



STYLE / CLOTHING

Rihanna discusses influence of 1960s 'Black Is Beautiful' movement as Fenty launches

RiRi cites photographer Kwame Brathwaite as an inspiration in creating the luxury brand.

By **DAVID RENSHAW**
May 29, 2019

Rihanna has revealed that Kwame Brathwaite, the Brooklyn-born photographer who helped pioneer the "black is beautiful" movement in the 1950s and 1960s, was a major inspiration for her new luxury brand, Fenty.

Fenty officially launched today, May 29. Launched in partnership with LVMH, Fenty makes Rihanna the first black woman in history to run a major luxury fashion house.

Rihanna marked the occasion by sharing a photograph of Brathwaite's on Instagram. The image, dated 1968, was taken at the Renaissance Casino Ballroom in Harlem on Garvey Day. A poster reading "Buy Black" can be seen in the background.

Brathwaite's movement promoted an Afro-centric version of female beauty that included unstraightened hair and dark skin at a time when representation was poor.

Speaking to *Vogue* in a new interview, Rihanna explained how she first came across Brathwaite's work. "When I was coming up with the concept for this release, we were just digging and digging and we came up with these images – they made me feel they were relevant to what we are doing right now," she said.

It was the discovery of one image of a group known as the Grandassa Models, who deigned their own clothes and regularly appeared in Brathwaite's work in the '60s, that struck a chord. "It was a really strange and powerful parallel," Rihanna said. "And he gave me permission [to use the imagery], obviously that is a big deal."

That wasn't the only parallel. "Kwame Brathwaite is from Barbados! And, his last name is my grandfather's name, which was my mother's name before she was a Fenty."

In a recent *New York Times* interview Rihanna said the plan for the Fenty luxury brand was to be "disruptive" and change the luxury fashion world with a focus on direct-to-consumer online sales. The collection, which includes sunglasses, shoes and other accessories, will be added to every few weeks.