



News Release

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

In partnership with Swarovski

Supported by American Express

With thanks to M·A·C Cosmetics

Technology partner Samsung

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Exhibition Outline

Savage Beauty is presented in a series of 10 rooms which showcase the dominant themes and concepts within McQueen's extraordinary body of work. The sections are built around garments which span the breadth of McQueen's womenswear collections, from his MA graduate collection in 1992 to A/W 2010, McQueen's final, unfinished collection.

The first section of the exhibition, **London**, focuses on the raw creativity of three of McQueen's impactful early collections: *The Birds* (S/S 1995), *Highland Rape* (A/W 1995) and *The Hunger* (S/S 1996). Ten designs are presented alongside footage of McQueen's earliest catwalk shows. Some of the pieces have not been on display since they were originally shown on the catwalk.

McQueen's skilful subversion of traditional tailoring practices is the focus of **Savage Mind**. Garments on display demonstrate signature McQueen silhouettes – including that of the 'Bumster' trousers – and highlight McQueen's innovative cutting techniques.

The interplay between dark and light is explored in **Romantic Gothic**. McQueen's frequent references to the Victorian Gothic tradition are particularly drawn out in this section. The display also includes pieces from McQueen's final, unfinished collection.

Romantic Primitivism explores McQueen's fascination with the animal world, a subject which inspired him throughout his career. This section also addresses McQueen's response to the theme of survival and includes garments crafted from horn, skin and hair.

McQueen's fascination with his Scottish heritage, ancestry and the colonial past is explored within **Romantic Nationalism**. His collections often centred around elaborate narratives, which drew inspiration from varied sources, spanning historic Scottish battles to the twilight years of the British Raj.

The Cabinet of Curiosities forms the heart of the exhibition and is presented in a double-height gallery. It showcases more than 120 garments and accessories, some produced in collaboration with the milliner Philip Treacy and jewellers such as Shaun Leane and Sarah Harmarnee. Screens show film footage from McQueen's many catwalk presentations.

A further section in the exhibition is devoted to recreating the spectacular ***Pepper's Ghost***, which provided a memorable finale to *The Widows of Culloden* (A/W 2006) catwalk show. Using technology popularised in the 19th century, the spectral form of Kate Moss appears within a dedicated viewing area.

McQueen's longstanding interest in Eastern cultures is examined in ***Romantic Exoticism***, in an arrangement of designs that draw inspiration from traditional Japanese dress forms such as the kimono, and decorative motifs including the chrysanthemum.

Romantic Naturalism represents McQueen's lifelong passion for nature and the inspiration he drew from its beauty and fragility.

McQueen's last fully realised collection, ***Plato's Atlantis*** (S/S 2010) is the finale of the exhibition. Set within a futuristic narrative where the ice caps have melted and humanity has had to devolve in order to live under the sea, the dramatically original collection fused McQueen's interest in nature and technology in what was widely considered his greatest achievement.

– ENDS –

For further PRESS information about the exhibition, please contact Zoë Franklin or Lily Booth in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2497 / 2500 or email z.franklin@vam.ac.uk / l.booth@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from <http://pressimages.vam.ac.uk>

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