MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY
JACQUES CHIRAC

Communiqué de presse
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Temporary exhibition/Garden Gallery
31 March to 12 July 2026

AFRICA FASHION



Mbeuk Idourrou collection, Imane Ayissi, Paris, France, Autumn Winter 2019. Photo Fabrice Malard Courtesy of Imane Ayissi

Curator

Christine Checinska,
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After conquering London, New York, Portland, Chicago, Melbourne and Montreal, the *Africa Fashion* exhibition, developed by London's Victoria and Albert Museum arrives in Paris. Here, it proposes a dialogue between the leading designers of the contemporary African fashion scene and the rich historical collections of the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac.

This exhibition celebrates the rapid growth of the African fashion scene, driven by a new generation of designers. Between inspiration and stylistic innovation, their creations celebrate a dynamic art scene as varied as the continent itself.

Africa Fashion presents the continent's style as a self-defining art form that reveals the richness and diversity of histories and cultures from across Africa. The museum is using this occasion to showcase its collections of African textiles, accessories and jewellery, as well as a selection of photographs taken from its archives and collected from the public.

African Cultural Renaissance

The political and social upheavals that took place alongside the independence movements in Africa from the 1950s onwards triggered a long period of creativity in the field of fashion, music and the visual arts. This first section presents several archives (posters, publications, recordings, magazines, photographs, etc.) testifying to the radical changes that took place during these years of liberation, from the mid-to-late 1950s until 1994, coinciding with the end of apartheid in South Africa.

Politics and Poetics of Cloth



ANC Nelson Mandela commemorative cloth, South Africa, 1991 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In this context of struggle and emancipation, making and wearing traditional African fabrics became a political act. This second section highlights the importance of textiles in many African countries: wax prints, commemorative fabrics, *àdìrẹ* (fabrics printed with indigo dye), kenté (multicoloured fabrics woven together from strips of silk or cotton) and bògòlanfini (two-tone fabrics dyed using earth and vegetable matter), all fragments of a diverse textile history, shaped by numerous techniques from across the continent.

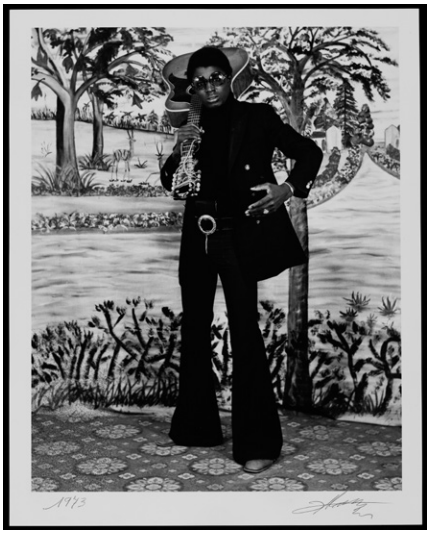
The Vanguard

In the middle of the 20th century, African fashions experienced a turning point with the emergence of designers whose brands became widespread on a local, national and international scale. The continent was alight with creativity.

To bear witness to this creative buzz, this third section focuses on the careers of five iconic 20th-century African designers: Shade Thomas-Fahm (born in 1933), Chris Seydou (1949 - 1994), Kofi Ansah (1951-2014), Alphadi (born in 1957) and Naïma Bennis (1940-2008) were the first generation of African designers to attract international attention.



Models holding hands, Lagos, Nigeria, 2019 by Stephen Tayo. Courtesy Lagos Fashion Week



Studio portrait of man with guitar, Hamidou Maiga, 1973, Bamako, Mali, Victoria and Albert Museum © Hamidou Maiga, courtesy of Jack Bell Gallery



Kofi Ansah 'Indigo' Couture 1997 - Emmanuel Narh Gaduga "Taller" and Linda Tsirakasu- Photo © 1997 Eric Don-Arthur _ www.EricDonArthur.com



Samuel Fosso, *African Spirits*. 2008. 76 x 101,6 cm
© musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac

Capturing Change

The tour continues with photographic portraits from the second half of the 20th century, capturing the euphoria of nations at the dawn of their independence. Photographs by Samuel Fosso, Félicien Rodriguez, James Barnor, Sory Sanlé, Abbas Habiballa, Paul Kodjo and Rashid Mahdi, from the photography collection at the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, document clothing habits and the importance of fashion as a tool for self-expression during this period of independence.

The museum is highlighting a selection of photographs from its collections and, thanks to a call for contributions, is exhibiting photographs collected from the public illustrating fashion and people's relationship with clothing in the African diasporas during the period of independence (1950-1990).

Cutting-edge

Fashion designers of African origin are today charting their own course, pushing boundaries, and opening up reflections around subjects as diverse as culture, gender and sexuality, whilst fighting assumptions about African fashions and identities. This fifth section showcases the new generation of designers, collectives, stylists and fashion photographers working on the African continent today and making a global impact, with a presentation structured around different themes: minimalism, mixology, co-creation, "Afrotopia", adornment and artisanal.

Works by designers based in Africa, Europe and the United States, including Ibrahim Kamara, Imane Ayissi, Kenneth Ize, Thebe Magugu, Orange Culture, Tongoro and MAXHOSA, bear witness to the creativity of the 21st century. Internationally, these designers are redefining luxury from avant-garde African perspectives.



Alchemy collection, Thebe Magugu, Johannesburg, South Africa, Autumn/Winter 2021 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photography: Tatenda Chidora, Styling + Set: Chloe Andrea Welgemoed Model: Sio

Global Africa

The influence of African fashions, with their diversity of styles and viewpoints, is asserting itself in an especially dynamic contemporary context. Digital platforms and social media, as well as music and cinema, are opening up new access to a constantly evolving world of fashion, driven by designers of African origin. This momentum is part of a new Pan-Africanism that goes beyond the continent's borders, echoing the cultural renaissance of the independence years.



MAXHOSA AFRICA, IAMISIGO, Imane Ayissi
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Looking back

The final section of the exhibition brings together rare textiles and accessories from the museum's collections with contemporary haute couture. It highlights the diversity of African textile techniques and questions the links between tradition and modernity.

This section highlights the lasting influence of ancient creations on today's stylists, setting the history of the art of dressing in Africa against a long-term backdrop.



Skirt, Tanzania, early 20th century, leather, glass beads, metal, 67,5 x 263 x 1 cm © musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, photo Thierry Ollivier, Michel Urtado

Africa Fashion offers visitors an essential re-interpretation of contemporary African fashions through the lens of designers from across Africa and its diasporas. By bringing designers and their creations to the fore, the exhibition confirms their revolutionary, innovative and profoundly influential character. At the crossroads of heritage, innovation and contemporary engagement, the exhibition invites the public to rethink the geographical aspects of fashion and recognise the central role of the African continent, celebrating the richness and creativity of its clothing fashions and avant-garde character.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

From September 30, 2025,
to January 18, 2026

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