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Unpacking Sanse: Change and Durability Within Senegalese Fashion and Identity

Camille Wright

Washington University in St. Louis

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This work documents formal and informal research on the fashion culture in Dakar, Senegal. It draws upon personal interviews, secondary sources such as essays, photography, and fashion illustration, and observation of Dakar Fashion Week 2012. The text focuses on personal identity in fashion, globalization, and the Western construction of African “authenticity” and “Africanness,” as well as the challenging of that construction by fashion designers from all over the African continent. Inspiration for the research was born from experiences with black youth in Chicago, Illinois and the growing trend of promoting black identity through afrocentric clothing, as well as growing numbers of “tribal” garments in mass-market clothing stores. This work offers first-hand insight into the evolving attitudes of Senegalese designers and consumers towards fashion culture, as well as a specific context to understand globalization in the world of fashion.