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The MAX celebrates fashion and 2 Mississippi natives through new exhibition *‘From Couture to da’ Streets: The Fashions of Patrick Kelly + Cross Colours’* *opens September 4*

MERIDIAN, Miss. (August 1, 2021) – Paris, London, Milan, New York, and Mississippi – famed sources of fashion design. Yes, Mississippi warrants recognition, as two of America’s most influential fashion designers are from the state. The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience honors designers Patrick Kelly and Thomas “TJ” Walker in the exhibition “From Couture to da’ Streets: The Fashions of Patrick Kelly + Cross Colours,” on display September 4, 2021-January 8, 2022. The exhibition features clothing, sketches, and related ephemera.

“Patrick Kelly has a witty way with fashion.” –*The Washington Post*, 1988

A Vicksburg native working in Paris, Kelly found a way to create fashionable clothing that also worked to destigmatize – and give a fresh, positive interpretation to – racist Black iconography. Before his untimely death in 1990, Kelly created 10 collections, dressed celebrities such as Bette Davis, Isabella Rossellini, and Grace Jones, and in 1988, was the first African American accepted into Chambre Syndicale du Prêt-à-Porter, France’s prestigious organization of fashion designers.

“Through their bold designs and graphics, Walker and Jones originally set out to craft positive messaging around African American culture and oppression.” –*Vogue*, 2019

Walker moved from Toomsuba, near Meridian, to Los Angeles with the dream of becoming a fashion illustrator, but once he teamed up with Carl Jones, they accomplished far more. Walker and Jones co-founded Cross Colours, an urban clothing line that uses bold colors and designs to celebrate Afrocentrism while also working to break social prejudices. In just five years, Cross Colours became a household name that revolutionized not only the fashion industry, but also African American street culture, while uplifting the Black community through positive messages and economic support.

“While Kelly worked to destigmatize racist iconography, Walker worked to uplift the Black community through positive messages. In tandem, both men changed the world, and that’s why people should come see this exhibition,” said Stacey Wilson, Curator of Exhibitions at The MAX. “They inspire and encourage others to make their own mark on the world.” Today, both designers are seeing a resurgence in popularity because the message behind the clothing resonates with many in the current racial and political atmosphere.

To assemble this unique exhibition, Wilson borrowed artifacts and other materials from Jackson State University, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, and the Los Angeles-based Cross Colours enterprise. A robust schedule of programs will support the exhibit, as The MAX engages diverse audiences. Any required registration can be done through www.msarts.org.

Exhibition-Related Programming

Illustrated Talk: Origins of Black Fashion in Church with Stacey Wilson, September 4, 2021, 11 a.m.-noon

Curator Stacey Wilson will lead a discussion on the origins of Black fashion in African American churches. Free with museum admission.

Dance at The MAX: Hip-Hop Fundamentals, September 4, 2021, 1-2 p.m.

In 1970s New York, African and Latino American communities created hip-hop as a safe alternative to violence and drugs. Since then, it has morphed into a cultural movement that has made a lasting impact on the world. Hip-hop is a versatile dance style that encourages freestyle moves and is fun for all ages. So come, wear comfortable shoes and baggy clothes, and let's dance! Free with museum admission.

Dance at The MAX: Hip-Hop Choreography, October 5, 12, 19, 26, 2021, 6-7 p.m.

Hip-hop is a versatile dance style that encourages freestyle moves and is fun for all ages. In this four-week class you will learn choreography so you can perform at the "Walk Dat Walk: Fashion Show at The MAX" on November 6, 2021. Registration required. Limited capacity. \$15 for Members, \$20 for non-Members.

Movies at The MAX: *Fresh Dressed*, October 1, 2021, 7-9 p.m.

Fresh Dressed chronicles the rise of hip-hop and urban fashion, but also the rappers, singers, and communities that influenced – or were influenced by – the movement. The film features Cross Colours, Kanye West, Pharrell Williams, Sean "Puffy" Combs, Nas, André Leon Talley, and more. Free and open to the public.

Speak Yo Mind: T-Shirt Design with TJ Walker, CXC co-founder, October 2, 2021, 1-3 p.m.

The Cross Colours clothing brand is built on the slogan "Clothing Without Prejudice." Learn how to translate a message into wearable art. TJ Walker, CXC co-founder, will lead a T-shirt workshop based on themes promoted by the Cross Colours brand. Participants can use their own themes in fashioning a statement shirt. Have an open mind and be ready to create! Limited capacity; registration required. Free with museum admission.

Street Art: Manhole Cover Printing Workshop with Cary Haycox, October 2, 2021, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Discover the beauty of Meridian's urban landscape. Cary Haycox, artist and teacher at Meridian High School, will teach students how to create unique prints featuring downtown Meridian's manhole covers. Limited capacity; registration required. Free with museum admission.

MAXEats: Cross Colours Dinner with Chef Erika Williams, November 5, 2021, 6-8 p.m.

Chef Erika Williams creates a sit-down dinner inspired by the fashions of Cross Colours. Registration required. \$35 for Members, \$40 for non-Members.

Walk Dat Walk: Fashion Show at The MAX, November 6, 2021, 7-9 p.m.

Not just a fashion show, but a curated couture/hip-hop experience. Come enjoy a night of hip-hop dance performances and view the newest collections by Cross Colors, modeled by people from the community. Stay tuned for updates and more information regarding model casting calls.

Visitor Information

Admission to the "From Couture to da' Streets: The Fashions of Patrick Kelly + Cross Colours" exhibition is free. To view the entire museum, visitors are required to pay regular museum admission prices. The MAX is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The museum is located at the corner of Sela Ward Parkway (22nd Avenue) and Front Street, overlooking the railroad at the edge of Meridian's historic downtown. Street parking is available, with shops and restaurants within walking distance. For more information visit www.msarts.org or call 601-581-1550.

About The MAX

The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience explores the state's creative legacies in one immersive attraction. Come discover the Mississippi roots of some of the world's arts and entertainment icons – Elvis Presley, Oprah Winfrey, B.B. King, Faith Hill, Morgan Freeman, Margaret Walker, Eudora Welty, and Jim Henson, to name just a few.

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