

# Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk

## Teacher and adult helper notes

Contents	Page
1 Visiting the exhibition	1
2 Exhibition content	2
3 Curriculum links	9
4 Suggested activities within the exhibition	9
5 Activities and resources to use in class	11
6 Questions or feedback?	11

## 1 Visiting the Exhibition

### Important information

- Food and drink are not permitted.
- There are three items you cannot take photographs of within the exhibition. These are clearly signposted.
- The exhibition contains nudity.
- You will enter and exit via the same door. Please be aware of other visitors who may be entering/exiting the gallery.
- Timeslots for visiting the exhibition are 30 minutes, unless otherwise stated on your booking. Please adhere to your time slot.
- Parts of the exhibition are quite dimly lit. Please remind your pupils to take their time when moving around the space.
- The exhibition has a background music, sound, flashing lights, and moving images throughout.

## 2 Exhibition content

The exhibition begins with a display outside the gallery space, followed by an introduction. It is then split into 5 sections:

- **Disability**
- **Race**
- **LGBTQIA+**
- **Size**
- **Age**

Below, we have outlined the key messages and designers from each of these sections.

### **Outside the exhibition**

We are showing four works from Edinburgh College of Art students. The Edinburgh College of Art Diversity Network was formed in collaboration with *All Walks Beyond the Catwalk*, an initiative challenging the fashion industry's dependence on unhealthy body ideals. It strives to teach students – as future stakeholders of the fashion industry – the importance of celebrating diversity within their approach to design and image-making.

### **Introduction**

The introduction section includes two large-scale images taken by fashion creatives representative of diverse voices, as well as visually representing diversity: an image by now 85-year-old catwalk photographer Chris Moore, of transgender model Andreja Pejic on the catwalk for Jean Paul Gaultier before she transitioned. There is also an image by Emma Summerton (there is a real gender imbalance in the photography profession, and female photographers make up only a fraction of the field), styled by Edward Enninful (editor-in-chief of British Vogue).

There are two garments on loan from writer, academic and activist Sinéad Burke, designed by Burberry and Christopher Kane.

There is an interactive showing fashion zines that explore topics as diverse as Black Womanhood, Mental Health and Queer Christianity.

### **Size**

When knitwear designer Mark Fast cast three models, ranging from a UK size 12 to 14, at London Fashion Week in 2010 his stylist reportedly resigned in protest. Narrow beauty ideals have historically dominated fashion. The ideal male body transitioned from the muscular to the lean and boyish, and while the 'heroin chic' aesthetic of nineties' grunge caused moral outrage it left a legacy of ever-shrinking sample sizes in high fashion.

The fashion industry is now slowly embracing a more diverse vision of womanhood. In 2017

Ashley Graham became the first curve model to feature on Forbes' list of the world's highest-paid models, while Spring 2019 was the most size-inclusive season to date across all four fashion cities.

Even then, Spring 2019 saw only 54 curve models from 7,431 total castings, and this figure fell to 50 in Autumn 2019. Of these 50, only 6 were for European brands – a significant imbalance given that the average British woman wears a size 16. Despite the rapid growth of the menswear industry, conversations on body positivity also focus narrowly on women, and an idealised and inaccessible vision of masculinity persists in high fashion.

### **Size – designers**

- **Chromat**

Chromat has always focused on designing for and celebrating all shapes and sizes equally, and are proud to produce their collections in sizes 0-30. When Chromat stylist Edda Gudmundsdottir invited Denise Bidot to open the Spring 2015 show, Bidot became the first curve model to open a catwalk show during New York Fashion Week.

- **Nicholas Kirkwood**

Nicholas Kirkwood's first catwalk show at London Fashion Week explored the subculture of hacking, taking the theme of defiance against the rule of the ordinary. The intentionally diverse cast of independently-spirited models included actress and activist Rose McGowan, and make-up artist Raisa Flowers, the only plus-size model to walk the Spring 2019 catwalks in London.

- **Simply Be**

After a survey showed that 89% of women felt their size was not represented in the fashion mainstream, Simply Be debuted the UK's most size-inclusive catwalk on the eve of London Fashion Week in 2017. It featured models from a size 10-26, including body positivity ambassadors Felicity Hayward, Tess Holliday, Hayley Hasselhoff and Kelly Knox.

- **BodyMap**

One of the most innovative fashion brands of the 1980s, BodyMap's trademark look comprised distinctive prints by textile designer Hilde Smith and the use of multiple layering and lines that were designed to remap the body's outline. Their diverse catwalks cast models of all ages, shapes and sizes, inspired by the attitudes of London's youth culture and club scene. Like many of the designers on display, BodyMap's work crosses over themes, and two further looks from this collection can be seen in **Age**.

- **Backdrop image: Paloma Elsesser, photographed by Matthew Kristall**

Since being discovered by Pat McGrath on Instagram, Paloma Elsesser has become an outspoken voice for body-inclusivity. Last year she walked in the Savage x Fenty lingerie show at New York fashion week, graced Glossier billboards, and scored the cover for *Vogue Arabia*. With her Chilean-Swiss and African American heritage, and UK size 16 frame, Elsesser is breaking down barriers – proof that social media is democratising the industry.

## Age

People over 60 are the world's fastest growing consumer group. Despite their spending power, they are still greatly under-represented on the catwalk. There are now signs fashion houses are shifting their focus from millennials back to a more luxury demographic, with the recent Autumn 2019 catwalks the most age-diverse on record. Yet, with only 36 castings of models aged 50+ across all four fashion capitals, age trails behind race, gender and size in terms of catwalk representation.

Over the last decade, style blogs such as Ari Seth Cohen's *Advanced Style* and social media influencers like Maye Musk (aged 70) and JoAni Johnson (aged 67) have helped to redefine beauty standards. In 2017, 82 year old male model Wang Deshun became a brand ambassador for Reebok, and earlier this year fashion icon Iris Apfel signed to IMG Models at the age of 97. Terminology is changing too - in 2017 beauty magazine *Allure* banned the phrase 'anti-ageing,' reflecting society's shifting attitude to ageless style.

### Age – designers

- **BodyMap**

Eighties label BodyMap remains culturally important, not least for their ground-breaking fashion shows, which could include anyone from the designers' mothers to celebrities such as Boy George, Leigh Bowery and Michael Clark. A third look from this collection can be seen in **Size**.

- **Ferragamo**

Ferragamo's casting over recent seasons has shifted to reflect their customer, bucking the trend of designing for a youth market. Their Spring 2019 catwalk featured male and female models of a range of ages, including Stella Tennant, 48, Didier Vinson, 45, and 43 year old Georgina Grenville, who modelled this look.

- **Dries Van Noten**

Dries Van Noten's 100th fashion show was an international reunion of 54 models who have walked for him since the early nineties. Familiar faces included Amber Valletta, then aged 42, Nadija Auermann, 45, Erin O'Connor and Alek Wek, both 39, and Cecilia Chancellor, 50, who modelled this look.

- **Simone Rocha**

Grounded in her Chinese-Irish roots, Simone Rocha has always set out to make her label inclusive. Autumn 2017's casting reflected the breadth of the brand's appeal to customers of all ages. Famous faces from the 1960s to the 1990s included Benedetta Barzini and Jan de Villeneuve, both in their 70s, and this look modelled by Marie-Sophie Wilson Carr, aged 53.

- **Backdrop image: Armani Spring 2016 campaign, by Peter Lindbergh**

Peter Lindbergh shot 1990s top models Nadja Auerman, Yasmin Le Bon, Stella Tennant and Eva Herzigova for Armani's *#NewNormal* Spring 2016 advertising campaign, styled in casual clothes with natural make-up and hair.

## Disability

There are more than 1.3 billion disabled people in the world, yet they have long been ignored by the fashion industry. In 1998, Paralympic sprinter Aimee Mullins fronted the cover of *Dazed & Confused*'s 'Fashion-Able' issue, guest edited by Alexander McQueen. An industry first, this editorial is one of the few high-profile examples of disability representation in the mainstream press.

In 1998, Mullins wore a pair of prosthetic legs carved from solid ash to open McQueen's Spring catwalk show in Paris. Nearly two decades later, in 2017 Kelly Knox and Jack Evers became the first disabled models to walk at London Fashion Week. The fashion industry is not held accountable for disability representation in the same way as for age, gender, race and size. Instead, it is left to individuals like Knox and Evers to challenge industry exclusion.

Greater visibility of disabled people in fashion is vital to changing attitudes. In 2015 wheelchair-user Jillian Mercado signed to IMG Models, and in summer 2018, Aaron Philip became the first Black, trans, disabled model to sign for a major agency. The following September, *Grazia* UK featured five disabled women on its cover – the first major publication to do so since 1998.

### Disability – designers

- Teatum Jones

Teatum Jones's Spring 2018 collection was a continuation of their year-long exploration of how the body is conventionally perceived as beautiful, inspired by GB Para-Equestrian, Natasha Baker. After contracting a virus at 14 months old, Natasha was left with permanent nerve damage, loss of balance and sensation, and severe weakness in her legs. She instructs her horses entirely through verbal commands and seat movements, earning her the nickname 'the horse whisperer.'

- Vivienne Westwood

In general, there is cultural invisibility when it comes to inclusion of disabled people in fashion, on TV, and in film. Westwood's casting of *Breaking Bad* actor RJ Mitte therefore made headlines in 2015 as one of the few instances of representation on the catwalk. Best known for his role as Walter "Flynn" White Jr, Mitte has cerebral palsy like his character on the show.

- FTL Moda (3 looks)

The *FTL Moda Loving You* show was held in collaboration with Fondazione Verticale, an Italian Foundation for spinal cord injuries. A diverse cast of disabled and able-bodied models wore looks by designers including Antonio Urzi, whose futuristic designs thoughtfully considered the creative possibilities around disability representation, incorporating the model's prostheses and disabilities into each look.

- Backdrop image: Aimee Mullins, photographed by Nick Knight, 1998

Nick Knight is no stranger to pushing the boundaries of fashion photography. The 'Fashion-Able' cover of *Dazed & Confused*, art directed by Alexander McQueen, and inspired by McQueen's belief that beauty is found in difference, visualised alternative perceptions of fashion and beauty. The inside story featured individuals with physical disabilities dressed in custom-pieces by Hussein Chalayan, Rei Kawakubo and milliner Philip Treacy.

## LGBTQIA+

In 1984, Jean Paul Gaultier put men in skirts on the catwalk, reportedly causing fashion editors to walk out in protest. In contrast, Spring 2019 was a landmark season for gender-inclusivity, with brands like Gypsy Sport, Opening Ceremony, Art School and Charles Jeffrey LOVERBOY putting gender non-conforming models at the forefront of their catwalk shows.

At a time when LGBTQIA+ rights are under increasing threat worldwide, the visibility of trans models such as Munroe Bergdorf is paramount to redefining beauty standards and changing attitudes. In 2017, Condé Nast launched LGBTQ platform Them, bringing gender inclusivity into the mainstream media. The following year, Paris Lees became the first transgender columnist for British Vogue as well as the first openly trans person to feature in its pages, and was named in its *100 Most Influential Women*.

However, the Autumn 2019 catwalks reported only 56 trans and non-binary castings - down from 91 in the previous season. The LGBTQIA+ community also continues to call for more meaningful representation of trans, non-binary, gender-fluid and queer identities in fashion.

### LGBTQIA+ – designers

- Pam Hogg

As a former Blitz Kid, the spirit of Scottish designer Pam Hogg's shows are always one of rebellion, protest, and liberation, underpinned by a diverse cast of models. According to Hogg, this collection was about 'purity in innocence...just being without agenda, being free.' Josh Quinton, who modelled this look, has walked regularly for Hogg since her politically charged Autumn 2014 Show *Courage* which explored themes of gay rights and protest.

- Walter Van Beirendonck

Questions of the boundaries between gender and sexuality often arise in Walter Van Beirendonck's work. His menswear collections explore body images that depart from conventional ideas of masculinity, challenging popular stereotypes and the extent to which gender and its relationship to fashion is largely dictated by society.

- Charles Jeffrey LOVERBOY

Informed by Jeffrey's upbringing in Glasgow, Autumn 2018's 'Tantrum' collection was an exploration of pain. Its narrative considered the perception of gay pride and confidence, confronting Jeffrey's experience of growing up gay. Integral to the collection is Alan Downs's book *The Velvet Rage*, which addresses the sense of invalidation caused by the pressures a heteronormative society places on gay men.

- Gypsy Sport

Rio Uribe's Gypsy Sport is the industry leader for gender-inclusive catwalks that advocate for personal expression and body positivity. Autumn 2018's diverse cast included self-proclaimed 'drag kid' Desmond Napoles, AKA Desmond Is Amazing, then aged ten years old. Uribe discovered Desmond on Instagram, and said 'Casting Desmond for the runway was my way of showing young boys and girls that being unique is something to celebrate'.

- Jean Paul Gaultier

Known as fashion's *Enfant terrible* for his socially transgressive collections, Jean Paul Gaultier has championed diversity for decades, employing models of various shapes, sizes and skin tones, while transcending presumed boundaries of gender or sexuality. From

skirts for men to underwear as outerwear, and putting androgynous women on the catwalk, Gaultier rejects stereotyped images of masculinity, femininity and beauty. The Autumn 2004 collection was shown on marionettes and models styled with scarves covering their faces, anonymising their gender.

- **Backdrop image: & Other Stories Fall 2015, by Amos Mac**

& Other Stories' Autumn 2015 campaign featuring transgender models Hari Nef and Valentijn de Hingh, was the first mainstream fashion campaign to use an entirely trans cast and crew. The collection and campaign for the H&M-owned label was inspired by the 6-year-old trans daughter of a friend of the brand.

## **Race**

In 2013, Naomi Campbell, Bethann Hardison and Iman formed the Diversity Coalition, intended to challenge racism on the runway. By the Autumn 2019 season progress was evident, as all but one of the ten most-booked models at New York Fashion Week were Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic. Castings for European shows lag significantly behind, but have also seen an upward trend towards racial diversity.

Beyond model castings, catwalk culture is changing. With the Islamic fashion market set to be worth £267 billion by 2021, modest fashion has appeared at houses such as Gucci, Max Mara and Dior. Meanwhile, designers like New York's Pyer Moss routinely use the catwalk to present social justice issues and to spotlight marginalised groups.

In 2017, Edward Enninful was appointed Editor-in-Chief at British *Vogue* in a landmark move. The first Black editor in the magazine's history, he is an outspoken advocate for diversity in fashion. The following year the September issue of US *Vogue* saw Tyler Mitchell make history with his portrait of Beyoncé – the first time a Black photographer has shot the cover of any *Vogue*. Many other major magazines also featured Black women on their covers for September, the most commercially important issue of the year.

### **Race – designers**

- **Max Mara**

In 2017 Somali-American model, Halima Aden, became the first Muslim woman to wear a hijab on the international high fashion catwalk, walking for Yeezy in New York and Max Mara in Milan. Aden spent her early years in a Kenyan refugee camp before emigrating to America. After reaching the semi-finals of the Miss Minnesota USA pageant in 2016, she signed to IMG Models.

- **Ashish**

- Ashish's London Fashion Week catwalks are cast to reflect Britain's diversity. Ashish Gupta emigrated to London from Delhi in 1996, and draws on his own roots with shows that celebrate immigrant communities.
- Look 1 Ashish's Spring 2017 collection celebrated Indian culture as an integral part of British culture. The collection was a response to the rise in racial tensions in the summer of 2016. Ashish said, 'When Brexit happened, it was the first time in 20 years I felt that maybe I am unwelcome in the country I consider my home.'
- Look 2 For Spring 2015, Ashish cast only black models. 'I didn't set out to make it a political message, but it struck me that if I'd used all white models, no one would have questioned it.'

- **Supriya Lele**

Supriya Lele draws on her Indian heritage to explore the nuances of British Asian culture and Anglo-Indian dress codes. Re-contextualising the traditional motifs of Indian style, Lele takes inspiration from the drapery of the sari, dhoti linens and nylon sportswear, capturing the tension between her two cultures.

- **Backdrop image: Grace Wales Bonner, Spring/Summer 2016 collection, photographed by Chloé Le Drezen**

Jamaican-British designer, Grace Wales Bonner, investigates the aesthetics of post-colonialism and the black male body in fashion. Spring/Summer 2016 drew on the history of Ethiopian migration to India, exploring how race becomes more complex as it clashes with geography, religion and trans-national movement

### 3. Curriculum links

#### Art & Design

Curriculum Links:

#### Art & Design (National Qualification 3-5, Higher)

- (Higher) Develop knowledge of art and design practice by studying artists and designers and their work.
- (Higher) Opportunity for candidates to be inspired and creatively challenged by thoughts, ideas and feelings through the work.
- (Higher) Design concepts for fashion or textiles
- (NQ 5) Analysing the impact of social, cultural and other influences on artists' and designers' work and practice.
- (NQ 4) Describing the factors that have influenced artists' and designers' work and practice
- (NQ 3) Presenting simply expressed facts and opinions about art and design work and the things that have inspired and influenced it.

### 4. Suggested activities within the exhibition

For secondary pupils, we have designed two levels of activity –

1. General discussion questions you can ask pupils throughout the exhibition
2. An in-depth research activity linked to Art and Design exam-style questions.

#### General discussion questions

- In the Diversity section, using the **Ashish** display for inspiration, ask your pupils about the phrase “diversifying fashion”. What does this mean to them? (Ashish’s London Fashion Week catwalks are cast to reflect Britain’s diversity.)
- Using the **Size** display as an example, ask your pupils how the modern fashion industry is changing. Is it becoming more ‘body positive’?
- In the **LGBTQIA+** section, Jean Paul Gaultier is known as fashion’s *Enfant terrible* for his socially transgressive collections, and he has championed diversity for decades. Using his jacket and skirt outfit and display of fashion show invitations, ask your pupils how Gaultier has rejected stereotyped images of masculinity, femininity and beauty.

## Research Activity

Ask pupils to identify social and cultural factors which have influenced the design of 3-5 specific outfits/pieces/works within the exhibition.

Pupils can focus on the major themes of the exhibition:

- Disability
- Race
- LGBTQIA+
- Size
- Age

You can simplify/add to this question depending on the level the pupils are working towards.

### How to start this in the exhibition

Answers may include some of the following examples:

- Charles Jeffrey LOVERBOY – influenced by designer’s experience of growing up gay in Scotland. Alan Downs’s book *The Velvet Rage*
- Supriya Lele – inspired by her Indian heritage and British Asian culture and Anglo-Indian dress codes.
- Nicholas Kirkwood - explores the subculture of hacking, taking the theme of defiance against the rule of the ordinary
- General factors may also include:
  - social media, which has hugely influenced the way in which audiences engage with the fashion world, and is increasingly questioning and challenging the fashion status quo.
  - celebrity culture. Product endorsements, airbrushing/image editing and promoting unrealistic body ideals (often achieved via plastic surgery) are shared constantly on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. Diversity of celebrities also representing those traditionally excluded from fashion industry such as GB Para-Equestrian, Natasha Baker and Desmond Napoles, AKA Desmond Is Amazing.

## 5. Activities and resources to use in class

### Activities

After their visit pupils could undertake additional follow up activities:

- Discover and discuss how today's fashion industry is challenging perceptions and championing alternative ideals of beauty on the catwalk, in advertising, editorial and behind the camera.
- Research some of the designers featured in the exhibition, pivotal in challenging fashion perception: Max Mara, Ashish, Vivienne Westwood, Pam Hogg and Jean Paul Gaultier.
- Choose a major theme from the exhibition and design an outfit which challenges/questions the contemporary ideals of fashion and beauty.
- People choose fashion as a way of representing their voice and views. What other issues or topics would you like current designers to address?

### Resources

#### Exhibition-related resources

Find a range of resources online including short films, podcasts and images from the exhibition, plus blogs and Instagram takeovers:

[www.nms.ac.uk/bodybeautiful](http://www.nms.ac.uk/bodybeautiful)

#### I Weigh Campaign

Fronted by British celebrity Jameela Jamil, this online movement calls itself “the revolution against shame” and aims to challenge the idea that women's worth is measured against how much they weigh:

[www.iweighcommunity.com](http://www.iweighcommunity.com)

#### Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness Podcast

Jonathan Van Ness interviews Denise Bidot about the modelling industry and her experiences of being a plus-sized model. This podcast is featured in the exhibition. Please note the full podcast contains a number of instances of swearing. You can listen to the full interview (36 minutes) online:

[www.stitcher.com/podcast/earwolf/getting-curious-with-jonathan-van-ness/e/53867666](http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/earwolf/getting-curious-with-jonathan-van-ness/e/53867666)

## 6. Questions or feedback?

If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please get in touch with us. We'd also love to see any work your class produce after visiting the exhibition:

**[schools@nms.ac.uk](mailto:schools@nms.ac.uk)**

**[@NtIMuseumsScot](https://twitter.com/NtIMuseumsScot)**

**[#BodyBeautifulExhibition](https://twitter.com/BodyBeautifulExhibition)**