



**STYLING: BLACK EXPRESSION, REBELLION, AND JOY THROUGH FASHION OPENS AT NORDSTROM NYC ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2020**

**225 West 57th Street  
New York, NY 10019**

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**NEW YORK (September 17, 2020)** — *Styling: Black Expression, Rebellion, and Joy Through Fashion* will be presented at Nordstrom NYC from September 17 to October 29, 2020. The exhibition, presented in partnership with Long Gallery Harlem and curated by Souleo, is a celebratory exploration of style within Black culture as a historical form of creative expression; rebellion against oppression; and source of joy. The show is also available at online partner [Artsy](https://www.artsy.net), where you can discover and collect the exhibited works through a viewing room.

The early 1920s marked the beginning of an iconic cultural movement that would become known as the Harlem Renaissance. This movement, championed by scholar Alain Locke, defined a new Black cultural aesthetic and firmly established Harlem as the world's Black cultural capital. Locke promoted a new appreciation

for the creative production of Black artists, revolutionizing and influencing Black self-expression in literature, the performing and visual arts, and fashion. It is the latter artistic discipline that shapes the focus of *Styling: Black Expression, Rebellion, and Joy Through Fashion*.

The first thematic thread of creative expression considers the universally human and innate desire that exists to express oneself. Since the beginning of human existence, adorning one's body satisfied both a practical need and desire to assert individual and communal identity.

Highlighting how this manifests specifically within the history of Black style are several works that reference the African ancestral legacy of creative expression across the wide range of African cultures. Traditional masks, headdresses, hats, and fabric prints are showcased in both historically accurate and imaginatively reinterpreted works. For example, painter Margaret Rose Vendyres presents images of Black celebrities and reimagines them with the addition of traditional African masks in her series, *The African Diva Project*. The result is a visual reminder that conversations about Black style must begin with an acknowledgment of the long and varied history of creative and stylish expression rooted in the continent of Africa.

The second theme looks at Black style through the lens of rebellion. Placing sartorial choices within the context of the fight for social justice are works that look both to the past and present of the Black experience in America. For example, wearable artist Beau McCall's *Triple T-shirts Freedom Fighter Collection* spotlights historical Black figures such as abolitionist Harriet Tubman; political activist Marcus Garvey; and socially conscious recording artist Nina Simone. Each shirt is connected with two additional ones that feature statements such as "Black Lives Matter" and "#StandAgainstHate." Thereby, demonstrating the symbolic ways in which Black style is used as a form of protest.

The theme of style as rebellion extends throughout the exhibition, beyond the topic of race, to also encompass issues of gender and sexuality. Artist Dianne Smith's new media investigation into the history of Black women and fashion from the Harlem Renaissance era to today spotlights Black models. These individuals helped to redefine the image of a stylish Black woman by choosing to present themselves in ways that ran counter to the acceptable norms of their time. Expanding the scope, wearable artists present gender-neutral garments that subvert strict lines of what defines women's and men's fashion. By not placing their creations into either gender category, they represent the fluidity and evolving nature of Black style as it challenges the status quo.

The final thematic thread weaving the exhibition together is: Joy! During contentious social and political times, the ability to find joy through fashion is a celebration of the varied, enduring, and inspirational ways that styling one's body has been and continues to be a powerful act to affirm oneself. This joy is present

in many of the works, from the fun and flamboyant afro wigs created by Ricky TheJones of AfrolipglossOriginals to the numerous smiling faces in the portraits by Elan Cadiz.

*Styling: Black Expression, Rebellion, and Joy Through Fashion* is a sartorial escapade through the multifaceted representations of contemporary Black style and their cultural significance. The exhibition celebrates the legacy of using personal style to channel self-expression, rebellion, and joy as inspired by movements such as the Harlem Renaissance. Thus, giving substance and expansion to the meaning behind making a “fashion statement.”

A portion of art sale proceeds from *Styling: Black Expression, Rebellion, and Joy Through Fashion* will benefit the Howard University Art Gallery and student programs.

### **ARTISTS REPRESENTED IN EXHIBITION**

Anthony Olubunmi Akinbola, Elan Cadiz, Willie Cole, EPPERSON, Felicia Megan Gordon, Gregory Gray, Hollis King, Beau McCall, Ruben Natal-San Miguel, Busayo Olupona, Yelaine Rodriguez, Dianne Smith, Stephen Tayo, Ricky TheJones of AfrolipglossOriginals, and Margaret Rose Vendryes

### **CURATORIAL CREDIT**

The exhibition is organized by Souleo. [Souleo](#) curates entertaining and informative events, exhibitions, and cultural programs. Souleo has collaborated with noteworthy institutions and brands including the New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Columbia University, Newark Museum of Art, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, and AARP. Souleo’s work has been widely covered in outlets including the Associated Press, NY Times, The New Yorker, NBC and more.

### **ABOUT LONG GALLERY HARLEM**

[Long Gallery Harlem](#) is a trusted resource for art collectors navigating the seemingly impenetrable art world with art advisory, collections management, and resale services. LGH makes critical work broadly accessible to the public in the gallery and non traditional venues and has done so through 25+ gallery exhibitions, brand partnerships (ie, HBO, Google, and Nordstrom) and a new window installation [Passing Between the Lines by artist Shoshanna Weinberger](#)—the public may discover and experience the work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without entering the gallery. The gallery has been a creative forum for under-represented emerging and mid-career artists for nearly 10 years and has received media coverage in the New York Times, Hyperallergic, Artsy, and others. Bisa Butler, Renee Cox, Delano Dunn, Derek Fordjour, Alteronce Gumbly, Kimberly Mayhorn, Arcmanaro Niles, Nona Hendryx, Zachery Richardson, and Kennedy Yanko are among the 70+ artists who have been presented in exhibitions in the gallery.

## **ABOUT ARTSY**

[Artsy](#) is the leading global online marketplace for buying, selling, and discovering fine art. Artsy connects its 4,000+ international partners—including galleries, auction houses, art fairs, and institutions—spanning 100+ countries with its 1.9 million global art collectors and art lovers across 190+ countries. Artsy expands the entire art market by using best-in-class, mobile-first technology to effectively connect supply and demand at a global scale. Launched in 2012, Artsy is headquartered in New York City with offices in London, Berlin, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Los Angeles.

## **ABOUT NORDSTROM NYC**

The Nordstrom NYC Flagship is located at 225 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, near Columbus Circle in New York City. Store hours are Monday - Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Sunday from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Admission to *Styling: Black Expression, Rebellion and Joy Through Fashion* is free. For more information, please call Nordstrom NYC at (212) 295-2000.

**Image Credit:** Margaret Rose Vendryes, Igbo Billy - Billy Porter, 2020.