



# Open Up!

## *\*The Commonwealth Fashion Archives*

**Archive Interventions:** *discovering collections,  
discovering talent, discovering communities.*

*Information for donators; from cultural and heritage organisations to  
creative individuals.*

*“I want every single young person to have the opportunity to discover how the arts can enrich their lives. Access to cultural education is a matter of social justice”. Nicky Morgan (Secretary of State for Education, UK) 2016.*

# The Commonwealth Fashion Archives

(A digital resource helping to raise visibility on fashion and clothing from around the Commonwealth)

**Who we are and what we're planning:** *the Commonwealth Fashion Council (CFC) are planning to launch an ambitious archive project; the Commonwealth Fashion Archives (CFA). The CFA platform will explore and creatively interpret people, fashion, clothing, textiles and material cultures from around Commonwealth nations - by looking back since the 1800s to the present day sectors of fashion from around the Commonwealth Fashion Industries (CFIs). We plan to situate new and existing data (digital photographic material) openly through a development project that focuses on partnership delivery, i.e. imagery donated by individuals and organisations (as a cross-sectoral collaboration project). Making cultural and heritage data accessible online is at the top of our agenda; people, fashion, clothing, textiles and material cultures, by making a wide-variety of photographic material available within a unique digital archives platform - situating opportunities for engagement to a wide variety of people online.*

*We aim to enhance access to existing cultural and heritage collections by selecting key pieces to represent the creative talent existing and pre-existing in visual format, digitally. The identities of past, worn by natives from Commonwealth countries, and talent from the present in the ever expanding fashion sectors (CFIs) - from around all 52 nations globally.*

*We believe that an online digital archive will help illustrate visually the rich and diverse talent from CFIs and explore collections from around the globe. Raising visibility per region, whilst helping to demonstrate publically the Council's key undertakings and programmes for Education, and creative collaborations. This platform*

*will help position public understanding and critical reflection on the vast fashion landscapes across the CFIs and re-position narratives from the past.*

*The CFA will provide digitally literate audiences who are interested in cultural fashion the opportunity to access and view imagery specifically about the CFIs from a wide perspective, i.e. from grass-root designers to established ones.*

*This idea of re-using and repurposing existing data will extend greater access to cultural and heritage collections (photographic documentation and other forms of digital material).*

*In a world concerned highly with aesthetic consumption it's time to spread awareness on the CFIs; diversifying collaborative organisations sharing similar values to make an impact to the lives of Commonwealth citizen's by opening up their talents and innovative work. We do this by connecting and introducing the creative sectors of fashion to a well-connected and networked Commonwealth to enable development outcomes.*

**Our vision:** *where the past collides with the contemporary; embodying the passing down of information from one generation to the next. Our online archives service is about merging stories from a variety of cultures and people. We hope to inspire audiences that are interested in cultural fashion from across the globe, attracting many different segments of the population.*

**Our aims:** *we aim to connect with cultural institutions and people, not just from Commonwealth countries but from around the globe, helping to re-use and re-purpose their cultural and heritage data, i.e. photographic material of people wearing a wide-variety of clothing and various material cultures. We aim to help stimulate new and existing audiences by showcasing a wide variety of visually interesting imagery. We will connect with an open network and nurture its growth by continually supporting their interests by*

*offering to those willing to contribute the opportunity to collaborate via our creative collaboration projects; providing a platform to help create fashion content from a range of mediums.*

*Increasing public awareness about the CFIs will reach a large quantity of the population by giving fashion creatives the opportunity to share their work to a larger fashion context; promoting their talent, linking communities and resources by providing a platform for those with a lack of media outputs and resources. We do this by connecting people together with our Committee and Council members across the CFIs to build relationship, providing more mainstream exposure; access to commonwealth fashion, plus linking government with fashion providing even greater support to those living and working across CFIs.*

**Material sourcing snapshot:** *we are looking to build and drive a predominantly image based digital resource, one that is also made up of videos, essays and texts around the subjects of Commonwealth fashion. We want to include text information about our partners and the researchers working hard to build up our data sources; hearing their stories reflective of their particular interests (hosting a multi-level user engagement).*

*The CFA will embody a good balance of image content for access and use, and text based research that offers a more critical engagement for analysis offering research potential. One that is informative and inspirational, at times - political and/or controversial.*

*We are looking at individuals; not just living and working in the fashion sectors across Commonwealth countries, but those inspired by cultural fashion from across the globe - to help us create open-ended perspectives, extending ever reaching audience participation. We want to see and hear about what cultures you wear and how you wear them.*

*“Today everything exists to  
end in a photograph”. Susan  
Sontag*

**Historic archive collections (*participation with archival material owned by other Cultural and Heritage institutions via partnership delivery*).**

*This specific area looks back at the history of people living across Commonwealth nations, dating back to the 1800s. This area hosts a variety of digitised photographs from daily life, to ceremonial engagements. We look at the way the body is embodied by material, how it's worn (whatever the source).*

*If your collection is relevant to the Commonwealth, i.e. photographs documenting past lives of people, clothing or material cultures and your digital agenda is to open up wider access to your collections - we want to hear from you regarding the potential to foster a participatory agenda.*



*\*images courtesy of the Commonwealth Secretariat's image library*

<https://commonwealth.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-commonwealth/action/viewHome>

**Contemporary photographic material:** *looks into the fashion and material cultures of today's world existing across the CFIs; fashion movements, influences of other cultures across the globe, the creative talent, resource developments, synergies of expression – exploring how fashion and dress are engaged in diverse ways across all 52 member countries.*





*\*Images courtesy of independent donators*

**Engaging online communities:** *we aim to have a multi-communication portal to impact new and existing online audiences across the globe. Our service will support information sharing in a user-generated content.*

*Participation from our online users will allow collective voices to shape the archives service by their contribution and interpretation of their own talent in fashion imagery they create. Discourses around the subject of fashion and clothing will help shape new perspectives; we see this aspect of the archive service an empowering one, one that gives people their voice a platform to share their imagery and determine their readings and interpretations by others. This allows people to impact the way we all see fashion from around the CFIs today, allowing the CFA platform to become this multi-channel communication tool between the people living and working across the CFIs and to a global audience.*

*We aim to give people the opportunity to drive their own material they might have made specifically for the CFA platform. Their contribution is crucial, it's a strong driving force to form real-life reflections; real-life narratives on wide-ended perspectives across many sectors concerning cultural fashion.*

**Impacts:** *The CFA will impact ways relationships are developed with key cultural institutions and individuals working and living across the CFIs with new audiences by;*

- *Promoting creative talent within the current fashion sectors across the CFIs – embracing multi-cultural influences.*
  - *Branding the Commonwealth and Britain as a leader in advocating education and development across Commonwealth nations; its people, youth culture, trade, education and business.*
- *Re-engaging cultural and heritage data online to identify and connect the historic record that captures experiences beyond our time.*
- *Help promote and preserve an immensely rich and diverse set of records on the Commonwealth; people, clothing, textiles and material cultures.*
- *Open up mass digital access in a world highly concerned with aesthetic consumption.*
  - *Democratisation of history, of culture, and collective memory/ies.*
- *Informing and inspiring creative practices with an interest in cultural fashion from a wide range of people - stimulating their research outputs.*
  - *Develop online communities by opening up their voices, allowing them to participate and engage with the CFA platform (facilitating a user participation area).*
- *Developing opportunities for young people to become aware and understand the Commonwealth organisations via school programmes delivery to educate young people.*

**Outreach programmes:** *we aim to explore the potential for creative collaborations by inviting people to join our digital community in person, by getting creative and hands-on. We aim to launch a gateway for people to have their work uploaded into our archives service by producing their very own Commonwealth fashion image(s).*

*This can be either created in one of our workshops, or deposited online by image makers. Images can be hand-made, photographed, or formed from multi-media photographic material, made by anyone! We believe that everybody should enjoy the opportunities culture has to offer. By building cultural-links we have great potential in spreading a wider message towards fashion, politics, identity and race; embracing and encouraging cultural diversity.*

*We believe in equality in access to cultural and heritage data, attracting and welcoming all.*

**How to get involved:** *join our archives and social media communities by submitting your images or work to the archive team.*

*\*all submissions are subject to review and copyright agreement.*

December 2017

[archives@commonwealthfashioncouncil.org](mailto:archives@commonwealthfashioncouncil.org)

+447907 174 445