

AHLUWALIA

AUTUMN / WINTER 2021 - "TRACES"

In place of a physical show, AW21 sees Ahluwalia presenting short film *Traces* in collaboration with musician Cktrl. Directed by Stephen Isaac Wilson with choreography by Holly Blakey, styling by Nell Kalonji, casting by Troy Casting, production design by Chris Melgram and Make up by Bari Khalique, the film captures the spirit of brotherhood and unity seen in the garments through synchronised movement performed to an exclusive score composed for this occasion by Cktrl.

The film is also accompanied by a look book, shot by frequent Ahluwalia collaborator, Laurence Ellis.

Like many of us, Priya Ahluwalia has taken all the extra time spent at home over the past year as an opportunity to grow her personal library. One book that particularly made an impact on the designer was *Home Going*, Yaa Gyasi's moving tale of two sisters born in the 1700s and separated at birth. The book follows the generations of both sister's families through years, noting the powerful influences past experiences of our ancestors can have on our lives. "It showed how we move around the world and that the things from the past always follow us around," she says. The strong impression from the pages spurred Priya on looking at migration as a societal process that leads to new ideas and new schools of thought, with the Harlem Renaissance as the prime example.

However, Ahluwalia's exploration of the Harlem Renaissance era wasn't about replicating the silhouettes or design stories of the times. Instead, it was reflected in the way she designed her AW21 collection. The notion of syncretism – a merging of different elements – has always been at the core of Ahluwalia since its inception through upcycling. This season, it's taken to the next level through the hybridisation of the garments, as puffer jackets become reversible and contrasting textiles combine into one. The label's signature patchwork button-ups bring together bamboo silk with deadstock shirting, while the graphic jumpers are made in a mix of repurposed knit and sweatshirt fabrics.

With this collection being the brand's biggest one yet, Priya also explored the variety of menswear and all of its categories. "The uncertainty in the world has made me think way outside of the circle of boundaries of what I know and to consider what's going on everywhere, and not just around me," she notes. This means not only delving into both the formal and casual aspects, but also offering pieces for a variety of weather conditions.

When it comes to the palette for the season, Priya looked at the colouristic tendencies of seminal Black artists Kerry James Marshall and Jacob Lawrence. Just like their paintings, looks from Ahluwalia AW21 ground the vibrant colours by juxtaposing them against black and brown. The prints continue the story of waves seen in SS21, while also adding new chapters with the use of digital printing onto 100% recycled fabrics made from plastic bottles. The graphic lines that created the patterns of repurposed textiles were inspired by migration maps of the world. While creating her last film *Joy*, presented in partnership with Gucci Fest, Ahluwalia's stylist Nell Kalonji was spray-painting custom accessories on top of sheets of paper which were later scanned and transformed into the patterns for the ombré pieces in this collection. These prints were also the basis for the customised adidas Originals Forum trainers seen paired with the collection.

This season also marks the debut of Ahluwalia's new emblem which has universal symbolism that transcends place or time – a compass-like insignia made out of four afro-combs pointing to each of the four corners of the world.

KEY STOCKIST LIST

ADDICTED – SEOUL

BROWNS – UK

DFS – PARIS

FEUILLESHOP – MONTREAL

HARVEY NICHOLS – DUBAI

HTOWN – LONDON

LIBERTY - LONDON

LN-CC – LONDON

MATCHESFASHION – LONDON

NEIMAN MARCUS – MIAMI/ LA

NORDSTROM – ATLANTA/ MIAMI/ LA

SSENSE – ONLINE

BIOGRAPHY

Priya Ahluwalia launched her eponymous multi award-winning label in 2018, after graduating from the MA Menswear course at The University of Westminster.

The label combines elements from the designer's dual Indian-Nigerian heritage and London roots and explores the potential of vintage and deadstock clothing by giving existing textiles a new life through various methods of craftsmanship. Considering every aspect of the design process, Ahluwalia works with responsible sourcing and manufacturing techniques to ensure sustainability is at the forefront of the brand.

With the designer's background being at the core of Ahluwalia, the brand incorporates traditional textile techniques to create an intersection between near and far, and past and present, making Ahluwalia both nostalgic and futuristic at the same time.