



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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***Africa Fashion*: showstopping exhibition of fashion from the V&A featuring 50+ designers from more than 20 countries in Africa**

NGV International | 31 May - 6 October 2024 | Ticketed



30 May 2024: *Africa Fashion* – the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of fashion from the African continent ever mounted in Australia – presents a dynamic survey of historical and contemporary designs from some of the most influential fashion designers in the region. Coming to Melbourne from the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) in London, the Australian premiere of *Africa Fashion* features nearly 200 works, including couture, bespoke and ready-to-wear fashions, and body adornments, more than 50 designers from 22 countries and regions on the African continent.

With works drawn from the collection of the V&A, NGV Collection as well as the personal archives of designers represented in the show, the exhibition features outstanding designs from some of the icons of twentieth century African fashion scene, including **Shade Thomas-Fahm**, **Chris Seydou**, and **Kofi Ansah**. The exhibition also profiles contemporary designers working today, with meticulously crafted designs by **Imane Ayissi**, **IAMISIGO**, **Moshions**, **Thebe Magugu** and **Sindiso Khumalo**.

The exhibition presents a visually arresting selection of garments, displayed alongside an array of adornments, textiles, film and photography, celebrating the creativity, innovation and indelible global impact of African fashions from the mid-twentieth century to the present day.

Foregrounding African voices and experiences, *Africa Fashion* also features personal insights from the designers, together with sketches, editorial spreads and catwalk footage that combined offer fascinating insight into the creativity powering the industry.

The exhibition is structured into two parts. Starting with the African independence movement and the liberation years, *Africa Fashion* illuminates the important role of fashion – alongside art, film, literature and music – in the cultural renaissance of the mid-twentieth century, when African nations began to reclaim their independence. The exhibition explores how these revolutionary ideas have shaped contemporary notions of African identity, politics and culture. Designers represented in this section include **Alphadi** and **Näima Bennis**, among others.

Complementing this, the section titled *Cutting Edge* presents contemporary couture, ready-to-wear, made-to-order and adornment, offering a close-up look at the new generation of ground-breaking designers, collectives, stylists and fashion photographers working in Africa today, including **Maxhosa**, **Lukhanyo Mdingi**, **Christie Brown** and **Rich Mnisi**. Unique to the NGV presentation will be new works from recent collections by **Imane Ayissi**, **Lagos Space Programme**, **Loza Maléombho**, **Thebe Magugu**, **Orange Culture** and **Lisa Folawiyo**.

The *Global Africa* section of the exhibition explores how the digital world has accelerated the expansion of the industry, irreversibly transforming fashions as we know them. From global fashion weeks to celebrity wearers, performers and the role of social media, *Africa Fashion* champions the diversity and ingenuity of the continent's contemporary fashion scene. Highlight works here include the outfit worn by Tiwa Savage by **Tongoro** at the Africa Music Awards, an **ODI – Onder Die Invloed** outfit worn by Sho Madjozi and a newly commissioned series of photographs shot and styled by **Ibrahim Kamara**.

In the centre of the exhibition, the sections titled *Capturing Change* and *Through the Photographers Lens* focus on photographic portraiture and look at the connection between fashion and self-representation. Highlights from this section include the late-twentieth century studio photography from **Sanlé Sory**, **Michel Papami Kameni** and **Rachidi Bissiriou** and the contemporary work of **Stephen Tayo**, **Sarah Waiswa**, **Gouled Ahmed**, along with by **Atong Atem**, **Lakin Ogunbanwo** and **Phumzile Khanyile** drawn from the NGV Collection.

For the Melbourne exhibition, the NGV invited members from Australia's African diaspora to be a part of the presentation by submitting personal photographs collected through a public call out via NGV's online platforms and local community networks. These archival images find expression in the exhibition through a digital display accompanied by a personal statement.

A newly commissioned series of portraits by Melbourne-based photographer **Thomas Suleiman Tumaini** highlights the energy and impact of the African diaspora community working in Melbourne's fashion industry. Presented digitally in the exhibition, the portraits of fashion designers, jewellery designers, models, stylists and hair artists appear in dialogue with images from the public call out, continuing the exhibition's narrative trajectory from past to present.

Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks, said 'The Allan Labor Government is proud to back this incredible exhibition which will once again demonstrate why Victoria is Australia's fashion and creative capital. Creativity brings people together and helps us share our stories so it's wonderful that in amongst world-leading fashion from the V&A, designer archives and NGV's own collection, members of African communities across Australia are also invited to participate and showcase their style and creativity.'

Africa Fashion curator **Dr Christine Checinska, Senior Curator African and African Diaspora: Textiles and Fashion at the V&A, said:** 'We hope *Africa Fashion* will inspire future generations of creative young people to engage with the arts through fashion and textiles. We are excited to share the exhibition with audiences in Melbourne.'

'The African fashion scene is as diverse as the continent itself - there is a sense of abundance rather than lack, an unbounded creativity, and an exercising of agency that for me is really engaging. We look forward to sharing a glimpse of the glamour and politics of the scene with audiences in Melbourne.'

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Tony Ellwood AM, Director, NGV, said: 'Fashion has the unique ability to express so much about who we are as individuals, but also as communities. This exhibition – the most comprehensive ever staged on this subject in Australia – presents a rare opportunity to share the dynamism and diversity of African fashion design with the Australian public and introduce the talents of these extraordinary designers to a whole new audience.'

The exhibition is accompanied by a rich public program, featuring local artists and designers, as well as co-presented programs and activities with local organisations, developed by the **Africa Fashion Program Co-Curator, Dorcas Maphakela**.

Highlights over the opening weekend of the exhibition include an introductory talk by *Africa Fashion* curator Dr Christine Checinska; a performance *Hair Day* featuring hairstylists Zarah Garbrah and Agata Saka in collaboration with spoken word poets Thabani Tshuma, Chichi Nwokocha and artist Ebony Hickey alongside Xavier Gibson and dancers from Asanti Dance Theatre; a weaving workshop with Muhubo Sulieman from Qaymi Arts & Crafts; plus, music from DJ Chris NG and performances from Brotha Asanti & Soulectric.

Throughout the season, artist-run organisations Next in Colour and Yo City present monthly programs and workshops as part of NGV Residencies. Taking place on 20 July, 17 August and 21 September, the Africa diaspora led organisations will present free programming for visitors of all ages.

NGV Learn will also deliver free artist-led workshops with Olana Janfa and Tab Sejoie which will be presented in Victorian schools through the School Community Liaison Officer Initiative, a part of the Victorian African Communities Action Plan.

Africa Fashion is on display from 31 May to 6 October 2024 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Admission fees apply. Further information and tickets are available via the NGV website: [NGV.MELBOURNE](https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au)

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The NGV Learn programs are generously supported by the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and Families School Support Program.

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IMAGES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/0ijca7khvddcb8kswwk/AD1oUfziMUS0SzQk3nQeyZ0?rlkey=nl5j58o444mz3qe7cs7q5lli3&st=ttc53fzg&dl=0>

Image credit for all images: Installation view of *Africa Fashion* on display from 31 May – 6 October 2024 at NGV International, Melbourne. Photo: Lillie Thompson

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