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In Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Hip Hop, The Museum at FIT Presents ***Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip Hop Style*** February 8–April 23, 2023

The Museum at FIT (MFIT) presents [Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip Hop Style](#), in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the birth of hip hop. The largest and most comprehensive exhibition to explore this revolutionary and influential style, this also marks the first time that the museum examines fashion exclusively through one musical genre. Over 100 garments and accessories capture the pivotal moments in hip hop fashion's evolution, ranging from Kangol hats to custom Dapper Dan jackets and the Manolo Blahnik Okla Alta booties inspired by Timberland work boots. The exhibition is curated by Elena Romero, journalist and assistant professor of Marketing Communications at FIT, and Elizabeth Way, associate curator of costume at MFIT, whose previous exhibitions include *Head to Toe* (2021), *Fabric in Fashion* (2018), and *Black Fashion Designers* (2016).



Kangol, 2022. The Collection of Eileen Costa. ©
The Museum at FIT

“It was important for The Museum at FIT to organize this exhibition, because hip hop—the most influential music genre of our era—has had such a profound impact on the world of fashion,” notes Dr. Valerie Steele, director and chief curator, MFIT. “Furthermore, hip hop fashion and music are cultural expressions of the African and Hispanic cultural diasporas, which MFIT seeks to amplify as part of our goal to expand the understanding of fashion.”

Visitors will see looks worn and made popular by artists Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, LL Cool J, Chuck D, Missy Elliot, Aaliyah, Khaled, Lil Nas X, and Cardi B, to name just a few. *Fresh, Fly and Fabulous* will also feature designs by 5001 Flavors, April Walker, Misa Hylton, Cross

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Colours, Karl Kani, Shirt King Phade of the Shirt Kings, FUBU, Rocawear, Wu Wear, Mecca USA, Baby Phat, Pelle Pelle, and Sean John, as well as Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Versace, among many others.



Shearling jacket, 1970s–1980s. The Museum at FIT, gift of Rebecca Pietri. © The Museum at FIT



Beau McCall Black Lives Matter triple T-shirt, 2021. ©The Museum at FIT

Born in the Bronx in 1973, hip hop was the invention of Black and Brown youth who created an innovative style of music, dance, and visual art that spoke to their lifestyles. Within two decades, hip hop had spread beyond the borders of New York City to impact international culture. Fashion and style were, and are, a major part of hip hop's appeal. Yet hip hop style is more multidimensional than many realize. Artists and fans have used fashion to embrace historic glamour, convey messages of Black pride and activism, and express their individuality and unapologetic style. These fashions include the Adidas sneakers, tracksuits, and shearling coats popularized by Run DMC; the Karl Kani clothing worn by Tupac Shakur; and Aaliyah's iconic Tommy Hilfiger bandeau and jeans ensemble, as well as other designer looks worn by Lil' Kim, Cardi B, and Lil Nas X.

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Sean John, fall 2008. The Museum at FIT, gift of Sean John. ©The Museum at FIT



Cazal glasses, Claw Money Archive Collection. ©Claudia Gold

Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip Hop Style begins with an examination of the early club venues where hip hop styles were showcased and the media—record companies, television shows, and films—that utilized fashion as a vehicle to promote hip hop artists and ideas. Sections such as The Designer Dreams, High Fashion Does Hip Hop, Collaborations, and Hip Hop in High Fashion explore the genre's evolving relationship with established designer brands, such as Jordache, Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, and Gucci, and examine how significant custom designers, such as Dapper Dan and 5001 Flavors, made hip hop style unique. Fashion was a popular way for hip hop entrepreneurs and artists to extend their musical personas, and many—including the creators of FUBU and Sean Combs—launched their own fashion lines, which grew to become influential American brands. The Sports Influence and Pink sections are dedicated to inspirational sources for hip hop style, and other sections look at the specific ways hip hop has influenced fashion categories, including denim, outerwear, and formalwear. The exhibition concludes with a Celebrity Style section that examines the personal and stage style of trendsetting artists and a Hip Hop Glam section that illustrates the worldwide impact of hip hop artists as red carpet fashion icons in the 21st century.

Concurrent with the exhibition, The Museum at FIT will launch a new, digital guide on [Bloomberg Connects](#), the free arts and cultural app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies. Available for download from Google Play or the App Store, Bloomberg Connects will make The Museum at FIT accessible for both in-person and virtual visits. Users can engage with the guide to help plan museum visits, gain access to exclusive MFIT content, explore exhibitions, and learn more about Fashion Culture programs. *Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous* will be the first exhibition featured in the MFIT guide, including exclusive interviews with hip hop experts.

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The *Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: 50 Years of Hip Hop Style* exhibition will be accompanied by a [book of the same title](#) (Rizzoli, 2023) with a foreword written by Slick Rick, and [a symposium on February 24](#) that will be free and open to the public.

Fresh, Fly, and Fabulous: Fifty Years of Hip Hop Style has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT and The Coby Foundation. Special thanks to Barrett Barrera Projects.

The museum is open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from noon to 8 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. All visitors are requested to [review the latest safety guidelines and protocols](#). For more information and the latest MFIT updates, [visit fitnyc.edu/museum](#); [register for the MFIT newsletter](#); and follow the museum on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

About The Museum at FIT (MFIT)

The Museum at FIT, which received its second accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums in March 2022, is the only museum in New York City dedicated solely to the art of fashion. Best known for its innovative and award-winning exhibitions, the museum has an important collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present. The Museum at FIT collects, conserves, documents, exhibits, and interprets fashion. Visit [fitnyc.edu/museum](#).

About the Couture Council of The Museum at FIT

The Couture Council is a committed membership group that supports The Museum at FIT. The Couture Council helps make it possible for the museum to mount world-class exhibitions that educate and inspire, to build and conserve its extraordinary permanent collection, and to organize free public programs that serve FIT's 9,000 students as well as the general public.

About the Fashion Institute of Technology

A part of the State University of New York, FIT has been a leader in career education in art, design, business, and technology throughout its history. Providing its approximately 9,000 students with an uncommon blend of hands-on, practical experience, theory, and a firm grounding in the liberal arts, the college offers a wide range of affordable programs that foster innovation and collaboration. Its distinctive curriculum is geared to today's rapidly growing economy, including fields such as computer animation, toy design, production management, film and media, and cosmetics and fragrance marketing. Internationally renowned, FIT draws on its New York City location to provide a vibrant, community in which to learn. The college offers



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nearly 50 majors and grants AAS, BFA, BS, MA, MFA, and MPS degrees, preparing students for professional success and leadership in the new creative economy. Calvin Klein, Michael Kors, Reem Acra, Brian Atwood, Dennis Basso, Francisco Costa, Norma Kamali, Nanette Lepore, Bibhu Mohapatra, Ralph Rucci, John Bartlett, Peter Do, Daniel Roseberry and Michelle Smith. Other prominent graduates include Leslie Blodgett, creator of bareMinerals; international restaurant designer Tony Chi; and Nina Garcia, editor in chief, *Elle*.

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