UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

FADA
VIAD

HYPERSAMPLING IDENTITIES, JOZI STYLE

CONVENED BY //

The Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD) Research Centre
Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture
University of Johannesburg

VENUE //

FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg
Bunting Road Campus, Auckland Park

DATES //

30 September - 2 October 2015

FRAMING STATEMENT //

The Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD), in association with fashion trend analyst, Nicola Cooper and VIAD post-doctoral fellow, Daniela Goeller, presents *Hypersampling Identities, Jozi Style* – an exhibition of work by young, male fashion designers and design collectives producing mens' wear, as well as that of the stylists, photographers, sartorial groups, and trend setters within their milieu.[1] These vibrant, dynamic, youth-orientated forms of production currently taking place in the urban Afropolitan environs of Jozi,[2] encompass and express a range of ever-emergent and ever-changing transnational, transhistorical, transcultural, Afro-urban and Afrofuturist black masculine identities.

The exhibition features emergent and established performances of fashion(able) and fashion(ed) Jozi identities by contemporary sartorial groups such as the Sbhujwas and Isikothane; young, street-savvy design collectives including the Sartists, -Smarteez, Dear Ribane III and Khumbula; and individual cultural practitioners such as Dr Pachanga and Jamal Nxedlana. Many of these practitioners draw on or reference fashions and styles of more established South African subcultural groups, specifially the Pantsulas[3] and Swenkas.[4] Both of these sub-cultural groups, in

---

[1] Hereafter referred to as 'practitioners'.

[2] Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall (2008:1) describe Johannesburg as "the premier African metropolis … shaped in the crucible of colonialism and by the labour of race"; a context in which 'worldliness' constitutes "not only the capacity to generate one's own cultural forms, institutions, and lifeways, but also with the ability to foreground, translate, fragment, and disrupt realities and imaginaries originating elsewhere, and in the process place these forms and pro-cesses in the service of one's own making".

[3] Pantsula is a sub-culture that incorporates political consciousness, life-style, language, dress-code, music and dance. It is rooted in apartheid township culture, specifically the street and *shebeen* (informal pub) cultures where it developed (Samuel 2001). Pantsula is influenced by the music (American jazz) and dance traditions from the Sophiatown-era (Marabi, Koffifi); fashion and style (mens' fashion portrayed in 1950s American gangster films and on jazz record covers); and the structural organisation of American gangster culture (street battles and competitions). A number of dance forms popular in the 1960s, such as Chips-Jive, Tap-Tap, Pata-Pata and Mon-key-Jive, can be considered as precursors of Pantsula dance (Goeller 2014a:[sp]; see Coplan 2007).

[4] Swenking is a competition, underpinned by emphasis on fashion, style and good manners. It is a conscious enactment of dandyism and the concept of the 'perfect gentleman', and an ex-pression of respect, pride, and refined masculinity (Goeller 2014c:[sp]). Zulu men, coming from Durban and Kwa-Zulu Natal and living as migrant workers in the hostels in Johannesburg and surrounding areas, carry out Swenking as a cultural practice. (Goeller 2014b:[sp]).

turn, were and continue to be, influenced by elements of traditional and contemporary popular culture, and combine these with references from the urban environment in which they are located. As established sub-cultures originating in the 1970s, Pantsula and Swenking have contemporary relevance, not only because they are currently active, but also because both have created particular images of male black identities in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, two prominent ones being the 'streetwise gangster-with-a-heart' (the Pantsulas) and the 'perfect gentleman' (the Swenkas) (Goeller 2014b:[sp]).

These images of black masculine identities directly inform the work of the Isikothane and Sbhujwa sartorial groups, and more indirectly, that of young Jozi-based practitioners of the so-called Generation Z (Goeller 2014b:[sp]). In the exhibition, the fashion styles of the Pantsula and Swenkas – and the sources they draw upon – are therefore positioned as historical references to, and for, the work of Jozi-based practitioners. Following the multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary nature of the practitioner's diverse practices, the work on *Hypersampling Identities, Jozi Style* is represented through a range of genres and media, and includes vernacular-, fashion- and documentary- photography; archival materials; imagery from popular visual culture; installations; artefacts; visual art; advertisements; films; and music videos.

It is important to note how "movement culture" (Miller 2009) – music,[5] dance, posing and other forms of embodied practice (gestures, deportment, mannerisms) – is embedded in these historical and contemporary visual performances of identity. The clothing worn, ways of assembling and wearing clothing (style),[6] and agency (pose and attitude)

---

[5] As Stuart Hall (2009:109) notes, many black diasporic cultures evolve with and around music, where style has "become itself the subject of what is going on" and the body "as if it were, and it often was, the only cultural capital we had … the canvases of representation". In this sense, discourses on cultural blackness often cannot be divorced from conversations on music, dance and the performative body.

[6] According to Susan Kaiser (2012:1),

> Fashion involves becoming collectively with others. Fashion is also about producing clothes and appearances, working through ideas, negotiating subject positions (e.g., gender, ethnicity, class), and navigating through power positions. It involves mixing, borrowing, belonging, and changing. It is a complex process that entangles multiple perspectives and approaches.

'Dress' is a more neutral term used predominantly for historical and cultural comparative purposes in global fashion theory to describe the traditional, symbolic, or functional use of clothing (Kaiser 2012:7). 'Dress style' refers to the actual items of dress and the way they are combined and worn to create identity and difference. Carol Tulloch (2010:276) considers style as a form

combined with elements of movement culture. comprise what Ann Hollander (1995:27) calls a complex, interactive and ever-evolving "visual narrative". Following Hollander, in the exhibition, emphasis is placed on a conglomerate of fashion, style, movement culture and agency, evolving in and through imagery or 'the visual'. In selected instances, the integral relationship between these elements are highlighted through strategic references to music, dance and fashions of a particular geographic and temporal context.

Operating within, and moving between, Jozi's seams (the inner-city, Daveyton, Soweto, Alex, Tembisa), practitioners manifest, in often transitory ways, the diverse means of leveraging fashion style and movement culture that characterises Generation Z. Distinguished by their engagements with each other across diverse locales and levels of society, Generation Z operates and produces in a multidimensional digital realm or 'third space' which enables these "flow[s] and interconnections" and the new structures of "power geometry" (Massey 1991:24-29) that it introduces.[7] An underpinning thread of connectivity in this predominantly digital creative network of production, dissemination, promotion and consumption, is the strategy of what we term 'hypersampling': the remixing, reappropriating, reintegrating, fusing, conjoining, interfacing and mashing-up of often disparate elements gleaned from a multiplicity of online and offline sources to produce new fashion styles. Materially, sartorial strategies of hypersampling might involve thrifting; recycling; repurposing; upcycling, as well as the combination of differing design elements, fabrics and/ or motifs. The term 'hypersampling' goes beyond this however, to also suggest strategies of utilising diverse digital platforms. With its connectedness to digital technologies and hyperculture, the term 'hypersampling'[8] – as opposed to 'sampling' and other terms that denote

of agency "in the construction of self through the assemblage of garments, accessories, and beauty regimes that may, or may not, be 'in fashion' at the time of use". She elaborates that style is "part of the process of self-telling, that is, to expound an aspect of autobiography of oneself through narratives". Tulloch (2010:274) proposes the *articulation* of *style-fashion-dress* as a complex system that can be broken down into part- and whole- relations between the parts (individual terms) and the wholes (the system that connects them) (Kaiser 2012:7). The larger articulation of *style-fashion-dress* locates style in the context of fashion: a social process in which style narratives are collectively "in flux with time" (Riello & McNeil cited in Kaiser 2012:7).

[7] Feminist spatial theorist Doreen Massey (cited in Tulloch 2012:2) describes her concept of 'power geometry' as being about "power in relation to the flows … movement" and distinct rela-tionships between different social groups and individuals regarding mobility. For Massey, power, and discourses thereof, operate in the third space as multidimensional rather than oppositional.

[8] 'Hypersampling' may be related to a particular form of eclecticism in fashion that expands into

the 'cutting, pasting and combining' of visual/design elements, images and styles[9] – is significant.

The focus on hypersampling in *Hypersampling Identities, Jozi Style* is positioned in relation – rather than in hierarchical opposition – to sampling. Ted Polhemus (1994:131, emphasis added) designates sampling as a particularly postmodern phenomenon, in what he calls the "Supermarket of Style", where "all of history's streetstyles … are *lined up* as possible options as if they were cans of soup on supermarket shelves." In "Style World", "'nostalgia mode' is set at full hilt, separate eras are flung together in one stretched, 'synchronic' moment in time, all reality is hype and 'authenticity' seems out of the question." Hypersampling incorporates this consumerist approach, but extends beyond it, opening up new ways of conceptualisation and practice in which seemingly limitless options and connections form nodes within an already rhizomic matrix of interconnectivity. Whilst it is not the only hypercultural platform where strategies of hypersampling are employed, the Internet operates as what Doreen Massey (1991) calls third space of 'inbetweenness' – a horizonless zone in which rapid communication and instantaneous, worldwide access to information produces an environment of unlimited possibility, and boundaries and spatial proximity lose significance (deepfriedscifi 2013). Boundless and boundaryless, the Internet enables rapid non-hierarchical, non-linear, synchronic, and diachronic interchanges across fields such

---

a 'super-sampling' of styles in an age of globalisation, communication and endless accessibility (Frankel cited in Theunissen 2005:19).

Given its relation to the digital realm, hypersampling differs from postcolonial terminology used to describe processes of cultural contact, fusion, intrusion, disjunction, crossovers and assimilation that occur due to border crossings by cultures and peoples, and which trigger the forging of "new identities and new ways of being" (Venn 2010:322). These include, amongst others, terms such as 'acculturation' (James Clifford; Paul Gilroy); 'hybridity' (Homi K Bhabha; Néstor García Canclini); 'transculturation' (García Canclini; Fernando Ortiz); 'belonging and unbelonging' (Sarah Ahmed); 'translation, syncretism and creolisation' (Edward Ricardo Braithwaite; Édouard Glissant); 'intersystems' (Lee Drummond); 'ethono-, media-, techno-, finan- and ideoscapes' (Arun Appadurai); 'amalgamation' (Gilberto Freyre); and 'entanglement' (Sarah Nuttall).

[9] Sampling a practice common to all cultural fields (art, literature, fashion). The term is commonly used in relation to fashion history/theory, Djing, Vjaying and with regard to subcultures. Sampling occurs when existing elements are de-contextualised and reused in combinations that generate new meanings. Dick Hebdige's (1979:102-106) concept of 'bricolage' used in the context of subcultural style refers to the decontextualisation of known elements and their re-contextualisation in a new style regime that denotes new meaning. Hudita Nura Mustafa (1998:22) employs a similar concept, the sartorial ecumene, that she explains as follows:

> An ecumene brings together images and goods from different cultural and geographic origins in new combinations. By a sartorial ecumene I mean the incorporation of objects and images of global origins into practices and circulations involving dress and adornment …The sartorial ecumene reinforces old and new dependencies within the global economy.

as fashion, dance, music, performance, visual art, entertainment, and commercialisation; continuous processes of reworking, reinventing, reimagining signifiers (semiotic) and styles (visual), and the often temporary formation of fluid, ever-changing, ever-emerging identity constructions. In hypercultural and digitally developing societies,

> Everything may be used to make something. All culture and history, and all materials. Evidence of this is the remix culture of YouTube videos, the musician Girl Talk, and the re-commodification of history and historical objects by hipster culture. In a hypercultural era, all of history is in the cultural domain, all culture is capable of being processed, wound down, and remixed. … Hyperculture is … a melting system of objects and value where everything blends together. … religions, arts, cultures, scientific techniques, all business commerce and trade are up for being remixed and reconsumed. The ultimate melting pot of thought, image, and existence (cyborganthropology).

Working with the concept of the "infinity wave" (Nxedlana 2015), and hypersampling from potentially limitless combinations of transhistorical, cultural, visual, and material signifiers, styles, and sources, Jozi-based practitioners aspire to, and work towards, creating new fashion products. Use of, and reliance on, digital platforms means that the forms of individualised and collective agencies they attempt to establish cannot be divorced from the broader spectrum of consumerist visual culture. In operating within a hypercultural space, for Jozi-based practitioners or 'third space kids', platforms such as social media (Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram), as well as mobile and online technologies are a vital means of communication, articulation, (self)representation and dissemination. With access to an immediate digital market, their representations of identity are available for visual consumption. Picked up on by bloggers, 'look-creators' and trend-spotters, digital technology rapidly increases the potential of creating new trends and cultural touchstones.

Given the semiotic links between the construction of identities and ways in which identities are performed, masqueraded, and articulated through fashion and style (see for instance Kasier 2012; Tulloch 2010), hypersampling can be considered as a practice through which newly fashion(ed), emergent identities can be imagined and produced. Working within the urban context of an ever-changing Jozi cityscape, scaffolded by consumerist, marketing and digital technologies, and fed on sound-bytes of apartheid and colonial Southern and South African histories, young practitioners hypersample freely, even playfully, from a range of

transhistorical, transcultural, visual, and material sources. Their sartorial strategies of hypersampling within the visual aesthetics of hyperculture are layered, interwoven, contradictory, clashing and closely stitched.

Hypersampling from the past, Jozi-practitioners adopt and adapt vintage and retro style referents, remixing them with contemporary design and materials to 'refashion' garments in ways that signify new meanings. Their transhistorical and transcultural hypersampling traverses wide temporal and geographic terrain, spanning, for example, signifiers of, and references to, fashion styles of historical black sartorial figures (the Black Dandy; -Mungo Macaroni; -Blackamoor); twentieth-century sartorial subcultural 'types' (the -homeboy; -hipster; -city-slicker; -nerd; -geek; -preppie; -suit; -spornosexual); colonial Southern Africa, Afrikaans Calvinism and the Voortrekkers; the apartheid era (1950s-1980s), and/ or the culturally traditional dress-styles of their forefathers. Many of the practitioners whose work is featured on the exhibition, including the Smarteez, Khumbula, Sartists, Sbhujwas and Isikothane, hypersample from the fashion styles of the Pantsulas and Swenkas.[10] Two photographic works, one by the Sartists, the other by Khumbula, demonstrate these complex interwoven transhistorical and transcultural relationships.

Fig. 1. The Sartists, *untitled*, 2014
Digital print
Photographer Andile Buka
Courtesy of the artists

[10] The Isbhujwa and Isikothane are sartorial groups that have emerged directly from either Pantsula or Swenking, or a combination of both. According to Daniela Goeller (2015),

> Isbhujwa (from the French '*bourgeois*') 'de-radicalises' Pantsula, in favour of the more polished hustler, or so-called 'black diamond', whereas the Isikothane (from the Nguni word 'kotha' (lick)) 'radicalise' Swenking into a parody of the icon of the neo-liberal era: the Wall Street banker in red suspenders.

Fig. 2. *Moeti and Lazarus Fume*, 1920
Silver Bromide Print
Photograph belongs to the Ramela family of Orlando East
Photographer unknown
Mofokeng, S. *Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890-1950*, (1997)

In a muted black and white photograph, retouched so as to resemble hand-coloured portraiture, three young black men look towards the camera. Their poses are relaxed and confident; one crosses his arms and rests his leg on his thigh, the second displays what appears to be open and friendly attitude towards the viewer, and the central figure looks straight into the lens with a slight smile, a tennis racket between his legs. These are the 'Tennis Boys', or rather, the Sartists donned as such. The pristine whites of their clothing, and confident demeanour suggests that they are stylish graduates of a quintessentially *Black Ivy* League. In producing this image, the Sartists hypersample from the turn of the century photograph of *Moeti and Lazarus Fume* (1920), which South African photographer Santu Mofokeng, includes in his seminal artwork titled *Black Photo Album/ Look at Me: 1890 -1950* (1997), and from the contemporary Bronx-based design duo, Street Etiquette's (Travis Gumps & Joshua Kissi) preppie line of clothing titled *Black Ivy*. The *Black Ivy* line thumbs its nose at the prestigious, but not necessarily egalitarian schools of the Ivy League, with all its references to elitism and 'old money' This new black varsity chic look also challenges clichéd representations of black masculinities as 'gangstas' of the 'hood, and, in so doing, advocates a form of protest through fashion and style.

Juxtaposed, the images of the Tennis Boys and *Moeti and Lazarus Fume* speak of shifting notions of masculinity, from a pre-apartheid context to a post-apartheid environment. In the original archival image, which constitutes the first reference of black people wearing a tennis outfit in South Africa, the two men adopt stiff, formal stances that suggest a sense of discomfort in front of the camera. In contrast, the Sartists seem at ease

– asserting and assuming agency in the designing, masquerading and marketing of their clothing. Their assurance might be because, for them, referencing South Africa's troubled colonial history is not just about the clothing; it is a form of paying homage to their grandparents' struggles and a way of expressing pride in their heritage. As they note, "We want to reference styles before apartheid because there are beautiful stories that are not told … about the black people that lived in those times" (Lephoto and Kungwane cited in Kumalo 2015).

In addition to referencing Mofokeng's image and the *Black Ivy* look, the Sartists play on the importance of sportswear in Jozi fashion, popularised through the trademark Converse All Stars 'takkies'[11] adopted by the Pantsulas from the 1970s onwards (Goeller 2014a:[sp]). Worn by Pantsulas as a play on the American urban 'gangsta' hip hop fashions of the mid-late 1990s, Converse All Stars have become associated with the figure of the South African '*tsotsi*' or '*skelm*'[12] (Ratele 2012:120). Links with gangsterism and hip hop culture can be traced to the the 1990s, when members of the hip hop community on the United States (US) East Coast looked to the gangsters of the 1930s and 1940s for inspiration. Mafioso influences, or the references to figure of the Italian raggazzo became popular, with many rappers setting aside gang- and prison- inspired clothing (oversized sweatshirts, hoodies, baggy pants, sneakers), in favour of classic gangster fashions such as bowler hats, double-breasted suits, silk shirts, and alligator-skin shoes ('gators'). A similar combination of expensive garments and criminal activities play out in Pantsula interpretations of the image of the American as a combination of the gangster and the mysterious, impeccable gentleman (Humphrey Bogart), artist (Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, American Jazz, Cotton Club), entertainer (Frank Sinatra, Fred Astaire) and political activist (Black Power movement, Malcolm X, Nation of Islam black suits). Signifiers of, and references to, all of these fashion styles were sampled and translated into Pantsula dress styles to become packaged as the figure of the 'streetwise gangster-with-a-heart', whose outfits comprised hats, suits, shirts, ties and two-tone or plain leather shoes, often combined with a dusk-coat (Goeller 2014b:[sp]).

---

[11]   South African colloquialism for sneakers.

[12] South African colloquial terms for 'gangster' or 'thief'.

Fig. 3. Khumbula, *The three steps of making tea*, 2014
Digital print
Photographer Harness Hamese
Courtesy of the artist

In a second image, Khumbula similarly articulates the attributes of the 'perfect gentleman' through hypersampling strategies. Again, three men are donned in garb referencing the historical, this time, tailored gentlemen's suits and hats. They are drinking tea out of china teacups, on the streets of what appears to be Soweto. The combination of the Anglicised tea drinking ceremony and elegant formal attire becomes a performance, invoking Hollander's (1995) visual narrative comprising fashion, style, agency and elements of movement culture. In this way, Khumbula references the trademark of the internationally mediated, contemporary phenomenon of black dandyism: the suit as signifier of respectability. For proponents of black dandyism, such as the contemporary UK-based design collective Art Comes First (Sam Lambert & Shaka Maidoh)[13] and Street Etiquette, wearing the suit is a physical and psychological embodiment of black masculinity. Not only does it convey the visual narratives of respectability: dignity, pride, confidence, self-assurance, elegance and social standing, but also portrays dressing as a form of self-discipline – a means to convey a sense of moral rigor, refinement, manners, values and personal codes of conduct.[14] In Monica Miller's re-reading of black dandyism[15] as a "cosmopolite self-concept",

---

[13] Art Comes First draws inspiration from the distinctively sharp styles of the 1950s Jamaican Rude Boys (aka 'Rudie'), who came to represent the young rebels wearing distinctively sharp sartorial styles comprising Mohair suits, thin ties and pork pie hats. The style was closely connected to the music movements of the time; their initial inspiration derived from American Jazz and R&B musicians as well as some notorious gangsters.

[14] Their self-fashioning of masculinity through projection of image and employment of fashion and style as a form of self-discipline echo the characteristics of both the aesthetic and aesthete dandy. The former is associated with excess, decadence, flamboyance and theatricality; the latter with self-discipline, personal hygiene, deportment, elocution, poise, taste, tailoring and refinement.

[15] In colonial and post-colonial discourse, Black dandyism is often dismissed as 'imitating whiteness', therefore considered an inappropriate model for the construction of modern black masculinities.

> A concentration on the dandy's cosmopolitanism establishes the black dandy as a figure with both, European and African and American origins, a figure who expresses with his performative body and dress the fact that modern identity, in both black and white, is necessarily syncretic, or mulatto, but in a liberating rather than constraining way. … This other dandy's syncretic nature enables the figure to display a knowingness about representation; this knowingness makes the look of black modernism much more complicated than an explanation of white imitation suggests. (Miller 2009:178).

Black dandyism as a 'cosmolite self-concept' could similarly be applied to the practice of Swenkas and their close counterparts, the Congolese Sapeurs. Visual narratives enacted in Swenking performances feature not only the clothing, but also the way it is assembled and worn on the body, the wearer's self-image and attitude (agency) and elements of movement culture.. Swenking is therefore not just about being elegantly dressed; it is about portraying, thinking of oneself, acting as, and in all senses of the word, 'being', a gentleman with his attendant qualities of respectability, dignity, class and social standing (Goeller 2015). The Congolese Sapeurs (*La Sape*), whose similarly flamboyant performances of 'gentlemanliness' has its roots in the French colonisation of the Congo in the early part of the twentieth century. Congolese men who worked for the French colonisers, or spent time in France, began adopting that country's sartorial elegance and aristocratic affect, combining this with a nod to 1920s jazz age refinement. Their performative 'Afroswagger' (a form of exaggerated nonchalance and panache), and close attention to personal appearance in fashion and manners may be associated with the historical figure of the Black Dandy.

In both the Sartists and Khumbula's works, all or some of the above-mentioned transhistorical and transcultural referents are digitally mediated: these referents of referents create a mishmash of past and present that points to an Afro-future. Referents of referents might be remixed or mashed up with images, sounds and ideas globally circulated on the Internet, as well as elements from popular, youth, music, virtual, prison and cyber cultures. In addition to these referents and elements, they also draw on the specificity of their urban environment, as well as the fluidity of cross-cultural exchanges taking place as a result of cultural migration into South Africa from across the African continent, often fusing global elements with the local to create new, 'glocal' identities.

Not unlike the ways in which global sartorial groups such as Art Comes First and Street Etiquette utilise certain strategies to invoke the transgressive, Jozi-based practitioners deploy hypersampling as a means though which to refashion the subjectivities and agencies of black masculine identities in ways that interfere with, disrupt, transgress, or problematise the hetero-normative. Rewinding and fast-forwarding from their positions in the present, third space kids use hypersampling as a means to articulate expressions of simultaneous 'belonging' and 'not belonging'. To borrow Susan Kaiser's (2012:3) phrase, used in mapping relationships between fashion and culture, and adopted by David Muggleton (2002:67) in relation to contemporary sub-cultures, they are "dressing to belong and dressing to differentiate"; fashion and style become signifiers for tensions between expressions of personal and collective identities, and the re-fashioning of contemporary black masculinities in transition.

THE ENCOUNTERS

(Re)-Fashioning Masculinities: Identity, Difference, Resistance

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of 'Encounters' scheduled to place over three days (1-3 October 2015). In the Encounters, which take the form of film screenings, presentations, roundtable and panel discussions, and conversations, participants explore the various forms of self-imaging/self-representation and hypersampling strategies used by sartorial groups such as the Swenkas, Pantsulas, Isikothane, and Sartists, as well as young Jozi-based design collectives such as Khumbula, the Smarteez, and the Ribane siblings whose work features on the exhibition. Fashion is considered as a means by which identities and subjectivities – particularly forms of transnational, transhistorical, transcultural, Afropolitan, Afro-urban, Afro-futurist black masculinities – are imagined, produced, marketed and disseminated. The Encounters offers invited participants, who include academics working across a range of disciplines; young Jozi-based fashion designers; photographers; stylists; filmmakers; cultural (art, design, performance) practitioners and trend followers (fashion bloggers) an opportunity to engage with, and explore themes that arise out of, or are tangential to, the work featured on the exhibition.

The Encounters provide opportunities to identify pertinent issues that can be furthered in a larger platform and exhibition based on related thematics next year (VIADUCT 2016), and in VIAD's guest-edited special edition of the academic journal *Critical Arts* for 2016.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The exhibition and Encounters take place against the backdrop of a recent surge in internationally-based research around the historical figure of The Black Dandy. This research, which takes the form of exhibitions (*Return of the Rude Boys* 2014, *Dandy Lion: (Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity* 2015); publications (Miller 2009); conferences (*Dandy Lion* 2015); and films (*The Black Dandy* 2015), explore the contemporary phenomenon of 'Black Dandyism' – African, African-American and UK-based appropriations of dandyesque dress and fashionable display as a means of performing black masculinities – in a range of historical and contemporary global contexts.

Parallel to this, focus is currently being placed on masculinities, and particularly the study of (western) men's fashion, which has been relatively marginalised in relation to scholarly investigations of women's fashion and dress (see McNeil & Karaminas 2009:1; Reilly & Cosby 2008:xi), both in global Fashion Studies and South African academia. This is evident in the introduction of a fashion week dedicated solely to men's wear in South Africa, highlighting a growing interest in links between fashion and masculinities.

The exhibition and Encounters are based on the premise that young, emergent South African fashion designers and cultural practitioners, and their work, are important, yet underexplored, agents of socio-cultural change in contemporary South Africa. Our focus on performances of black masculine identities does not discount other forms of identity construction taking place in Jozi through fashion. Rather, it is generated through what VIAD has identified as a vibrant, dynamic, youth-orientated area of creative production currently underway in the urban environs of Jozi, and the rich skeins of visual and conceptual material such production presents. The current global interest in black dandyism as well as the scholarly and market-driven focus on (fashionable) performances of masculine identities, indicates a need to explore the topic in local terms, whilst situating this exploration in relation to broader South African, African and global fashion arenas.

POSSIBLE THREADS TO BE EXPLORED

1.   HYPERSAMPLING

- Transnational, transhistorical, transcultural, Afropolitian, Afro-urban, Afro-futurist black masculinities (Jozi practitioners and groups)

2.   BLACK DANDYISM AS A CONTEMPORARY PHENOMENON

3.   SELF-REPRESENTATION-SELF-IMAGING-SELF-STYLING

- Photographic self-representation (politics of the look; taking control; power-relations; empowerment; agency; self-regard).
- Use of digital technologies (cell phone, Internet, particularly social media) in contemporary forms of self-representation. Agency; empowerment; control over one's image and identity; closely linked to marketing of the self.
- Self-fashioning of visual identities through projection of image to convey dignity, respectability; pride; self-assurance; elegance; forms of social standing.
- Self-styling or self-fashioning of identity as a person – dressing as a form of self-discipline: moral rigor; refinement; manners; values; personal codes of conduct. (Above two points speak to: the aesthetic/aesthete dandy).

4.   PERFORMING MASCULINITIES

- Visual display; performing masculinities; attitude; Afroswagger; flamboyance; assertion of personality; means of self-expression (albeit according to group codes) (Sapeurs, Swenkas).
- Integrally related to assertion of masculinity and sexuality (virility; physical strength; economic power) (Sapeurs, Swenkas).
- Men paying great attention to dress often seen as gay/queer (particularly in some African countries/cultures) yet often done in order to assert hypermasculinity (Sapeurs; Swenkas).
- Tensions between individuality; and being part of the group; operating according to group codes.

5.   REFERENCING THE PAST

• Paternal or family values; homage to grandparent's struggles and heritage.

• Nostalgia for the past. Raises many issues: it may be argued that black subjects were dressing to 'fit into' or 'belong in' dominant culture (a culture that was politically oppressive). Such 'fitting into' has many possible reasons, some of which might include: avoiding trouble (blending); aspiring to be like (interpellation); respectability (I will be treated as I am dressed); conscious choice (I have the right to dress as I like).

6.   RESISTANCE

• Transgression of racial boundaries: whiteface-blackface (Pantsulas).

• Statement against seeing the black person as labourer, not a man ('I Am A Man' 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike slogan).

• Gender and sexual ambiguities.

• Dressing as a form of (self)-assertion against 'white' images of subjugation; degradation; infantilisation; objectification; anonymity; dressing to find a conception of independence vis-à-vis white-black codes.

• Form of assertion against erasure in colonialist, imperialist and apartheid eras.

• Black dandyism as a form of protest, tracing it from the days of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, where blacks adorned their meagre wears as a sign of affirmation of their existence, to contemporary incarnations in the cosmopolitan art worlds of London, Paris and New York.

7.   RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BLACK DANDYISM AND THE HISTORICAL (BLACK) DANDY

• The dandy as a paradoxical figure: defies social order (ridiculous, absurd) yet embodies 'good taste' and sophistication (Sapeurs, Swenkas).

• The dandy is "constantly performing"; public performance is "necessary for the dandy's very identity"; creates controversy and conflict because he is a "type of masculine character … who quite overtly performs for an audience" (Hendler cited in Mintler 2010:119, 124).

• Exploits logic of conventional rules of behaviour and dress in order to produce the unexpected. Conforms to the rules of unexpectedness within a particular system and challenges that system from within.

- Transgressive of hetero-normativity: reveals and contests the limits and stresses of socially acceptable normative behaviour and forms of masculinity prescribed for hetero-sexual, white men. Poses an alternative means of expressing masculine identity. Dandyism is not an opposite construct of masculinity; rather it is a collection of various sartorial proclivities and behaviours that provide alternatives to rigid/narrow definitions of masculinity.

- Subverts gender and sexual stereotypes (combines masculine-feminine elements; effeminate; feminised); often gay/queer. Drawing from masculinities and femininities, the dandy navigates and moves between these gender categories in ways that trivialise them and destabilise their boundaries (Feldman cited in Mintler 2010:124).

- Victorian dandy: rejection of Victorian prudishness, propriety, decorum and reductive essentialism of hegemonic masculinity.

- Female cross-dressers who styled themselves as dandies in the early twentieth century; drag queens.

- Performances of 'conspicuous leisure' and 'conspicuous consumption' (Isikotane).

- Excessive preoccupation with self; narcissism; vanity.

- Figure of dandy often coded as the opposite of gentleman and man by Victorian satirists (Sapeurs, Swenkas).

8.   CONSUMPTION

- Fashionable dressing for status; extravagance; economic prosperity; conspicuous consumption; economic mobility (Hip-hop; Isikotane).

- Thrifting speaks to socio-economic contexts and availability of materials;

in contrast to flaunting of money (Isikotane).

- Vintage/retro clothing: used for quality of fabric and cut; either unobtainable or largely unaffordable today.

- Austerity trend/thrifting; looking back to vintage can be seen in light of current economic crisis.

9.   COMMERCIALISATION-MARKETING-BRANDING-HYPERCULTURE

- 'Auto exotic gaze' of Europe and America; 'supersampling' Africa.

- Africa as source of inspiration/reference; 'Africanising look'; use of 'African' or animal skin prints.

- Contemporary commercialisation of style (Pantsulas, Swenkas).

  by national South African corporates such as Woolworths, Truworths Man, Edgars, Markham, Mr Price, JJs and Ackermans.

- Music; popular culture; fashion film, entertainment overlaps (hyperculture).

- Use of style in advertising products (Swenkas).

- Descendants of slaves perpetuating, marketing, pushing for products made by modern slaves in sweatshops; now slaves to fashion.

- Combination of marketing self and brand self as brand; self and brand names.

- Commercial exchanges; affiliated with brands (e.g., Addidas) – adds credibility.

SOURCES CITED

Brand, J and Theunissen, J. (eds). 2005. *Global fashion local tradition: on the globalisation of fashion*. Indiana University: Terra.

Coplan, DB. 2007. *In township tonight! Three centuries of South African black city music and theatre*. Johannesburg: Jacana.

Cyborganthropology. [O]. Available:
http://cyborganthropology.com/Hyperculture
Accessed 8 August 2015.

Dandy Lion: (Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity. 2015. [Exhibition]. Curated by S. Lewis. Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago.

Dandy Lion: (Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity. 2015. [Conference]. 6 April. Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago.

Deepfried. 2013. [O]. Available:
https://deepfriedscifi.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/so-what-is-hyperculture-an-attempt-to-define-it/
Accessed 8 August 2015.

Goeller, D. 2014a. *Pantsula*. Unpublished article:[Sp].

Goeller, D. 2014b. *Image-making and South African fashion-culture – Isipantsula, Swenking and Isikothane: of American gangsters, international gentlemen and Italian raggazzos*. Unpublished article:[Sp].

Goeller, D. 2014c. *Portrait of a gentleman – Swenking and the reactualization of dandyism in South Africa*. Unpublished article:[Sp].

Goeller, D. 2015. Black masculinity in South Africa: pantsula, swenking, isbhujwa, and isikothane. Paper to be presented at the *Rhythms of life: youth and popular culture in a changing South Africa* conference, Cape Town, November.

Hebdige, D. 1979. *Subculture. The meaning of style*. London: Methuen.

Hollander, A. 1978. *Seeing through clothes*. London: University of California Press.

Kaiser, SB. 2012. *Fashion and cultural studies reader*. London/New York: Berg.

Kumalo, Z. 2015. Eye on … the Sartists. *Oqojiii* 1:10.

Massey, D. 1991. Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place, in *Mapping the futures: local cultures, global change*, edited by J Bird, B Curtis, T Putnam, G Robertson & L Tickner. London: Routledge:59-69.

Mbembe, A and Nuttall, S 2008. *Johannesburg. The elusive metropolis*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

McNeil, P & Karaminas, V. 2009. *The men's fashion reader*. London: Bloomsbury.

Miller, M. 2009. *Slaves to fashion: black dandyism and the styling of black diasporic identity*.

Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Mintler, CR. 2010. From aesthete to gangster: the dandy figure in the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald. *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8:104-129.

Mofokeng, S. 1997. *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890-1950*. The Walther Collection. Göttingen: Steidl. [O]. Available: http://cargocollective.com/santumofokeng/filter/work/black-photo-album
Accessed 26 August 2015.

Muggleton, D. 2000. *Inside subculture: the postmodern meaning of style*. London/New York: Berg.

Mustafa, HN. 1998. Sartorial ecumenes: African styles in a social and economic context, pageantry, power and imitation, in *The art of African fashion*, edited by E van der Plas & M Willemsen. Amsterdam: Africa World Press and Prince Claus Fund:13-45.

Myburgh, CV. 1993. *Pantsula dance – case studies on the origins and makings of a township art form: the Johannesburg Dance Foundation's Proficiency Certificate Course, 4th year (honours).* Johannesburg:[Sn].

Nxedlana, J. 2015. Informal conversation with L Farber, C Jorgensen and M Fidel-Regueros. Johannesburg, UJ Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, 12 July.

Polhemus, T. 1994. *Street style. From sidewalk to catwalk.* London: Thames and Hudson.

Ratebe, K. 2012. Ayashisa mateki: Converse All Stars and the making of African masculinities, in *Was it something I wore?*, edited by R Moletsane, CA Mitchell & A Smith. Cape Town: HSRC Press:112-131.

Reilly, K. and Cosbey, S. (eds.) 2008. *Men's fashion reader*. 3rd Edition. New York: Fairchild.

Return of the Rude Boys. 2014. [Exhibition]. Curated by D Chalkley and H Elliott. Terrace Galleries, Somerset House, London. 13 June- 25 August.

Samuel, G. 2001. Shifts in Pantsula in a performance context in KwaZulu-Natal: a case study of Pearl Ndaba's Golden Dancers between 1998-2001, in *Footsteps across the landscape of dance in South Africa*, edited by KA Vedel & J Wateran. Shuttle 02 – a Cultural Exchange Project between Denmark and South Africa. Salisbury: Armstrong & Assoc:53-58.

Theunissen, J. 2005. Global fashion local tradition, in *Global fashion local tradition: on the globalisation of fashion*, edited by J Brand and J Theunissen. Indiana University Bloomington: Terra:9-23.

Tulloch, C. 2010. Style-fashion-dress – from black to post-black. *Fashion theory: Journal of dress, body and culture* 14(3):273-304.

Tulloch, C. 2012. Fashion and culture: fashion studies, cultural studies, in *Fashion and cultural studies reader,* edited by S Kaiser. London/New York: Berg.

Venn, C. 2010. Aesthetics, politics, identity: diasporic problematisations. *Critical Arts* 24(3), November:321-347.

Wizman, A and Lunetta, L. (dir). 2015. [Film]. *The Black Dandy*.