



News Release

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V&A opens major exhibition exploring the career of leading British fashion model, Naomi Campbell



NAOMI: In Fashion

Gallery 40

V&A South Kensington

22 June 2024 – 6 April 2025

Supported by BOSS

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Press Images available at pressimages.vam.ac.uk

This Saturday, the V&A will open the major exhibition *NAOMI: In Fashion*, which explores the unequalled 40-year career of fashion model and cultural icon Naomi Campbell (b. 1970).

A trailblazer in the field, her celebrated ability to ‘walk’ the catwalk, along with the special alchemy she creates through collaborations with every major fashion house, fashion publication and leading fashion photographers, ensure that after four decades in the fashion industry, Campbell continues to star in catwalk shows, advertising campaigns and editorial fashion shoots around the world. In parallel, Campbell’s cultural leadership, activism and championing of emerging creatives transcend the traditional parameters of the fashion model role.

Produced in collaboration with Campbell and foregrounding her voice and perspective, *NAOMI: In Fashion* is the first exhibition of its kind. The exhibition draws upon Campbell’s own extensive wardrobe of haute couture and ready-to-wear ensembles from key moments in her career along with loans from designer archives and objects from the V&A’s collections. Highlights include a dramatic 1989 Thierry Mugler car-inspired corset, Campbell’s look from Sarah Burton’s last

Alexander McQueen show, a pink Valentino ensemble worn at the 2019 Met Gala and a pair of staggeringly high Vivienne Westwood platform shoes worn by Campbell during her famous 1993 catwalk fall. The exhibition includes around 100 looks and accessories from the best of global high fashion chronicling her 40 years in the industry. Visitors can encounter designs by Alexander McQueen, Anna Sui, Azzedine Alaïa, Burberry, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, Gianni and Donatella Versace, Jean Paul Gaultier, John Galliano, Karl Lagerfeld, Kenneth Ize, Torishéju Dumí, Valentino, Virgil Abloh, Vivienne Westwood, Yves Saint Laurent and many others.

In addition to stunning garments and fashion accessories, fashion photography features prominently. Striking imagery by leading photographers such as Campbell Addy, Nick Knight, Peter Lindbergh and Steven Meisel, form a selection of photography curated by Edward Enninful OBE.

The exhibition also recognises Campbell's mentors including prominent public figures such as Nelson Mandela, who inspired her to use her platform for social change. Campbell has advocated for equity from an early age, joining the Black Girls Coalition in 1989 and fronting the 2008 'black issue' of *Vogue Italia*. Along with Bethann Hardison and Iman, she has also campaigned for The Diversity Coalition since 2013 to champion diversity on the catwalk. The exhibition also spotlights her on-going active support of emerging creatives, through events such as Arise Fashion Week and her global initiative EMERGE, founded in 2022.

Naomi Campbell said: "I'm honoured to be asked by the V&A to share my life in clothes with the world."

Sonnet Stanfill, Senior Curator, Fashion, V&A, said: "Naomi Campbell's extraordinary career intersects with the best of high fashion. She is recognised worldwide as a supermodel, activist, philanthropist, and creative collaborator, making her one of the most prolific and influential figures in contemporary culture. We're delighted to be working with Naomi Campbell on this project and to celebrate her career with our audiences."

About the Exhibition:

The exhibition opens with high-impact clips of Campbell on the catwalk, illustrating her legendary 'walk', setting the scene for the supermodel's unparalleled 40-year career. **Becoming Naomi** then goes back to Campbell's childhood. Born in 1970, south-Londoner Campbell aspired to a career on stage and performed in 1980s music videos for artists including Bob Marley and Culture Club. Her life changed when, aged 15, she was approached by model agent Beth Boldt while out shopping with schoolfriends; two years later she would be on the front cover of *Vogue* and walking for acclaimed designers in London, Paris, Milan and New York. Foundational to her meteoric rise was hard work, training and a love of dance. A feathered cocktail dress by Yves Saint Laurent for his Autumn/Winter 1987 collection is on display; walking for Saint Laurent signalled her entry into the highest echelons of fashion modelling. Examples of Campbell's earliest covers are also shown, including her *Vogue Paris*, Patrick Demarchelier cover from August 1988 – she was the first Black model to cover the magazine.

By the early 1990s, the term '**Supermodel**', or model turned international celebrity, was widely used directly in reference to Naomi and a small group of peers. Fashion had become mass entertainment. Campbell, though still in her teens, was at the centre of this excitement, and leading designers championed her talents. She became known for her superlative 'walk' while her work with leading photographers created some of the era's most memorable images. Simultaneously, she moved beyond the world of fashion, performing in music videos, launching her own perfume and becoming a champion of diversity. Highlights from this section include an Andy Warhol-print dress from Gianni Versace's Spring/Summer 1991 show and a dramatic

1989 Thierry Mugler car-inspired corset made from plastic, metal and acrylic. Campbell unwittingly created fashion history in 1993 when, smiling, she fell to the runway floor while wearing Westwood's staggeringly high blue platforms. The original pair, with the model's name written inside, were quickly acquired by the V&A. The full ensemble is reunited here for the first time since this mishap, a fashion moment which elevated Campbell's profile, and the designer's, to even greater heights.

The next section focuses on Campbell's intense personal and professional relationship with late Tunis-born, Paris-based designer **Azzedine Alaïa** – who she would call 'Papa'. Alaïa opened up his residence and studio to the young model, who, with her mother's permission, lived for a time with the designer, his partner and their dogs. Alaïa is famed for his figure-hugging designs and Campbell's sculptural physique, to him 'a perfect body', inspired much of this work. In turn, Alaïa offered valuable experience and introductions to industry professionals. Together, the pair created runway magic and editorial gold. A leopard-print knitwear bodysuit from Alaïa's Autumn/Winter 1991 ready-to-wear collection features, famously captured in a photograph by Herb Ritts in 1991 for *Interview* magazine.

Aged 17 Campbell moved to **New York** and threw herself into the city's buzzing, social, fashion scene. She forged enduring friendships with designers and others in the industry. Key looks include an ensemble from Marc Jacobs' *Grunge Redux* collection and an ensemble designed by Anna Sui, a longtime friend of Campbell's.

Since the early 1990s Campbell has been one of the most high-profile models in the world – and one of the most recognisable Black women. She is on our televisions and phones, in music videos and newspapers. **The Spotlight** explores a highly publicised biographical moment, when Campbell served a period of court ordered community service. On display in this section is the Dolce & Gabbana gown that Campbell wore on her final day of community service – a look she wore in response to the paparazzi capturing her arrival and departure every day throughout.

The next section looks at Naomi Campbell as an **Exemplar** in the field, and her early collaborations with many fashion houses, from Dolce & Gabbana and Vivienne Westwood to Jean Paul Gaultier. Formed when Campbell was a young woman, these connections evolved into decades-long collaborative friendships. Designers have long valued Campbell's ability to model, with apparent ease, the most difficult ensembles, and to glamorise whatever she wears, from a Fendi coat with beaded sleeves, to a bejeweled Dolce & Gabbana bodysuit.

World-renowned photographers – from Steven Meisel and Arthur Elgort to Patrick Demarchelier and David Bailey – reference Campbell's unique **Alchemy** with the camera. Campbell equally has a deep respect for those she works with, recognizing their artistic talent and vision, and working to achieve the image they have in mind. The selection of photography featured is curated by Edward Enninful OBE. Enninful has said of Campbell: 'As anyone who has worked with her knows, when Naomi arrives at a shoot, she is there to work.'

With over forty years of experience working with the leading names in fashion, Campbell is an **Archetype**, whose skill and reputation as an exceptional model is indisputable. Her presence on the catwalk, or in marketing campaigns is guaranteed to attract attention. This section recognises Campbell advocating for friends, career-defining moments and emerging designers with highlights including an ensemble from Virgil Abloh's final collection during the Off-White show held shortly after his untimely death, a hand-embroidered dress and cape from Rizman Ruzaini embellished with over 35,000 crystals and a custom pink ensemble by Pierpaolo Piccioli for Valentino worn by Campbell at the Met Gala. A grey wool ensemble by BOSS for their

Autumn/Winter 2023 'BeYourOwnBoss' campaign is also displayed in this section, nearby a dress by Sarah Burton for Alexander McQueen highlighting the occasion of Campbell receiving the Fashion Icon Award at the British Fashion Awards in 2019.

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For further PRESS information please contact press.office@vam.ac.uk

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Notes to Editors:

- The exhibition *NAOMI: In Fashion* will run from 22 June 2024 – 6 April 2025.
- Tickets are available at vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/naomi
- This exhibition will be accompanied by a publication *Naomi: In Fashion* featuring an interview with Naomi and showcasing over 20 of her most iconic looks – personally selected and discussed by Campbell herself. Available from V&A Publishing in UK / ROW and from Rizzoli in North America.
- The exhibition is the latest in the V&A's series of revelatory fashion exhibitions and follows Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto (2023); DIVA (2023); Africa Fashion (2022); Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear (2022); Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams (2019); Mary Quant (2019-2020), Fashioned from Nature (2018-2019), Balenciaga: Shaping Fashion (2017 – 2018) and Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear (2016 – 2017).
- The V&A's fashion collection is designated as the UK's National Collection and is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of dress in the world.

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Support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition supporter BOSS.

About V&A South Kensington

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity. V&A South Kensington is a world of extraordinary global creativity, with unmissable exhibitions, experiences and educational programmes for all. One of London's most iconic buildings, it is home to national collections of art, design, fashion, photography and furniture to theatre, performance, architecture, and ceramics, as well as the UK's National Art Library. It is a place where everyone can experience a story of creativity that spans 5,000 years and every creative discipline, which brings that story to life through programmes and activities for all ages and specialisms, and world-leading research and conservation.

About BOSS and HUGO BOSS

BOSS is made for bold, self-determined individuals who live life on their own terms, with passion, style, and purpose. Collections offer dynamic, modern designs for those that embrace who they are fully and unapologetically: as their own BOSS. The brand's heritage tailoring, performance suiting, casualwear, denim, athleisure, and accessories cater to the style needs of the discerning consumer. Licensed fragrances, eyewear, watches, and kidswear complete the brand. The world of BOSS can be experienced in over 489 own stores worldwide. BOSS is the core brand of HUGO BOSS, one of the leading companies positioned in the premium segment of the global apparel market. The group offers collections in 131 countries at around 7,800 points of sale and online in 73 countries via [hugoboss.com](https://www.hugoboss.com). With approximately 19,000 employees worldwide, the company, based in Metzingen (Germany), posted sales of EUR 4.2 billion in the fiscal year 2023.

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