DANDY LION
(Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity

Kia Chenelle (American, b. 2013), The Waiting Man I, 2013

MUSEUM OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
moadsf.org • 685 Mission Street • San Francisco
How to Use This Guide When Visiting MoAD

The Dandy Lion Curriculum Guide is intended for use with students in middle school and high school; however, the content may be adjusted to meet the learning needs of other age groups. The Student Vocabulary Sheet, Question Sheet, and Lesson Plans should be used to prepare students for a focused museum visit. MoAD Group Tours can be used to introduce students to the exhibition. The Vocabulary Sheet can be used to introduce students to terms they will encounter throughout the exhibition. That will, in turn help students look more carefully at the photographs found in the exhibition.

When visiting MoAD, give each of your students a copy of the Questions to Use While at MoAD to further engage them in the context of the exhibition. Be sure to have your students answer the Reflection Questions as soon as possible after your visit to the Museum. These are designed to help students think deeper about the exhibitions after they have visited the museum.

You may also opt to choose either of the projects to complete before (recommended) or after your Museum visit. Please note that the histories and cultures that inform Black Dandy culture are vast and complex. Some of the history is touched upon in this Curriculum Resource Guide, but additional knowledge and reading on the following histories is recommended: The Transatlantic Slave Trade, African Colonialism, the African Diaspora, Reconstruction era, Pan-Africanism, the Harlem Renaissance, and the history of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is important to note that the exhibition’s curator, Shantrelle P. Lewis, says that not all of the men shown in this exhibition would identify themselves as dandies and some might be put off by that title or possibly any other label. Lewis identifies these men under this umbrella for the purpose of discussing a cultural phenomenon.

We sincerely hope you find this Curriculum Resource Guide helpful and welcome any comments or feedback you may have. Additionally, we would love to hear how you have chosen to implement the material in your classroom or program. If you have developed any handouts or found new resources you would like to share with other educators, please send us an email with a copy of the resource.

Best Wishes!

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About the Exhibition

The men photographed in this exhibition reflect a current and growing movement among men of African descent – a manner of dress, attitude, and biting sense of humor with both historical antecedents and contemporary motivations. These images also demonstrate that the medium of photography has become an effective platform for the self-representation of sartorial Black men.

The roots of Black Dandyism can be traced back to attempts by 15th-century African rulers to mix African attire with European fashions, and also to the “dressing up” of enslaved Africans in Europe and the Americas during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Black Dandyism is thus an assimilation of European menswear intertwined with an African aesthetic of performance and ritual of dress. In a continental African context, clothes are extremely important – for royalty and commoners alike. Scholar Monica L. Miller notes that articles of clothing on Black men during slavery (and colonialism) often signified one’s station in life: freedom or subjection. In response to the widespread stereotype of Black men as brutes, by the early 20th century, fashion became a means for men of African descent to exert control over self-presentation and craft new identities, and thus a new phase of the dandy movement was born.

Today, artists from various regions around the African Diaspora are using still photographs and moving images to depict young sartorial Black men in urban, rural, literal, and abstract landscapes across the globe. These trickster Dandy Lions are high-styled rebels. They defy stereotypical and monolithic understandings of masculinity within the global Black community.

The first comprehensive exhibition of its kind, Dandy Lion: (Re) Articulating Black Masculine Identity thus explores a contemporary conversation about nuanced sartorial expressions and the fluidity of Black masculinity. In creative collaboration with the photographers and filmmakers who document them, these present-day dandies are using a formal means of style and dress not only for innovative self-expression, but also to disrupt convention and advance change.

Shantrelle P. Lewis
curator, Dandy Lion: (Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity
Dandy
A man who places extreme importance upon his physical appearance, especially style, language usage, fashion, and neatness. Originated in England in which, self-made, newly wealthy men imitated aristocrats in appearance and behavior.

La SAPE
Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (The Society of Ambiance-Makers and Elegant People). A social movement of dandies in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. Members are often called “Sapeurs”.

Sartorial
Of or related to tailoring, style of dress, or fashion. Example: “Kofi had great sartorial taste. His clothes always fit him perfectly and they were made of the best fabrics.”

Masculine
Having qualities, behaviors, roles, or appearances usually associated with men, especially in terms of strength and aggression.

Stereotype
To unfairly believe that all people from a group are the same. People often stereotype a group with which they have had little or no contact.

Aesthetics
The study of beauty or the appreciation of beauty.
Questions to Use While at MoAD

1. To answer the following question, find a photograph in the exhibition that you like.
   a. What is the title of the photograph? (HINT: the title is the second line on the label)
   b. What is the name of the photographer?
   c. What country is the photographer from?
   d. Why did you pick the photograph? Describe it (colors, pose, etc.).

2. Find another photograph in the exhibition.
   a. What do you notice about the person(s) body language (how they are standing)?
   b. Is the person looking back at you or are they looking away?
   c. Why do you think the model and the photographer made the decision to present the image this way? What are they trying to show?
3. Find the two photographs taken by Harness Hamese, which include a woman.
   
   a. What are the titles of the photographs? Why do you think he gave the photos those names?
   
   b. Would you consider the woman in the photographs to be a dandy? Why or why not?
   
   c. Besides being a woman, how is she different than the men around her or in the rest of the exhibition? Explain.

4. Go into the MoAD Freedom Theater and watch the two films, Black Beau by Terance Nance and Sir by Numa Perrier.
   
   a. What do you notice about the person(s) body language (how they are standing)?
   
   b. Is the person looking back at you or are they looking away?
   
   c. Why do you think the model and the photographer made the decision to present the image this way? What are they trying to show?
Reflection Questions – After Your Visit

1. How does a black dandy, or a black man who dresses in finely tailored clothes, defy social expectations of race and gender? Explain.

2. Why is a tailored suit an important symbol of power?

3. Can you think of other examples of fashions that represent Black Power? Explain.

4. Do the black men in the exhibition Dandy Lion only represent their own identity or do they represent an entire group? Explain.

5. Did anything about the exhibition surprise you? Why or why not?
In recent years, the Black Dandy has gained popularity and captured the world’s imagination. Black dandies are being documented throughout the world from New York City to London, South Africa, and Brazzaville in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“We’re constantly being bombarded with the same image of black people, over and over again—the same tropes played out again and again in media and in movies and in journalism and popular culture. So to see something that is contrary to the dominant narrative is so refreshing,” says Shantrelle P. Lewis, the curator of Dandy Lion who began documenting the black dandy in 2010. “When [black men] walk inside this exhibition, they see themselves reflected on the wall, and it’s a very powerful thing.”

The term dandy originated in Victorian era Europe, so the term often evokes white men wearing top hats, ruffled blouses and petticoats. However, the men depicted in Dandy Lion are styled in a much different, contemporary, and unique fashion. “A brotha may pair an African print bowtie with a tweed, plaid jacket and some shell-top Adidas,” says Lewis.

The black dandy uses his style and attitude to take control over his representation – what social scientists call agency (the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power). The black dandy self-styles himself in a way that is different from the popular representation of black men dressed in hip hop style. By breaking stereotypes and mixing classic European fashion with black aesthetics, the black dandy demonstrates that black men can be more than the rapper, athlete, or thug. Furthermore, the dandy proves that just because a man dresses well, he is not necessarily gay. “If you photograph black men who identify as straight, that in and of itself deconstructs all of your ideas about what masculinity and manhood looks like within the black community,” says Lewis.

The history of the black dandy is complex and dates back to 18th century England when black servants were forced to dress up...
like their slave owners for the entertainment of the slave owners and their friends. During the Transatlantic Slave Trade, a small number of enslaved Africans were brought to England. Planters, government officials, and military officers who were returning to the United Kingdom from the Caribbean or the Americas often brought enslaved Africans to England. These black men and women were viewed as companions, who kept their masters from being lonely on long journeys across the Atlantic Ocean. They were often dressed in fancy clothes – sometimes fancier than their slave master’s clothing – and paraded around like pets. These were often referred to as companion slaves. Some of these enslaved Africans wore collars around their necks with padlocks made of pure gold or silver. Few of these black people were identified as anything more than servants, but they were often included in family portraits.

The enslaved Africans were often positioned on the edge of paintings or on the same level as dogs and other animals. In most of the paintings, the black people are silently serving their masters and serve no other role except to illustrate the wealth of their slave master. However, unlike in the United States, some British black people were taught to use refined language and were educated. Some of these educated black people, such as Olaudah Equiano, escaped slavery and became very wealthy. Olaudah Equiano was a former slave who bought his own freedom and became a radical reformer working to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain and its colonies. Equiano became the first black person to be employed by the British government and is most famous for writing and publishing his autobiography, The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, 1789.

In the United States, dress was an important consideration for enslaved people of African descent. During the early years of slavery in the United States, blacks were often given cast-offs – used clothes passed down from the slave masters. However, the Negro Act of 1735, prescribed materials suitable for making slave clothing. The fabric for slave clothing was required to be made from only the cheapest and coarsest material. By limiting
slave clothing to the cheapest material, clothing became a tool for reinforcing social hierarchy between African Americans and between masters and their slaves. Higher ranked slaves, who often worked in the house, were rewarded with cast-offs, while lower ranked slaves, who usually worked in the fields, were given only clothing made from cheap “negro cloth”, a coarse plain white cloth. Sunday, the day of rest from the hard labor of being a slave, was the only day that all enslaved Black people could dress in nicer clothing. The tradition continues today with many African Americans reserving their finest clothes for Sunday church services.

Following the end of the American Civil War, and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, the era known as Reconstruction (1865-1877), African Americans were given voice and representation in the United States government for the very first time in American history. Southern states elected Black officials into important positions such as governors, members of Congress, and as local officials. Again, dress was an important factor for demonstrating the social position of African Americans from their past as slaves. The sight of well-dressed African Americans often angered poor whites that demonstrated their anger through violence. Accounts of violence during this period frequently referred to well-dressed clergymen and women as the subject of white anger.

During the late 19th and early 20th century, scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois and his contemporaries, including the political activist and orator Marcus Garvey, were adamant about influencing the social position and image of Black people during the 20th century. Du Bois and Garvey believed African Americans needed to overcome racial inequality and prejudice through the self-actualization of their own social position. They believed African Americans needed to work hard and obtain higher levels of education. In doing so, Black people could improve their social standing in America. They also believed that Black people

Learn more about Olaudah Equiano in MoAD’s Slavery Narratives online at http://www.moadsf.org/slavery-narratives/ouladah-equiano/
needed to dress in a manner that reflected their intellect. Du Bois and his contemporaries gave rise to a new black dandy, called the New Negro.

The New Negro is a term that came into use during the Harlem Renaissance (1917-1928) and was made popular by African American writer, philosopher, and poet, Alain Locke. New Negroes were Black men and women who formed the middle class and demanded their legal rights as citizens. The New Negro wanted to create new images of African Americans that challenged the negative stereotypes of Black people created through minstrel shows.

World War I was a major turning point in the consciousness of African Americans. The war was depicted in American media as “the war to make the world safe for democracy”. Following the war, racial tensions were high in the United States. African American soldiers returned from battle to find that discrimination had not improved. Lynching was still a commonplace occurrence and following the Great Migration, the numbers of Ku Klux Klan members dramatically increased.

Alain Locke distinguished the “New Negro” from the “Old Negro” by claiming that after World War I, African Americans were being more assertive and self-confident. The New Negroes of the 1920s included poets, writers, musicians, politicians, business owners and many other leaders. Black Americans began to focus on the creation of their own standards of beauty and culture.

During the 1950s and 60s, style was also an important factor to the self-actualization of African Americans and Black people throughout the world. In 1958, Kwame Nkrumah became president of Ghana, the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence from British rule. On his visit to the United States, Nkrumah wore traditional Ghanaian Kente cloth, which sparked interest for African Americans to wear clothing from and inspired by Africa. Some historians credit Nkrumah with
inspiring the back-to-Africa fashion popular in the 1960s, when African Americans wore dashikis and natural or afro hairstyles. Wearing traditional kente cloth for Nkrumah represented throwing off the chains of white supremacy and Eurocentric ideals that were imposed upon Africans during British colonialism.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans who protested and fought for equality were dressed in a refined European fashion. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks were almost always dressed very nicely when they protested, as evidenced in their famous mug shots. Malcolm X is famously known for always wearing his signature horn rimmed glasses, business suit, bow tie, and fedora. Leaders of the movement for equal rights understood the importance of their sartorial choices. Dressing up was a form of showing respect – for self and for others in the community.

In the 1960s, following the Civil Rights struggle, assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and rising resistance to the Vietnam War, fashion in America, including the African American community relaxed into more casual clothing. SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) began wearing overalls with white shirts and black ties. The overalls signified their solidarity with farmers in the South. Founded in 1966, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the Black Panther Party developed a uniform for members to wear: a powder blue shirt, black leather jacket, black pants, black shoes, black beret, sunglasses, and optional black gloves. While the Panthers were not casual by today’s standards of dress, their uniform was significantly more relaxed than what their predecessors wore.

Flash-forward to the late 70s and early 80s, with the birth of hip-hop, popular African American fashion completely changed. B-boys (break dancers) began tapering their pants with pins so they could move more freely. Eventually, hip-hop artists like Run-D.M.C. popularized tracksuits and Kangol hats. As hip-hop grew into an international phenomenon, companies like Williwear, FUBU and Cross Colours emerged and transformed hip-hop fashion into a multi-billion dollar industry.
In the late-1980s, hip-hop changed with the introduction of gangsta rap, which was popularized by groups such as NWA. With the change in musical styles, also came a change in fashion and clothes became baggier. By the late 1990s, the style which is still popular today consists of oversized white t-shirts (a style that originated in California prisons), baseball caps, large goose down jackets or hooded sweatshirts, and baggy over-sized pants worn low slung below the waist so the elastic edge of the wearer’s boxer shorts or sweat shorts are visible.

Contemporary dandies self-style themselves in a way that is both the antithesis (opposite) of hip-hop style and at the same time, highly influenced by hip-hop culture. In the same way that hip-hop has historically gone against the status quo, the dandy is working to break stereotypes and monolithic images of Black men. Also as with hip-hop, the contemporary dandy samples fashion styles from the past.

“When hip-hop came along, men and women started dressing down as a form of rebellion. Now the ironic thing is that it’s actually conservative to dress down,” says rapper singer Jidenna, whose 2015 hit song, Classic Man is an ode to the “street elegant old-fashioned man.”

The contemporary black dandy uses his sense of style as a form or resistance. He is not merely copying European fashion, nor does he see himself as being above or better than his peers. Instead, the black dandy uses fashion to work against the narrow confines of the stereotypes mainstream society has placed upon his body. Trayvon Martin and the countless numbers of Black men killed by cops, remind us that the image of Black men is feared by many people in the United States. As Shantrelle Lewis says, “the thing is, a suit is not going to stop a Black man from being racially profiled. It’s not going to save his life. But it is a form of armor.”

(RE)Presenting:  
The Portrait

Time Allotment: Four or five 45-minute class periods

Learner Population: Middle School (6-8) and High School (9-12); may be adapted for other age groups.

Introduction: This mini-unit is intended to introduce students to portraiture. Students will learn about the different types of portraiture, basic photography skills, how to set up the camera and studio for portraiture, and finally students will either take a self-portrait or create a portrait of a classmate. This unit may be shortened or extended over a longer period of time, depending upon the goals of the instructor.

Goals:

Students will understand:
- The diverse ways in which portraits can be created
- The purpose of portraiture in telling a person’s story
- How to talk about art portraiture
- Concepts of composition, light, mood, background, and emotion
- How to set up and create a photo portrait

Materials:

- Images from Dandy Lion: (Re) Articulating Black Masculine Identity (p. 9 - 15)
- Cameras: digital, 35 mm film, disposable or cellphone camera
- Tripod
- A lighting source (window or lamps)
- A stool
- Special clothing for model
- Props (foreground and/or background)
(RE)Presenting:
The Portrait

Day 1 - Discussion:

Ask students to define the word “portrait”. Have students give examples of a portrait.

Ask: What images come to mind when you think of the word, “portrait”? Ask students to define “self-portrait”.

Ask students what the difference is between a portrait and a snapshot?

Definition: A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or any other artistic representation of a person – also known as the subject. A portrait usually focuses on the subject’s face, but may also include the full body. The intent of a portrait is to demonstrate the subject’s personality or mood. Portraits are carefully composed.

A selfie or snapshot is different from a portrait because it is usually shot quickly and spontaneously. The photographer is not as concerned with making an artistic, carefully composed photograph. Furthermore, selfies and snapshots usually document everyday happenings, such as birthdays or tourism.

There are many photographers who specialize in portraits. Some historical photographers who worked with portraiture are Gordon Parks and James Van Der Zee. Contemporary (living) photographers who specialize in portraiture are Ray Decarava, Deborah Willis, and Carrie Mae Weems.

Show your students examples of portraits by each of the photographers in addition to the pieces included in Dandy Lion.

An inspirational youth photographer who has received a great deal of attention is 17-year old Austro-Nigerian photographer David Uzochukwu. Uzochukwu lives in Brussels, Belgium. He uses digital manipulation to create his hauntingly, beautiful images.

View his photographs on his website: http://www.daviduzochukwu.com/
Portraiture Vocabulary:

**Self-Portrait:** A portrait of an artist taken or created by that artist.

**Fashion Portrait:** A genre of photography focused on clothing and other fashion items.

**Character Portrait:** A portrait that tells the unique traits and personality of a person.

**Selfie:** A quick photo taken of oneself, usually with a smartphone and shared on social media.

**Point of View:** The position from which someone or something is observed.

**Framing:** Enclosing something within a frame or border.

**Lighting:** The arrangement or affect of light upon the subject being photographed.

**Composition:** The arrangement of visual elements within the frame of a work of art.

**Mood:** The sense of emotion in a photograph.

**Rule of Thirds:** One of the basic tools for creating balance in a photograph. See *illustration (right).* You break an image into nine equal sections by drawing lines horizontally and vertically. The theory is that if you place interesting items in the intersections or along the lines, your photo becomes more interesting and achieves balance.

When viewing sample photographs, have students discuss the photographs using the above vocabulary terms. Be sure to encourage students to discuss the emotional qualities of the photographs. Encourage them to analyze the elements in each photograph that contribute to the emotional feeling of the photograph.
(RE)Presenting:
The Portrait

Day 2 – Students Take a Portrait or Self-Portrait

Students can either take a self-portrait or they may be paired with a partner and take each other’s portraits. When taking a self-portrait or having a portrait taken of yourself, consider how you want to be represented. We all have different sides to our personality. How do you want to be seen? What mood do you want to convey?

It may seem really simple to state in words what you want to get across, but creating a visual image that conveys all of your thoughts is a much more difficult task. Think of yourself as a visual storyteller. All of the decisions you make from what you wear, to your pose, to lighting, and your surroundings, tell a story. Students will pick their favorite photograph – the one that best conveys their personality – and print the photograph.

Teachers should set guidelines depending on your student population and age-group. It is up to the instructor to set boundaries for the photographs, but try to give students enough creative license to express their unique personality.

Day 3 – Reflective Writing Piece

Assign students to write about the portrait they chose, whether it is a self-portrait or a portrait taken by a classmate. How does the Point of View of the portrait convey the personality of the student? What are the photographic elements that helped to get their message across?

Day 4 – Mounting & Hanging Work

Have students mount their photographs. You can mount photographs by using spray-mount and attaching photographs to matte boards or you can use matte cutters to frame the work. Also print out and mount student reflective writing pieces to display along with the portrait. There are many online resources to teach photo mounting.

A site with great step-by-step instructions is http://www.reframingphotography.com/content/mounting-matting-and-framing. Once all work is mounted, hang the work in either the classroom, hallway, or other area where it can be viewed. Hold a gallery walk, critique, and/or art opening.
California Visual Arts & Common Core
State Standards Addressed in This Guide

The lesson plans in this curriculum guide may be adapted to meet the standards in almost any subject or grade level. Due to the themes of the exhibition connected to identity and the complexity of some of the content, the lesson plans are intended for use with middle school and high school students. However, the lesson plans meet the content standards requirements for many of the elementary grade levels.

VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

To see which Visual Arts Standards are met in each lesson plan, please visit the California Visual and Performing Arts Standards at http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/vpastandards.pdf

HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Dandy Lion was on display at the Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP) in 2015. MoCP developed additional resources which may be used in coordination with the MoAD lesson plans. The guide is online at: http://www.mocp.org/exhibitions/2015/04/DandyLionEdPacket.pdf
MOAD