. (2023, March 24) Misa Hylton x Diesel custom denim ensemble 2020. Museum at FIT: Fresh Fly & Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip-Hop Style.
- Hip hop: a culture of vision . Queue-it. (n.d.). Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/hip-hop/hip-hop-a-culture-of-vision-and-voice/>
- Jenkins, S. (2015, January 24). Fresh Dressed Film
- Shackelford, C. (2022, February 25). The evolution of hip-hop fashion: Origins to now. He Spoke Style. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://hespokestyle.com/hip-hop-fashion/>
- Walters, M. (2014, July 16). The story of how pharrell became the most influential man in music. Capital XTRA. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.capitalxtra.com/artists/pharrell-williams/lists/the-most-influential-man-in-music/>