

Alexander mcqueen 2

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Jane Wang Second draft research paper Jul 30h, 2012 Alexander McQueen “ Creativity is a very fragile thing, and Lee was very fragile,” said the milliner Philip Treacy, who had worked with Alexander McQueen. McQueen, a British genius fashion designer creating a large amount of provocative works in last two decades, committed suicide because of the suicide of Isabella Blow and the loss of his mother, who were two important supporters of his design (Wilson 89). The “ Spine” Corset, the Skull Scarf, and the “ Bumster” skirt are the representative of the collections of his provocative and dark romantic beauty.

McQueen always indicated the dark and deathly elements in his collections, critiqued “ inanity” of the fashion world and expressed his personal life reflections in fashion design. He was the chief designer of Givenchy between 1996 and 2001 and earned British Designer of the Year awards four times(1996, 1997, 2001 and 2003) (Wilson 89). In terms of McQueen’s intricate tailoring and provocative design styles, McQueen was significantly influenced by Gilbert Adrian, and Elsa Schiaparelli in the aesthetic aspect; Charles Frederick Worth had processing influences on McQueen's.

Adrian and Schiaparelli were fashion designers prevalent around 1930s and 1940s and Worth was popular in in early 19th century. In McQueen’s collections, he applies Gothic Romance with pure black and complex lace ornamentations. His collections focus on the expression of his feelings and moods; it can be scary, disgusting, and romantic. McQueen is like a poet who uses clothing to write his poetry. His runways can always make viewers think, but not just enjoy the visual elements of clothes. Suzy Menkes says of McQueen’s works, “ Distasteful images?

But it's a reflection of our nasty world. And a powerful fashion designer always ingests the ether of modern times. " (Bolton 12). To me, McQueen's runway shows are more like drama to convey McQueen's savage and animalist beauty and deathphilosophyfor fashion. In McQueen's work, he indicates orientalism, classicism and English eccentrics, but also shows many clues for thefuture of fashion. As Eric Wilson said in 2010, " As designers have done for centuries, Mr. McQueen altered the shape of the body using corsetry and anatomically corrects breastplates as a recurring motif.

More recently, his work took on increasingly futuristic tones, with designs that combined soft draping with molding, or ones in which a dress seemed to morph into a coat. At his last show, in October, the models wore platform shoes that looked like the hulls of ships. " (Wilson 1). According to theinterviewwith Andrew Bolton, author of " Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty", Bolton offers clues of designers affecting McQueen's aesthetic. Bolton says, " In terms of tailoring, McQueen was most influenced by designers whose technical acumen mirrored his own, designers such as Gilbert Adrian and Elsa Schiaparelli. (Interview 1). After I saw Schiaparelli fashion exhibition, I found many direct Schiaparelli design concepts' influences on Alexander McQueen's contemporary collections. Schiaparelli invented culottes, wrapped turbans, Arab breeches, embroidered shirts, pompom-brimmed hats, and barbaric belts (Smith 1). I think her Skeleton, Lobster, and Tear Dresses have the most obvious influences on McQueen's fashion design, where he also employs a lot of animal elements to express a kind of savage and original beauty.

As McQueen himself explains, " Nature was the greatest, or at least the most enduring, influence upon me. Everything I do is connected to nature in one way or another; Nature was also a central theme, if not the central theme, of romanticism. " (Bolton 15). Take two similar fashion designs from Schiaparelli and McQueen, The Skeleton Dress (Fig 1) and " Spine" Corset (Fig 2). Obviously, in both works, two artists utilize a " backbone" as a key element in their works. They both look scary and savage.

In Schiaparelli's work, she employs silk to create a backbone effect, while McQueen changes material to a kind of metal, which strengthen the bones' lines and shock effect. Schiaparelli just uses pure black in this collection. Similarly, McQueen just applies the metal's original color in his design, which is quite concise. Like Schiaparelli, McQueen also tightens the waist to indicate the silhouette of the body. Unlike Elsa's slight decoration of the spine, McQueen extends the human spine to a kind of animal spine with the coccyx.

Therefore, it is a good example to exemplify the Schiaparelli's design influences on McQueen's. Because of Bolton's mention of McQueen's tailoring influence from Gilbert Adrian, let us take a look at their previous works. Like Adrian's women's suit, McQueen's women's suit always has an exaggerated silhouette and the " s" pattern is obvious. McQueen also uses a lot of broad shoulders in suits; puffed sleeves were created by Adrian, which was popular in 1930s and 40s American fashion (History). The huge puff-sleeve dress style is continued in McQueen's dress (Fig 4).

Likewise, Adrian's dress " A version of the 'Hostess Gown'" contains many puffed sleeves. They both create dresses with huge dress trains to express

dresses' falling and floating. Due to the similarity between two designers' fashion style, I chose one work from Adrian and one from McQueen to make a specific comparison. If we take a look at Adrian's film custom dressing (Fig 3) " A version of the 'Hostess Gown'" compared with McQueen dress (Fig 4) from Autumn/winter 2010-11, both artists' modern style and innovative silhouettes come through.

In Adrian's work, he seems to employ silk to indicate a sense of freedom and flow. Similarly, McQueen uses translucent and light material to show the dancing-like movement of the dress. Like Adrian, McQueen also provides three perspectives of the dress, which looks like a dancing and swirling performer. Likewise, the dress hem of McQueen's was tailored freely and asymmetrically. Adrian just slightly tightens up the waist in this work, whereas the bodice is designed as an extremely tight style by McQueen.

Unlike Adrian's concise decoration of flowers on the upper left shoulder of the dress, McQueen transforms patterns onto materials as decoration on the surface of the dress and added small puff-sleeve on the shoulder parts. Both works give the viewer a sense of flowing movement; nevertheless, McQueen accentuates the curved bodylines of the dress, which is imbued with a sense of elegance of a dancer and replaced the opaque material Adrian uses to a translucent material, which looks like the body of flowers to add more romantic feelings.

McQueen not only shared similar tailoring ideas with other designers, but also the intricate and complex processes of dressmaking. Bolton also mentions, " In terms of dressmaking, he looked to designers who shared his sense of theatricality and his love of exaggerated silhouettes, such as <https://assignbuster.com/alexander-mcqueen-2/>

Charles Frederick Worth, Christian Dior, and Charles James. " (Interview 1). Worth was an English fashion designer of the 19th century, and also considered as the Father of Haute couture, which is made for specific customer with high-quality, expensive fabric and sewn intricate decorations.

If we juxtapose both McQueen and Worth's dressmaking works, they both are finished by the most experienced tailoring skills and hand-executed techniques. Especially, McQueen's dressmaking reflects an aristocratic style in palace of Middle 19th century, where the dresses had intricate Alençon lace decorations, expensive silk materials, bustles, tightened waists, and an embellished neckline. For example, looking at one of Worth's evening dresses (fig 5), there are many obvious elements shared with a coat of dress from McQueen's autumn/winter 2008 collections (fig 6).

Both works have loose and puffed dress trains. In Worth's work, he employs corduroy in deep red color, which creates a solemn and elitist effect. Similarly, McQueen applies silk to red to express a figure of Queen. Like Worth, McQueen also cuts the shoulder parts of the dress with a puffed effect. However, McQueen repeats this effect in the neck part and strengthens it in the train of the dress. In terms of ornamentation, in Worth's dress, there are Alençon lace patterns in the upper back, while McQueen utilizes intricate metals and diamonds as head decorations, which looked like a Queen's crown.

Indeed, the tailoring similarities between both designers are evident. However, McQueen updates the puffed sleeves with tightened wristbands to emphasize the 19th century aristocratic style. Without doubt, Alexander McQueen is a prolific and experienced fashion designer and his collections

are multi-faced and cause viewers to think deeply. Even though he shared many similar aesthetics with other fashion designers, he recombined each tiny element he liked and produced novel, updated, “ McQueen’s” work. As Bolton describes McQueen like a demonic Edward Scissor hands (Interview 1).

Yes, I feel that McQueen is a devout Scissor hand. Although he received acrimonious critics of his provocative style, like the controversial Highland Rape, autumn/winter 1995-96, which even made viewers feel uncomfortable with the collections, he insisted on his own dark and death romance. Do you remember the character Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream? “ Helena believes that love has the power to transform something ugly into something beautiful because love is propelled by subjective perceptions of the individual, not by objective assessments of appearance. (Bolton 12) I think this idea is central of McQueen’s collections, which breaks the viewer’s boundary between ugliness and beauty. His aesthetic purpose is to force viewers look at the ugliness, examine the dark part of their innermost beings and think about the savagery of nature. In addition, he updated Worth, Schiaparelli and Adrian's designs with modern styles, novel textile, complex hand-making processes, which follow up the contemporary fashion society. . [pic] (Fig 1) Elsa Schiaparelli.

The Skeleton Dress. France. 1938. Silk crepe [pic] (Fig 2) Alexander McQueen. “ Spine” Corset. Untitled. Spring/summer. 1998 [pic] (Fig 3) Gilbert Adrian, “ A version of the 'Hostess Gown' ”, 1930's and 40's [pic] (Fig 4) Alexander McQueen (British, 1969-2010). Dress. Autumn/winter 2010-11. [pic] (Fig 5) Charles Frederick Worth (French, Bourne 1825-1895 Paris).

Evening Dress. 1893-95 [pic] (Fig 6) Alexander McQueen. Untitled. Autumn/winter. 2008 Works Cited Bolton, Andrew and Koda Harold.

Savage Beauty. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011. Print. History Wired Gilbert Adrian. National Museum of American History. Jan 2010. Web. 19 Jul 2012. Interview with Andrew Bolton, author of ' Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty'. Yale University Press. 5 May. 2011. Web. 19 Jul. 2012. Smith, Roberta. DESIGN REVIEW: For a Body that Nobody Ever Had. NY: The New York Times. Dec 7, 2001. Print. Wilson, Eric and Horyn, Cathy. " Alexander McQueen, Designer, Is Dead at 40. " New York Times Feb 2010: 89. Web.