

Fashion School: Is It Really Cultural Appreciation?

As much as the fashion industry and those that surround it depend heavily on the influence of others cultures, the ones who it is derived from aren't sufficiently credited. There is such a strong focus on how to be creative, innovative and endearing yet, no limelight is shed on knowing how to properly go about taking inspiration and giving acknowledgement when it is rightfully needed.

We live in an era where eurocentrism prevails to the extent that people feel it's unnecessary to be accurate or to put time and effort into considering the input that people of colour have to share. Why is it that when wanting to use warmer toned markers when sketching, it suddenly becomes a burden to teach students how to manipulate them? Or when working on historical assignments, we tend to have no choice but to deal with invalid sources of representation? What about being told that the prints you would like to use are too "ethnic" or "doesn't fit our concept". It shouldn't have to be this way. We should be able to be accommodated with the cost of our tuition.

The same designers that we are told to take interest in and to praise as geniuses are the ones with the most amount of power and slyly use it against us. If you want to give tribute to any particular culture, get someone who is actually of said culture to guide you.

Dr. Adrienne Keene states: "That, to me is a huge part of this. There is absolutely no creativity here. If I can point to several other lines in the last year, and dozens more over the last decade, that have done the exact. same. thing., there's nothing original or new about your designs—cultural appropriation notwithstanding. It was our people who did the heavy lifting creative work for you. *We* designed these images. *We* have the knowledge and understanding of what they mean and how they can be appropriately used. *We* evolved and developed and maintained our cultures for thousands of years. Our cultures are not in, what Jessica calls, "the free bin" for your taking." (<http://nativeappropriations.com/2015/02/new-york-fashion-week-designer-steals-from-crow-artist-bethany-yellowtail.html>)

If you were to see others take what is rightfully yours and make profits from it, wouldn't you too feel as though you were robbed? This is how those who are under-represented feel when their culture seems "edgy and cool" when their approval hasn't been given and they are never made the focal point. The faculties in fashion schools should make more of an effort to help to diminish the notions that shrugging your shoulders at important issues such as these is the go to response when in the wrong. If you want your students to truly make a difference, the change should start with those who already have the knowledge, experience and credibility to do so. I wish Eurocentric views of today's fashion didn't dominate the minds of the peers we spend most of our time with. Some days, you can only lay back and dream of a world where everything isn't always minimal, bland or white-washed.

In the wise words of Dr. Adrienne Keene: “Our designs and cultural markers are used to “enhance” white culture, while white cultural artifacts are protected and policed.”