

Alexander McQueen: Behind Extravagant Attire For
Men and Women

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Abstract

This research paper uncovers the target market, design, promotion, and relevance of both men's and women's apparel. Alexander McQueen a young boy from Lewisham, London began his journey by dropping out of school at the age of sixteen. He later began working at shops for men suits. Later leading him to work with theatrical costume designers. He moved back to London to further pursue his designer career. As a fashion designer he began to create controversial pieces of clothing for women. His work is rather sophisticated yet controversial, thus capturing the eyes of those who can afford his clothing.

Keywords: McQueen, designer, london, sophisticated controversial

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Introduction

McQueens apparel captivates the eyes of both men and women. His work is inspired by his earlier works in different shops. McQueens aesthetic can range from roman gothic/ Victorian inspired to pieces inspired by military uniforms, traditional Japanese kimonos, and Latin America (collegefashion.net). His work is worldwide being worn by the most prestigious celebrities to the duchess of Cambridge in London. Alexander's runway work was more than just clothing. The factor that set people off when looking at his work was that it wasn't simple, his work was rather more theatrical and controversial. Being a fashion genius his shows would cast models to walk on water in his pieces, as well as dress the up and chess pieces and having them walk like robots. His form of designing clothes was never to play it safe or have it be arranged in a form where the audience would understand, but in a way to express his depiction of clothes. In 2008 Lee McQueen's Spring collection was a tribute to the late Isabella Blow, the woman who discovered him (Mower). Isabella was a huge contributor to Lee's career, she propelled his career from a student rack to a couture house, and faithfully wore his clothes (Mower).

Background

Alexander McQueen was born in Lewisham, London on March 17, 1969, into a working class family, consisting of his mother, father and 5 other siblings. McQueen's father Ronald was a cab driver meanwhile his mother Joyce was a social science teacher. His early life wasn't luxurious, and although his parents worked they still had a low income. The amount of money they had didn't stop them from supporting McQueen and his siblings. Alexander was a school dropout at the age of sixteen. After dropping out of school Alexander began working with a shop that was famous for 'made-to-order' men's suits. After he left school he "trained on Savile Row at Gieves and Hawkes, where he reportedly once embroidered a suit for a the Prince of Wales with the words "I am a c*nt" in the lining" (Milligan). Later on he moved away and decided to start working with theatrical costume designers instead. McQueen later left his work and moved to Milan where he worked with Italian fashion designer Romeo Gigli. Fleeing back to London he obtained his "masters degree in fashion design from London's central Saint Martins (formerly known as central Saint Martins college of art and design) in 1992 (Milligan). After earning his masters degree in fashion design he started a business designing clothes for women.

Alexander's love for design got him the title of "Chief designer of Louis Vuitton-owned Givenchy" (Biography.com). After his time working with Givenchy as head designer he decided to open up his own business in 2000. Where Gucci had actually bought 51 percent of shares with Alexander's private company. Working alongside Sarah Burton she was head of design at Alexander's McQueens in women's apparel. In 2003 McQueen was on top of the fashion world, and was named "Designer of the year by the Council of Fashion Designers of America

Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire by the Queen of England”, (biography.com). McQueen began opening shops in New York, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Milan, and London. In 2008 his spring/summer line was dedicated to Isabella Blow. Two years later McQueen committed suicide after his mother’s death.

Market segment

The Alexander McQueen brand comes with themes of gloom, death, and an aura of uneasiness and unstableness (Jenkins). McQueen’s top buyers range from the ages of 25-45. His shows to display a spring or summer collection usually do consist of ‘weird’ pieces, but once out and displayed for consumers the pieces of clothing are dimmed down. He shows a simpler more flattering side to his pieces that consumer would be able to wear on a day basis. Celebrities associated to buying Lee’s clothes do range from kpop idols to even the Duchess of Cambridge Kate Middleton. Lady Gaga is also known for her crazy looks, wear and Alexander McQueen ensemble to her ‘ A Star is Born’ premiere in London (Kaplan). Mcqueen’s designs range from \$4,175 for a 100% lambskin leather pencil skirt. A regular womens t-shirt goes for about \$350, whereas dresses can range from \$3,000 to \$13,000. For menswear suit jackets range from \$2,000 to \$4,000. Lee’s brand is mainly suited for upper class men who are able to afford his clothing for evening wear, to premiers or important meetings. Namjoon of Bts has also worn a full suit as a casual wear to an interview.

Fall 1996 collection

McQueen's New York fashion week debut he presented a darkly collection named 'Dante'. Featuring the 'bumster' trousers which caught the eye of the fashion press (harper'sbazaarUk). This collection had everyone off their seats, mixing religion into his pieces. His London show was staged at a church (bowdoin.edu). The 'Dante' collection was dedicated to his friend Isabella Blow (which later on some pieces were shown in the 2014 collection) Models walked a crucifix shaped runway to soundtrack of organ music and gunfire (Crisell). The pieces of this collection were either satanic or goddess like. With headpieces shaped as horns. The religious collection also included mask with Jesus in the middle. As far as clothing goes lace veils were draped over the horns. This is also where McQueen introduced his bumster pants that left everyone in awe. The prints in the collection were monochrome, disturbing and extraordinary (O'flaherty). The denim clothing had bleached splashed all over it, ivory white lace as well as white. The Dante collection is now called the greatest fashion show on earth (O'flaherty).

Design

After dropping out of school and becoming an apprentice where he trained in Savile row and Hawkes, he became more skillful. Some of Lee's work was actually inspiration from the earlier shops he had worked at. His unique mindset of bringing back the victorian look also created the basic foundation of what his collections consisted of. Looking back at his earlier collections he had a lot of eccentric, unusual looks. Taking inspiration from roman gothic/victorian inspired, armor, animal inspired textiles, military uniforms, Japanese kimonos, and Latin America. McQueen has said before that if you'd like to know him just to look at his work. He uses fibers to

make clothes appear blurred, fine fibers to look like fur, grommets and zips, lace, ribbons, and small feathers.

Promotion

Alexander McQueen's collection is forecasted in runways to show off the look as well as online for those who aren't able to attend the show. McQueens team uses social media apps such as instagram for easy access. Lee's clothes are sold in a wide range of shops such as nordstrom and Barney. Alexander McQueen only has one shop in New York but the website is available for worldwide customers.

Relevance

Alexander McQueen has won the British Fashion Awards' British Designer of the Year four times and won the Men's Wear Designer of the Year award in 2004. In 2003, he received the CFDA Award for Best International Designer and was honored with a CBE from Queen Elizabeth II for his services to the fashion industry (Milligan).

Conclusion

Known for his outrageous, sophisticated tailoring, artist/ theatrical mind, Alexander McQueen will always be remembered as an iconic fashion designer. His controversial collection led to his success, but the fame that came with it was irrelevant to him. Since the beginning of his brand thousands of people still look forward to his designs. When Lee puts out a sophisticated, simplistic gown or suit he does it with a story behind it. Leaving his legacy behind fans and those who love his work can still remember him through his work. Showing off his skillful mindset

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was more of his moral than becoming famous, he wanted people to know him through his work instead.

(Dante collection fall 1996)



(Alexander and Isabella blow)

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