

Alexander McQueen: Art Meets Fashion

*A novel voyage in the imaginative universe
of British fashion’s “enfant terrible”*

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Québec City, Wednesday, June 14, 2023 ✕ After Los Angeles and Melbourne, the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is proud to present from **June 15 to September 10, 2023** in Québec City the *Alexander McQueen: Art Meets Fashion* exhibition, the first Canadian exhibition of the work of designer Lee Alexander McQueen (1969-2010), a key figure in the international fashion industry between 1990 and 2010.

When art meets fashion

Simons is the main presenting partner of the exhibition, which proposes a reflection on the creative process of “the enfant terrible” of British fashion. To explain his vast artistic heritage and sources of inspiration, a connection has been made between collections that this ingenious designer created and art works from periods from antiquity to the present of diverse cultural



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state corporation funded by the Gouvernement du Québec.

origins and using varied techniques. The works, some of them produced by the great masters of art history such as Dürer, Goya and Picasso, and by Québec artists François Baillairgé, Patrick Bernatchez, Clarence Gagnon, Holly King, Marcel Saint-Pierre, and Claire Savoie, transform themselves into genuine visual references that echo McQueen's creations and collections. There is no way of knowing whether the designer sought to directly evoke the works juxtaposed with his creations, but this presentation explores the interdisciplinary impetus that defined his entire career.



The exhibition assembles 225 items to sumptuously illustrate these unique encounters. The exhibition comprises 195 objects from the LACMA collection (including 69 fashion ensembles signed Alexander McQueen from the Regina J. Drucker collection), 50 works of art including a selection of historic costumes, 17 headdresses and shoes produced by Los Angeles artist Michael Schmidt, in addition to 32 works from the MNBAQ collection. Three works from the Musée de la civilisation, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the National Gallery of Canada round out this imposing body of work that is sure to charm *fashionistas* and art lovers alike.

A rich and diverse creative universe

Lee Alexander McQueen's critically acclaimed collections reflect a technical virtuosity whose creative process is rooted in references both autobiographical and encyclopaedic, enriched by history, the natural sciences, technology, the media, and popular culture.

The exhibition also highlights the universality of such themes as life, death, nature, mythology, religious belief systems, and the human condition that are central to internationally renowned creator's artistic approach.

McQueen's sources of inspiration

Four themes underpin this major exhibition's narrative thread. They describe in detail the varied, abundant sources of inspiration that enabled McQueen to quickly distinguish himself from one collection to the next and to excel in his art.

Mythos reveals the designer's distant inspirations, including Christian iconography of the northern Renaissance and the Italian Renaissance, or



Greek and Roman Antiquity. *Fashioned Narrative* explores McQueen’s agility in sharing narrations, whether imaginary, autobiographical or historical. *Technique and Innovation* highlights his virtuosity and how he reinvents everything. *Evolution and Existence* re-examines the designer’s fascination with the cycles of life and the human condition.

This thematic path enables the public to grasp the designer’s avant-gardist, non-conformist penchant in addition to appreciating his characteristic technical and conceptual virtuosity.

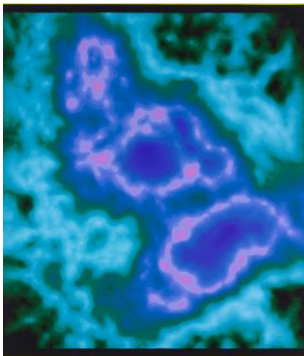
Stylish, inspired staging

The bold staging of *Alexander McQueen: Art Meets Fashion* takes visitors through six emblematic sections with distinctive atmospheres. *The Mouseion* is a sanctuary dedicated to muses and the study of universal knowledge. *The Alley* is considered as the catwalk of a fashion show or a sombre lane in London that comes to life. *The Cabinet of Curiosities* assembles rare, singular items that suggest unusual encounters between epochs, artistic currents, and collections. *The Atelier* is a luminous site in which the tailor’s rigorous gestures and the expression of expertise reveal themselves. *The Labyrinth* echoes Greek mythology and invites visitors to follow the creator’s tortuous thoughts on universal themes such as the human condition, life, and death. Lastly, *The Laboratory* is considered as a place for social, technical, and scientific experimentation, thereby allowing us to contemplate humankind’s future.

Caroline Ross, a lighting and image designer, collaborated on the exhibition’s staging to enrich the visual experience of visitors and to adorn with light, theatrical effects, and incandescent projections the areas of beauty imagined by designer Loïc Lefebvre.

Seminal works in the exhibition

An incredible prodigy, McQueen created many collections that marked both fashion lovers and the history of fashion. Among the striking creations of his collections assembled in Québec City, it must first be noted that McQueen, like Goya and Picasso, was inspired by bullfighting, as



The Dance of the Twisted Bull collection eloquently attests. Clarence Gagnon's painting *Olé!* (1906) echoes this spring-summer 2002 collection, as does an etching by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Un Caballero español mata un toro despues de haber perdido el caballo* (1816), which magnificently illustrate this inspiration.



Mention must also be made of the strength of the collection *The Widows of Culloden* (fall-winter 2006-2007), which draws inspiration from the creator's Scottish ancestry, the MacQueen clan tartan, and the natural landscapes of Scotland to thus create exquisitely constructed romantic silhouettes. A magnificent white dress from this collection, in the section devoted to the history of costumes, is arresting indeed.

The collection *The Girl Who Lived in the Tree* (fall-winter 2008-2009) tells the story of a princess who leaves the branches of a tree to explore the earthly world and proposes an encounter between natural vegetation and the supernatural imagined by McQueen. A black strapless dress embroidered with illustrations by Arthur Rackham for *The Dream of a Summer Night* engages in a dialogue with *Lush* (2003), a photograph by Holly King representing an imaginary landscape that the same fabulous energy appears to inhabit.



The collection *Plato's Atlantis* (spring-summer 2010) with its unfathomable motifs and blues evokes the almost abstract, luminous organic form of Jack Goldstein's painting. With its unique image manipulation technique, Goldstein's *Untitled* (1989) resonates perfectly with McQueen's innovative textiles.

Lastly, the elegantly draped jacket from the collection *Untitled (Angels and Demons)* with its motifs of wings and gold angels evocative of Italian marbles, forges magnificent links with the marble *Fragment with Two Seraphim* (circa 1460), from the entourage of Desiderio da Settignano, or the painting (circa 1650), from the collection of ancient art of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, vividly illustrating the pure, ethereal aspect associated with celestial angels.



“the basis for anything I do is craftsmanship”

-Lee Alexander McQueen

Lee Alexander McQueen, timeline



1969

Born March 17, Lewisham, London.

1985

Leaves school (at age 16) to become tailoring apprentice at Savile Row's Anderson & Sheppard.

1988

Begins working for film and theatre costumier Berman's & Nathan's.

1989

Becomes junior cutter for Koji Tatsuno.

1990

Works as pattern cutter for Romeo Gigli.

Enrolls in MA Fashion program at Central Saint Martins.

1992

March 16 (at age 23) presents MA degree collection *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victim*.

Complete collection purchased by Isabella Blow.

November: important *Vogue* spread featuring Isabella and Detmar Blow at their Gloucestershire estate, Hilles house, in which Isabella and Detmar exclusively wore McQueen.

1993

Fall/Winter 1993-1994: *Taxi Driver*

McQueen's first professional show, presented as part of the British Fashion Council.

Debuts the bumster silhouette.

Spring/Summer 1994: *Nihilisme*

1994

Fall/Winter 1994-1995: *Banshee*

Spring/Summer 1995: *The Birds*

1995

Fall/Winter 1995-1996: *Highland Rape*

Spring/Summer 1996: *The Hunger*

1996

Fall/Winter 1996-1997: *Dante*

Spring/Summer 1997: *Bellmer la Poupee*

Appointed Chief Designer of Womenswear at Givenchy.

Awarded British Designer of the Year.

1997

Fall/Winter 1997-1998: *It's a Jungle Out There*

Spring/Summer 1998: *Untitled (Golden Showers)*

McQueen's first collection under sponsorship by American Express.

Awarded British Designer of the Year.

1998

Fall/Winter 1998-1999: *Joan*

Spring/Summer 1999: *No. 13*



1999

Fall/Winter 1999-2000: *The Overlook*

Spring/Summer 2000: *Eye*

First collaboration with Swarovski after Isabella Blow met Nadja Swarovski, establishing the groundwork for the influential Swarovski Collective.

2000

Fall/Winter 2000-2001: *Eshu*

Spring/Summer 2001: *Voss*

Gucci Group invests in McQueen's eponymous label.

Sarah Burton appointed Head of Womenswear.

2001

Fall/Winter 2001-2002: *What a Merry Go Round*

Spring/Summer 2002: *The Dance of the Twisted Bull*

Leaves Givenchy.

Awarded British Designer of the Year.

2002

Fall/Winter 2002-2003: *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*

Spring/Summer 2003: *Irene*

Collaborates on a line with Savile Row's Huntsman.

2003

Fall/Winter 2003-2004: *Scanners*

Spring/Summer 2004: *Deliverance*

June 16: honored as a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in the Queen's list of birthday honors.

Named International Designer of the Year at the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA).

Awarded British Designer of the Year.

2004

Fall/Winter 2004-2005: *Pantheon ad Lucem*

Spring/Summer 2004: *It's Only a Game*

Launches McQueen menswear line.



2005

Fall/Winter 2005-2006: *The Man Who Knew Too Much*

Spring/Summer 2006: *Neptune*

2006

Fall/Winter 2006-2007: *The Widows of Culloden*

Spring/Summer 2007: *Sarabande*

Launches McQ diffusion line.

Established Sarabande Foundation named after the Spring/Summer 2007 runway show.

2007

Fall/Winter 2007-2008: *In Memory of Elizabeth How, Salem 1692*

Spring/Summer 2008: *La Dame Bleue*

Isabella Blow dies on May 7.

Opens stores in New York City, Milan, London, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles.

2008

Fall/Winter 2008-2009: *The Girl Who Lived in the Tree*

Spring/Summer 2009: *Natural Dis-tinction, Un-natural Selection*

2009

Fall/Winter 2009-2010: *The Horn of Plenty*

Spring/Summer 2010: *Plato's Atlantis*

2010

Joyce McQueen, mother of Lee Alexander McQueen, dies on February 2.

Lee Alexander McQueen dies on February 11 (age 40).

Fall/Winter 2010: Final collection completed by Sarah Burton, posthumously dubbed *Angels and Demons*.

Sarah Burton named Creative Director of Alexander McQueen.

Credits

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in collaboration with Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ).



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The exhibition has received financial support from the Gouvernement du Québec and the Ville de Québec under the Entente de développement culturel.

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The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is deeply grateful to its Foundation's partners and donors for their financial support in the production of this exhibition.



Alexander McQueen: Art Meets Fashion

Pierre Lassonde Pavilion

June 15 to September 10, 2023

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Page 1 - Photos from left to right: Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress* from the *Plato's Atlantis* collection, Spring/Summer 2010, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress* (detail) from the *Plato's Atlantis* collection, Spring/Summer 2010, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Manuel Cipriano Gomes Mafra, *Urn*, c. 1865-1887, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Barbara and Marty Frenkel, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Page 2 - Photos from top to bottom: Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Un Caballero español mata un toro despues de haber perdido el caballero*, 1816. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Gail and Stuart Buchalter in memory of Ethel Buchalter, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Lee Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Ensemble (Bustier and Skirt)* from *The Dance of the Twisted Bull* collection, Spring/Summer 2002. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, *Woman's Headpiece* created by Michael Schmidt, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Clarence Gagnon, *Olé!*, 1906, oil on canvas, 169,7 x 101,4 cm, collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, purchase, restored by the Centre de conservation du Québec (1949.84), photo: CCQ, Guy Couture

Page 3 - Photos from top to bottom: Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress and Harness* from the *Plato's Atlantis* collection, Spring/Summer 2010, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker in loving memory of Juliana Cairone, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Jack Goldstein, *Untitled*, 1989, acrylic on canvas, collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, gift of Patrick and Osirys Canonne (1998.46) © Succession Jack Goldstein, photo: MNBAQ, Denis Legendre

Page 4 – Photos from top to bottom: Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress* (detail) from *The Widows of Culloden* collection, Fall/Winter 2006-07, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker in honor of Joseph and Genevieve Venegas, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress* from *The Girl Who Lived in the Tree* collection, Fall/Winter 2008-09, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the collection of Regina J. Drucker, *Woman's Headdress* created by Michael Schmidt, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Holly King, *Lush*, 2003, chromogenic development, purchase for the Prêt d'œuvres d'art collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (CP.2006.22) © Holly King, photo: MNBAQ, Patrick Altman

Page 5 – Photo: Alexander McQueen, fashion designer, in his offices at 10 Amwell Street, London. Photo: Mike Goldwater / Alamy Stock Photo

Page 6 – Photo: Alexander McQueen, *Joan*, Fall/Winter 1998-1999, photo © Robert Fairer

Page 7 – Photo: Alexander McQueen, *The Dance of the Twisted Bull*, Spring/Summer 2002, photo © Robert Fairer

Page 9 – Photos from top to bottom: Lee Alexander McQueen, Sarah Burton, *Woman's Jacket* (detail) from the *Untitled (Angels and Demons)* collection, Fall/Winter 2010-11. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // Circle of Desiderio da Settignano, *Fragment with Two Seraphim*, c. 1460, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Collection, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Page 10 – Photos from top to bottom: Alexander McQueen, *Woman's Dress* (detail) from the *Scanners* collection, Fall/Winter 2003-04, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift from the Collection of Regina J. Drucker, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA // *Trunk with Brocade Design* (Kati Rimo), Tibet, 17th-18th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Dr. Robert Hayward in memory of Ruth Sutherland Hayward, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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