
WALES BONNER
REFLECTIONS
ON
ESSENCE

Dedicated to the Saint Boys

ART DIRECTION GRACE WALES BONNER

EDITOR NICK MURPHY

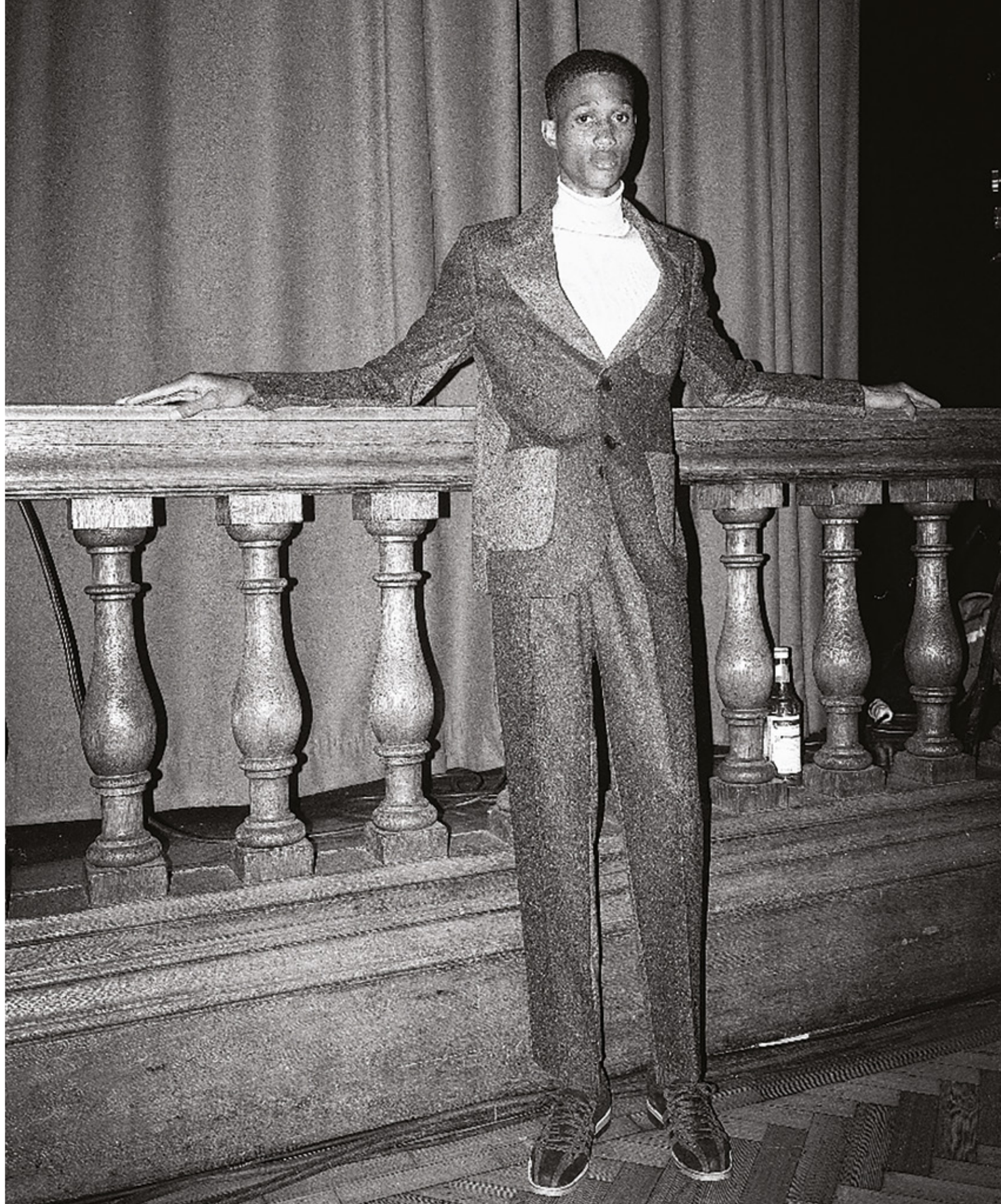
WALESBONNER.NET

REFLECTIONS ON ESSENCE

BY GRACE WALES BONNER

WALES BONNER

LOVERS ROCK
AUTUMN WINTER 2020 PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR



Introduction
Ekow Eshun

Essence is 'the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, which determines its character.'

Essence is liberation.
The Legend of the Flying Africans is founded in an act of collective resistance. In May 1803 a group of captive Africans stage a revolt on a slave ship as it nears America. The ship is bound for St Simons Island, off the coast of Georgia. As it approaches its destination, the captives, who belong to the Igbo people of West Africa, rise up against the crew, force them to jump overboard and then run the vessel aground. Once on land, the Igbos are said by an eyewitness to have 'taken to the swamp'. Rather than risk being returned to captivity they line up hand in hand, walk into the water and drown together, committing mass suicide. Other accounts tell a different story. Instead of submerging themselves, it is said the Igbos raised up their arms, invoked their gods and took to the sky, soaring back home over the ocean. In the wake of that original 1803 revolt, the tale of the Flying Africans has been told for generations across the Atlantic world. For the most part, the story of their escape is recounted as folklore, a poetic evocation of a desire to fly from a state of oppression. But we might reasonably also look at the tale as something more than just metaphor. One way for enslaved African peoples to resist assimilation into the New World was to hold on to the religious and spiritual practices of their homelands. This in opposition to Western tenets of progress, equality and knowledge which provided the ideological cover for the injustices of the slave trade. As the scholar Jason R Young has noted, retaining a connection to the spirit realm 'also afforded to enslaved men and women new avenues of bodily movement - in spirit possession, transmigration, dance and flight - that rejected the idea of their bodies as merely an extension of the masters' will, as merely a discrete tool meant to produce and reproduce'. Even if it's not literally true, the Legend of the Flying Africans is perhaps more than just superstition or any of the other names used to discount beliefs that fall outside Western epistemologies. Its power, its persistence, is maybe because of the dazzling act of inversion that lies at the heart of the story. The shackled take flight. Africans see further and reach higher than their white subjugators. A dream has the moral clarity to outshine waking life.

Essence is enemy.
To be black means to always be subject to the white gaze. In The Souls of Black Folk, WEB DuBois, the great seer of race, coined the term 'double consciousness' to describe the 'peculiar sensation' of living as a black person physically within, and psychologically outside white society: 'this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity'. Being prey to the white gaze means functioning as an object of prejudice and fascination and psychological projection. The tropes are familiar ones: black women as angry or lascivious. Black men as creatures of overdeveloped musculature and ungovernable sexuality, liable to lapse into violence and lawlessness. By this formulation, our character is defined by our colour. Our race is our essence. This is a subject that Frantz Fanon turns to in a pivotal scene in Black Skin, White Masks, when he describes a white boy's startled reaction at Fanon's approaching figure. Clinging to his mother, the boy cries, 'Look, a Negro!...Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened.' For Fanon the moment is one of psychic assault. He is forced to see himself through the eyes of the child, as brute and threatening, and then dumped back in his own skin, objectified and humiliated. 'My body,' he writes, 'was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recoloured, clad in mourning on that white winter day.' This sensation of bodily remove is also at the heart of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. The novel's hero discovers that his blackness renders him beneath sight to most white people, even as it lends him a heightened visibility across society, as a stereotypical object of fear and fascination. He is denied voice or agency or subjective existence. 'You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world,' writes Ellison, 'That you're a part of all the sound and anguish...you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And alas, it's seldom successful.'

Essence is the discrepant spirit of a young republic.
Consider these men. Each of them dressed like royalty. Which is to say with the freedom and self-assertion of those who acknowledge no rulers. There are four of them. Kings without a country. One wears a vivid yellow tracksuit unzipped to the navel. Another is in brilliant green trousers and a striped cardigan.

A third is dressed in a shirt and trousers composed of contrasting shades of pink. The last of them wears a waistcoat and flared jeans in multicoloured patchwork denim. We glimpse these men, in passing, in the glorious reggae movie, Rockers. Truth to tell, in other circumstances they'd likely be overlooked as strivers on the edge of the social system in Jamaica. But in the splendour of their self-regard, we see how stylishness makes them visible on their own terms here on the streets of Kingston. Their assurance brings to mind Tina Campt's notion of the practice of refusal: 'a refusal to recognise a system that renders you fundamentally illegible and unintelligible; the decision to reject the terms of diminished subjecthood with which one is presented. Using negation as a generative and creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise.'

Essence is the unfamiliar.
'The land, the people, the light', goes the motto of St Lucia and across the West Indies, the richness and wonder of the Caribbean landscape has invited comparisons in the Western imagination with an Edenic paradise. In his 1992 Nobel lecture, Derek Walcott reflected on how a nature 'so exultant, so resolutely ecstatic' was miscast as pure and benign and Arcadian. The West, he bemoaned, had 'looked at a landscape furious with vegetation in the wrong light and with the wrong eye.' Look more attentively and you see that the palm trees and ferns and fauna of the Caribbean have been shaped by a past of conquest and colonialism. History, says Walcott, is inscribed 'in Antillean geography, in the vegetation itself.' When Europeans arrived on the islands they brought with them 'portmanteau biota' - plants, animals, microbes, diseases - that radically remade the ecology of the West indies over short centuries. To look at the landscape now is to see the evidence of a legacy of violence. But it's also to bear witness to a dance, a dialogue, a patois. Sugarcane, yam, coffee, banana, breadfruit, mango, coconut, ackee are not historically native to the Caribbean but they are now emblematic of the Caribbean. Nature speaks a creole of human agency and exchange. But the effect of such accelerated change, of a geography so intertwined with the power relations of its inhabitants, is unsettling. What is native or foreign, new or old, indigenous or alien? Even for those born on the islands the terrain can feel unfamiliar. Belonging is elusive, reflects Walcott on growing up in the Caribbean. 'We were all strangers here.'

Essence is...

Original Commission for Reflections on Essence. *September 2020.*

Lovers Rock

Mahfuz Sultan

I see lovers rock through a camera obscura – inverted and reversed, projected on my bedroom wall. A series of dreams I mistake for memories; a landscape of lower frequencies where events mutiny against succession, and everything is out of order. It all opens with a tracking shot of wallflowers leaning against a bannister watching the dancefloor; the sound of muffled laughter behind curtains where people sneak shots of rum and lovers go to be alone. I feel it all at once – the coarse parquet floors, the wool and gabardine, the silk and satin, the velvet curtains, and the damp walls. I am in the empty offices and hallways where the bass periodically rolls by like a searchlight. I am there in the crowded car ride home and in the static as she keeps changing the radio station. I watch him sneak in the back door of her house. I see the lights suddenly go on in her parents' bedroom. There is the squeal of tires as we disappear into the night.

I see lovers rock in various states of exile. Night Nurse plays several years before its time from a small transistor radio in an apartment in Addis Ababa; a clandestine print shop for Marxist propaganda hidden in plain sight on the second floor of a police station. My father is there in a cadet jacket with gold buttons and beret, bathed in green phosphorus. My uncle Jemeel is still alive. He wears a waistcoat and jellabiya over his jeans and drinks a cup of tea at the window as he always does in my memories. He holds his glass up, fastidiously checking its color. A Tata truck rumbles by.

I turn and walk through a door that opens impossibly onto a sun baked courtyard. My mother sits on the grass beneath a jacaranda with a book of sonnets in her lap. She wears her Nazareth school uniform, white socks, and brogues. Carroll Thompson's voice floats over the sounds of a picnic just outside the frame. Maria crosses the courtyard in her lime sari – the only thing I can remember her wearing – and says something in Portuguese. She must be back in Goa with her sons now, the squat housing complexes and empty bus stops of Al Rayyan a dim memory.

I hear lovers rock in an overcrowded apartment in Dallas where we pass the time huddling in front of the radio and in the gift shop at the Playboy Tower in Chicago where my mother works. I can still see the track jacket she would wear beneath her father's military coat; the embroidered epaulets; the afro shaped like a nimbus; the steel toed boots; the clip of a folding knife in the back pocket of her jeans. I can see her bike rides home up Lakeshore Drive in the evenings, with the wind at her back and the trees leaning toward the horizon line and the lake so black that the city leaves no reflection in it. It reminds me of Langano; its floating pearls of light, its symphony of wind and cicadas; or that little room on Waverly Place with only a mattress set adrift between stacks of vinyl. We listen to Beres Hammond while we burn our books and pack up to move back to the old world. There are those drives through stretches of yellow gaseous night along the Corniche to Falcon Video and my brother reading by flashlight in the backseat. And everything is silent save the radio.

Janet Kay sings as Mohammed Mahfuz, my namesake, waves goodbye and returns home to fight. I hope her voice was the last thing he heard – from somewhere, from something – as he died of heatstroke lost in the aridities between Djibouti and Ethiopia. Papa Noel Dyer must have crossed the same desert as he hitchhiked from Jamaica to Shashamane and tethered all of us to those distant islands and their stories of endless ambulations between antipode and metropole. I imagine Malik Ambar must have crossed the same desert from Harar to the Red Sea before disappearing into the mercantile slipstream of the 17th century and reemerging a Deccan king in India. He appears again four centuries later as a character in a Wales Bonner collection, another addition to her gallery of romantic figures, real and fictive, who are everywhere the trade winds blow.

These are Grace's poetic interstices, the worlds between worlds, where Africa, India, and the islands touch as if on a dancefloor. Her collections Lovers Rock and Essence are set in Notting Hill in the late 1970s, yet recall Jamaica, Addis Ababa, Zanzibar, even Goa... at least for those of us who, like Malik Ambar or Aimé Césaire, have spent our lives on the postcolonial circuit, flickering in and out of other stories as shades, exiles, ephemera…

In Grace's work, we see Ashes set like a metronome between sea and sky on the prow of his boat and Isaac's narratives of dispersal and disappearance, of stories split between suspended screens, and people that take flight. We see Akomfrah's endless waves that roll and break (no matter the work, there are always the waves) and Jean Rhys staring from that attic window in her thralldom by the sea. And Walcott – we hear Walcott, his Victorian ictus wrestling with the rhythms of patois, the impulse of every word to touch another or stay suspended like those white egrets caught between the old world and the new. And so, the sounds of humid summer nights in London and basement parties lit like the bottom of the sea become the soundtrack to our exile and longing; the joy of being so irrevocably, irreversibly lost in the world and young and black and together.

Original Commission for Reflections on Essence. *September 2020.*


70


4A

photographed by
Sean and Seng

styled by
Tom Guinness

hair by
Cyndia Harvey

make-up by
Lauren Parsons

casting
Finlay Macaulay at Establishment

production
Lucy Hunt at Gainsbury and Whiting

models
Grace Musase, Maximilian Kachingwe, Farhan Alam, Kesewa Aboah, Sienna King

[1] **His refined intention.** Maximilian wears *Jose Mesh Polo* and *Jones Evening Coat.*

[2] **A proposition for a new uniform.** The *Stockwell Dashiki Shirt* and *Isaacs Tailored Trousers.*

[3] **Pale sugar hues harmonise retro sportswear.** Maximilian wears *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Johnson T-Shirt* and *Shorts.*

[4] **Magical crepuscular vibes.** A *yellow and black blouson* references *jockey souvenir jackets. Jamaican gold brass buttons embellish classic military tailoring.* The *Isaacs Panelled Blouson, Hanover Military Trousers* and *Jones Evening Coat.*

[5] **Conjuring the hippie sensibilities of the 1970s.** The *Kingston Plastron Shirt in maroon* and *rust stripe* and *Brixton Patch Pocket Jeans in indigo wash denim.* A golden accent adds richness.

[6] **His refined intention.** Maximilian wears *Jose Mesh Polo.*

[7] **The bold exuberance of a cobalt and teal check.** Farharn wears *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Tartan Track Top* and *Track Pants.*

[8] **Proud stripes in ivory and oceanic blue.** Grace wears *Montego Colour Block Shirt* and *Jeans.*

[9] **West African wax textiles inform the pattern of woven jacquard knit in the Clarendon Tracktop.** Rhythms of lush green and warm ivory. Grace wears *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Johnson Satin Shorts.*

[10] **Sportswear tessellates with traditional outerwear.** The *Dancehall Trench* in *Burgundy* is *double breasted* and has *Ruby satin sleeves* and *ribbed cuffs with White stripes. A hybrid coat,* shown here with the *adidas Originals tracksuit.*

[11] **Heavy ivory topstitching traces the irreverent detailing on the** *Hanover Military Jacket* and *Trousers.* Structured casualwear.

[12] **Jubilant energy! Colours like hot jewels.** The *Parish Cricket Cardigan, Saint Jones Zip Up Cardigan, Jones Bermuda Shorts* and *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Nizza Lo trainers.*

[13] **The reinvention of nostalgic classics.** Grace wears *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Kingston Tracktop* and *Trackpants* and *Nizza Lo trainers.*

[14] **The Kingston Kaftan dress in black tailoring wool** with *tonal satin trim* and *Isaacs Tailored Trousers.*

[15] **A dance between womenswear and menswear introduces a new silhouette.** The *Hanover Military Jacket* and *Boxpleat Skirt* with *Youth Patch Pocket Shirt.*

[16] **Timeless and spirited elegance.** The *belted Savanna Safari Jacket* and *Hanover Boxpleat Skirt* in *russet, orange* and *navy check.*

[17] **A new interpretation of traditional jockey racing wear.** The *Sunshine Panelled Shirt in yellow, ivory* and *black satin* and *Hanover Military Trousers.*

[18] **A play on Savile Row tailoring in cedar brown stripe wool.** The *Isaacs Tailored Jacket* and *Trousers* with *Saint Ann Ribbed Blouse.*

[19] **The reinvention of nostalgic classics.** Grace wears *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Kingston Tracktop* and *Trackpants* and *Nizza Lo trainers* and *Rafia Cap* by *Stephen Jones.*

[20] **The Saint Ann Ribbed Blouse and Skirt.** *Handcrafted crochet stripe* rhythms.

[21] **Finest weave creates the structured softness of the Rafia Cap** by *Stephen Jones.* Jaunt and Saunter.

[22] **Warm days flow.** The *Lucia Gathered Crochet Dress.*

[23] **Easy layering of fine crepe over emerald jersey.** The *Kingston Hooded Dashiki, Johnson Crest T-shirt* and *adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner Nizza Lo trainers.* A sweet nostalgia.

All clothing *Wales Bonner Essence Spring Summer 21* and *Adidas Originals* by *Wales Bonner*

Sunday A Come

Michael Smith

Sometime a siddung
wit me heart full up an me face wet up
for is a shame when yuh mumma breast wither up
an yuh waan cry an yuh cyaan bawl
for darkness between yuh world an yuh skin

but a like how yuh scratch dem drum
fi know yuh name an whe yuh come from
for dat note is a long note
too long fi i sing it straight

but the yout dem talk a different talk
dem a multiply dem step an dem a look inna de sun
an dem naw tun back
dem allergic to de scene

One an twenty
Two an twenty
Sweat an dry
Pocket empty
an dem naw line up

diggin dem dreams from no asphalted street
wit no swollen mout an no blistered feet

so mek yuh tun me life pon me head
meck we go walk

so meck we walk
like a me did bun
like a me did a bun
bun down Cross Road
bun down Cross Road

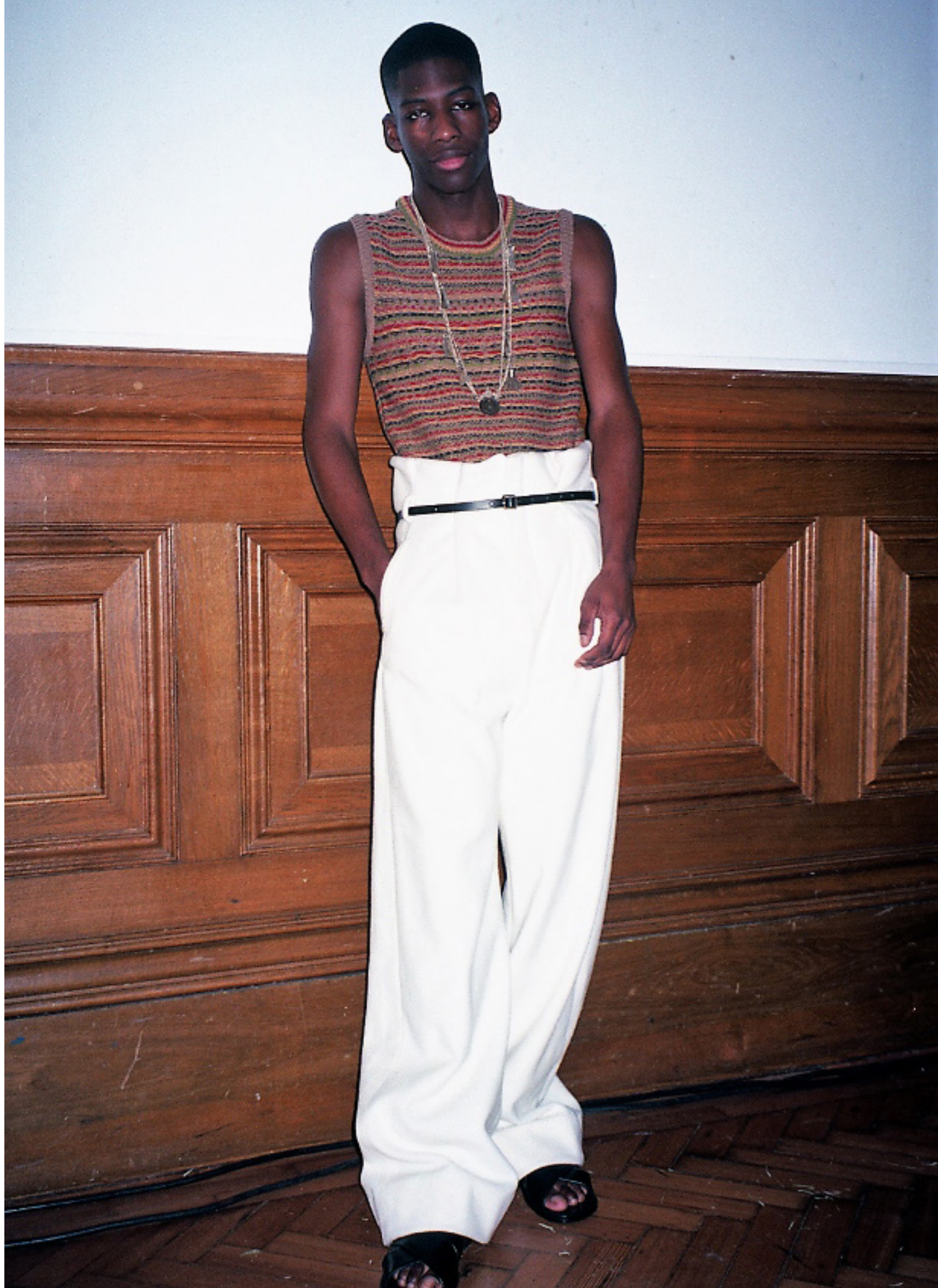
a doan like tell story
for dat note is a long note
too long fe i tell it straight

but a goin walk pon me blistered feet
sing louder dan de abeng
through me swollen mout
an stan firm
wid me puppa holograph
drench ïn blood

SOURCE: *'Sunday A Come'* by *Micheal Smith* (Originally published: Race Today Publications, *1986*)

WALES BONNER

LOVERS ROCK
AUTUMN WINTER 2020 PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIZ JOHNSON ARTUR



Mi Cyaan Believe It'
Micheal Smith

Mi cyaan believe it
(I can't believe it)
mi seh mi cyaan believe it
(I say I can't believe it)
room dem a rent mi apply widdin but as me go in cock-roach rat and scorpion also come in
(The room they rent and I apply within, as I go in, cock-roaches, rats and scorpions also come in)
one good nose haffi run but mi nah guh dong sit dong pon high wall like Humpty Dumpty
(one good nose have to run, buWt I'm not going to sit down on a high wall like Humpty Dumpty)
mi a face mi reality
(I face my reality)
one lickle bwai come blow him horn
(one little boy comes blows his horn)
me look pon him wid scorn when me realise how mi five bwai pickney was a victim of the trix dem call partisan politics
(I look at him with scorn when I realise how my five boy children were a victim of the tricks they call partisan politics)
an mi bun mi belly and mi bawl
(and I burn my belly and I bawl)
Mi seh mi cyaan believe it
(I can't believe it)
mi daughter bwaifriend name is Sailor and him pass through the port like a ship
(my daughter's boyfriend's name is Sailor and he passes through the port like a ship)
more grand pickney fi feed
(more grand children to feed)
but the whole a we need
(but the whole that we need)
what a night what a plight mi cyaan get a bite, mi life is a stiff fight and mi cyaan believe it
(what a night, what a plight, I can't get a bite, my life is a stiff fight and I can't believe it)
sittin in de corner wid mi friends talkin bout tings and time
(sitting in de corner with my friends talking about things and time)
mi 'ear one voice seh: "who deh? "
(I hear one voice sey: "who's there? ")
mi a seh "who deh? "
(I say "who's there? ")
"who a seh who deh when wi a seh who deh"
("who says who's there when we say who's there? ")
when wi tek a stalk, dem lick down wi flat
(when we take a stalk, they beat down our flat)
teet start fly, and big man start cry
(teeth start to fly and big man starts to cry)
an mi cyaan believe
(and I can't believe it)
mi seh mi cyaan believe it
(I say I can't believe it)

De other day mi a pass one yard pon de hill, when mi tek a stalk mi 'ear " hey bwai! "
(The other day I pass one yard on the hill, when I take a stalk I hear"Hey boy! ")
Yes maam
(Yes madam)
"hey bwai! "
("hey boy! ")
Yes maam
(Yes madam)
"You clean up de dog s***? "
*("Did you clean up the dog s***?! ")*
Yes maam
(Yes madam)
an mi cyaan believe it
(and I can't believe it)
Doris a mother of four, get a wok as a domestic
(Doris is a mother of four, and gets a work as a domestic)
bass man move in an bap-si-kaisico she pregnant again
(The boss moves in and bap-si-kaisico she's pregnant again)
bap-si-kaisico she pregnant again
(bap-si-kaisico she's pregnant again)
an mi cyaan believe it
(and I can't believe it)
De yard de other night when mi a hear fire, fire to plate claat, who dead, you dead, who dead, me dead, who dead, Harry dead, who dead, heleven dead, woyeee, Orange street fire deh bun mi 'ead
and mi cyan believe it
(The yard the other day when I hear fire, fire like hell, who's dead, you're dead, who's dead, I'm dead, who's dead, Harry's dead, who's dead, eleven are dead, woyeee, Orange street, fire there burn my headand I can't believe it)
Lord me see one black bud livin in one building but no rent no pay so him cyaan stay,
Lord de opress and de disposess cyaan get no res',what nex'
(Lord, I see one black bud living in one building, but he doesn't pay anyrent, so he can't stay, Lord, the opressed and the dispossesed can't get no rest, what's next)
Tek a trip from Kingston to Jamaica, tek twelve from a dozen,
mi see mi mama in heaven. Madhouse. Mi cyaan believe it.
(I take a trip from Kingston to Jamaica, and see my mother in heaven. Madhouse. I can't believe it)
You believe it?
(Do you you believe it?)
How you fi believe it when you blind you eye to it?
(How are you going to believe it when you close your eye to it)
But mi know you believe it, laaawd, mi know you believe it.
(But I know you belive it, Lord, I know you believe it.)

SOURCE: *'Mi Cyaan Believe It'* by *Micheal Smith* (Label: Mango – MLPS 9717, 1982)

Roof Nightclub

Ishion Hutchinson

First, above all, I live forever. And
thereafter redecorate paradise
in the majesty of the Roof Nightclub,
DJ Lucifer, at predawn hours
terrifies the floorboards to give way to
Apollyon's abyss, reflecting scarred light
on the wall. The mirror alive with tremors.

Herons bring news of consolation.
I rebuke them for my brilliance
and enrich uranium in my cove
across Navy Island. The hospital
vanishes in the fog, so I arrange rain
to restore magenta ginger lilies
where my mother walked to born me.
Malignant fireflies at Christmas;
sorrel then sorrow, such is Kingston, there
funky carols seethe asphalt with famine.

Forever ends. Never a moment holds
'still-here,' when sand murmurs through my fingers.
I number and chant down stars, ellipsoidal
as fire ants with, "I think I will be
killed once I die!" and again return
the Super Ape, to conquer the Roof Club,
rip off Apollyon's hell fence; skin him; dance
thundering subatomic dub music,
until my rage yields settled coral.
A million embers of eyes split from coals
to see me loom out the shadows' sunray
by the turntable wearing a splash crown.

Strictly photographed by *Jason Evans* styled by *Simon Foxton* 1991

Serious T'ings a Go

Marlon James

If hip-hop's visual language is graffiti, then dancehall's visual language is the sign, the event poster—the notice that big t'ings a gwaan down di street. Take the analogy further and the differences are as noteworthy as the similarities: both are signifiers, even though graffiti signifies the artist himself, while the dancehall sign signifies an event. One is mostly expression, while the other is mostly communication. Both are art forms that came out of nothing, with almost no precedent, and both remain the only art in each genre that feels like the sound of each genre. Street art, outsider art, but more than anything, outlaw art. But the comparison can only go so far, since dancehall is its own cultural phenomenon, and while we could waste time playing spot the influence, we forget that the music sprung almost fully formed, on the streets of Kingston. Dancehall art in turn could never have been made for any other musical genre, not even roots reggae, which was already on its way to being established music. There's too much do-it-yourself spirit here. Too much plundering of whatever materials available, too much info scribbled and scrawled on the go, too much of function over form, and too much of the spunky creativity of a people, sometimes without resources to create.

It would be a surprise to many of the people who made these signs that this medium, where function triumphs over form every time, should emerge as its own art, with its own aesthetic—though if you are going to bring words like "aesthetic" into it, you've already missed the point. Back when I was a kid in the 70s, a dancehall sign felt like subversive code, an invite to something to which I would never be allowed to go. Something that to me just looked like Jamaica. You'd be surprised, less than 20 years after independence, how hard it was to find culture as you saw it in the street. For my parents' generation, Dancehall wasn't even culture.

A session wasn't a place for decent people. Nobody was going to open "Shore Vibes," with prayer, no church sister was going to be at "Dutty Fridaze," at least not in plain sight. And you certainly wouldn't have heard any of those songs on the radio. The people who put them on always traded in alter-egos—Mumsy as Simone! Keisha as Sexy!—that electrified my imagination. These were Reggae events, where the musician wasn't the star so much as the record itself. And these were posters where the sound systems, like KILLAMANJARO, took on mythic status. But all this role-playing and mythmaking undercuts what is so special about the dancehall sign, which is its invitation to the realest of the real. People you might know, inviting you to come nice up de dance. Security: Your best behavior, meaning this event is ours, and good times are here to stay if we protect it. The dancehall poster is visual proof that dancehall happened and continues to happen. And proof of dancehall's vitality is not in music videos, or Instagram posts, or how many rappers invite the hottest DJ to guest on their single. The proof is that sign that just went up on the lamp post, about that party next week that going bruk it dung, right down the street.

SOURCE: Walters, Maxine, and Marlon James. *Serious T'ings a Go Happen: Three Decades of Jamaican Dancehall Signs,* Hat & Beard, *2016.*

Serious Things a Go Happen. Artist unknown. *2001.* Original dancehall street sign from the collection of Maxine Walters.

Countryman. Johnnie Black. *1978.* From the exhibition *"Black Exposure"* by Johnnie Black. Kingston: *2020.*

Reflections on 56 Hope Road
Grace Wales Bonner

Something about his military shorts unravelled in my imagination like their frayed edges. They framed what I thought I knew about place and those interwoven connections. Of the exchange between oceans that forms my own existence in these waters.

In my mind, they were a relic of another wartime life, of service to a country. A reminder of promised dignity. I was seduced by the intimacy and the closeness to the life that lived with, helped to care for, weather and fragrance them. These were handed down, or perhaps found in a Notting Hill market. Cherished and cut off now for daily football practice in the grounds in front of the house. I found a rhythmic invention in this rehoming. They were ripped by the movement of people, through the enduring presence of such natural and graceful agility.

They hit like a Hurricane[1]. They hit me like music.

Blessings, ablutions and reflections here. Meditations on the intention to soothe broken hearts and minds here. The ambience of the smoke and fragrant green of vegetation, a realization of worship, of clean living and pure health. The empty clothes hung that once adorned the vessel, an Emperor's cloak around a beautiful shining soul. The warmth of black sunlight glowing. And his outer presence, so mighty.

And I could feel God in that room. The earthiness of earth at my feet. Feet bathed in the light or in stone and water reflections, those gestural scenes of his feet dancing out there.

The asante slippers he received. An offering from Gods. The purity that fragrances the surround, an affirmation that he existed in two spaces, partly on this earth but already One.

Mr Marley House. His generosity in sonorous reverberation, surrounding, One. Sounds of Unity. Calling for the One. One People.

And I still feel the bass of the studio, a density to it that soothes the aching heart. The electricity of the feel of Hope.

The sun is shining.

Freedom sounds play out.

26th September 2020

[1] Hurricane Hits England *(1996)*, Grace Nichols Original Commission for Reflections on Essence. *September 2020.*

Ideology and Ideological Struggle

Stuart Hall

In the case of the Rastafarians in Jamaica, Rasta was a funny language, borrowed from a text—the Bible—that did not belong to them; they had to turn the text upside down to get a meaning which fit their experience. But in turning the text upside down, they remade themselves; they positioned themselves differently as new political subjects; they reconstructed themselves as blacks in the New World: They became what they are. And positioning themselves in that way, they learned to speak a new language. And they spoke it with a vengeance. They learned to speak and sing. And in so doing, they did not assume that their cultural resources lay in the past. They did not go back and try to recover some absolutely pure "fold culture," untouched by history, as if that would be the only way they could learn to speak. No, they made use of the modern media to broadcast their message: "Don't tell us about tom-toms in the forest. We want to use the new means of articulation and production to make a new music, with a new message." This is cultural transformation. It is not something totally new. It is not something which has a straight, unbroken line of continuity from the pat. It is transformation through a reorganization of the elements of a cultural practice, elements which do not in themselves have any necessary political connotations. It is not the individual elements of a discourse that have political or ideological connotations; it is the ways those elements are organized together in a new discursive formation.

Let me come to the question of social forces. This ideology, which transforms a people's consciousness and awareness of themselves and their historical situation, although it explodes culturally, does not constitute itself directly as a social and political force. It has its limits, as all religious forms of explanation do. But it does become articulated to a social movement, a movement of people. And it functions so as to harness or draw to it sectors of the population who have never been inside that historical bloc before. Is it a class? In the case of the Rastafarian movement, it has at its center the experiences, the position, the determinations of economic life in Jamaican society.

SOURCE: Hall, Stuart, et al. *Cultural Studies 1983 a Theoretical History.* Duke University Press, *2016.* pg. 144.

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Further Reading

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