



TEXTURES

THE HISTORY AND ART OF BLACK HAIR



APRIL 14-15, 2022

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM



WELCOME

We are honored to welcome you to this symposium,
convened in conjunction with the exhibition
TEXTURES: the history and art of Black hair.

The exhibition runs from September 10, 2021 - August 7,
2022, and synthesizes research in history, fashion, art, and
visual culture to reassess the "hair story" of peoples of
African descent.

This symposium surrounds these histories and convenes
thinkers and creators from a variety of backgrounds to
discuss, engage, and celebrate ideas pertaining to Black
history, hair, beauty, and culture.

Dr. Tameka Ellington
Dr. Joseph L. Underwood

For the Kent State University Museum



— THE KSU —
MUSEUM

TEXTURES AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

- 9 AM **Auditorium Opens/Meet & Greet**
Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka Ellington & Dr. Joseph L. Underwood
- 10 AM **Fashioning the Black Flapper: The Politics of Beauty and Respectability in the 1920s**
Presenter: Dr. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, Lecturer, Case Western Reserve University
- 10:30 AM** **An Analysis of the Semiotics and Meaning Making of Black Hair and Identity in Jacqueline Woodson's Verse Narrative Autobiography of 'brown girl dreaming**
Presenter: Dr. Annette Lynch, Professor, Textiles and Apparel, University of Northern Iowa
- 11 AM** **Representation des noirs en Europe avant l'esclavage (The Representation of Blacks in Europe before Slavery)**
Presenter: Maryse RONEL (a.k.a. Masa Zdroz), Artist featured in TEXTURES
- 11:30 AM **A Photographic Record of Blackness and Black Hair**
Presenter: Dr. Joseph L. Underwood, Assistant Professor of Art History, Kent State University
- 12 PM **Adjourn for Lunch**
- 1:30 PM **The Rise of Rasta Hair**
Presenter: Dr. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel, Senior Lecturer, University of Education, Winneba
- 2PM **You Don't Need A Mirror When Your Sister Does Your Hair**
Presenter: Dr. Taura Taylor, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Morehouse College
- 2:30 PM** **Hair Texture on TV News: Why Representation Matters**
Presenter: Whitney Harris, Assistant Professor of Virtual Digital Media, University of the District of Columbia
- 3 PM **Screening of The Next 400: Digging into the tangled roots of Black hair culture**
Presenter: Sia Nyorkor, News Anchor & Reporter, WOIO-TV

- 4 PM **Adjourn for Break/Gallery Visit**
- 6 PM **Keynote Lecture: How to be an Anti-Texturist**
Dr. Afiya Mbilishaka, Clinical Psychologist, Hairstylist, PsychoHairapy LLC
With an Introduction by Mike Daniels, Director, KSU Student Multicultural Center
- 7 PM **Closing remarks and reflections**
Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka and Dr. Joseph

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2022

- 9 AM **Auditorium Opens/Meet & Greet**
Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka Ellington & Dr. Joseph L. Underwood
- 10 AM **Crown and Glory**
Presenter: Dr. Lynnette M. Gilbert, Assistant Professor of Art Education, Arkansas Tech University
- 10:30 AM **Is My Hair Too Radical For You?**
Presenter: Camaron Loritts, Assistant Director of the Center for Research, Engagement, and Collaboration for African American Life
- 11 AM **Afro Hair Futurity**
Presenter: Alix Bizet, Social Designer
- 11:30 AM **Self-esteem, Quality of Life, and Natural Hair**
Presenter: Dr. Tameka Ellington, Co-Curator of TEXTURES
- 12 PM **Adjourn for Lunch**
- 1:30 PM** **Our Hair is Community**
Presenter: Foluso Akinbode, Ph.D. Candidate & Instructor, Texas Woman's University
- 2 PM **Behind the Salon Chair: The Pressure and Influence on Black Hair and its Appearance**
Presenter: Ladosha Wright, Salon Owner, Author

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- 2:30 PM **Cornrows: Connecting Cities, Culture, and Community**
Presenter: Ambar Johnson, Founder, Parallel Patterns
- 3 PM **Screening of Made: Exploding the Old Narratives Around Black Hair**
Presenter: Bloomberg & Ebony, in collaboration with TEXTURES
- 3:30 PM **Illuminate: Through the Eyes of the 21st Century African American Child**
Presenter: Dr. Kendra L. Preer (Arts Facet Chair, Kent Area Chapter of the Links, Inc.) and KAC Links Student Photographers.
- 4 PM **Adjourn for Break/Gallery Visit**
- 6 PM **Keynote Lecture: Hairy Business: Getting to the Root of Hair Health**
Dr. Crystal Porter, Hair Scientist and President, Mane Insights, Inc.
With an Introduction by Dr. Amoaba Gooden, Vice President for the KSU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- 7 PM **Closing remarks and reflections**
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***This presenter will stream their lecture to the symposium auditorium*

THURSDAY, APRIL 14, 2022

9 AM

Auditorium Opens/Meet & Greet
Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka Ellington & Dr. Joseph L. Underwood



10 AM

Fashioning the Black Flapper: The Politics of Beauty and Respectability in the 1920s
Presenter: Dr. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, Lecturer, Case Western Reserve University



During the 1920s, debates over black women's bodies, clothing, hair, and general appearance stood at the center of public attention and political discourse over gender and race equality. Middle-class reformers, young black migrants, as well as new role models such as female performers and blues singers, all used the image of the "Black flapper" to redefine notions of beauty, respectability, and freedom on their own terms. Clothing and appearance offered an accessible route to challenge white racist stereotypes regarding black femininity and beauty. Yet, they were also useful tools in challenging intra-racial notions of respectability and gender roles. This paper highlights the place of fashion and beauty as a critical political realm for Black women who were often barred from access to formal routes of power in the era of Jim Crow.

Keywords: beauty, politics, respectability, expectations

10:30 AM**

An Analysis of the Semiotics and Meaning Making of Black Hair and Identity in Jacqueline Woodson's Verse Narrative Autobiography of 'brown girl dreaming'
Presenter: Dr. Annette Lynch, Professor, Textiles and Apparel, University of Northern Iowa



Memoirs provide an authentic route into the lives of others that contain potential qualitative data that can be utilized to expose patterns of significance central to understanding and interpreting the importance of dress and appearance to the cultural construction of identity. This study evaluated Jacqueline Woodson's memoir entitled brown girl dreaming to explore the management of Black girls' identity by self and female relatives.

The setting of the book takes place during the Civil Rights Era South and in the North, the years following the Great Migration. The presentation will also explore the changing meaning associated with hair styles as Woodson moves in both space and time, from the South to the North and from the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Power Movement.

Keywords: Management of Identity, Meaning of hair

11 AM**

Representation des noirs en Europe avant l'esclavage (The Representation of Blacks in Europe before Slavery)

Presenter: Maryse RONEL (a.k.a. Masa Zodros), Artist featured in TEXTURES



I began my career as a photographer questioning the representation of Black communities in the media, especially focusing on women and the lack of positive images. The beauty of the Black woman includes the prolific, and majestic, art that is her hairstyle. Yet, living in Europe, the representation of Blackness is especially marked by the period of slavery and colonization, a period that crystallized an image that devalues, excessively sexualizes, and impoverishes the African continent in all its aspects. However, with just a little research, we can uncover illustrious Black figures in European art of the 15th and 16th centuries. To that end, I offer some personal reflections as an artist who is raising questions about the presence of Black peoples in Europe before the period of slavery.

Keywords: representation, histoire, europe, personne noire

11:30 AM

A Photographic Record of Blackness and Black Hair

Presenter: Dr. Joseph L. Underwood, Assistant Professor of Art History, Kent State University



What has been the role of photography in shaping how we tell stories about Black hair?

This presentation considers how photography by artists from Africa and the African Diaspora challenge the misconceptions and violence wrought by non-African photographers during the colonial and postcolonial eras.

Keywords: photography, art history, erasure

12 PM

Adjourn for Lunch

1:30 PM

The Rise of Rasta Hair

Presenter: Dr. Osuanyi Quaicoo Essel, Senior Lecturer, University of Education, Winneba



Rasta hair (dreadlocks) culture has been demonised and scandalised in Ghana. It is a common knowledge that the hairstyle has received a grotesque impression amongst the people to the extent that wearers of this hairstyle are stigmatised, discriminated against, marginalised, and perceived as criminals. Available studies on rasta hair culture have confirmed the existence of the stigma associated with rasta (dreadlocks) in Ghana. Notwithstanding the stigma about rasta in Ghana, there is an upsurge and diffusion of rasta hairstyle culture among the youth in the urban centres, towns and villages. The diffusion of rasta beyond the metropolitan centres in Ghana needs further investigation to establish the formal structures for rasta hair promotion and how it is impacting on the youth amidst the stigmatisation, marginalization and discrimination on social, economic, and political repression grounds. This study, therefore examines the rise of rasta hairstyles among the youth in Ghana.

Keywords: stigma, rasta hair culture, discrimination

2 PM

You Don't Need A Mirror When Your Sister Does Your Hair

Presenter: Dr. Taura Taylor, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Morehouse College



American beauty trends are inconstant, with peculiarities of style changing frequently, however, what prevails is a social preoccupation with appearance.

Anecdotally, beauty choices are regarded as personal, yet culture and social location impress upon beauty options and preferences. People the world over cognitively distinguish between attractiveness and unattractiveness and share a common propensity to respond favorably toward individuals they perceive as attractive in comparison to those they do not. Nonetheless, attractiveness is a social construct that is neither universally recognized or an unbiased indicator of an individual's inherent attitudes, behaviors, personality and/or intentions. Considering the centrality of hair to feminine beauty and that women's perceived beauty disproportionately affects their life outcomes in comparison to men, the growing popularity of naturally curly hair among Black women suggests a shift in perspectives about beauty norms. This presentation centers and the role of Black hairstylists in shifting inequities and fallibilities of beauty conventions.

Keywords: Natural Hairstylists, Body Politics, Beauty Conventions, Counterframes

2:30 PM** **Hair Texture on TV News:
Why Representation Matters**

Presenter: Whitney Harris, Assistant Professor of Virtual Digital Media, University of the District of Columbia



This presentation will take a look at the unique challenges Black women working in local TV News as on-air reporters and anchors face when it comes to how they're allowed to wear their hair, the contracts that dictate their look, and the unfair standards they face when compared to their white peers. The presenter will share her own Black-hair journey on-air at local news stations across the country. The presentation will then explore the recent increase of Black women wearing their natural hair - braids, twists, and curls - on the news at local and national stations across the country and the positive reception these styles have received; ushering in a new wave of accepted Black hairstyles on-air and further affirming that representation matters in media.

Keywords: Media, Hair Discrimination, Natural Hair

3 PM

Screening of The Next 400: Digging into the tangled roots of Black hair culture

Presenter: Sia Nyorkor, News Anchor & Reporter, WOIO-TV



There's a new exhibit at Kent State University that's bringing people from all backgrounds to the Museum: "TEXTURES: the history and art of Black hair." It examines the intricate history and evolving nature of the culture and walks through how we as society got to where we are now. Why are Black people treated differently because of hair? We also address legislation called The CROWN Act, which is pending all over the country, including right here in Ohio, that would ban hair discrimination.

Keywords: Media, CROWN Act, television

4 PM

Adjourn for Break/Gallery Visit

6 PM

Keynote Lecture: How to be an Anti-Texturist

Dr. Afiya Mbilishaka, Clinical Psychologist, Hairstylist, PsychoHairapy LLC

With an Introduction by Mike Daniels, Director, KSU Student Multicultural Center



Dr. Afiya Mbilishaka will be your hair guide through traditional West and East African cultural community rituals, the cultural-historical traumas that created texturism, and the psychological impacts of texturism. She will then identify strategies to address our own internalized biases around hair texture and tools to honor the beauty of all hair.

7 PM

Closing remarks and reflections

Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka and Dr. Joseph



FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2022

9 AM

Auditorium Opens/Meet & Greet

Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka Ellington & Dr. Joseph L. Underwood



10 AM

Crown and Glory

Presenter: Dr. Lynnette M. Gilbert, Assistant Professor of Art Education, Arkansas Tech University



Adoration, beautiful, complex, are just a few terms used to describe my work and intentional emphasis on hair. This presentation will share thoughts and processes used to capture the presence and value of black women through coils and textures. As one that has always been fascinated with colors, textures and pattern I use these elements paired with various acrylic mediums, shredded paper, pattern and recycled paper to capture the perplex beauty of our natural crown. Hair is identity, and just like hair, our essence of being is composed of vibrate, complex layers that are often misunderstood, devalued and/or criticized instead of celebrated, honored or respected. My goal as an artist and arteducator is to change the narrative.

Keywords: Natural, Crown, Identity, Complex

10:30 AM

Is My Hair Too Radical For You?

Presenter: Camaron Loritts, Assistant Director of the Center for Research, Engagement, and Collaboration for African American Life



Historically Black women and their appearance have been politicized and analyzed within educational spaces. During the Civil Rights Movement, college campuses became spaces of resistance and protest with Black women at the center, which led to further analysis of Black women's aesthetic. This presentation will look at the perceptions of Black women's hair during the Civil Rights Movement within higher education, with special attention to the Afro as a symbol of resistance and Black Power.

We will walk through the ways Black women's hair leads to a perception of radicalism and talk through ways Black women can control their own narrative to empower themselves.

Keywords: Radicalism, Higher Education, Perceptions

11 AM

Afro Hair Futurity

Presenter: Alix Bizet, Social Designer



The presentation will explore Afro hair as a unique texture, social-political material and the need to rethink it in a post-colonial context. Tamed, shaved, dyed or natural, hair is a material that has been used by humans for centuries to construct a portrait of themselves. Human hair is coiffed and styled to be a social indicator between individuals to communicate their status and cultural affiliations. Although hair's original state is characterized by richly diverse textures and colours, our idea of hair has been steadily standardized over the years by the cosmetics industry, media, and social conventions, making it akin to a uniform.

The presentation will display the rich culture of Afro hair. Specifically, its narrative power across the diasporas and its link between Afro Caribbean communities that face displacement of the Afro Hair culture in the age of fast gentrification.

Keywords: Afro Hair, Diversity, Discrimination, Communities, Identity, Resistance.

11:30 AM

Self-esteem, Quality of Life, and Natural Hair

Presenter: Dr. Tameka Ellington, Co-Curator of TEXTURES



Since the beginning of the natural hair movement in the 1990s, African American women are redefining what beauty is via a "counter-hegemonic strategy" (Patton, 2006) of not following the White standard of beauty. With hundreds of years of being told that African features are unattractive, hair texture has the power to dictate the life decisions African American women make, how she treats herself, as well as how others treat her.

In many instances African American women's level of self-esteem is closely connected to their thoughts about their hair (Thompson, 2008b). A purposive sample of 38 professional African Americans women with natural hair were interviewed and the overall results revealed that African American women with natural hair tend to have a high level of self-esteem regarding themselves and their hair. The struggles of maintaining the White beauty standards were negated after realizing how prohibitive their hair was to their lives: physically, personally, and monetarily.

Keywords: Self-esteem, natural hair, lifestyle

12 PM **Adjourn for Lunch**

1:30 PM** **Our Hair is Community**

Presenter: Foluso Akinbode, Ph.D. Candidate & Instructor, Texas Woman's University



Current conversations about Black hair are laden with allusions to the Andre Walker hair typing system and/or a focus on hair texture and length. These conversations commonly veer away from communal aspects of Black hair. I propose a multifaceted framework in which Black people discuss the financial, functional, sexual, and/or gendered ways in which they have experienced Black hair. This framework is crafted as a possible tool for Black people to better articulate their hair experiences as opposed to the use of the Andre Walker hair typing system and similar hair systems. Better communication about Black hair among Black people can contribute to more unified efforts to improve obstacles to Black hair care and self-expression while encouraging more nuanced understandings of Black hair characteristics and experiences.

Keywords: Hair typing, texturism, Black hair

2 PM

Behind the Salon Chair: The Pressure and Influence on Black Hair and its Appearance

Presenter: Ladosha Wright, Salon Owner, Author



Since the beginning of time Black Beauty and hair culture has boldly referenced identity, social standing, stage of life, self-love and oneness with spirit. Still today it is central to a black woman's presentation of self. Yet the dehumanizing effects of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade forever changed and influenced the dynamics and standards of Black beauty. This presentation will address the transcendent role of the hairstylist not only as one who alters, cuts, braids, locks and coifs. But rather as one who nurtures, ministers and sees into the Black woman's soul life of beauty. This presentation will travel through time to address the pseudoscience of race, and the poisonous dominant culture myths, fallacies and the fake news about black hair past and present and all of the movements affecting Black hair and its appearance. Also discussed is the matter of what has happened to black hair in the pandemic and post pandemic aftermaths.

Keywords: Natural Hair, Black Hair History, Hair History, Black Hair Movement

2:30 PM

Cornrows: Connecting Cities, Culture, and Community

Presenter: Ambar Johnson, Founder, Parallel Patterns



Design, at its best, is complexity resolved. And what is more simple and exquisite, in all its forms, than cornrows? Since 3000 BC, Black people have cornrowed their hair encoding societal and cultural markers in three strands. Our hands hold so much memory, what if we began to remember? This presentation seeks to advance our understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of cornrows while also amplifying the influence cornrows have on how we design and build cities and communities. Participants will leave the session with a cultural orientation towards urban planning and community building that is rooted in history, identity, and design.

Keywords: design, history, urban planning, community building

3 PM

Screening of Made: Exploding the Old Narratives Around Black Hair

Presenter: Bloomberg & Ebony, in collaboration with TEXTURES.

Artist and braider Shani Crowe washes away bias and stereotypes tied to Black hair by showing the beauty and power rooted in the coils and textures of African American locks. Braids are historically contextualized by the co-curators of TEXTURES.

3:30 PM

Illuminate: Through the Eyes of the 21st Century African American Child

Presenter: Dr. Kendra L. Preer (Arts Facet Chair, Kent Area Chapter of the Links, Inc.) and KAC Links Student Photographers



A group of young photographers, ages 10-14, captured images of African American hair in their Ohio communities through the lens of their digital cameras. In the tradition of Gordon Parks, students use photography to discuss how their culminating exhibit demonstrates their own experiences, relationships, natural hair journeys, and offer viewers a broader perspective from Black youth in America. The overall collection of images provides a powerful statement on what they find beautiful and what they would like to change about the world's perception, representation, and response to Black hair as a political statement and cultural symbol.

Keywords: children, photography, Ohio, community

4 PM

Adjourn for Break/Gallery Visit

6 PM

Keynote Presentation: Hairy Business: Getting to the Root of Hair Health

Dr. Crystal Porter, Hair Scientist and President, Mane Insights, Inc.

With an Introduction by Dr. Amoaba Gooden, Vice President for the KSU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Social media is filled with convincing hair advice, must-do hair styles, and product recommendations; creating an abundance of information that very few are able to decipher. Dr. Porter reveals the truth about products and services within the market, provides scientific insight to dispel common hair misconceptions, and arms textured-hair consumers with strategies to cultivate a healthy mane.

7 PM

Closing remarks and reflections

Symposium Organizers: Dr. Tameka and Dr. Joseph





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The symposium, and the exhibition that inspired it, would not have been possible without the generous support of the following sponsors and partners:



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