

2020 EXHIBITIONS: FASHION FOR ALL

CELEBRATING INCLUSIVE FASHION DESIGN

**COOPER
HEWITT**



Smithsonian Design Museum

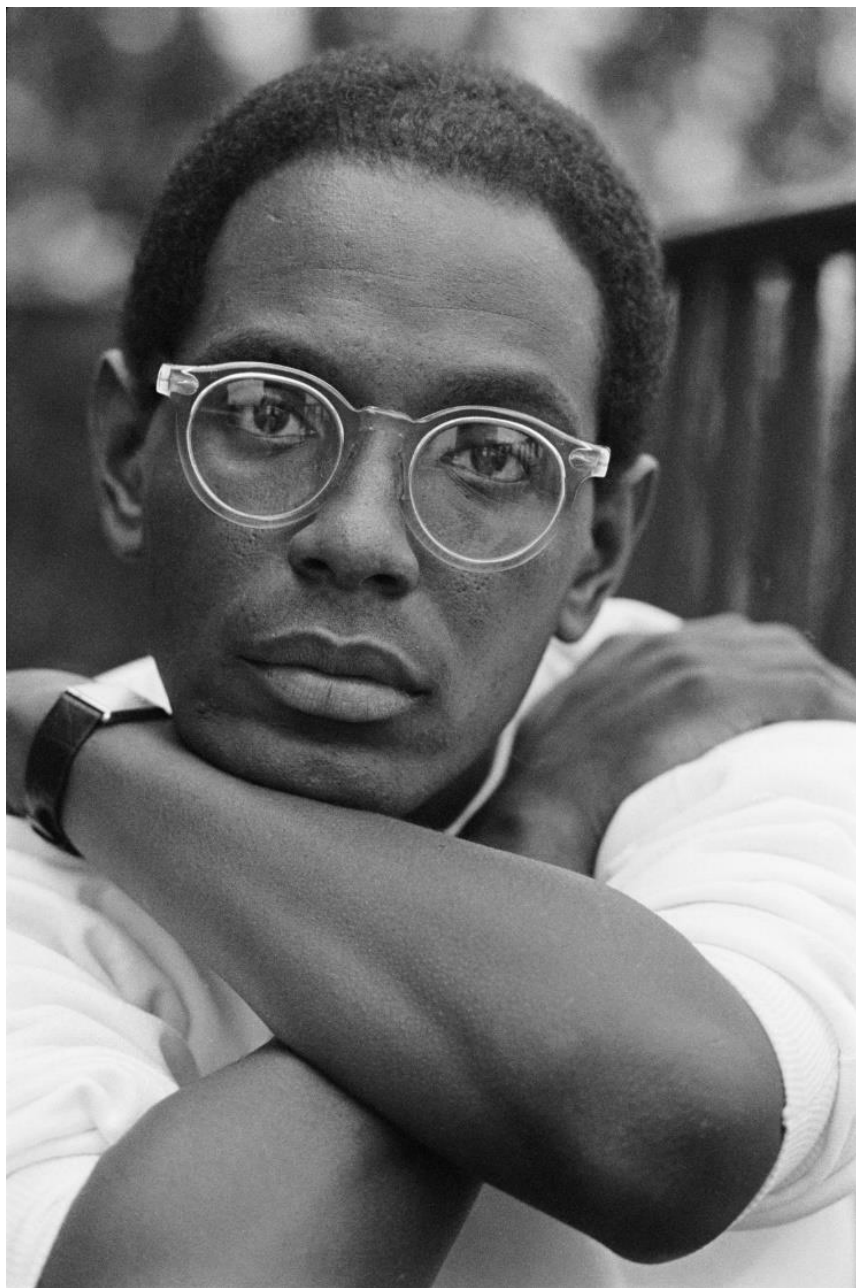
WilliWear Showroom, SITE, 1982, Photographed by Andreas Sterzing, Courtesy of SITE - James Wines, LLC, photo © Andreas Sterzing



WILLI SMITH: STREET COUTURE

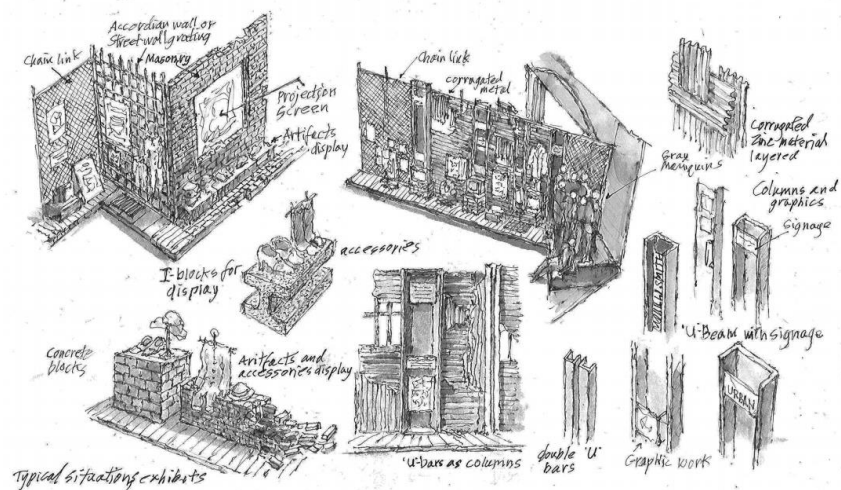
March 13, 2020 – October 25, 2020

This exhibition will be the first museum survey of African American designer Willi Smith (1948–1987), who championed inclusive fashion across race, class, and gender. *Willi Smith: Street Couture* is organized by Alexandra Cunningham Cameron, Curator of Contemporary Design; Darnell-Jamal Lisby, Curatorial Assistant; and Julie Pastor, Curatorial Assistant.



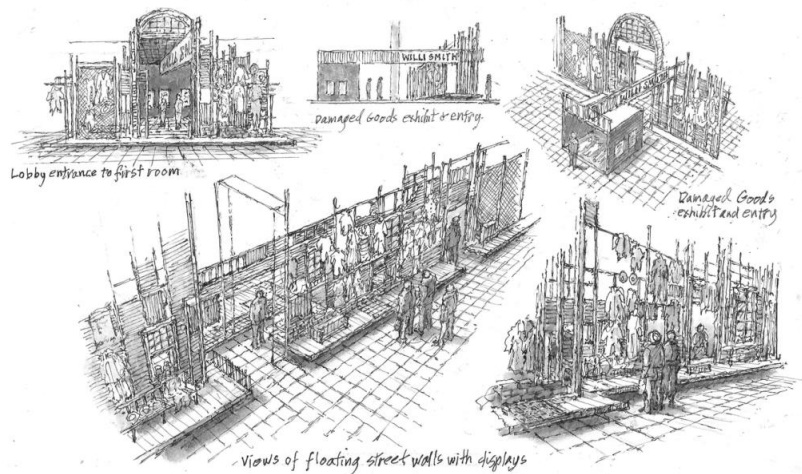
CELEBRATING WILLI SMITH

Smith was a pioneer of streetwear fashion, heralded as “the most successful black designer in history” by the *New York Daily News* before his sudden death in 1987 of AIDS-related complications. Featuring the most influential projects of Smith’s career—including collaborations with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Keith Haring, Nam June Paik, Dan Friedman, and Dianne McIntyre—the exhibition will illustrate Smith’s use of fashion for creative exchange and breaking down cultural and social boundaries. His work will be revealed as a catalyst for today’s repositioning of fashion—from an exclusive discipline reinforcing class, race, and gender divides, toward an industry that encourages inclusivity, accessibility, and progressive cross-disciplinary collaborations.



EXHIBITION EXPERIENCE

Willi Smith: Street Couture will present an amalgamation of Smith's work, characterizing his abilities as a multifaceted artist. On view will be more than 200 objects, including photography, video, design drawings, garments, patterns, ephemera, and showroom architecture, most of which have not been seen in more than 30 years. Exhibition design by **SITE** architects will recreate the original WilliWear showroom and stores within the museum's galleries, allowing elements of the street such as chain-link fencing and cinder blocks to serve as the framework of the exhibition.





MONOGRAPH

Cooper Hewitt and **Rizzoli** will co-publish a 228-page hardcover book designed by **poly-mode**, a design studio dedicated to helping organizations embrace cultural diversity and community involvement. The publication will feature more than 300 rare photographs and essays by 48 contributors across fashion, art, and cultural sectors to explore topics such as the emergence of street style in the United States, the history of collaborative practice, the downtown New York art scene of the 1970s–80s, the relationship between fashion, marketing, and race, and the impact of black and black queer communities.



Top: National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC
Bottom: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City

DUAL-CITY SYMPOSIUM

FASHION AND RACE: INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

Cooper Hewitt and the **National Museum of African American History and Culture** are co-organizing a dual-city symposium focusing on the relationship between fashion and race. The conferences, taking place April 2020, are separated into two complementary themes: Influence (to take place in DC) and Impact (to take place in NYC). A broad spectrum of groups and individuals will be represented, including academia, government, design professionals, fashion and dress enthusiasts, the corporate fashion community, and the general public.



Smithsonian

COOPER HEWITT

SEARCH  MENU 



OPEN CALL

EXHIBITION

ARCHIVE SITE

WILLI SMITH COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

On the occasion of *Willi Smith: Street Couture*, the first-ever exhibition devoted to American designer Willi Smith (1948–1987), Cooper Hewitt is creating a digital community archive, powered by Cargo, dedicated to the pioneering streetwear designer and the artists, designers, and performers with whom he collaborated to break down social, cultural, and economic boundaries. We want to restore and preserve Willi Smith's place in the fashion canon. To that end, we seek your personal photographs, anecdotes, ephemera, and garments.

Help us rewrite fashion history. Review the terms and conditions and submission guidelines below. Email your completed questionnaire to willismith@si.edu

SHARE NOW

DIGITAL COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

Willi Smith: Street Couture was built through the memories and contributions of Smith's friends and collaborators. Cooper Hewitt is extending this call for participation to the wider community, requesting Willi Smith and WilliWear photographs, anecdotes, ephemera, and garments. The digital community archive will capture and celebrate Smith's widespread impact across social, cultural, and economic boundaries.



CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM FASHIONS

February 28, 2020 – August 23, 2020

Modest fashion is a fast-growing global industry that has been built largely by and for Muslim women. *Contemporary Muslim Fashions* celebrates their creativity and entrepreneurship. This presentation of the exhibition is organized by Susan Brown, Associate Curator of Textiles.



Barjis Chohan, Spring/Summer 2015

THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF MUSLIM WOMEN

Contemporary Muslim Fashions is the first major museum exhibition to explore the rise of the global modest fashion industry, examining how Muslim women have become arbiters of style within and beyond their communities.

As designers and entrepreneurs, they have shown that clothing can be on-trend and still meet the needs of diverse wearers. As journalists, bloggers, and influencers, they have drawn international attention to the vitality of contemporary modest style. And as consumers, they have helped build one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global fashion industry.

Following the widely acclaimed opening at the de Young Museum in San Francisco and travel to Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt, Cooper Hewitt is proud to present the exhibition for its only east coast venue.



Céline Semaan Vernon for Slow Factory, 2017

CELEBRATING THEIR CREATIVITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Contemporary Muslim Fashions reflects the diversity of Muslim women and their creative reimagining of fashion, celebrating the unique styles that arise from a dynamic interplay of global fashion trends, regional dress traditions, and personal and collective attitudes toward modesty.

The exhibition features the works of established and emerging designers from sixteen countries worldwide, spanning the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America. In addition to approximately 80 ensembles in high-end fashion, streetwear, sportswear, and couture, the show brings diverse voices into the galleries through contemporary art, street photography, social media, and music videos.



PUBLICATION

Contemporary Muslim Fashions is accompanied by a 320-page, fully illustrated, hardcover book published by the de Young Museum with Delmonico/Prestel. Filled with dazzling art and fashion photography as well as stills from runway shows and films, the book explores the ways vibrant Muslim styles are shaped by global trends and multivalent religious beliefs. Accompanying these images are essays and personal narratives by leading voices that touch on compelling and timely topics from the history of head covering to the influence of today's social media.

WHO WE ARE

At Cooper Hewitt, we educate, inspire, and empower people through design. Through innovative exhibitions, education programs, thought leadership, and more, we create opportunities for everyone to discover the importance of design and its power to change the world. Housed in the historic Carnegie Mansion on Museum Mile in New York City, Cooper Hewitt is part of the Smithsonian Institution—the world's largest museum, education, and research complex.



COOPER HEWITT AT A GLANCE

Our visitors

59%
millennials

47%
involved in design

35%
New Yorkers

24%
international

210,000+ objects
spanning thirty centuries digitized
on cooperhewitt.org

30,000 participants
in our 2018 education programming

100 Cooper Hewitt staff who bring it all to life

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Education programs at Cooper Hewitt provide opportunities for learners of all design skills to understand the value of design and engage in design thinking. Exhibitions are accompanied by robust programming, including curator and docent-led tours; lectures, panels, and conversations; hands-on workshops led by working designers; curriculum-based activities for students and educators; professional development programs; online tools; and more.



PRESS BUZZ

Press and marketing for Cooper Hewitt exhibitions and events make millions of impressions each year. Current exhibitions have been featured in the **Washington Post** and the cover of the Arts section of the **New York Times**, among other notable publications. *Willi Smith: Street Couture* has received advance coverage by **Vogue**, **Women's Wear Daily**, **Architect's Newspaper**, **PIN-UP Magazine**, and more.

**“WILLI SMITH WAS AHEAD OF HIS TIME
AND COOPER HEWITT’S UPCOMING
RETROSPECTIVE WILL PROVE IT.”**

—VOGUE MAGAZINE





PARTNERSHIPS

Join us to celebrate diversity and inclusivity in fashion design.

Cooper Hewitt offers customized benefits that provide opportunities to achieve specific corporate and marketing objectives. We work closely with our partners to ensure mission alignment, access to resources, brand visibility, and more.



THANK YOU

To discuss partnership opportunities,
please contact:

Cooper Hewitt Director's Office
CHDevelopment@si.edu