

teenVOGUE



Fashion Brand MadeMe Collaborated With Artist Aya Brown on Products That Showcase the Queer Black Female Experience

“We’re about to get real loud and you’re going to have to deal with it!”

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Teen Vogue is celebrating Pride by highlighting the stories that matter to the LGBTQ community. See all our coverage [here](#).

Just in time for Pride, the streetwear brand *MadeMe*, a peerless “by girls, for girls” brand founded by Erin Magee in 2007, announced a collab with Brooklyn artist *Aya Brown*. The collection features three of Aya’s original designs of unapologetically visible black queer women printed on hoodies, tees, and underwear. As Aya said: “The world is so not ready, but we’re fucking coming!”

Aya’s been drawing ever since she was a kid. She draws black avatars of herself including girls she knows and girls she’s attracted to, solely on brown paper. Because, why start on a white canvas when the people you’re drawing are women of color? Aya’s drawings are fun, sexy, and incredibly intimate, all at

the same time. “As a kid, I used to draw in my school books more than I would ever write or do any work. I would look at comic books and since I’m half Japanese, a lot of anime,” Aya told *Teen Vogue*. “I’d draw these characters but make them look more like me. I’d add the things I wore, like the sneakers my Dad would buy me, and add those features to the drawing,” she continued. Her style has evolved, but in many ways has stayed the same. Nowadays, she still depicts women that look like her, adding sartorial details from her own closet.



The drawings’ Aya designed for the collab with *Madame* include a black woman doing the splits and dumbbells raised high in the air, an apt metaphor for the strength of black queer women. The drawing “Selfie Harness” features an image of a black woman in a North Face jacket, her sweatpants pulled down to show a strap-on dildo. She stands tall and proud, looking like a total badass. Another drawing is of a black torso also wearing a dildo. The drawings leave nothing hidden, articulating the strength, intimacy, and vulnerability that encompass the black queer experience. “Recently, I’ve been more comfortable with expressing myself and my sexuality and identity. I have always done these drawings, but I now feel comfortable enough to start sharing them,” Aya said. Aya’s collection with *Madame* marks a shift from sharing her work online, to sharing it with anyone that might come across someone wearing the t-shirts in the street. Talk about visibility!

From a young age, Aya was drawn to streetwear, opting for graphic t-shirts that were vulgar. “I think putting [these images] on a shirt is a way to make people aware of queer black women and what we look like in life through the gaze of Aya and not the typical white male gaze,” she said. In a culture where depictions of women, and especially black and queer women, are often centered around the gaze of cis white men, Aya’s drawings are a welcome change, presenting an accurate representation of the queer experience.



While some might think the *Mademe* x Aya Brown collab features images that are provocative or unique, in reality, Aya’s art is beautifully mundane. Her art is of what she and her friends look like, even if that reality isn’t typically portrayed publically or in the media. “This is what I see, these are my friends. Putting us on a t-shirt, putting myself on a t-shirt, will allow people to get comfortable. This is what we look like. This is how I am. Maybe in intimate settings or around my friends. This imagery exists and it’s never been seen before, so it’s really important that we’re putting it on a shirt,” Aya said.



“If I’m wearing my hoodie on the train, you’re going to see a torso with a dildo coming out, and you’re just going to have to be comfortable with that. This exists in the world. We’re here and we’re not going anywhere. We’re actually about to get real loud and that’s it, you’re going to have to deal with it!” Collabs like this create an important space to do just that: show people that black queer women are here and they’re not going anywhere. *Deal with it.*

The Mademe X Aya Brown collection of hoodies, underwear, and tees, were modeled by Hawa Sakho and photographed by [Jheyda McGarrell](#). Aya explained she was a bit nervous going into the photoshoot. It would be her first time seeing other people wearing her designs. She wanted the women modeling them, who are also black queer women, to feel like the designs fit with their experience. “I want to protect these images because they’re real, this is a real person. I want to make sure whoever does receive them feels empowered and feels strong, like they don’t have to hide or be uncomfortable because somebody else is uncomfortable,” Aya said. “That’s the goal of all this is to empower people and make people feel like they don’t have to be apologetic for who they are,” she continued.



The products are available starting today via the [MadeMe website](#) and all proceeds from the collaboration will benefit the [Marsha P. Johnson Institute](#), an organization working to defend the rights of black trans people. We can't wait to see people rocking these pieces in public.

