



News Release

Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty

In partnership with Swarovski

Supported by American Express

With thanks to M·A·C Cosmetics

Technology partner Samsung

14 March – 2 August 2015

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“The collections at the V&A never fail to intrigue and inspire me. The nation is privileged to have access to such a resource.... it’s the sort of place I’d like to be shut in overnight.”

Alexander McQueen

This spring the V&A will present the only major retrospective in Europe of the work of the visionary fashion designer Lee Alexander McQueen. One of the most innovative designers of his generation, McQueen was celebrated for his extraordinary creative talent. He combined a profound grasp of tailoring and eclectic range of influences with a relentless pursuit to challenge the boundaries of art and fashion, blending the latest technology with traditional craftsmanship.

Originated by the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, *Savage Beauty* will be edited and expanded for the V&A’s large exhibition galleries. It will feature 30 additional garments, including some rare early pieces, lent by private individuals and collectors such as Katy England and Annabelle Neilson as well as pieces from the Isabella Blow Collection and the House of Givenchy. A new section will be added to the exhibition, focusing on McQueen’s fledgling development as a designer in London. Other new garments that will be displayed include a red ballet dress from *The Girl Who Lived in the Tree* (A/W 2008-9) and a white feathered dress from *The Horn of Plenty* (A/W 2009-10).

Gainsbury and Whiting, the production company that collaborated with Alexander McQueen in staging his catwalk shows are working with the V&A on the exhibition. Each section will capture the essence of the provocative, dramatic and extravagant catwalk presentations that McQueen became renowned for, combining storytelling, theatrical performance, music and film. For example the spectacular moment where Kate Moss appeared in a gown of rippling organza as a holographic 3D image will be shown near life size as it was for the finale of the *Widows of Culloden* (A/W 2006-7) catwalk show.

Another key moment of the exhibition that has been expanded at the V&A is the Cabinet of Curiosities, which will showcase designs produced by McQueen in collaboration with fellow creatives such as the jeweller Shaun Leane and milliner Philip Treacy. Presented in a double-height gallery, interspersed with film footage of nearly all of McQueen's catwalk shows, it will display around 40 additional objects that have not previously been seen together. These include a sequin top overprinted with a haunting image of the Russian Romanov children (*Joan*, A/W 1998-9); an embellished matador's jacket (*The Dance of the Twisted Bull*, S/S 2002) and a black horned headpiece designed for Givenchy (S/S 1997).

In total, the exhibition will showcase more than 200 ensembles and accessories, the largest number of individual pieces designed by McQueen and collaborators ever seen together. They range from McQueen's Central Saint Martins' postgraduate collection of 1992 to his final designs for A/W 2010, completed after his death, and are drawn primarily from the Alexander McQueen archive in London.

The thematic presentation of the exhibition will interrogate ideas and concepts central to McQueen's work, including: subversive tailoring; Gothic sensibility and the interplay between darkness and light; primitivism and the animal world; heritage and ancestry; nature and the natural world; and technology and handcraft.

The V&A was one of the first museums to show McQueen's work in 1997 in the exhibition *Cutting Edge: 50 Years of British Fashion 1947-1997*. He was also represented in the *Fashion in Motion* series in 1999 and with Shaun Leane in 2001, and was one of 11 designers represented in the exhibition *Radical Fashion* in 2001 which showcased works from his *Voss* collection (S/S 2001).

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A, said: *"I am thrilled that this magnificent show is coming to London and feel passionately that the V&A is its natural home. Lee Alexander McQueen presented his work here during his lifetime and studied the Museum's wide-ranging public collections of tailoring, painting, art, photography and books as inspiration for his visionary designs, yet remained vigorously anti-establishment and a true provocateur."*

Sarah Burton, Creative Director Alexander McQueen, said: *"Savage Beauty is a celebration of the most imaginative and talented designer of our time. Lee was a genius and a true visionary who pushed boundaries, challenged and inspired. He believed in creativity and innovation and his talent was limitless."*

The V&A's presentation of the exhibition is being made possible with the cooperation of Alexander McQueen and will be in partnership with Swarovski; supported by American Express; with thanks to M.A.C Cosmetics; and technology partner Samsung.

Nadja Swarovski, Member of the Swarovski Executive Board, said: *"We are honoured to support this landmark exhibition celebrating the creative genius of Alexander McQueen at one of our most*

distinguished cultural institutions. We were privileged to collaborate creatively with McQueen since 1998 in both fashion and design, and Savage Beauty is an eloquent tribute to the scale of his talent and to his limitless imagination, which conjured looks that were sometimes wild and challenging, but always exquisitely crafted, and always beautiful.”

Lisa Gregg, Vice President of Consumer Products & Experiences, American Express, said: *“We are delighted to be a part of this unique retrospective. Our support of Alexander McQueen spans many years over which time we had the privilege of supporting his meteoric rise from cutting edge British designer to global household name. As one of the sponsors of the 2011 New York debut of Savage Beauty, we are particularly excited about the homecoming of this truly special and inspirational exhibition.”*

– ENDS –

Notes to Editors

Ticket Information

Admission £16 (concessions available). V&A Members go free.

Advance booking is advised – this can be done in person at the V&A; online at www.vam.ac.uk/savagebeauty; or by calling 0800 912 6961 (booking fee applies)

- The exhibition is being curated by Claire Wilcox, Senior Curator of Fashion, V&A and Professor in Fashion Curation, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London
- The exhibition is based on *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, an exhibition organised by the Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 2011
- Andrew Bolton, Curator of the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York is Consultant Curator and was Curator of the original exhibition
- Sam Gainsbury, Creative Director and Joseph Bennett, Production Designer will redesign the exhibition at the V&A with Anna Whiting as Consultant Producer, following their collaboration on the original exhibition in 2011
- Related Alexander McQueen activity in London next year will include an exhibition of photographs by Nick Waplinton showing Alexander McQueen’s working process at Tate Britain from 10 March - 17 May 2015

Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition sponsors.

About Swarovski

The crystal house and Alexander McQueen share a rich history, beginning in the 1990s when Isabella Blow introduced the young maverick designer to Nadja Swarovski. Swarovski went on to support McQueen’s S/S 1999 collection, which was to be the first of numerous collaborations, including the creation, alongside Tord Boontje, of the V&A’s Grand Entrance crystal Christmas tree in 2003; and the dramatic Swarovski gemstone-encrusted Bird’s Nest and Bird Skull headdresses

for his A/W 2006 collection. Swarovski has worked hand-in-hand with the great couturiers since 1900, when founder Daniel Swarovski's precision-cut stones became highly prized ingredients in the dressmaking ateliers of Paris.

Founded in 1895 in Austria, Swarovski Crystal Business designs, manufactures and sells crystals, natural and created gemstones, and finished products such as jewellery, accessories and lighting. Swarovskigroup.com | [Swarovski on Facebook](#) | [@swarovski on Twitter](#)

About American Express

The Company's partnership with McQueen began in 1997 and went from supporting his early runway shows in London and Paris to the creation of several limited edition cards, including the first ever 'Haute Couture' Gold Card containing real gold leaf. American Express collaborated with McQueen in 2004 on 'Black', a unique, one-off event, inspired by the black Centurion Card which saw him show in London for the first time in years.

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About M·A·C Cosmetics

M·A·C, a leading brand of professional cosmetics, was created in 1984. The brand has grown through a tradition of word-of-mouth endorsement and is now sold in 95 countries/territories worldwide.

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About Samsung

Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. inspires the world and shapes the future with transformative ideas and technologies, redefining the worlds of TVs, smartphones, wearable devices, tablets, cameras, digital appliances, printers, medical equipment, network systems and semiconductors. Samsung employ 307,000 people across 84 countries.

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Exhibition Publication and V&A Shop

To accompany the exhibition, the V&A will publish *Alexander McQueen* (edited by Claire Wilcox. £45, hardback), featuring previously unseen material and essays by a team of international contributors. A range of mementos inspired by the exhibition and created in partnership with Alexander McQueen will also be available exclusively from the V&A Shop in store and online from March 2015. For PRESS information, contact Julie Chan on 020 7942 2701 or j.chan@vam.ac.uk

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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