



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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"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 presents 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* has been edited and expanded for the V&A's large exhibition galleries. It features 66 additional garments and accessories, 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 has been added to the exhibition, focusing on McQueen's early London collections. Other new garments displayed include a red ballet dress from *The Girl Who Lived in the Tree* (A/W 2008) and a white feathered dress from *The Horn of Plenty* (A/W 2009).

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 captures the essence of McQueen's provocative, dramatic and extravagant catwalk presentations, through installation, music and film. For example, a dedicated gallery is used to recreate the spectacular moment where Kate Moss appeared in a gown of rippling organza as a holographic 3D image, or Pepper's Ghost, for the finale of the *Widows of Culloden* (A/W 2006) catwalk show.

Another feature of the exhibition that has been expanded at the V&A is the Cabinet of Curiosities. Presented in a double-height gallery, interspersed with film footage of nearly all of McQueen's

catwalk shows, it showcases designs produced by McQueen in collaboration with fellow creatives such as the milliner Philip Treacy and the jeweller Shaun Leane.

In total, the exhibition includes more than 240 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 reflects McQueen's Romantic sensibility and interrogates ideas and concepts central to his work, including: his subversive tailoring; his Gothic sensibility; 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 has come 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 is 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 have collaborated 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 and Experiences, American Express, said: *"We are honoured to be a part of this unique retrospective at one of the world's most iconic cultural institutions. We had the good fortune of partnering with McQueen over many years on a number of fashion projects including support for his early runway shows in London, Paris and New York. Lee's passion for innovation and creativity were truly infectious. His ability to take the traditional and subvert it to create something new is an essential piece of his extraordinary legacy which is so beautifully celebrated in this homecoming exhibition at the V&A".*

– 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 vam.ac.uk/savagebeauty; or by calling 0800 912 6961 (booking fee applies)

- The exhibition has been 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 have redesigned the exhibition at the V&A with Anna Whiting as Consultant Producer, following their collaboration on the original exhibition in 2011
- A specially commissioned interactive feature will be launched on the V&A website to coincide with the exhibition. *The Museum of Savage Beauty* will provide an insight into the techniques, inspiration and stories behind 27 of the objects in the exhibition, featuring filmed interviews, photography and contextual pieces from the V&A collections. vam.ac.uk/museumofsavagebeauty
- Other Alexander McQueen activity in London includes an exhibition of photographs by Nick Waplington 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, semiconductor and LED solutions. Samsung employs 307,000 people across 84 countries.

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Exhibition Publication and V&A Shop

To accompany the exhibition, the V&A is publishing *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 is available exclusively from the V&A Shop in store and online. 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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