



LEE ALEXANDER MCQUEEN: MIND, MYTHOS, MUSE

An Experience L.A. Event

Friday, September 9, 2022
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Lee Alexander McQueen CBE (1969–2010) was a British fashion designer/couturier who founded his own house, Alexander Queen, in 1992. He was then appointed head designer at Givenchy (1996 to 2001). Later in 2001 he partnered in with The Gucci Group (now Kering) under his own label, Alexander McQueen.
- *Mind, Mythos, Muse* is the first McQueen exhibition on the West Coast.

LEE ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

Lee Alexander McQueen was “fashion’s closest thing to a rock star,” wrote Amy Spindler in *The New York Times* in 1997. He had his own label, Alexander McQueen; was head designer at Givenchy and partnered with Gucci; and designed clothes for actual rock stars including David Bowie and Björk. His collections were notoriously shocking, and his skills were virtuosic.

Lee Alexander McQueen grew up in London’s East End. His first job in fashion was as an apprentice at the bespoke Savile Row tailors Anderson & Sheppard, when he was sixteen. He notoriously claimed that while working there he placed hidden profane notes in garments made for the Prince of Wales. Early in his career, McQueen also worked for theatrical costumers Angels and Bermans, and fashion designers Koji Tatsuno and Romeo Gigli.

He then went back to school for a master’s degree in fashion design at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. His striking MA graduation collection,

Image: Alexander McQueen, *Woman’s Ensemble (Dress and Leggings)*, Spring/Summer 2010, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker

which had a Jack the Ripper theme, was bought in its entirety by Isabella Blow, an aristocrat, magazine editor, and fashion muse and influencer before there was such a thing as social-media influencers.

McQueen established his own label in 1992, and was known as an *enfant terrible* of the fashion world for his shocking designs and collection concepts—early collections included *Taxi Driver* (after the Scorsese film) and *Nihilism*. McQueen would continue to put controversial collections on the runway for the rest of his career.

In 1996, McQueen became head designer of Givenchy. Around this time, he also designed the wardrobe for a David Bowie tour and clothing for Björk videos and album covers. In 2001, Gucci bought 51 percent of McQueen's label, with McQueen remaining creative director. The McQueen label continued to grow. Between 1996 and 2003, McQueen earned four British Designer of the Year awards, and was honored as a commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in 2003.

Lee Alexander McQueen died by suicide in 2010, on February 11, just nine days after his beloved mother and constant supporter, Joyce McQueen, passed away.

A major McQueen exhibition, *Savage Beauty*, was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2011, curated by Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda, breaking all attendance records at that time. It later opened at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2015, again breaking their attendance records.

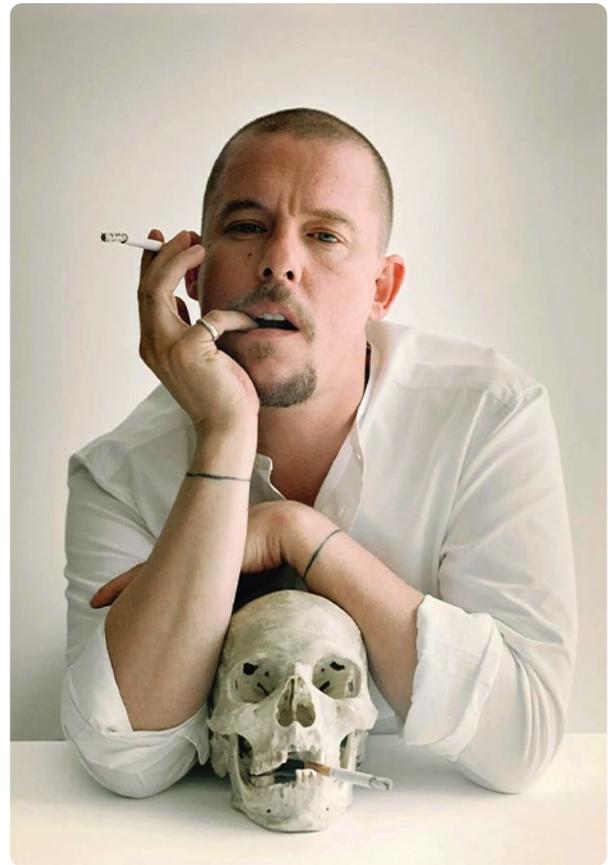
LACMA

LACMA (the Los Angeles County Museum of Art) is the largest art museum in the western United States. Its permanent collection holds more than 147,000 objects spanning 6,000 years. More than 1 million people visit LACMA each year.

Originally part of the LA Museum of History, Science, and Art in Exposition Park, LACMA became its own, art-focused institution in 1961. The Wilshire Boulevard location, designed by William Pereira, opened in 1965. The campus has grown significantly in the decades since, now spanning 20 acres and many buildings. The Lynda and Stewart Resnick Pavilion in which this exhibition is housed is one of the newer buildings, added in 2010. Four buildings on the LACMA campus were demolished in 2020 to make space for the forthcoming David Geffen Galleries, designed by Peter Zumthor—a lengthy capital project that has been extensively covered and discussed in the *L.A. Times* and other media outlets.

THE LYNDA AND STEWART RESNICK EXHIBITION PAVILION

The Resnick Pavilion at LACMA was designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano, a winner of the Pritzker Prize who is known for high-tech public places such as the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1977) and the new Academy Museum of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences adjacent to



Lee Alexander McQueen



Lee Alexander McQueen: *Mind, Mythos, Muse*, 2022

LACMA. Opened in 2010, the Resnick Pavilion at LACMA is the largest purpose-built, naturally lit, open-plan museum space in the world.

Lynda and Stewart Resnick are major patrons of LACMA who gave a \$45 million lead gift in 2008 for the construction of the new exhibition pavilion. The Resnicks are co-owners of The Wonderful Company, a global company behind such brands as POM Wonderful and Fiji Water.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What do you make of the title of the exhibition, *Mind, Mythos, Muse*?
- The exhibition contextualizes McQueen's work amid his artistic influences. How does this illuminate McQueen's creative practice or the idea of artistic influence more broadly?
- What is the relationship between fashion and other visual arts? Performing arts? How is fashion unique as an art form, and how does it intersect and overlap with other forms?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- The Eighth R. L. Shep Triennial Symposium on Textiles and Dress: Lee Alexander McQueen, a free video series Watch via [LACMA's exhibition website](#)
- Other exhibitions at LACMA lacma.org
- The USC Fisher Museum of Art fisher.usc.edu
- Fashion classes at the USC Roski School of Art and Design roski.usc.edu
- Upcoming Visions and Voices events, including
 - 10/8** [Taipei Night at the USC Pacific Asia Museum](#)
 - 10/21** [Louise Bourgeois: What is the Shape of This Problem? — Exhibition Walkthrough and Conversation](#)
 - 10/22** [Exploring the Prints of Louise Bourgeois](#)
 - 10/25** [Lido Pimenta in Concert](#)

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

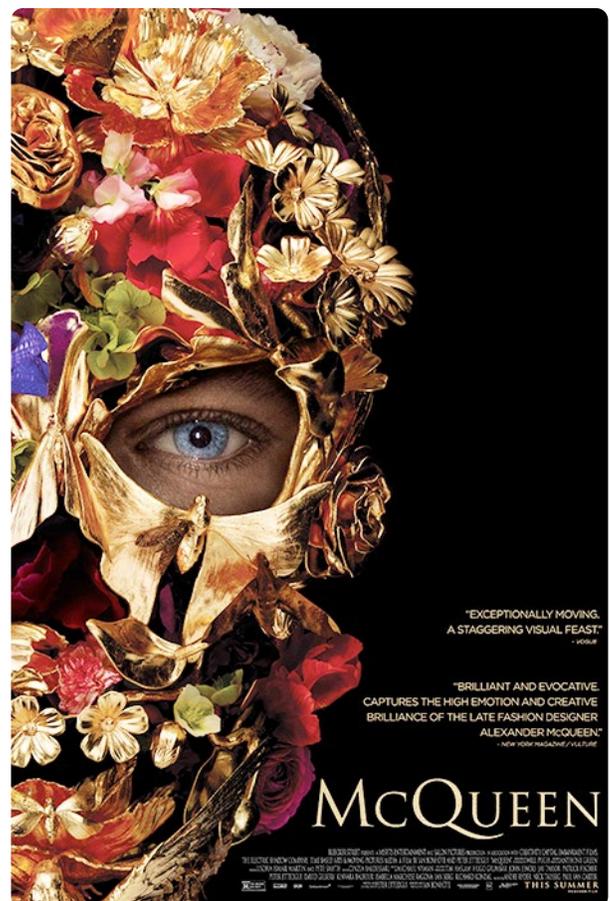
CHRISTINA SNIDER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

ARTICLES

- Ariane Fennetaux, "[Birds of a Feather: Alexander McQueen's Victorian Bestiary](#)," *Cahiers victoriens et éduardiens*, no. 88 (2018): 1-14.

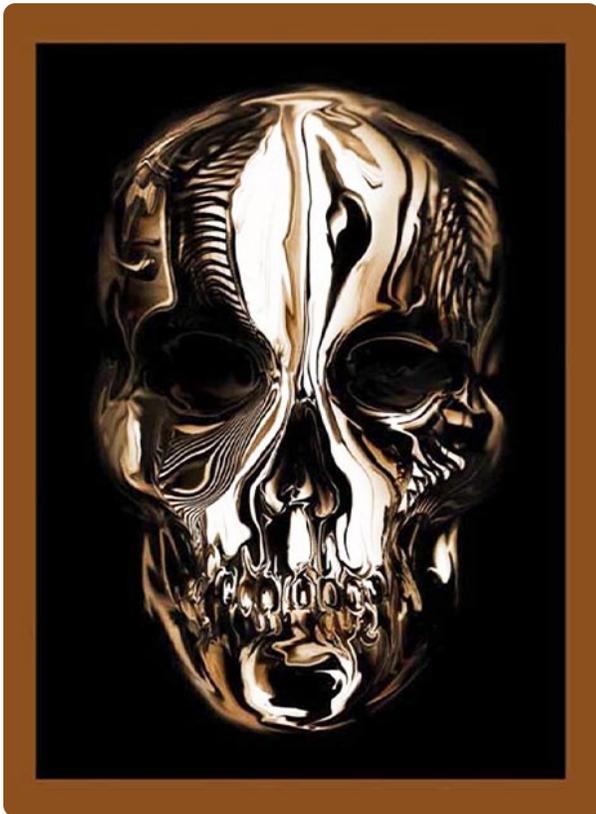


Lee Alexander McQueen: *Mind, Mythos, Muse*, 2022

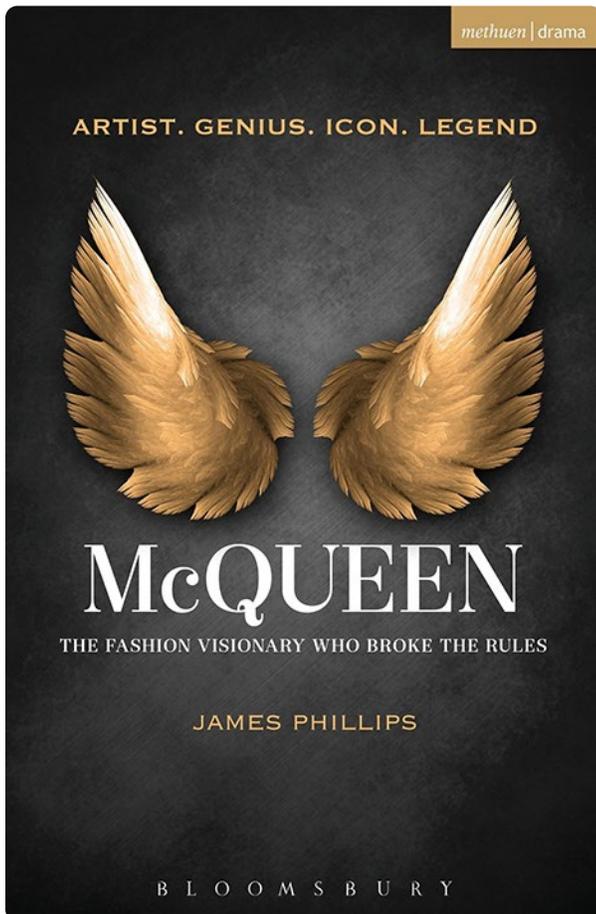


@USCVandV

VISIONSANDVOICES.USC.EDU



Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty



- ⦿ Justyna Stępień, “‘Savage Beauties.’ Alexander McQueen’s Performance of Posthuman Bodies,” *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 13, no. 2 (2017): 170–82.

BOOKS

- ⦿ Andrew Bolton et al., *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011).
- ⦿ Kristin Knox, *Alexander McQueen: Genius of a Generation* (London: A&C Black, 2010).
- ⦿ James Phillips, *McQueen: Or Lee and Beauty* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015).
- ⦿ Dana Thomas, *Gods and Kings: The Rise and Fall of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano* (New York: Penguin, 2015).
- ⦿ Valerie Wallace, *House of McQueen* (New York: Four Way Books, 2018).

DATABASES

- ⦿ [Bloomsbury Fashion Central](#)
- ⦿ [GQ Archive](#)
- ⦿ [Harper’s Bazaar Archive \(1867–current\)](#)
- ⦿ [LGBTQ+ Source](#)

JOURNALS

- ⦿ [Fashion and Textiles](#)
- ⦿ [Fashion Theory](#)

STREAMING MEDIA

- ⦿ [McQueen](#) (Bleecker Street, 2018)



Image: (Left) Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Ensemble (Dress and Leggings)*, Spring/Summer 2010, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, (Right) Manuel Cipriano Gomes Mafra, *Urn*, circa 1865-1887, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Barbara Barbara and Marty Frenkel, photos © Museum Associates/LACMA

Lee Alexander McQueen: Mind, Mythos, Muse

One of the most significant contributors to fashion between 1990 and 2010, Lee Alexander McQueen (London, 1969–2010) was both a conceptual and technical virtuoso. His critically acclaimed collections synthesized the designer's proficiency in tailoring and dressmaking with both encyclopedic and autobiographical references that spanned time, geography, media, and technology. The first McQueen exhibition on the West Coast, *Lee Alexander McQueen: Mind, Mythos, Muse* contextualizes the designer's imaginative work within a canon of artmakers who drew upon analogous themes and visual references. Exploring imagination, artistic process, and innovation in fashion and art, the exhibition examines the interdisciplinary impulse that defined the designer's career. Displaying select McQueen garments from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker alongside artworks largely from LACMA's permanent collection, *Mind, Mythos, Muse* presents a case study of the designer's methods and influences, and in doing so, provides the opportunity to better understand artistic legacy and cycles of inspiration.



Lee Alexander McQueen: Mind, Mythos, Muse

2022 By Clarissa M. Esguerra

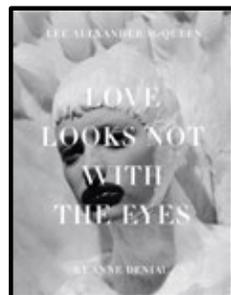
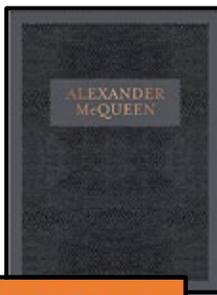
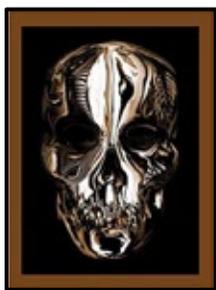
McQueen's iconic fashion juxtaposed with historic textiles and works of art, revealing the designer's dynamic approach to storytelling.

One of the most significant contributors to fashion between 1990 and 2010, British designer Lee Alexander McQueen was both a conceptual and a technical virtuoso. His critically acclaimed collections synthesized his unique training in Savile Row tailoring, theatrical design and haute couture with a remarkable breadth and depth of encyclopedic and autobiographical references spanning time, geography, mediums and technology. McQueen's singular viewpoint produced exquisitely constructed, thought-provoking, often subversive or allegorical fashion.

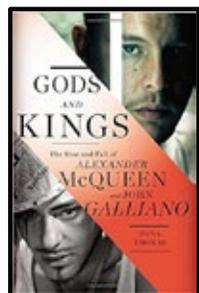
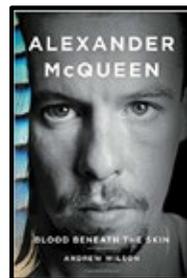
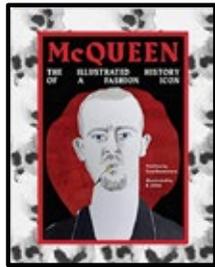
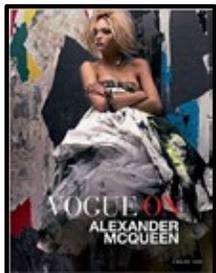
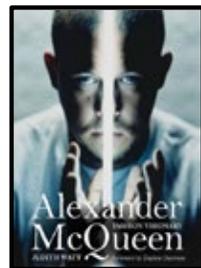
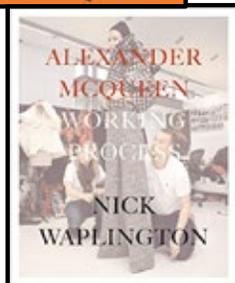
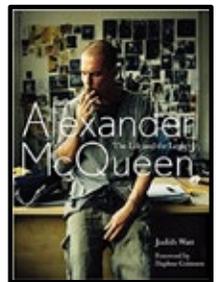
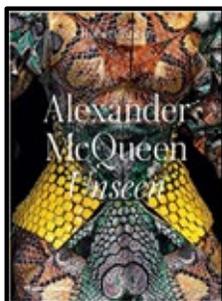
Taking a reflective look at McQueen's artful design process, this book documents the designer's diverse sources of inspiration by displaying McQueen's imaginative fashions alongside related artworks. McQueen's encyclopedic references range from ancient Greece and Rome to Tibetan silk brocade patterns, 17th-century Dutch painting, the prints of Goya and the films of Stanley Kubrick. In each of these cases and beyond, examples of McQueen's imaginative and extraordinary work are displayed alongside artworks from LACMA's permanent collection. Spanning art from a multitude of mediums, eras and cultures, this publication provides a new and innovative assessment of McQueen's work and highlights his mindful approach to storytelling and construction through fashion.

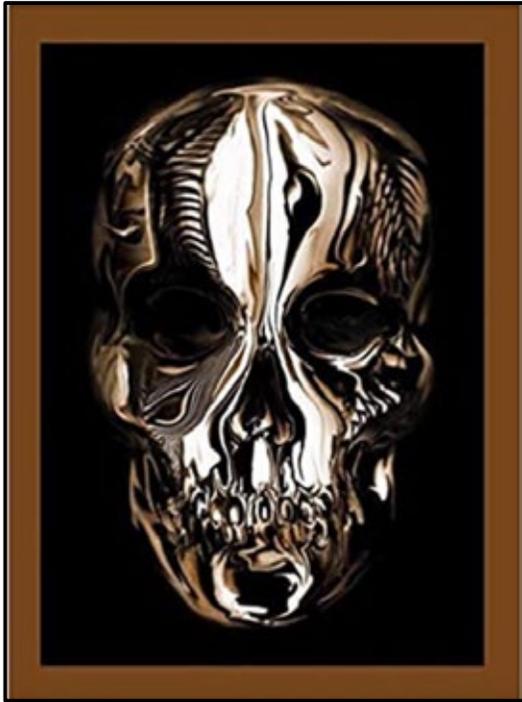
Lee Alexander McQueen (1969–2010) was one of the most important fashion designers at the turn of the 21st century. In 2011, following his death, the Costume Institute in New York organized an enormously successful retrospective of his work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

All descriptions sourced from Amazon



Books on McQueen





ALEXANDER McQUEEN SAVAGE BEAUTY

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

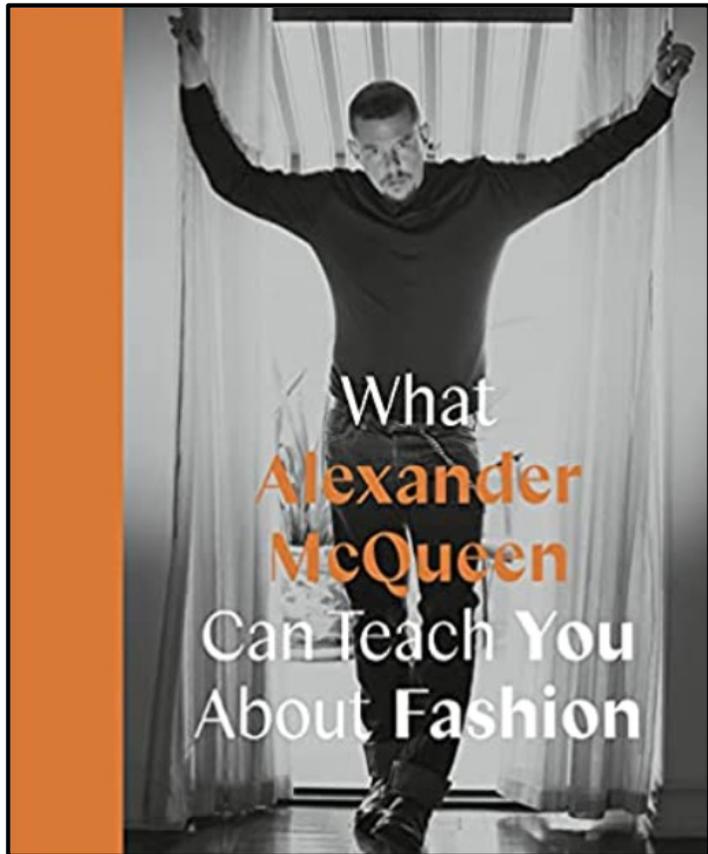
2011 By Andrew Bolton

Arguably the most influential, imaginative, and provocative designer of his generation, Alexander McQueen both challenged and expanded fashion conventions to express ideas about race, class, sexuality, religion, and the environment.

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty examines the full breadth of the designer's career, from the start of his fledgling label to the triumphs of his own world-renowned London house. It features his most iconic and radical designs, revealing how McQueen adapted and combined the fundamentals of Savile Row tailoring, the specialized techniques of haute couture, and technological innovation to achieve his distinctive aesthetic. It also focuses on the highly sophisticated narrative structures underpinning his collections and extravagant runway presentations, with their echoes of avant-garde installation and performance art.

Published to coincide with an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art organized by The Costume Institute, this stunning book includes a preface by Andrew Bolton; an introduction by Susannah Frankel; an interview by Tim Blanks with Sarah Burton, creative director of the house of Alexander McQueen; illuminating quotes from the designer himself; provocative and captivating new photography by renowned photographer Sølve Sundsbø; and a lenticular cover by Gary James McQueen.

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty celebrates the astounding creativity and originality of a designer who relentlessly questioned and confronted the requisites of fashion.



What Alexander McQueen Can Teach You About Fashion

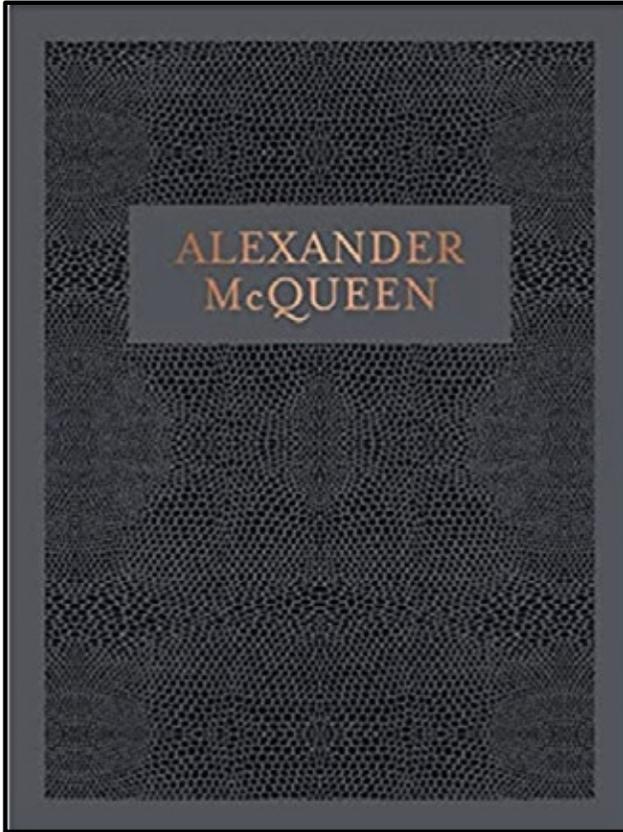
2021 By Ana Finel Honigman

If Alexander McQueen were to give a masterclass on design, creativity and attitude, what wisdom would he impart? Discover McQueen's life, work and legacy in this sharply curated biography focusing on artistic spirit.

Alexander McQueen will go down in history as the most talented and enigmatic 'bad boy' of fashion. But it was his **drive and visionary perspective** that secured his place in sartorial legend when his defying couture looks sent shockwaves through the fashion landscape.

But how did he think? And how was his attitude reflected in his work? *What Alexander McQueen Can Teach You About Fashion* breaks down McQueen's life and work into memorable maxims – including Don't be Scared of Fear, Challenge Gender, Add Volume, then More Volume and Show Skin. This book uncovers **McQueen's creative flair, his inspirations, his business acumen** and the details that make his designs so arresting.

With **pithy, thoughtful text** and **inspirational photographs**, learn something from McQueen and apply it to your own life, creativity and style. These are the things that really define what it means to be McQueen.



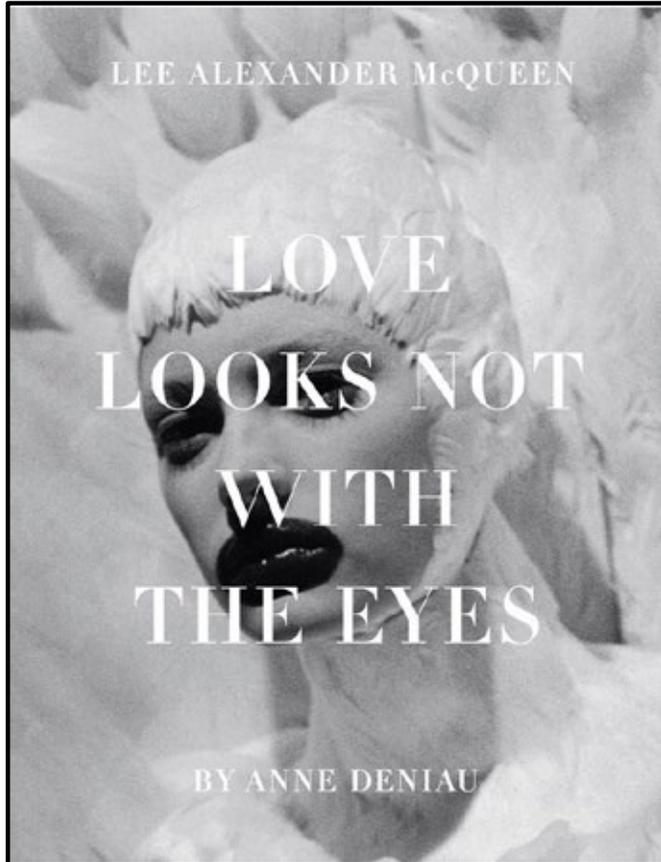
Alexander McQueen

2015 By Claire Wilcox

This definitive publication on Alexander McQueen (1969–2010) invites you into the creative mind and world of one of Britain’s most brilliant, daring, and provocative designers, and the many themes and references that shaped his visionary fashion collections.

A true comprehensive study, this catalog is the first in-depth look at McQueen and explores key themes of the exhibition—tailoring, gothic, primitivism, naturalism, and futurism. The book also features previously unseen material as well as groundbreaking essays and feature spreads by multiple authors and leading fashion commentators. This kaleidoscopic approach explores themes central to the designer’s work and his collections, such as the psychology of fashion, natural history, the theatre and spectacle of his shows, and the key creative collaborators during McQueen’s lifetime.

Alexander McQueen also offers an encyclopedic survey of McQueen’s catwalk collections, illustrated with striking images by leading fashion photographers, and specially commissioned photographs that capture the breathtaking skill of his designs and awesome theatricality of his shows.



Love Looks Not with the Eyes: Thirteen Years with Lee Alexander McQueen

2012 By Anne Deniau

Lee Alexander McQueen (1969–2010), whose design combined visionary aesthetics, emotional power, and extraordinary craft, was known for staging provocative shows that were as much performances as venues to display his couture creations. Charged with energy, informed by history and culture, and filled with fresh concepts, McQueen’s shows have become legends not only of fashion but also of art. Anne Deniau was the only photographer allowed backstage by McQueen for 13 years, beginning in September 1997 and ending with the final show in March 2010. She captured McQueen working with his close circle of collaborators — including designer Sarah Burton, milliner Philip Treacy, jewelry designer Shaun Leane, and model Kate Moss—to create his meticulously produced spectacles. Her book offers an inspiring homage, through the art of photography, to the work of a great artist.

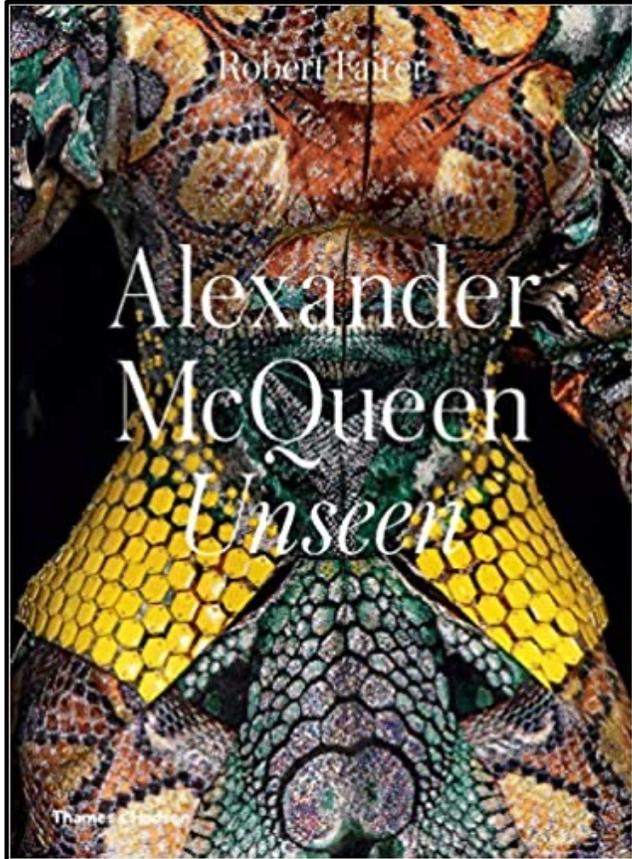


Alexander McQueen: Unseen

2016 By Robert Faier, Sally Singer, Claire Wilcox

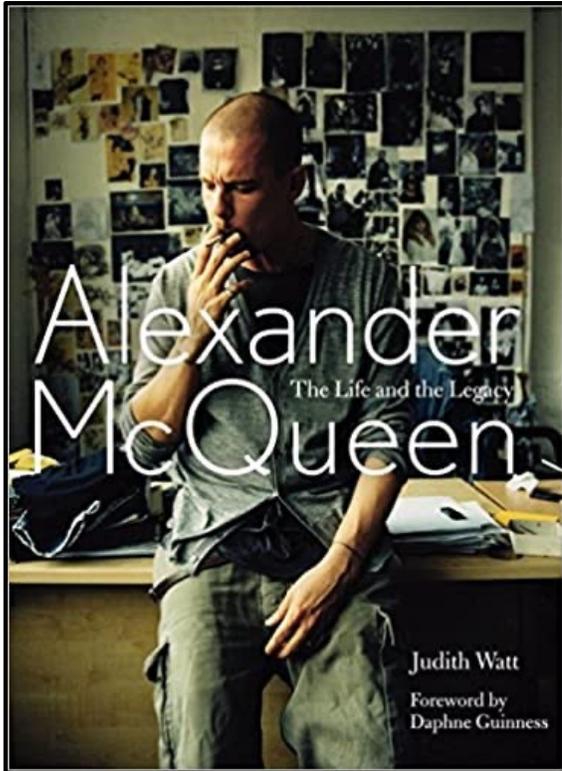
Alexander McQueen, the iconic designer whose untimely death in 2010 left the fashion world reeling and fans worldwide clamoring for more, fused immense creativity, audacity, and a hauntingly dark aesthetic sense into powerful, unforgettable imagery. The strange, singular beauty of his clothing was matched by the spectacle of his legendary fashion shows, which demonstrated his outstanding showmanship and consistently pushed the boundaries of runway events. Robert Fairer's intimate, vibrant full-color photographs of McQueen's collections, taken backstage and on the catwalk when few photographers were allowed access, offer a unique insight into the life and work of one of the world's most captivating figures.

This previously unpublished portfolio of stunning, high-energy photographs captures the people and the spirit that made the designer's flamboyant shows unique. Fairer, *Vogue's* backstage fashion photographer for over a decade, was an integral part of the whirl of activity behind the scenes. These images, which capture both the glamor and the grit, represent a new genre of fashion photography and are a treasure-trove of inspiration. This superb book contains an introduction and collections texts by fashion expert Claire Wilcox. Dynamic images of McQueen's collections--thirty of his total of thirty-six shows are presented chronologically--portray behind-the-scenes moments that reveal stylists, models, hairdressers, makeup artists, and McQueen himself at their most candid and creative.



Alexander McQueen Unseen

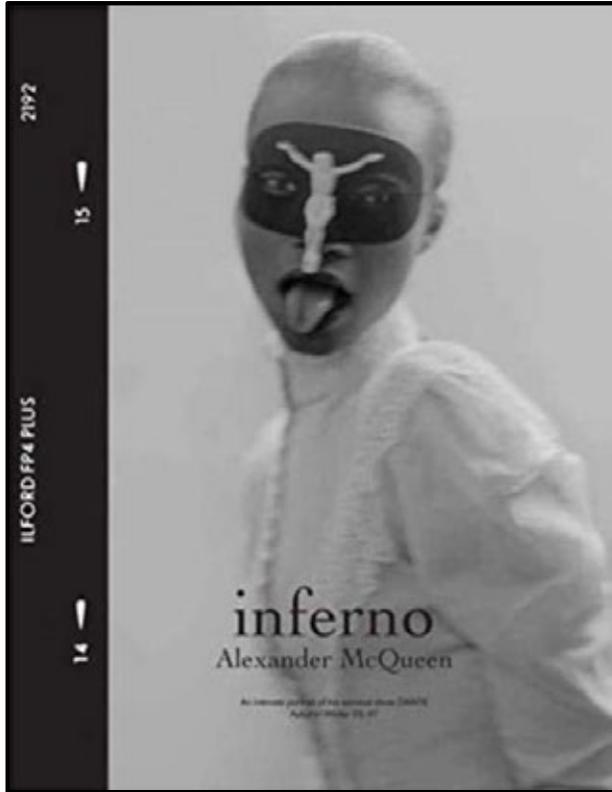
2016 By Robert Fairer



Alexander McQueen: The Life and the Legacy

2012 By Juliet Watt

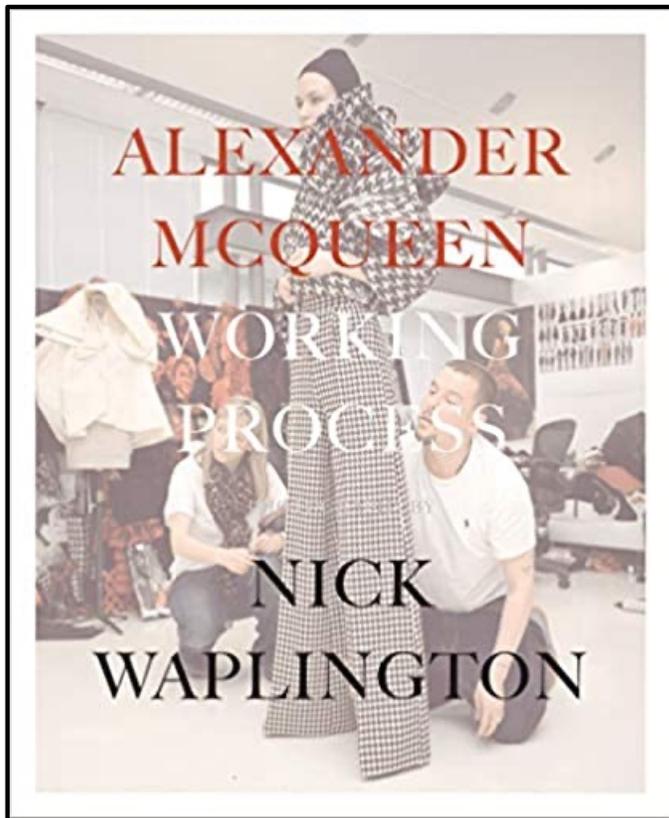
Judith Watt, a leading fashion historian and close personal friend of her brilliant, tragic subject, offers a close-up backstage look at the life, legacy, and visionary genius of Alexander McQueen. From his East London childhood to his explosive, game-changing fashion career to his shocking suicide at the age of forty, Watt's *Alexander McQueen* features revealing commentary and intimate perspectives by those who were closest to the fearless, groundbreaking designer—including milliner Philip Treacy, stylist Katy England, photographer Nick Knight, as well as friends and collectors Sarah Jessica Parker, Lady Gaga, and Daphne Guinness—and stunning, photographs, many never before seen, of some of his most remarkable designs and intricate apparel.



Inferno: Alexander McQueen

2015 By Melanie Rickey

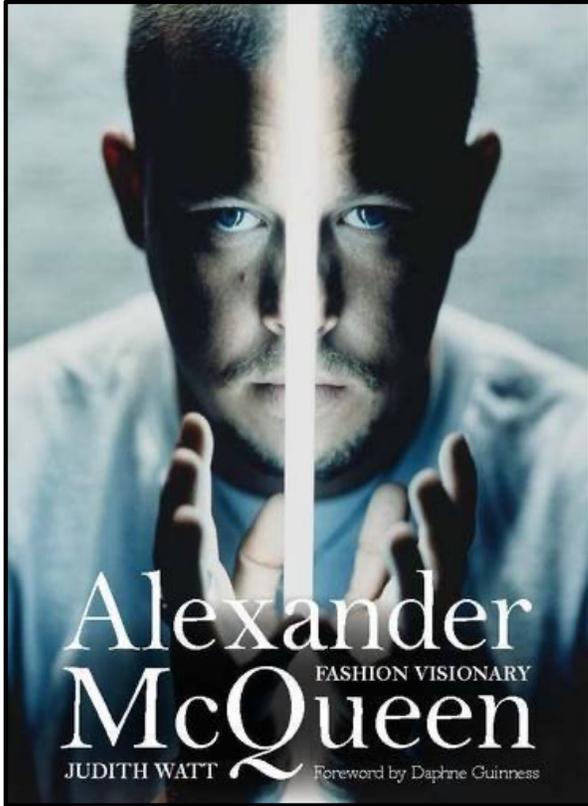
London 1996: Alexander McQueen took over the Hawksmoor masterpiece Christ Church in London's East End for what was quite possibly the greatest fashion show on Earth. A candle-lit, cruciform catwalk with a backdrop of stained-glass windows set the tone for an extraordinary collection. Lace sat against chiffon and rubbed shoulders with couture and club-culture clothing and digital print. Dante was the seminal collection that would resonate throughout Alexander McQueen's career. This book features unique photographs shot behind the scenes, with raw, unseen pictures of the designer, models and clothes. The fashion creatives who worked with McQueen to make the show such a success recall this pivotal time in the designer's career and reflect on what made Dante truly groundbreaking. Newly created imagery of clothes shown on the catwalk gives an insight into why this collection was so special.



Alexander McQueen: Working Process: Photographs by Nick Waplington

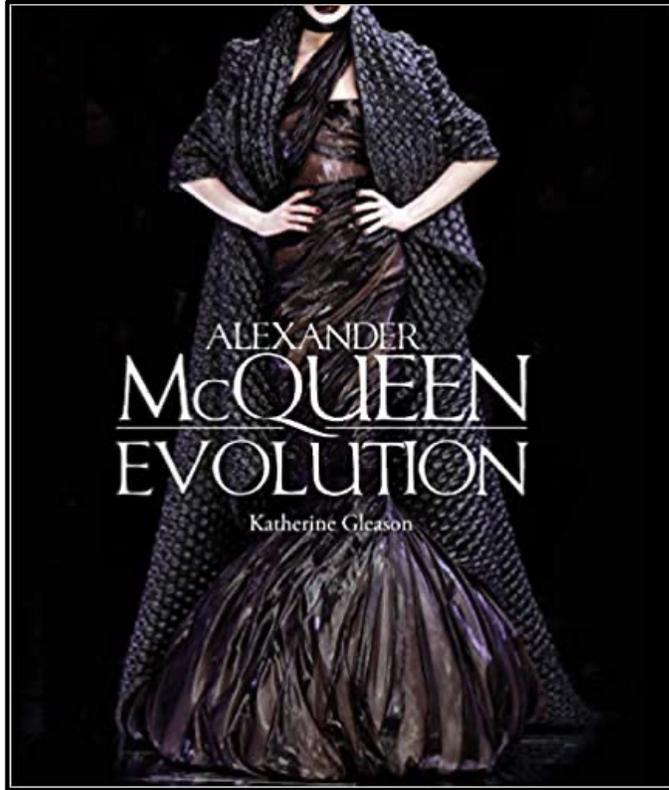
2013 By Sisannah Frankel

In 2008 Alexander McQueen commissioned photographer Nick Waplington to document the creation of his Fall 2009 collection--all the way from inception to runway showing. Unfortunately, it was to be the last Fall/Winter collection that McQueen would stage before his untimely death. This show, which he titled *The Horn of Plenty*, found McQueen revisiting his 15-year archive of work and recycling it into a new collection. In effect, it was his personal survey of his work to date. The set was composed of broken mirrors and a giant trash heap made up of all the sets from his previous shows; critics have commented that this reflected McQueen's feelings towards the fashion system and how it pressures designers to be creative geniuses while relegating each collection to the garbage bin of history as soon as it's sold. Waplington was given unprecedented access to McQueen and his staff, which included the current Creative Director of the brand, Sarah Burton. Every step of the creative process is documented in fascinating detail and readers receive a rare insight into the inner workings of McQueen's creative process. Most notably, McQueen himself placed the book's layout, picture by picture, on storyboards. The book was ready for publication when McQueen died, then was put on hold--until now. This substantial overview, with more than 120 photographs, is published just as McQueen edited it, commemorating the most personal of his collections. It includes an essay by Susannah Frankel, Fashion Editor at *Grazia* (U.K.).



Alexander McQueen: Fashion Visionary

2014 By Judith Watt



Alexander McQueen: Evolution

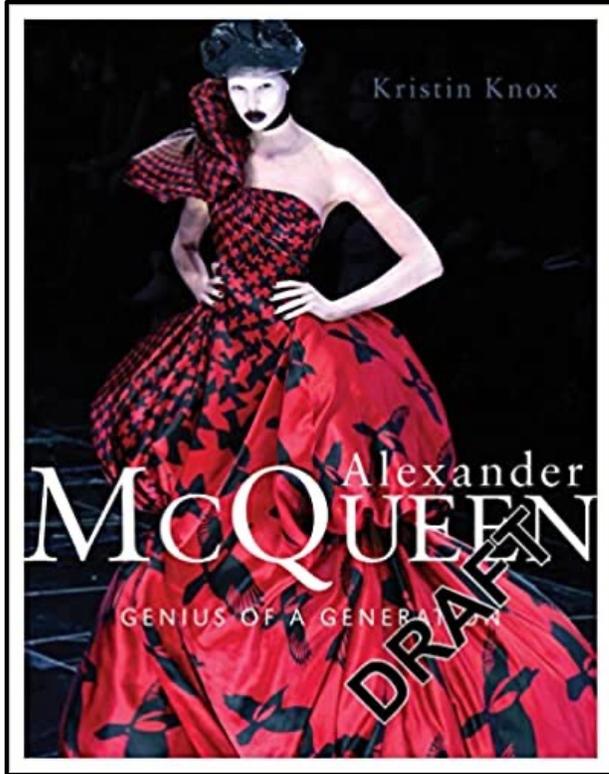
2012 By Katherine Gleason

From Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims, his 1992 graduate collection, to Plato's Atlantis, the last show before his death in 2010, Lee Alexander McQueen was as celebrated for the exquisite tailoring, meticulous craftsmanship, and stunning originality of his designs as he was notorious for his theatrical—and often controversial—runway shows. McQueen found inspiration for his avant-garde collections everywhere: his Scottish ancestry, Alfred Hitchcock movies, Yoruba mythology, the destruction of the environment—even the fashion industry itself. Whatever his inspiration, however, McQueen's concept for his runway show came first and was crucial to the development of the collection. Every show had a narrative and was staged with his characteristic dramatic flair. Highland Rape featured disheveled models smeared with “blood” staggering down the runway in town clothes. In Scanners, two robots sprayed paint on a model trapped on a spinning platform. In Widows of Culloden, a hologram of supermodel Kate Moss held center stage. Other McQueen shows staged models walking through water, drifting snowflakes, rain, and wind tunnels; pole-dancing in garish makeup at a carnival, playing living pieces in a bizarre chess game, and performing with trained dancers in a Depression-era-style marathon. Illustrated throughout with stunning photography and liberally sprinkled with quotations from McQueen and those who knew him best, *Alexander McQueen: Evolution* is the story of the designer's thirty-five runway shows and the genius behind them.



Vogue on: Alexander McQueen

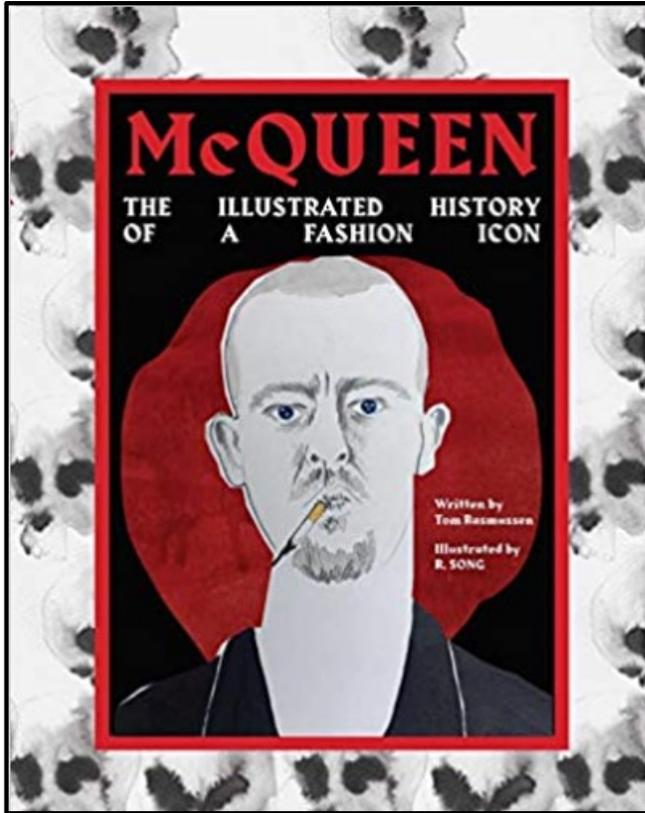
2012 By Chloe Fox



Alexander McQueen: Genius of a Generation

2010 By Kristin Knox

A tribute to Alexander McQueen. 1969-2010 An iconic, imaginative, and inspirational fashion designer whose work turned heads and hearts all over the world. 125 stunning fashion showcatwalk photographs. with commentary by an experienced fashion journalist.



McQueen: The Illustrated History of the Fashion Icon

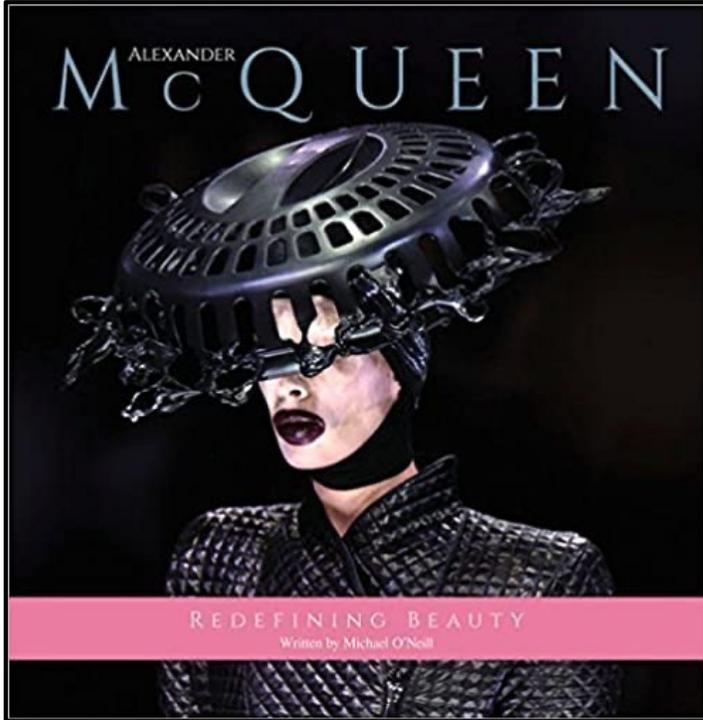
2018 By Tom Rasmussen

This book is an illustrated look at the life, loves, fashion moments, and ultimate tragedy of one of fashion's greatest stars.

The savage beauty of his creative vision stunned and shocked the fashion world for over 15 years, with his avant-garde theatricality leading many to call him the enfant terrible of British fashion. He created fashion moments which have not faded from memory, like David Bowie's Union Jack coat from 1996, Sarah Jessica Parker's tartan Met Gala dress from 2006, and Lady Gaga in those alien armadillo shoes in the "Bad Romance" video clip in 2009.

But before he was Alexander McQueen, he was Lee Alexander McQueen, the boy from London who dreamed of becoming a fashion designer. He worked his way up from making suits on Savile Row to starting his own fashion label and becoming one of the youngest designers ever to win the award for British Womenswear Designer of the Year.

McQueen: The Illustrated History of a Fashion Icon tells Lee Alexander McQueen's story through the gorgeous illustrations of R. Song and text by Tom Rasmussen, charting the rise of McQueen through his life, his loves, his friendships, his struggles, his models, and his biggest fashion moments, before his deeply sad death at the age of 40 in 2010.

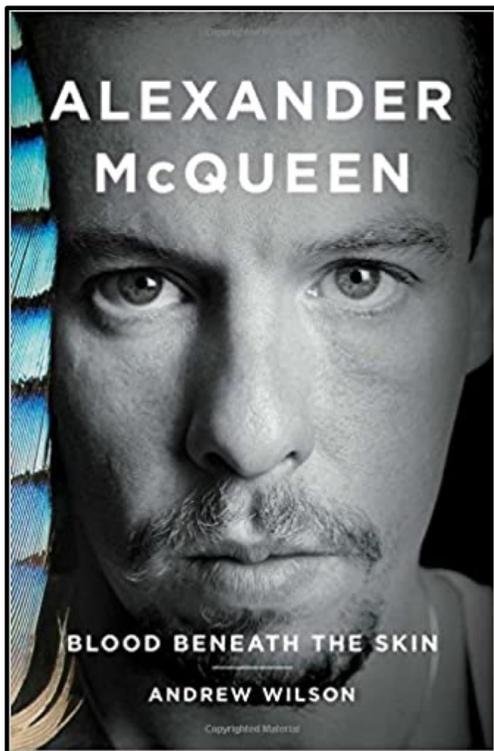


Alexander McQueen: Redefining Beauty Beyond the Borderline

2016 By Tom Rasmussen

Magnificently illustrated with some of McQueen's most riveting designs, this book illuminates the struggles of a man who dared to defy accepted fashion norms and give the world a new sense of grandeur

From conflicted gay teenager and aggressive and remote young man, through to his lonely suicide, this book charts Alexander McQueen's ascent to couturier par excellence, highlighting his spectacular shows and showing how his confrontational, streetwise manner was simply a shield that protected and masked a very shy, sensitive, and insecure man who hailed from the wrong side of the high fashion tracks. McQueen's talent is now globally acknowledged to have been unmatched in contemporary haute couture, and this book distills from the lavish sweep of his colors, designs, fabrics, and forward-driving concepts the essence of a man on a quest for beauty and his own contentment. In casting the spotlight on the stark contrast between catwalk glamour and his upbringing and personal demons, the book shows how his talent both nourished and destroyed him. It takes us from the vicious glare of the walkway where he was fêted by the wealthy and famous as an innovative artist to behind the glamour. There, defiance delineated a life that was hurled into inescapable depression by the deaths, first of his great friend and supporter Isabella Blow and then by his mother.



Alexander McQueen: Blood Beneath the Skin

2015 By Andrew Wilson

The first definitive biography of the iconic, notoriously private British fashion designer Alexander McQueen explores the connections between his dark work and even darker life.

When forty-year-old Alexander McQueen committed suicide in February 2010, a shocked world mourned the loss. McQueen had risen from humble beginnings as the son of an East London taxi driver to scale the heights of fame, fortune, and glamour. He designed clothes for the world's most beautiful women and royalty, most famously the Duchess of Cambridge, who wore a McQueen dress on her wedding day. He created a multimillion-dollar luxury brand that became a favorite with celebrities including Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell.

But behind the confident facade and bad-boy image, lay a sensitive soul who struggled to survive in the ruthless world of fashion. As the pressures of work intensified, McQueen became increasingly dependent on the drugs that contributed to his tragic end. Meanwhile, in his private life, his failure to find lasting love in a string of boyfriends only added to his despair. And then there were the dark secrets that haunted his sleep...

A modern-day fairy tale infused with the darkness of a Greek tragedy, *Alexander McQueen* tells the complete sensational story, and includes never-before-seen photos. Those closest to the designer—his family, friends, and lovers—have spoken for the first time about the man they knew, a fragmented individual, a lost boy who battled to gain entry into a world that ultimately destroyed him.

"There's blood beneath every layer of skin," McQueen once said. Andrew Wilson's biography, filled with groundbreaking material, dispels myths, corrects inaccuracies, and offers new insights into McQueen's private life and the source of his creative genius.

Gods and Kings: The Rise and Fall of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano

2015 By Dana Thomas

More than two decades ago, John Galliano and Alexander McQueen arrived on the fashion scene when the business was in an artistic and economic rut. Both wanted to revolutionize fashion in a way no one had in decades. They shook the establishment out of its bourgeois, minimalist stupor with daring, sexy designs. They turned out landmark collections in mesmerizing, theatrical shows that retailers and critics still gush about and designers continue to reference.

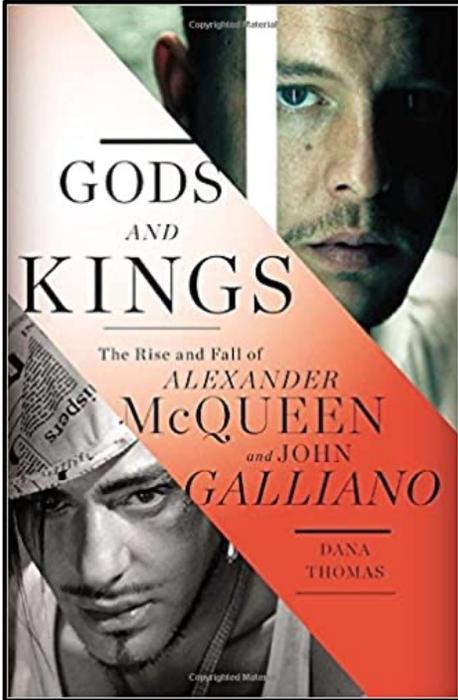
Their approach to fashion was wildly different—Galliano began as an illustrator, McQueen as a Savile Row tailor. Galliano led the way with his sensual bias-cut gowns and his voluptuous hourglass tailoring, which he presented in romantic storybook-like settings. McQueen, though nearly ten years younger than Galliano, was a brilliant technician and a visionary artist who brought a new reality to fashion, as well as an otherworldly beauty. For his first official collection at the tender age of twenty-three, McQueen did what few in fashion ever achieve: he invented a new silhouette, the Bumster.

They had similar backgrounds: sensitive, shy gay men raised in tough London neighborhoods, their love of fashion nurtured by their doting mothers. Both struggled to get their businesses off the ground, despite early critical success. But by 1997, each had landed a job as creative director for couture houses owned by French tycoon Bernard Arnault, chairman of LVMH.

Galliano's and McQueen's work for Dior and Givenchy and beyond not only influenced fashion; their distinct styles were also reflected across the media landscape. With their help, luxury fashion evolved from a clutch of small, family-owned businesses into a \$280 billion-a-year global corporate industry. Executives pushed the designers to meet increasingly rapid deadlines. For both Galliano and McQueen, the pace was unsustainable. In 2010, McQueen took his own life three weeks before his women's wear show.

The same week that Galliano was fired, *Forbes* named Arnault the fourth richest man in the world. Two months later, Kate Middleton wore a McQueen wedding gown, instantly making the house the world's most famous fashion brand, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened a wildly successful McQueen retrospective, cosponsored by the corporate owners of the McQueen brand. The corporations had won and the artists had lost.

In her groundbreaking work *Gods and Kings*, acclaimed journalist Dana Thomas tells the true story of McQueen and Galliano. In so doing, she reveals the revolution in high fashion in the last two decades—and the price it demanded of the very ones who saved it.





Shaun Leane

2020 By Shaun Leane, et al

A comprehensive visual record of the life's work of this renowned jewelry designer, known for his work with Alexander McQueen

Celebrated world-wide for his modern romantic jewels that push the boundaries of contemporary design, Shaun Leane has been responsible for creating a new genre of jewelry; precious, poetic, with a sense of eternity, yet relevant to today's world.

Illustrated with a breath-taking combination of high fashion shots and detailed close-ups of the pieces themselves. Captured by photographers Nick Knight, Robert Fairer and Chris Moore, along with a dedicated photo essay of unseen backstage images recorded by Leane's close friend Ann Ray.

Shaun Leane is introduced by the jeweler himself, then divided into three distinct parts: His heritage and training, by Joanna Hardy; reflections on **Leane's famous collaboration with Alexander McQueen**, by Claire Wilcox; and his modern classic commercial jewelry style, by Vivienne Becker. Altogether, this book provides a vital overview of an artist that will be of interest to anyone who follows the contemporary jewelry and fashion scene.

Alexander's **MUSE**
and Mentor
Isabella Blow

For a time, starting in the early 1990s, Isabella Blow and Alexander McQueen were inseparable—fashion muse and master—lovers without the sex. They shared something else: a self-loathing so intense it would devour them both, with Blow's suicide in 2007 and McQueen's in 2010. In an adaptation from her new book, *Champagne Supernovas*, MAUREEN CALLAHAN reveals how two great British talents lost the battle of their lives



COUTURE SHOCK
Alexander McQueen and Isabella Blow photographed by David LaChapelle for Vanity Fair's March 2007 issue, at Sandringham Castle, England

Designed *for* Destruction

208 | VANITY FAIR | www.vanityfair.com

SEPTEMBER 2014

www.vanityfair.com | VANITY FAIR | 218

VANITY FAIR

STYLE | SEPTEMBER 2014 ISSUE

Designed for Destruction

<https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/2014/9/designed-for-destruction>

Like most designers, Alexander McQueen was a prodigy. From the beginning of his career, in 1992, Alexander McQueen defied himself as a designer who trafficked in mouch, fibb, and perversion so heightened it was almost funny. He was an outsider, and he worked to it, but only three years later, he was being himself.

He had just shown his autumn-winter 1995-96 collection, "Highland Rape," and it was his breakout: His models stormed the runway with hare brains, wearing dyed tartan and lace and peacock rubber pants. It made McQueen a star, and now he wanted to fit in with the fashion people he'd once ridiculed: he'd already had his teeth fixed, and would later have liposuction on his stomach and lose the wattle under his chin.

He took to hit at Hilis, Isabella and Detmar Blow's country pile, and Isaac Isaie, and was always known to close friends, a blue-blooded man-maker who'd discovered McQueen when he was just a student, made sure falkons were on hand for her bird-obsessed protégé. His friends found it all so pretentious, Lee McQueen, the cadaver's son, try-

Adapted from *Champion: Superstar*, Kate Moss, Marc Jacobs, Alexander McQueen, and the '90s Revolution. *Harper's Bazaar*, by Marcion Callahan, to be published this month by Touchstone, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., © 2014 by the author.

"[MCQUEEN] WAS VERY ATTRACTED TO PEOPLE BEING ABUSED," SAYS DETMAR BLOW.

ing to inhabit the grandeur of his new, more fashionable first name—actually, it was his middle name, and it was Isaac who suggested he adopt it. For more info, she said.

He agreed. His old friends, who still called him Lee, knew McQueen would soon be gone. "I remember Isaac telling me that someone at British Hagar said that we should split up," says his then boyfriend, Andrew Groves. "That it would be better for his career."

McQueen was happen to Isabel's gay bar, hanging out with prostitutes. He'd begun spending time in New York, crashing with his friend the fashion designer Miguel Adlwer. They'd hit clubs in the Meatpacking District, or go to Bowery Bar, where they'd sometimes see Marc Jacobs, then collapse in Adlwer's basement apartment in the East Village.

Back in the U.K., the decadence continued. He was on his way to becoming the kind of fashion person that he loathed—demanding, narcissistic, status-obsessed. McQueen also told Detmar and Isaac how he had to be degraded, how one partner made him have sex with another man while he watched, that he didn't like it but that it played into his sense of victimization.

"He was very attracted to people being abused," says Detmar Blow. When he was younger, there was much about Lee McQueen that was bizarre and light, sensitive and caring. Now those aspects were missing.

According to McQueen's old friend Chris Brod, after Isaac confided her inability to conceive, McQueen, who could be wilfully cruel to those he cared for most, later turned to Detmar and said, "I've heard you've been shooting blanks." He'd see her stuffing his way in tears, undone by her latest crisis, and say, "Here comes that old Isaac."

"Lee wasn't the nicest person to her, but she loved his genius," says designer Helen Macdonald, another Isaac discovery. "He was so crasy. One minute he'd be a wonderful person, and the next he'd be telling people to piss off."

Many of McQueen's friends suspected he was bipolar, over the years, Isaac would also struggle with the disorder.

"The signs were there all along," Groves says, but the highs and lows were usually masked on the road rush to complete collec-

tions. Alice Smith, his first publicist and longtime friend, also thought McQueen might be bipolar. "He was extremely vivacious sometimes, and others he could hardly speak." She recalls seeing him and Isaac at a Central Saint Martins fashion show sometime after "Highland Rape," side by side in the front row, staring into space. Smith went over to say hi, and McQueen, in sunglasses, ignored her. "I remember thinking, My God, what's happened to him?"

After "Highland Rape," everything Lee McQueen had been working toward became real. He was named Designer of the Year by the British Fashion Council. He had the most prestigious slot at London Fashion Week, showing last, Louis Vuitton Meek Heremity was closing.

LVMH was formed in 1997 when the fashion and champagne companies merged. Bernard Arnault, the C.E.O., was most interested in expanding the new company's fashion holdings and inviting its mostest houses. By 1996, Arnault was considering Alexander McQueen for Givenchy.

McQueen was breaking a little under the stress. He was seeking relief in hard drugs and anonymous sex and had lost many of his old friends.

After her last encounter with McQueen, Alice Smith was surprised when he invited her to a gathering. "Come to my party... loads of Charles," the invite read. Smith showed up, and the stylist Kate Grand saw these, but hardly anyone else, maybe 15 people in the acoustic. Annabelle Neilson's generous Noting Hill flat, McQueen was doing what in the ballroom, when he was out in the living room, everyone was dancing strenuously, trying way too hard to have fun. He couldn't hide his disgust.

"I remember going up to him and saying, 'Are you all right?'" Smith says. "And he said, 'Yes, fine, I'm fine.'... He just got black moods, and he couldn't shake them off."

The same was true of Isabel's. She'd been at lower ends since the fall of 1994, when British Home slid behind her; she was far too mercantile and extravagant, having run up



STYLE SECTION
McQueen was fitting at a party celebrating...
"Please, it's her's a dress"
Alexander McQueen, 2004
Isaac was Isaac's assistant
at Kenneth Cole.

THE FASCINATOR
Blow, photographed
in a Philip Trepani creation,
2000. Blow helped
launch the famed designer's
career and brokered
his eventual collaboration
with McQueen.



"IF ALEXANDER USES SOME OF MY IDEAS IN HIS SHOW, AND HE HAS, I DON'T GET PAID; HE DOES," SAID ISABELLA BLOW.

the budget on one shoot to nearly \$30,000. "She would say, 'I'm so unhappy, I'm so unhappy,'" Plum Syles, her former assistant, told *New York magazine*. "And I'd say, 'But what about Dante?' What about this fabulous thousand-acre estate? What about your gorgeous flat in town? And she'd say, 'But, Plum, I haven't got a child.'"

In the fashion press, Blow and McQueen still presented themselves as inseparable, the muse and the mesmerized. And McQueen did love her. She was his most articulate ambassador, explaining his point of view as he never could. "What attracted me to Alexander," she told *Harper's Bazaar* in 1996, "was the way he takes ideas from the past and subverts them with his cut to make them thoroughly new.... He is like a Peeping Tom in the way he sits and snubs at fabric to explore all the ergonomic zones of the body."

It was similar to the way they described themselves: lovers without the sex. "Dante," the show he staged in a church in Spitalfields, would be dedicated to her.

McQueen wanted the job as *Glenshy* and declined himself a corner to let her say, "I think people won't see that now," he said. "They don't want to look at though they bought all their clothes in a thrift shop."

With "Dante," McQueen used masks that referenced the sultry iconography of photographer Joe-Peter Wilkin, doubling his models in military coats and corsets, their pallid faces shaded with crimson lipstick. Writing in *The New York Times*, Amy Spender described "Dante" as a combination of "blue-blood and hot blood." McQueen, she said, "brought the excitement, edge and theatrics he is known for but added a wonderful fourth element for the first time: maturity."

"Fashion Is a Vampire Thing"
In October 14, 1996, *USM* announced that Alexander McQueen, now 27 years old, was taking over as head designer at *Glenshy*. His appointment left founder Hubert de *Glenshy* disconsolate. "I find it a total disaster, and I suffer," he said, "but what can I do?"

When McQueen took the job at *Glenshy*, Isabella assumed that she'd be named the house muse, that McQueen would put her on salary. He gave her nothing. She was headbroken.

"She gave Lee everything," says Julien Macdonald. "All her money, all her time, all her energy. She introduced him to everybody. And then, when he went to *Glenshy* and he had money, he said her to go off. He had millions, she was penniless, and he gave her nothing. He just shut the door."

Isie, hopeful all would be made right, tried to keep her mouth shut, but not long afterward, while being interviewed, she got drunk and the truth came out. "The role of a muse is changing," she said. "If Alexander uses some of my ideas in his show, and he has, I don't get paid, he does."

McQueen was furious. His great business fear was that everyone he knew, except his mother, was using him. Isie would ask, "Do you remember the good old days? You knocked me up"—the most poignant metaphor a childless fashionista could conjure. And McQueen would say, "That would be gone, Isie."

For someone who would soon sit down with *Charlie Rose* and declare, "Fashion people are not that intelligent," McQueen had no problem adapting. He was running around with Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell, Bella Freud, and Elton John. He loved taking the *Eurostar*, so *USM* often flew him and his team back and forth—commercial, not private. They gave him a driver and an apartment in Paris, which he shared with his crew. Though McQueen's office was quite small—at about 9 by 12 feet, it was the size of a walk-in closet—he seemed happy just to have one.

He set to work immediately; he had three months till his debut at *Glenshy*, which had become a fashion-world fiasco. Was this hellion capable of going commercial? "McQueen's debut was mixed reviews. He 'left his audience cold and confused with his first show for *Glenshy*,'" wrote Amy Spender in *The New York Times*. But Heath Brown in *The Times* was kinder. "The garble has paid off," he wrote. "McQueen later said 'he boundaries of fashion to its limits.'"

After that first show, Lee McQueen was

gone. He was Alexander now, the imperial genius.

"*Glenshy* was the point where Lee started to change, on many levels," says Simon Costin, his then sex designer. "The stress involved in doing *privé*-porter, couture, and his own label was pretty horrendous." Costin, like others before him, began to suspect McQueen was bipolar. "He was up and down a lot more, harder to work with," Costin says. "The people who perhaps assumed back or said 'Don't be ridiculous' would disappear."

When Kate Betts interviewed McQueen for an American *Esquire* profile, he let it in. The headline subsequently asked, "Does Alexander McQueen have enough talent to keep *Glenshy* going?" Betts wrote that his latest collection was "almost revolting." He was in the throes of a persecution complex.

"It's like Hitler and the Holocaust," McQueen told *Avantgarde*. "He destroyed millions of people because he didn't understand. That's what a lot of people have done to me, because they can't understand what I do."

Fearing abandoned by McQueen, Isie found a new project, American designer Jeremy Scott. It was like taming an old lover with a new one, and

Scott implied that McQueen was threatened. "Isabella told me she was an admirer of her and said he wanted to kill me," Scott said. "But I don't know that I believe it. She was always talking about other people and how they did her wrong." He was 24 years old, at least McQueen, his top row of teeth increased in a gold grid that spelled *JEHOVAH*. The fashion press loved him.

In 1997, *The Independent* ran a profile of Scott, called "Move Over McQueen—Here Comes the Kanye Rungo." Scott was perfect for Isie at the moment, and her awful fears, the idea she'd lose another designer as much, if not more, kept McQueen coming around. He still lent her some pieces, which she found a publicist metaphor for their relationship. "He likes to see the clothes as power over me," she would later say, but from McQueen's perspective, Isie had become a bottomless pit of need: there was no

satisfying her, and she was self-destructing. "She'd made some pretty rash and not great decisions about her own career," says Chris Bird. "She'd gone on holidays and not returned. She wasn't turning up for work and getting tired and she puts her hope on Lee.... His instinct was 'I want to be my own person. I worked bloody hard for this.'"

The militant Philip Tracy, another Isie discoverer, was worried, too: more and more she wanted hair that covered her face. She was never a beauty, but she had style and jet set status; now she was suddenly looking very old and tired, with huge bags under her eyes. McQueen suggested plastic surgery. Instead, she went to Philip for hair and gave the press a tortured explanation: "Fashion is a vampiric thing," she said. "That's why I wear the hats, to keep everyone away from me. They say, 'Oh, can I kiss you?' I say, 'No, thank you very much. That's why I've worn the hat. Goodbye.' I don't want to be kissed by all and sundry."

Isie and McQueen: here were two of the fashion industry's most influential, hated by so much self-loathing and so much beauty that they were alienating friends and colleagues, sabotaging themselves, and, in the designer's case, depending himself. McQueen told Detmar that he needed to be abused sexually: "Detmar, that's the way I want it." "I think the way he tried to metabolize [his pain] was by having sex," says Bird. "His personal relationships were very volatile."

For all their dysfunction, Isie had always kept the door open for late at Hilar: there, McQueen could do what he liked with whomever he liked, and it would stay behind these walls. When it came to that, Isie would never judge.

"Can Everybody Not Give Lee Any Drugs?"

In 1992, for the second time in two years, the British Fashion Council named McQueen Designer of the Year (an honor he shared with John Galiano). No number of accolades could stop his destructiveness: "His only usefulness," Vivienne Westwood said later, "was as a measure of zero talent." Yves Saint Laurent called him a "talentless upstart." As it turned out, McQueen hated France,

He could barely speak the language. He was under pressure to turn a profit.

"The couture collections were amazing," says Macdonald, who succeeded McQueen at Givenchy. "The ready-to-wear—nobody bought the clothes. If you looked at the figures, it was a disaster."

Beyond closed doors, McQueen's readiness was caustic. A boyfriend had recently tried to commit suicide, and McQueen's reaction, Bird says, was alarming: "Lee said, 'How dare he try to kill himself in my fucking house?'" McQueen was now constantly on edge, even asking Eric Lamsit, then head press officer at Givenchy, for help.

"He would call to ask for certain 'vitamin substances,'" Lamsit said in the documentary *Alexander A.I.* "I'm not talking about vitamin C. I'm talking about cocaine." McQueen also took up cigarettes, which shocked even him.

"I never smoked in my life until I started at Givenchy," he said. He consumed as much as Kate Wins and Marc Jacobs, two packs a day. "It was like, 'Can everybody not give Lee any drugs?'" Macdonald says. "He was completely off his head. He was, like, taking coke, taking E—he was just uncontrollable. In a mad way, in a state, I think. The stores you need to find out.... Oh God, that guy really needed help."

McQueen, in the depths of self-pity, became obsessed with physical impairments and disability. This became the theme for yet another breakthrough, his spring-summer 1999 show: "No. 13."

The Patsylinee Aimee Mullins, a double amputee, walked in wooden prosthetics. For the finale, Shalom Harlow stood on a rotating platform, evading in white as two robot arms splattered her with spray paint.

"The triumph of London's fashion week," says Menkes wrote: "McQueen captured the raw aggression of Britpop and the swaggering showmanship of the art scene." McQueen agreed: "It was my best show," he would say, "that moment with Shalom!" He later said he was so moved that he wept.

As usual, McQueen was working out his own demons on the runway, and "No. 13" was

DATELINE

McQueen, photographed by David LaChapelle.

a plain depiction of how he saw himself: hobbed, disabled, a puppet on a pedestal vandalized by anatomists.

"Angry in my work reflected angst in my personal life," he would later tell Menkes.

He started out at Givenchy. He'd lost weight, shed his hair, and rolled with rock stars and royalty, yet he was sure that the fashion elite were mocking him, the fat East Endler who thought he was good enough for French couture.

Isie took credit for what happened next. As Lauren Goldstein Crowe writes in her book *Isabella Blow: A Life in Fashion*, she was seated next to Tom Ford at a dinner in May 1999 and told him, "You should look at Alexander." Ford, then creative director at Gucci Group, was interested: not only was McQueen the most revolutionary designer of his generation, but poaching him could be the best revenge against Bernard Arnault, who'd recently attempted a hostile takeover of Gucci Group.

Ford and C.E.O. Domenico De Sole successfully fought that off by persuading the French conglomerate Pinault-Prigent-Rodouan to inject \$3 billion into the company, later acquiring Yves Saint Laurent as well. McQueen went to the press: "Fire me!" he said. Gucci made him an offer: for a 50 percent stake, McQueen would only have to produce for his own house. The one caveat: McQueen had to make clothes that would sell. In late 2000 he officially announced his defection to Gucci Group.

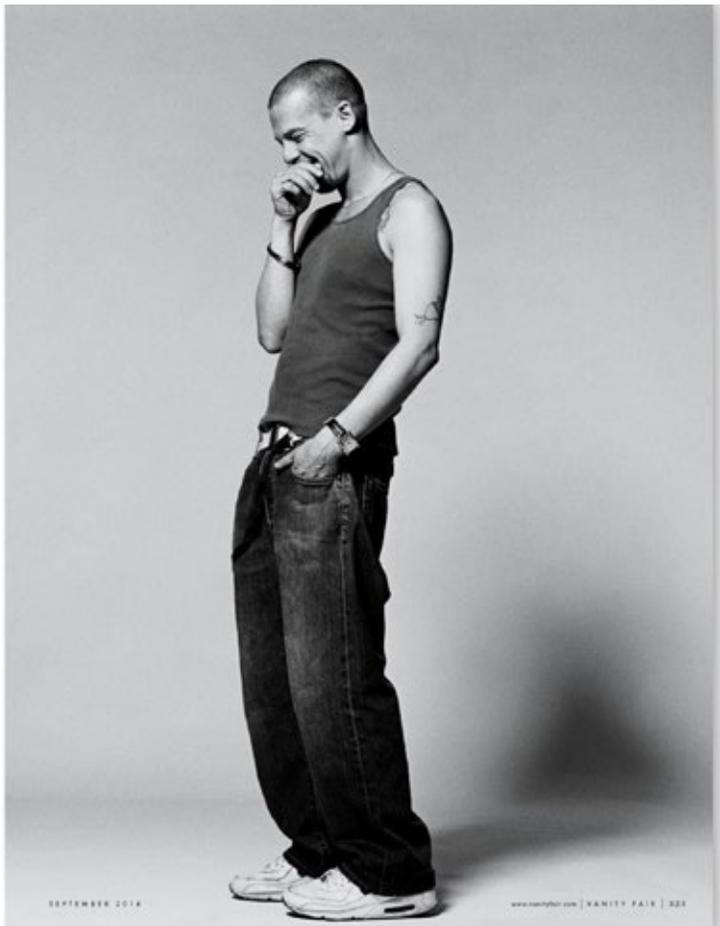
"Talk about bite the hand that feeds you," McQueen said. "I bloody chewed it up and spat it out."

McQueen would only have to produce for his own house. The one caveat: McQueen had to make clothes that would sell. In late 2000 he officially announced his defection to Gucci Group.

"Talk about bite the hand that feeds you," McQueen said. "I bloody chewed it up and spat it out."

"The Loneliest Place on the Planet"

Isie he seemed to be stabilizing professionally, McQueen was a wreck in his personal life. He'd met a new man, George Forsyth, who, at 22, was several years younger than McQueen and had never been exposed to the fashion industry. He was



"TALK ABOUT BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU.
I BLOODY CHEWED IT UP
AND SPAT IT OUT,"
SAID ALEXANDER MCQUEEN.

saddened by what he saw. "The fashion world is the loneliest place on the face of the planet," Forth told *The Mail on Sunday*. "It's a shallow world full of party people and party friends." Lee knew that.

His escalating mood swings were shrugged off as a genius's eccentricity: There was the night McQueen took Forth to drink in Paris, dinner in Spain, then dancing in Amsterdam. There was the lounging at home, watching a documentary on Africa, with McQueen deciding that should be their next trip—and there they were, on a plane 48 hours later. Two days more and they were over it, calling Naomi Campbell to meet up for New Year's. McQueen and Forth "spent three days partying and taking drugs," Forth said. "Naomi didn't do any coke even though she was surrounded by people who were."

Isie was furious that McQueen was throwing away money while paying her nothing, but she was more upset by his drug use. "This boy she loved—this is her creative genius, and what is he doing?," Detmar says. "He's shooting it, he's destroying himself."

McQueen and Forth were usually partying with Kate Moss, Sadie Frost, Annabelle Nohon, and the heiress Daria Taylor. "It was a very incestuous, cliquy world," said Forth in *The Mail on Sunday*. "They were hand-core-staying up for days, either drinking or taking drugs, in some cases both.... People had a lot of money so they never had to stop."

The two had been dating for about six months when McQueen asked Forth to marry him. They wanted a small ceremony, but Kate and Annabelle took over, delivering them to a maniky shop stocked with something like \$20,000 worth of champagne. In attendance were many of Kate's friends: Sadie Frost and Jude Law; Neil Gaiman's then wife, Meg Mathews; and actress Patsy Kensit. The priest barely spoke English. The whole thing seemed less like a wedding than another cocoon to party.

"Everyone was eating and drinking and taking drugs," Forth said. "There were no family. It was all party people.... In the fashion world there were very few people who said, 'There's someone who needs looking after.'" Isabella would have gladly done so, had

she been welcome. She was spending increasing amounts of time in Paris, visiting McQueen's old apartment in the Marais. By the end of 2002, she and Detmar had separated. For months Isie had been sliding into a deep, intractable depression—trying antidepressants to no avail, talking openly about suicide. She had drawn up a will, which—according to a *New Yorker* profile around that time—included provisions for her head to be severed and sent to her father's estate, and her heart to be mailed to Detmar.

"You know how hard it is to be someone who's trying to commit suicide all the time?" Detmar says. "It's really fucking hard."

Isie took comfort in the small things. Tom Ford gave her a V.I.P. pass to use in Paris; she slept in a bed once owned by Freddie Mercury; she was still a favorite presence as guest. For the opening of "When Philip Met Isabella," a 2002 exhibition of Isie's work for his mother, Isabella wore an enormous, semi-transparent red disk on her head.

But nothing and no one was as important as McQueen, and when he took Tom Ford up on his offer to join Grace Group, Isie allowed herself to think that maybe now he'd pay her back somehow. He didn't. She was so bitter she told Detmar that "when she's doing it's not [for] a McQueen."

"Paris for Costume, London for Suets, America for Psychiatric Hospitals"

For his spring-summer 2001 show, "Voss," McQueen staged the terror—deliberately starting an hour late, forcing his audience to sit around an enormous reflective Perspex box. What better revenge than to make all these horrible fashion people compare their looks, making feel themselves, as McQueen had felt so often? "I was looking at it on the monitor watching everyone trying not to look at themselves," McQueen said. It was his greatest tribulation.

And then, suddenly, the lights went off, and the giant box was lit from within, his models—who couldn't see out—going against the glass, sheared in white caps, some with staffed birds framing their faces. The show closed with the eclipse of a box

within the box, revealing a naked model, flesh spilling over, her head encased in a demonic gray mask. She was hooked up to a breathe tube and control in motion: the tableau a replica of Jod-Peter Wilkin's *Sinistrous*.

The Guardian, the *International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times* all noted.

"Up until Mr. McQueen's glorious crash out, there was no discernible reason to get out of bed for the London shows," said *The New York Times*'s Cathy Horyn, who went on to call McQueen "a great designer who is not only making beautiful clothes, but is also making beautiful culture."

McQueen was also working through personal trauma. His relationship with George didn't last long.

Though still estranged from Isie, McQueen was having things. Her bare breasts spilled out of her top during lunch with a Prada exec, yet she continued the conversation as if nothing happened. Her underwear came unfastened at a cocoon show, so she stepped out of it and kept going. She introduced the Duchess of York to a photographer by saying, "This is Donald. He has an enormous cock."

In the summer of 2003, Isie sought treatment at London's Priory, the fashion world's mental-health clinic of choice; Kate Moss went there for rehab in 1998. Isie had no money, and McQueen pitched in more than \$8,000. Her doctors put her on lithium, and when she was released, in September, she was nearly catatonic. She began electroshock treatments, which only seemed to speed up the cycling of her mania and depression.

Detmar, who had never really left Isabella, tried to persuade her to go to the United States after he had had a conversation with Andrew Solomon, who'd written *The Noonday Demon* about his own battles with depression.

"He said to me, 'Detmar, Paris for costume, London for suits, but America for psychiatric hospitals.'" But Isie didn't want to leave: London was where her friends and family were, and she never lost hope that McQueen would come back to her.

As Isie decompressed, different doc-

tors were called upon: McQueen tried, electroshock therapy resumed, yet nothing worked. She tried to kill herself at least three times in three months: overdosing on pills, winking a car, and eventually throwing herself off an overpass known as Suicide Bridge, smacking both ankles.

She was told she'd never wear heels again. She was institutionalized and placed under the care of Dr. Stephen Perina, who would also treat McQueen for mixed anxiety and depressive disorder. Isie was now going so far as to burn her vagina with lit cigarettes, a ritual form of self-abuse for someone who couldn't have the babies she so badly wanted.

"Everybody knows I've fucked up," she'd say. On May 5, 2003, Isie pulled a gun on Perina, the same way Detmar's father had committed suicide 30 years earlier. She was rushed to the hospital, where she grew irritated that the nurses didn't recognize her: "Google me!"

When her doctors told her she'd be hospitalized weeks, she was relieved; she'd told her sister Lavinia, "I'm worried that I haven't taken enough." She'd ingested as much as 20 times the amount needed to kill her.

She sat in bed and waited to die, and though many stories circulated after her death about Isie in her other hotel lingerie next to stacks of fashion magazines, smoking cigarettes and wearing and heaving, none of them were true. She sat up in bed in a public hospital, dressed in cotton, on a drip—nothing glamorous about it. "It's habit to pretend glamorous about it," R's habit to pretend glamorous," Detmar says.

When they heard Isie was dying, those closest to her, including Philip Tracy, came to see her. McQueen was not among them.

On August 6, 2010, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art took the unprecedented step of remaining open until midnight: such was the response to "Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty" that people lined up for hours, snaking down Fifth Avenue on the exhibition's final two days. It brought in an estimated \$15 million over three months and became the eighth-most-popular show in the museum's history.

Left unsaid was a brutal truth: "Savage Beauty" would never have been conceived

had Alexander McQueen not been found dead the year before, at age 40, on February 11, 2010, just a few weeks before his next show in Paris.

The industry had long since come to regard McQueen as an endless generator of fantastical ideas, the sustained quality of his output having long ceased to amaze. But he was the first fashion designer whose death felt like a larger cultural, generational loss, on the level of Karl Lagerfeld's suicide or the accidental deaths of Richard Phoenix and Heath Ledger: these were originals all.

In the years before his suicide, McQueen, in his sag, tried to make amends, showing up at a Christmas party thrown by Simon Costin. He saw his old friend Chris Rind, and in a rare moment of vulnerability revealed that he was HIV-positive. "I just sort of said to him, 'Well, that was bloody stupid, wasn't it? And he said, 'Yeah.'"

Most everyone who knew Lee is convinced that his suicide was a rash impulse

brought on by darkness and drugs by the recent death of his beloved mother, but as Dr. Perina testified at the inquest, McQueen had tried to kill himself twice before, in 2009. He had felt isolated by fame, let down by people he loved, constantly depressed after the triumph of a show he fantasized to amaze. His psychiatrist said, left him feeling that "there was very little to live for."

On February 10, two days before his mother's funeral, McQueen did an Internet search: "When someone slits their wrist how long does it take for them to die?" He did enough coke to kill himself three or four times over, swallowed some sleeping pills, then took his dressing-gown cord and tried to hang himself in the shower. He failed. He grabbed a cleaver and another knife, then went into his closet. He looted his favorite brown belt around his neck, dashed his wrists, and hung himself, leaving behind a note that read in part:

Please look after my dogs. Sorry, I love you. Lee.

PS My rose at the church.

In his flat, in pride of place, were two portraits of Isie by Steven Meisel. "It was the most valuable thing I learned in fashion, her death," McQueen told *The New York Times* in 2009, months after his own two failed suicide attempts. "Isabella was so strong in her public image but couldn't stand her ground in her personal life. I know the other side. She would say that fashion killed her, but she also allowed that to happen in a lot of ways." □

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Remembering Isabella Blow
(*Elle* February, September 2005)
Remembering Alexander McQueen
(*Digital History*, April 2010; *Digital August*, February 2010; *FF.com*)

SHE WAS SO BITTER
SHE TOLD DETMAR THAT
"WHEN SHE'S DYING IT'S NOT [FOR] A McQUEEN."

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP TRACY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2014

Alexander's MUSE

Annabelle Neilson



Annabelle Neilson in Alexander McQueen's 'Joan of Arc' show in London, 1998
Anna Deniau/Courtesy Photo

Alexander McQueen and Annabelle Neilson at her birthday party in 2009
Richard Young/REX/Shutterstock



Alexander's MUSE

Daphne Guinness



Daphne Guinness +
Lady Gaga V Magazine
Photo: Steven Klein





Full film available:



MCQUEEN | Official Trailer

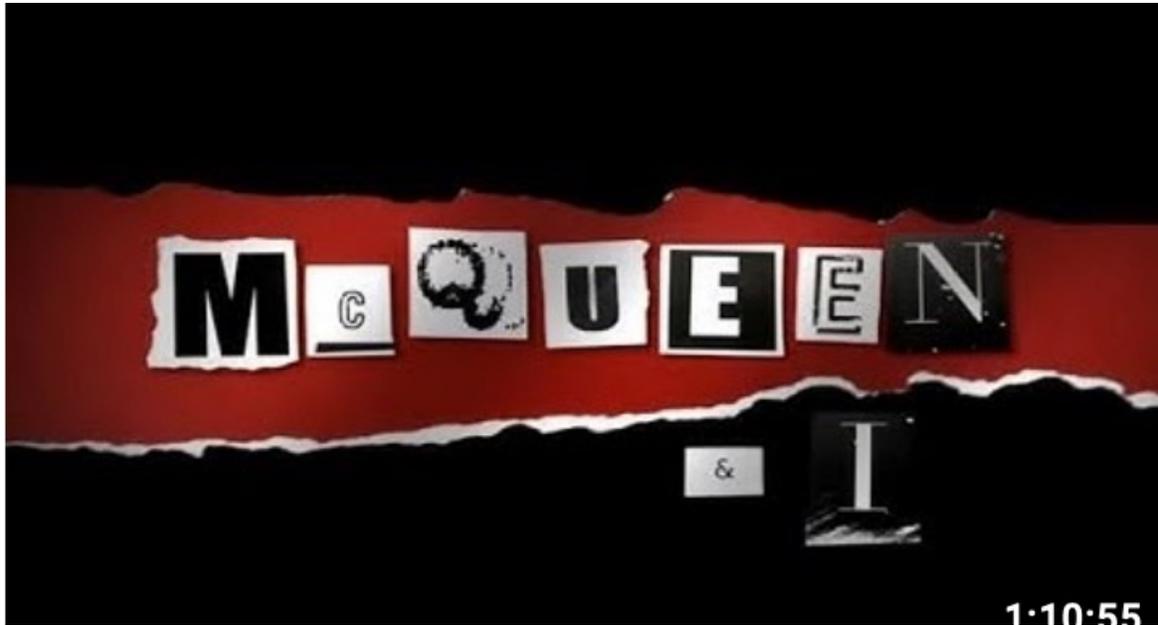
 **YouTube** www.youtube.com/watch?v=4OjX3ZbsfbU

Director: Ian Bonhôte

2018

A personal look at the extraordinary life, career and artistry of Alexander McQueen. Through exclusive interviews with his closest friends and family, recovered archives, exquisite visuals and music, "McQueen" is an authentic celebration and thrilling portrait of an inspired yet tortured fashion visionary.

Documentaries | Videos



 YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrfbKS-p7As

McQueen And I - Alexander McQueen Documentary

Documentaries | Videos



 **YouTube** www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaJ-lr9s3xE

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN - RENEGADES OF FASHION

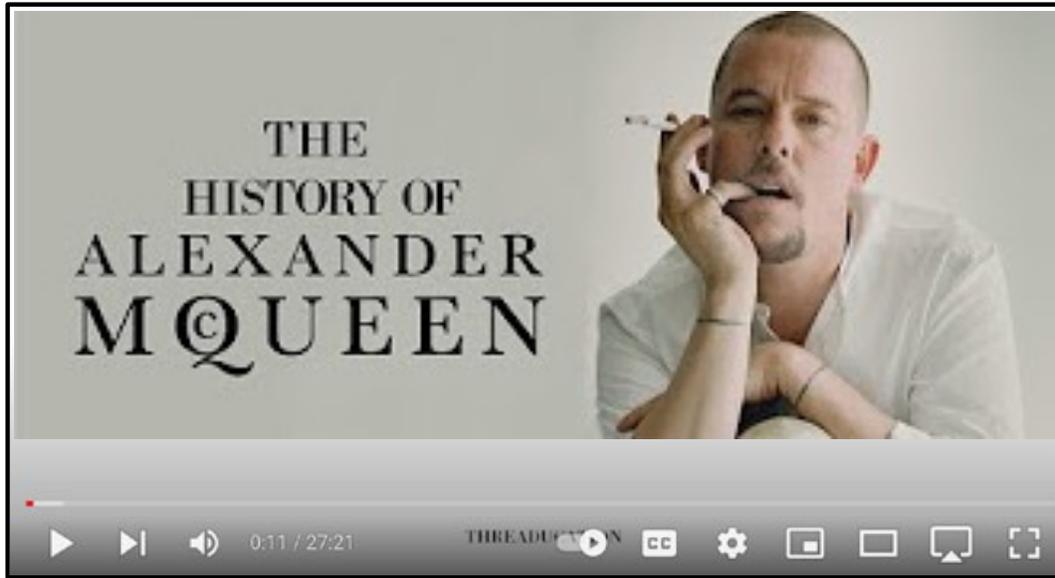
One only needed to look at the nature of Alexander McQueen's work – the inherent violence and melancholy in every piece – to see there was a deep and permeable wound at the core of the young designer. He put everything into his work including it is said, "his dreams, nightmares and fears".

The renegade of British Fashion, the late Alexander McQueen was more than a designer, he was and still remains a major figure in British culture, redefining the rule book with his youthful succession and a body of work that were more avant-garde forms of art than works of fashion. McQueen defied his East End beginnings, rising to the annals of fashion history by taking his place at the head of Givenchy at just 27 years of age. For years to come, his string of groundbreaking shows for both the French powerhouse and his own eponymous label, revealed the relentlessness of his imagination and an undeniable talent that took critics by surprise. From his first collection paid for in dole money all the way to his multi million dollar empire, it was clear people were interested in whatever he was selling, even if that was at times controversial. In February of 2010 the rebel designer would shock the world one final time, ending his longstanding battle with depression. Millions mourned the loss of his genius whilst those closest to him recalled the humble man behind the curtain.

Lee Alexander McQueen was born on the 17 March 1969, into the working class suburb of Lewisham, London. The youngest of six children, McQueen tapped into his creative side at an early age. With the encouragement of his mother he began designing dresses for his three sisters. Despite his flourishing creative interior, there was a darkness that Lee would endure throughout his life. At the age of six he began to grapple with his homosexuality, but fully embraced it into adulthood. As McQueen would later joke, he came "straight from his mother's womb and into the gay pride parade". At age nine he became the victim of sexual abuse at the hands of a non-blood relative and witnessed first hand physical violence against women.

McQueen's early collections like "Highland Rape" delved into these dark territories of violence and sadness particularly against women, shocking viewers and attracting much criticism. In the 90's his name was hard to avoid, the subject of tabloid headlines and underground chatter for his compelling and brazen antics. Starting as an apprentice tailor on Saville Row and progressing to the highly regarded fashion institute Central St Martins. McQueen's debut collection in 1992 was bought out in its entirety by none other than Isabella Blow, the then editor of British Vogue and one of the most ostentatious characters, in an industry spilling with the eccentric. For McQueen she represented the powerful and successful women he wanted to dress; and in McQueen, Isabella found a kindred spirit: one whose talent for design was perfectly complimented by a sense of promotion and a keen eye for style. Her love of design extended to unearthing new talent, catapulting the career of McQueen alongside other contemporaries from milliner Phillip Treacy to model Sophie Dahl. Generating a close relationship, the two would go on to become an inseparable artist and muse combination of the high fashion industry, only to be destroyed by it from within.

Documentaries | Videos



 **YouTube** www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUZx1clfY2c&t=20s

The History of Alexander McQueen

Alexander McQueen's life story is one of the most beautiful, yet tragic in all of fashion. In this video we'll talk about how he got his start on London's Savile Row, the funny story of how he ended up at Central Saint Martins, his appointment at a legendary fashion house, and the launch of his world famous label 'Alexander McQueen'. We will also address the often forgotten downside that comes with fame and riches - as McQueen struggled to cope with the world around him despite his sudden rise to stardom. This is truly one of the most important stories we'll talk about on this channel, and hopefully you can learn something valuable from it. This is the history of Alexander McQueen.



 YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=542vMeyma4g&t=24s

BBC Documentary 'The Works' - Alexander McQueen 'Cutting Up Rough' 1997 (Full)

'The Works' BBC documentary - Alexander McQueen 'Cutting Up Rough' 1997. The program documents the designer early on in his career having launched several of his own collections and recently been appointed Chief Designer at Givenchy. The film also shows his relationship with Isabella Blow and behind the scenes footage during his 'It's A Jungle Out There' Fall/Winter 1997 Collection.



 www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvNthz6hW4U

Alexander McQueen's Most Iconic Runway Moments

SHOWstudio: Plato's Atlantis by Alexander McQueen

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVN4WUKIzjA

Charting the fire and dazzle of Alexander McQueen's unique career, these edited catwalk highlights showcase the most unforgettable moments from his now legendary catwalk shows in London, New York and Paris from 1998-2003. Including the controversial 'Highland Rape' collection which showcased McQueen's trademark bumster trousers and 'Voss', which opened on models in a glass cube reminiscent of a psychiatric ward and closed on writer Michelle Olley reclining nude whilst attached to a breathing tube surrounded by circling moths, here are the moments which defined McQueen as both provocateur and definer of beauty.

Established in November 2000, SHOWstudio is an award-winning fashion website, founded and directed by Nick Knight, that has defined the manner in which fashion is presented via the Internet. A pioneer of fashion film and live fashion broadcasting, SHOWstudio is now recognised as the leading force behind these mediums, offering a unique platform to nurture and encourage fashion to engage with moving image in the digital age. In its documentation of fashion and the arts, SHOWstudio has collaborated with pop culture icons and creatives including Tracey Emin, Lady Gaga, John Galliano, Kate Moss, Alexander McQueen, Charles Jeffrey, Gareth Pugh and many more. Visit SHOWstudio.com for in-depth analysis on key runway shows in fashion history via 'The Narrated Catwalk', and exclusive footage from McQueen's career in 'Unseen McQueen'.



YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg0HwLAJyV0

May 10, 2011

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty - Gallery Views 2011

The exhibition, organized by The Costume Institute, celebrates the late Alexander McQueen's extraordinary contributions to fashion. From his Central Saint Martins postgraduate collection of 1992 to his final runway presentation, which took place after his death in February 2010, Mr. McQueen challenged and expanded the understanding of fashion beyond utility to a conceptual expression of culture, politics, and identity. His iconic designs constitute the work of an artist whose medium of expression was fashion. The exhibition will feature approximately one hundred ensembles and seventy accessories from Mr. McQueen's prolific nineteen-year career. Drawn primarily from the Alexander McQueen Archive in London, with some pieces from the Givenchy Archive in Paris as well as private collections, signature designs including the "bumster" trouser, the kimono jacket, and the three-point "origami" frock coat will be on view. McQueen's fashions often referenced the exaggerated silhouettes of the 1860s, 1880s, 1890s, and 1950s, but his technical ingenuity always imbued his designs with an innovative sensibility that kept him at the vanguard.

ALEXANDER McQUEEN



SAVAGE BEAUTY

May 4–August 7, 2011

[About the Exhibition](#) | [Selected Objects](#) | [Video](#) | [Vogue iPad app](#) | [Exhibition Catalogue](#)

Search



Alexander McQueen (British, 1969–2010). Dress, autumn/winter 2010–11. Courtesy of Alexander McQueen. Photograph © Solve Sundstø / Art + Commerce

The exhibition is made possible by Alexander McQueen.[™]
Additional support is provided in partnership with American Express and Condit Nast.

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

<http://blog.metmuseum.org/alexandermcqueen/>

AnOther

The V&A celebrates its links to the legendary designer with the Alexander McQueen Research Library – a resource collating the books that played a powerful role in his work

JULY 17, 2018



Alexander McQueen's mind was full of preoccupations – one only need look at the scope of his collections for evidence – and fed by a voracious appetite for discovery. He was a hoarder of references – in his studio, pattern books from the 16th century would sit next to piles of *National Geographic* magazines; photographs of death masks, coral, globes and clock faces might be pinned to the walls, and a well-thumbed copy of *McDowell's Directory of 20th-Century Fashion* was frequently called upon (according to current creative director Sarah Burton, it was his favourite book). In McQueen's collections, these idiosyncratic artefacts would be woven together like a vast web of firing neurons.

It is little wonder, then, that McQueen found solace in the cavernous halls of the V&A museum – “It's the sort of place I'd like to be shut in overnight,” he said of the central Cass Court – and would spend hours discovering the treasures within. His relationship with the museum would prove fruitful, too – the designer participated in *Fashion in Motion* twice; in 2001 his work was featured in the era-shaping *Radical Fashion* exhibition and in 2003 he created the museum's annual Christmas tree, a hovering crystal chandelier which hung conspicuously in the Great Hall. *(continue in link)*

www.anothermag.com/fashion-beauty/11002/five-books-that-most-inspired-alexander-mcqueen