

World's first retrospective of groundbreaking designer NIGO to open at the Design Museum in Spring

Nike, Pepsi, Louis Vuitton, Snoopy, Uniqlo, Nintendo, Sesame Street: iconic yet totally different brands that all have one man in common.



NIGO photographed at the Design Museum. Photo credit Elliot James Kennedy.

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NIGO: From Japan with Love

1 May – 4 October 2026 | the Design Museum

PRESS IMAGES AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

From the 1 May 2026, the Design Museum in London will stage the very first retrospective on NIGO. The visionary designer and creative director is credited as one of the first designers to bridge the worlds of streetwear and luxury fashion. One of the founding fathers of 'hype culture', NIGO has applied his creative mind to some of the world's most recognisable brands and cultural icons, as well as pioneering his own streetwear and luxury fashion labels.

NIGO, the first Japanese Artistic Director of Paris fashion house KENZO since its founder Kenzo Takada, rose to prominence with his streetwear brand A Bathing Ape in the 1990s; going on to launch Billionaire Boys Club with American musician Pharell Williams in 2003 and HUMAN MADE in 2010. Recognised for his unique ability to identify trends and sample cultural references across wide-ranging disciplines, NIGO is responsible for setting some of the most influential trends in recent fashion history. Over the course of his 30-year career, he has successfully bridged fashion, music, architecture and interior design; infusing a range of influences spanning vintage Americana, streetwear, hip-hop, traditional Japanese craft and growing up in 1980s Tokyo.

Featuring over 700 objects - with 600 from NIGO's own personal archive - the exhibition will chart NIGO's expansive career from the back streets of Harajuku to the runways in Paris. Highlights include a recreation of his teenage bedroom, rare and early era BAPE designs, ceramics hand-thrown by NIGO himself and a life-size glass tea house made specially for the exhibition.

NIGO says, *"I am truly honoured for my first retrospective exhibition to be held at the Design Museum in London, and I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to present my work in such an iconic space."*

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The exhibition will be split into four sections: *The Future is in the Past, Evolution, The NIGO Effect* and *New Traditions*.

Beginning with a replica of NIGO's 1980s teenage bedroom, visitors will be able to examine objects collected and preserved from his youth that shaped his creative influences. As elements of American culture trickled into Japanese fashion and music following the post-Second World War military occupation, NIGO's collection of childhood ephemera represents a meeting of two worlds.

Fascinated by Americana, he started collecting objects as a teen and developed a signature style donning 1950s Levi's denim jackets, vintage baseball caps and varsity jackets, several of which will be exhibited. NIGO has amassed over 10,000 pieces in his personal archive, which until now has been kept mostly private. As part of this first section, NIGO has

personally selected 300 objects that are both meaningful and have shaped his craft and approach to design. NIGO chose USM Modular Furniture to showcase his personal archive in the exhibition, the same shelving system used to display his collection in his Tokyo studio.

Cherished figurines and toys, including Donald Duck, Felix the Cat and Star Wars characters will be on show with his Japanese toys, music and magazines from the era, demonstrating this mingling of cultures. This fusion can be seen in a vintage film poster for Tom Hank's American classic 'BIG' translated into Japanese, or a Japanese tabletop game reimagining the favourite American pastime baseball. This mix of figurines, objects and ephemera sets the distinctive stage of 1980s Tokyo and the influences that would go on to inspire NIGO to this day.

The second section '*Evolution*' leads from NIGO's early career with his first store NOWHERE, co-founded with fashion designer Jun Takahashi in 1993, part of the 'Ura-Hara' scene centred around the backstreets of Harajuku, Tokyo. In the same year NIGO launched his clothing line A Bathing Ape (often abbreviated to BAPE). This section features early design drawings from NIGO's time at fashion college as well as rare early era BAPE clothing items: sweatshirts, t-shirts and a variety of jackets including nylon, camo, varsity and puffer styles.

A marketing maverick, NIGO soon developed the model of limited-edition runs, novel packaging and exciting collaborations that fuelled collecting and hype culture. T-shirt packaging that looks like spray cans, membership cards that resemble credit cards and collaborations with the likes of KAWS, MAC, Pepsi, Disney and Nintendo are just some of the ingenious creations that feature in the exhibition.

Being one of the first to break down the barrier between streetwear and luxury set NIGO's designs apart and propelled him to the global stage, introducing him to leading American hip-hop artists including regular collaborator Parrell. NIGO's love for fashion is intrinsically tied to his love for music, styling several of his favourite artists from the 1990s into the 2000s, launching his own record label BAPE Sounds and forming the band Teriyaki Boyz. Teriyaki Boyz CDs will be on show alongside playful merchandise, including snow globes, playing cards, figurines, stamps and even a model of a Teriyaki Boyz branded burger.

NIGO adopted the motto 'The Future is in the Past' for his fashion label HUMAN MADE, finding inspiration in the past and manifesting it through fashion. Viewers will be able to draw a direct parallel to the vintage Americana fashion collected in his youth and the pieces he went onto design, including their 'Yokosuka Jumper' souvenir jacket, a stadium jacket emulating the Varsity style and denim pieces. NIGO brought this same perspective to his role as Artistic Director of KENZO in 2021, incorporating elements from the house's archive into his contemporary designs, creating a fresh yet nostalgic identity. Several runway looks will be on display, as well as the royal blue suit and cape ensemble designed for Kid Cudi worn at the 2022 Met Gala.

'The NIGO Effect' examines NIGO's career after achieving cult status, a trendsetter who became one of the most sought-after partners for brands across fashion, music and design. In this section we see collaborations with the same brands that inspired and defined NIGO's childhood, drawing parallels between the objects he collected as a child in his bedroom and the projects he went on to create.

Known for his signature sunglasses, his 'Millionaire', 'Bolivia' and 'Havana' style sunglasses for Louis Vuitton's Spring-Summer 2005 show will be featured, a collaboration between Marc Jacobs, Pharrell Williams and NIGO. An ensemble from his very recent collaboration with Pharrell Williams for the Louis Vuitton menswear Fall-Winter 2025-2026 show will be displayed in conjunction with earlier collaborations with Virgil Abloh for the brand.

NIGO's ongoing partnership with Nike will be explored, with limited edition t-shirts and a signature Varsity style jacket featuring the NIGO x Nike swoosh emblem. Sealed 2024 APE-force trainers and the accompanying figurine will be on display, exhibited alongside his other specially designed Air Force III trainers.

The final section, *'New Traditions'* will explore NIGO's personal explorations into Japanese craft and rituals, finding new creative practices in traditional techniques. Following his own motto 'The Future is in the Past', NIGO finds inspiration in heritage and aims to translate this into his contemporary practice. Alongside training to be a master of tea ceremony, NIGO also

practices ceramics, creating pottery from his studio in Tokyo and travelling across Japan to learn regional styles. This final section will showcase 25 of his own hand-thrown ceramic creations, in conjunction with a life-size glass tea house made specially for the exhibition; a modern interpretation of a traditional Japanese tea house designed by NIGO in collaboration with exhibition supporter NOT A HOTEL.

Tim Marlow, Director and CEO of the Design Museum says, *“NIGO’s contributions to the fashion industry as we know it today are highly significant and under-explored. He has helped redesign the landscape of brand collaboration as well as continuing to blur boundaries between streetwear and luxury. The Design Museum is delighted to present the first global retrospective of his extraordinary career and showcase the impact of a Japanese pioneer on global fashion culture.”*

NIGO: From Japan with Love opens 1st May 2026 with tickets on sale today. The exhibition will be accompanied by a beautifully illustrated book charting NIGO’s career and retail range available exclusively via the Design Museum Shop.

NIGO: From Japan with Love’ is supported by NOT A HOTEL.



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NIGO’s chosen furniture partner: USM Modular Furniture.



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About the Design Museum

The Design Museum is a multifaceted museum, an ever-changing space for the public, industry and education to come together and explore new ideas. A registered charity, the museum's innovative exhibitions, partnerships, research and learning programmes evidence how design can enable this planet and its inhabitants to thrive. Our landmark building in Kensington is the centre of our national network and a global hub for the transformative potential of design.

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THE NIGO HOUSE - NOT A HOTEL TOKYO is currently under construction on a cliff overlooking Tokyo Bay, planned for opening in 2027.

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