

Performance In the Cabinet of Curiosities

Or, The Boy Who Lived in the Tree

Johannes Birringer

Dedicated to Herbert Blau

Celebrating the creative talent of one of the most innovative designers of recent times, *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*¹ was announced by the Victoria and Albert Museum in the artist's hometown of London as the first and largest retrospective of McQueen's work presented in Europe. The V&A later published its success "in numbers" by claiming that half a million visitors from eighty-four different countries attended the museum, which remained open throughout the night during the final weekends due to "unprecedented demand." The original show was organized by the Costume Institute for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City back in 2011, becoming one of the most visited exhibitions ever, and creating problems, as curator Andrew Bolton admits, in channelling the onrush of spectators.² How is it possible that a fashion designer could make such an impact in the museum/art world? New York City was quick to capitalize on the controversial fame and rock star mystique that followed the artist's suicide in early 2010. Before his untimely death at forty, McQueen's last picture show, so to speak, was his *Plato's Atlantis* collection staged at Palais Omnisports de Paris-Bercy (October 6, 2009), hailed as the first ever runway show to be live-streamed over the internet.

Multitudes could now see McQueen's work or read about it through all the channels available today, moving beyond the closed-circuit fashion weeks in Paris, Milan, London, Tokyo, and New York. Fashion is, of course, a very large industry, its commercial tentacles reaching into every corner of our society, but High Street is unlike haute couture or the closed circuits of our opera houses and ballet stages. Thus, who would have seen McQueen's collaboration with French ballerina Sylvie Guillem, for example, for whom he designed the costumes in

Eonnagata (2009), presented at London's Sadler's Wells in a dance concert created with Russell Maliphant and Robert Lepage? Or who would have seen the dazzling, Bill Viola-like image of Alla Kostromichova floating in a water tank wearing colorful, digitally-engineered prints inspired by sea creatures and moth camouflage patterns ("The Girl from Atlantis," *Vogue Nippon*)?

Plato's Atlantis combines complex fictional and cinematic references, along with dystopic philosophical undertones. It was the designer's most futuristic digital performance and was inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution, Plato's description of an island that sank into the sea, marine life, climate change, sci-fi and horror movies, art work by Ridley Scott's special effects team for *Alien*, laser print technology, and more. McQueen constructed avatar-like models of animal-human-alien hybridity, somehow walking on very high armadillo shoes that had a form entirely without reference to the natural anatomy of feet. The models' staggering movement, as I could glimpse from the film footage projected behind the mannequins in *Savage Beauty*'s last chamber, brilliantly white with tiles, was monitored by two cameras moving alongside the models on large robotic arms—the images thrown towards the back of the space. Here another film was projected, displaying Raquel Zimmerman writhing nakedly in desert sand, a dreaming Cleopatra succumbing to the erotic slithering of sensuous snakes over her breasts. Not even Jean-Paul Gaultier could have thought of it, despite his dabbling in perverse erotics while working with Madonna, Kylie Minogue, and Naomi Campbell, and devising his Mermaid and Frida Kahlo collections. It seems that more designers have been drawn to performance, including Hussein Chalayan, whose new dance work, *Gravity Fatigue* (October 2015), recently featured more than one hundred costumes at Sadler's Wells.

Fashion's erotic appeal is as global as is its outreach. Its techno textiles and digital imaging techniques are swiftly becoming all the rage of the new media world, with the BBC recently honoring these forays into the arena of wearables that used to be populated by sound artists, Silicon Valley computer scientists, and sports companies catering to athletics markets. Fashion's proximity to the arts—and perhaps less acknowledged, to the theatre and its ontological confusions about ephemeral performance appearances, as Herbert Blau notes in his book on the "complexions of fashion"—has more recently been explored by cultural critics surprised to note the interest fashion designers have taken in film, performance, architecture, and dance, as if the kinetic constructions and choreographies of the body were not of foremost concern to those who adorn flesh (and anatomy) with vestimentary gestures. By drawing attention to their excess or subversive apparition, the latter is inevitably aligned with the edgy avant-garde (cf. Caroline

Evans's *Fashion at the Edge*, or Claire Wilcox's exhibition of *Radical Fashion* for the V&A in 2001).

Why there would be such a dark attraction to the perverse, gothic, and uncanny, to the "deathliness and haunting," the "symptoms of trauma" and "apocalyptic distress" before and after the turn of the millennium, which Caroline Evans discerns in recent experimental fashion (McQueen, Galliano, Chalayan, Margiela, Viktor & Rolf, et al.) is another matter, not easily unravelled in a short article. My concern here is to look at an exhibition that aims to define this dark attraction as a search for the sublime, a point on which curators Andrew Bolton (Met) and Claire Wilcox (V&A) agree. They have confessed that their curation is a kind of "love poem" to McQueen's "almost shamanistic approach to materials" and their fetishistic qualities.³ Both curators speak of the sublime beauty and emotional intensity in the work, referring to the "personal voice" of the designer, whereas my questions are more specifically directed at the shows (performances of the collections from 1992 to 2010) and what this exhibition does not seem to be able to reveal.

McQueen's runway shows captured my interest from the very moment I stepped into the first gallery of the London exhibition. Never having experienced one live, I was forced to make my own montage of impressions culled from the large, wall-sized projection of slow-motion footage. The exhibition included some incredibly alluring and disturbing images of models asymmetrically adorned in fashions that left their flesh exposed, one breast hanging out, shirts sliced, heads shaven, contorted toughness and aggressive postures mixed up with pain built into the addenda, the jewellery, the braces. There was something about the postures that struck me and that I could not pin down. These images were splayed over the mannequins with the dresses from the early 1990s (such as *The Birds* and *Highland Rape*), and so I watched the film while perusing the materials silently hanging there: synthetic lace, leatherette, metal studs, tire-tread prints, a lock of hair. Later, I composed my Eisensteinian montage from the innumerable video monitors, stacked on shelves inside cubicles all over the *Wunderkammer* (Cabinet of Curiosities), the double-height room near the end of the V&A's *Savage Beauty*. This surely was the fetish room *par excellence*, the interior of the ruined castle, full of trophies of the dead, the ghosts of armors, sharp feathers, outlandish platform shoes, spooky wooden wings, coiled corsets, all kinds of metal and leather S&M accessories, gimp masks, headgear, and other bizarre extremities created in collaboration with jeweller Shaun Leane and milliner Philip Treacy. In the middle, a slowly rotating dress (once worn by model Shalom Harlow at the end of the No. 13 show, Spring–Summer 1999) had been sprayed with paint by

two robots that first seemed to dance with Harlow before turning into attacking predators jerking their metal fingers toward her.

I will return to the performances of these runway spectacles, but begin with the “set” that sprawls across a number of specially-designed galleries, none of which made much visceral sense except perhaps the lurid, cramped ossuary of skulls and bones, featuring extravagant garments with horse hair, animal skin, and horns—the designer’s reworking of items worn by Yoruba and Amazonian Indian tribes, from *It’s a Jungle Out There* (1997), the *Eshu* (2000), and the *Irere* (2003) collections—as well as the glass box from the 2001 *Voss* collection, which resembled a padded cell in a psychiatric hospital with tiled floors and walls formed with surveillance mirrors. When the cell is dark you only see your own reflection. When the lights come on inside, you see the trapped models and a film of McQueen’s live staging of Joel-Peter Witkin’s 1983 photograph, *Sanitarium*, with the voluptuous naked figure of fetish writer Michelle Olley reclining on a horned chaise longue, her masked head attached to a breathing tube, and her body surrounded by living moths.

The room with the glass box featured a number of other designs behind glass panels (from *It’s Only a Game* [2005] that slyly mashes up Eastern and Western influences, toying with Japanese kimonos and American football shoulder pads and helmets), as was the case in the next gallery themed “Romantic Naturalism,” with its spectacular razor clam shells dress. Most of the other rooms allowed a close-up look (and almost touch) at the finer details of embroidery, the pleats, sashes, ribbons, feathers, the hoods, straps, and eaten-away silk gowns. The close-up look was encouraged, though the staging on simple platforms (as with the “Romantic Nationalism” suite of tartan dresses from the 2006 *Wives of Culloden*) or the grey concrete warehouse look for the opening hall, with static mannequins along the walls, did not bring to life the scenography of the runway performances nor the cultural and historical environments of the collections. Thus the garments remained oddly contextless, in spite of the associations the dim mortuary bone room or the tarnished, gold-framed Venetian mirrors in the “Romantic Gothic” Room might have wanted to arouse. Unlike the New York exhibition, the V&A exhibit opened with McQueen’s early collections and his notorious *Jack the Ripper Stalks his Victims* student show (1992, Central Saint Martins), alluding to the designer’s youthful years in London and his apprenticeship as a tailor on Savile Row. But with very little text, and no context given, the V&A’s seemingly autobiographical narrative quickly disappeared into the facets of “Romanticism” offered by Bolton and Wilcox as an organizing principle. Each subsequent section offers a variation on a theme: Romantic Gothic, Primitivism, Tribalism, Nationalism, Exoticism, Naturalism.

Yet frustratingly, there is no critical trajectory and no questioning into the Romantic Gothic, into the birds and feathers and moths, the psychic tremors caused by terrifying bird-women and hybrid creatures. There is no comment on McQueen's scrutiny of nature, primitivism, and colonialism, nor his tortuously surreal sexual passion (misogyny?) and tantalizing queer absorption with sadomasochistic headpieces and wearables (the 1997 *La Poupée* inspired by Hans Bellmer), his attraction to the story of Victorian serial killer Jack the Ripper, to Carpenter, Hitchcock, or Kubrick thrillers, to pulp fiction, death-obsessed Brit artists such as Damien Hirst or the Chapman brothers, or to Rebecca Horn's installations and body modifications. The exhibition has many gripping, perplexing moments when one marvels at the craft and technical finesse of a beautiful garment, like the jacquard-woven silk dress from 2010 that had been printed with a detail from Hieronymus Bosch's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, or the stunning red dress with hand-painted microscope slides and dyed ostrich feathers (2001 Voss collection, modelled by Erin O'Connor).

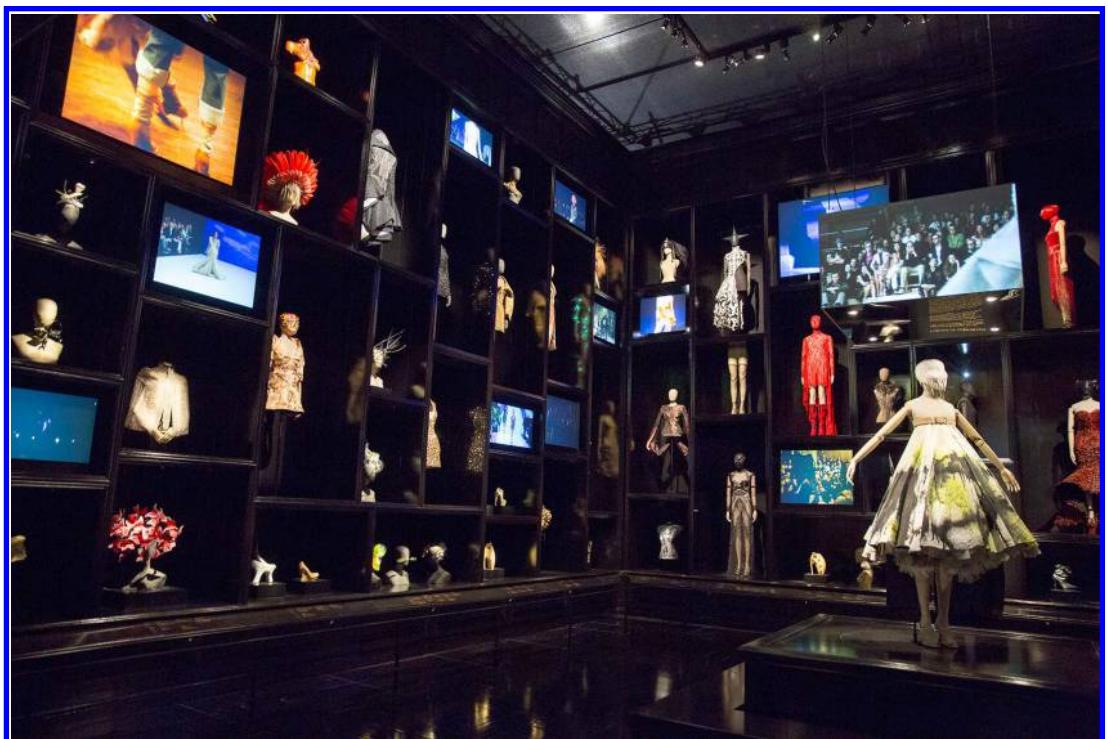
Yet the Cabinet of Curiosities, in particular, fails to bring the clothes and contraptions to life to affect our sensory imagination or prop up their narrative threads, in ways that only embodied performance can do. In the cabinet, the small video screens, along with a complex and layered mutating soundtrack by John Gosling (including heavy breathing and the sound of scissors slashing) make the lack of the runway drama and movement glaringly obvious. Scattered around the four sides of the room at various levels, groups of monitors show randomly programmed and repeating short sequences from the runway shows, and there, on these small screens (without the live sound), we see the models silently perform while wearing McQueen's fashion fantasies and erotic obsessions. What I saw was riveting. I glimpsed a stunning array of different scenographies and design leitmotifs for theatrical productions in which the models act parts, so to speak, or respond to the invariably sculptural garments and accoutrements in ways that resemble the kind of physical theatre we would imagine coming out of the Bauhaus or an experimental Kabuki lab.

Shifting my attention to the runway shows, I inevitably find resonances with body art and dance—the endurance performances of Marina Abramović, the blood-letting of Franko B., the techno-robotic body manipulations of Stelarc, the striking physical *mise en scène* of Pina Bausch's *tanztheater*, as well as the sexual energies in the physical theatre of DV8, Wim Vandekeybus, or Jan Fabre. I also recognize kinky burlesque and queer desire —a splendid perversity that comes from an aesthetics of the 1980s and 1990s affected by the impact of gender-troubling pop, punk, and Brit art movements, MTV, gay/lesbian club cultures, controversies over photography (Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano) and live art, video and film

that exploited taboo subjects. Bausch's often stunningly cruel gender battles (for example, *Blaubart* and *Auf dem Gebirge hat man ein Geschrei gehört*) must be recalled, but also the somber physical-spiritual existentialism of butoh (such as Sankai Juku's slow minimalism) and the hectic techno-fantasies of Dumb Type and other Japanese cracked media/sound art (not to mention the deconstructions in Kawakubo or Miyake's designs and how they resurface in costumes design for dance)—they all had emerged in the 1980s and after. The runway spectacles, in fact, mark McQueen's embeddedness in the performance subculture of the late-twentieth century; he is a conceptual art director who shares, I believe, an affinity with Romeo Castellucci and Jan Fabre, and perhaps less overtly, with Matthew Barney's quixotic *Cremaster* films and Lou Reed's (post-Velvet Underground) thanatic music about pleasure and death.

The V&A should have dared to stage the runway shows instead of making us sit in the cramped cabinet. Only through the live dramaturgy of the shows would we have gotten to experience the full impact of McQueen's fascination with abused and violated bodies, and his deeper exploration of the narrative threads of revenge and female warrior power, mixed up with the submissive dolls, prosthetic corsets, and shackled silent anger, the seclusion and melancholy, the weird poetic fantasy encapsulated in something like the (head)dress titled "The Girl Who Lived in the Tree" (autumn/winter 2008). I tried to glimpse the decadent abysses looking at the tiny monitors: here are dancers and models in *Deliverance* (spring/summer 2004), performing an exhausting dance marathon in an old nineteenth-century Parisian dance hall, eventually staggering across the room. They seem wasted. After the high kicks that fling the sequined skirts into the air, the performers tire and one of the models is caught by her partner just as she collapses on the floor. He then carries her off. In a later video clip section, the now disheveled model-dancers (wearing utilitarian denims and patchworks) seem completely spent. Attempting the high kicks, they crumble on the floor.

There is the black model (Debra Shaw) in *La Poupee* (spring/summer 1997) wearing a sliced dress of bugle beads, her elbows and knees shackled to a square metal frame. She slowly descends a staircase and wades through water, awkwardly balancing her body while adapting—trying to move—to the encumbrance that makes a normal walk impossible. Just as Bausch did in *Arien*, the stage is flooded with water, the models thus forced to "articulate" (to use a reference to the Bellmer subtext and the surrealist artist's series *Poupée: variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée*) their movement in a restraining environment which at the same time transforms the stark oppositions that seem to run through the designs (the sculpted jackets or the pink silk brocade cheongsam with funnel necks) influenced by Asian styles (and references to origami) mixed up with Western punk, graffiti,



Top: Installation view of *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* at the V&A. © 2015 Victoria and Albert Museum London.
Bottom: Installation view of "Cabinet of Curiosities," *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* at the V&A. © 2015 Victoria and Albert Museum London.

and unusual branch-like headpieces. McQueen evidently wants to generate an emotional, visceral shock. His masque-like pageantries are calculated, spectacular scenic effects, such as the snowy, frozen landscape in *The Overlook*, or the former morgue in Paris used as a stage filled with antique taxidermy, in *Natural Dis-tinction, Un-natural Selection* (spring/summer 2009). They evoke a particular atmosphere, and watching Debra Shaw, I could not help feeling anxious and distressed as she seems visibly uncomfortable trying so hard to keep her poise with the metal shackles forcing her into distorted motion.

The choreography, if we call it thus, lacks the sense of abandonment and joy we experience in *Arien* (the dancers playing and splashing around in the water when the huge fake rhino appears), or the tenderness and sadness that also always marks Bausch's emotional expressionism. For the *tanztheater*, the flooded stage becomes a zone of regression, mixed with the marvels of fairy tale or trance-like transcendence (as it was also danced to an utterly exhaustive and uplifting end in *Vollmond*, the performance that concludes the Wim Wenders film *Pina*, featuring a rainy stage landscape filling up with water). For McQueen's runway orchestrations, the models are obliged to perform (emotionless) *tableaux vivants* of complex characters who cannot actually *become* them, so to speak. Shaw's shackles do not connote slavery or entrapment in a simplistic manner. The metal square is enigmatic. But Shaw's movement stays vulnerable without ever betraying a sense of her turning (realizing the actionable image as something she can alter), altering or affecting the impact of the wearable. She thus remains thoroughly stuck in the image McQueen fashioned. Commenting on the vulnerability even of so-called supermodels, Blau argues:

However rich, sanctioned, and self-assured they may be, one might expect that in or behind any fashion photograph, and even more on the runway, there may be a certain leakage of anxiety, about being objectified, about returning the gaze, about the high-tension vacuity of it all, in its most resplendently gorgeous manifestations, this spot or protrusion of the body (Naomi's hips or Cindy's mole) or a sense of the discrepancy between what is being projected and, with no less vanity in the versatility of becoming, some sense of violation, including the possible feeling, as she makes her turn on the runway, all flashes going off, that this dress is not for her.⁴

McQueen's associate, Sarah Burton, is quoted in the catalogue's essay on the catwalk shows, saying "The thing about Lee was the pure, pure vision. He wanted to move people,"⁵ but we are not told what this implies, other than that McQueen seemed to have loathed the theatre and preferred to think of club culture as

his inspiration. But the spectacles are not “pure” vision; they are calculated and knowledgeable references (to Tudor masques, for example, or bloody Jacobean revenge tragedies written by John Webster and his contemporaries, to Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, Kubrick’s *The Shining* and *A Clockwork Orange*).⁶ In the finale of the *Widows of Culloden* show (2006), McQueen’s cinematic and gothic inclinations play havoc with his Scottish Highland rape and battle associations, the bagpipe music and refined tartan designs, mixed up with game-keeping traditions and twisted heirlooms (a bird’s nest headdress filled with seven blue speckled eggs encrusted with Swarovski gemstones). He literally recreates the nineteenth-century mechanics of a Pepper’s Ghost (holographic) construction featuring Kate Moss’s ethereal dance apparition as if she were a cloud, dancing in the air and slowly disappearing into the Milky Way. The V&A recreates this hologram, scaled down, in a small dark room right behind the wonder cabinet, where we can watch the apparition dance to music from John Williams’s score for *Schindler’s List*. There was a hushed silence in that holographic room which I found pathetic. So now I have contradicted myself many times: I am attracted and repelled, I am exacerbated.

Like the pathetic hologram, the runway shows are spectacles, but their theatrical beauty and shock value also make one cringe because they are so excessive, flaunting pathos and perversity, that even the clear moments of danger —when the model wearing the razor clam shells dress creates an intense tactile awareness of the sharp edges that could cut and harm the body, or when the Prosthetic Corset turns the fashion garment into a monstrous contraption that disfigures the female body—do not negotiate a sense of deconstruction of protocols as much as they suggest willful radical (and empty) gestures. As Blau intimates in his reflections on the vicissitudes of the look, such fashion shows resemble the tradition of the avant-garde, where the conceptual operations behind the effects are overshadowed by the scandal of the effects.

Nevertheless, the operations caught my interest, especially as I tried to compare McQueen (or Gaultier for that matter) with Japanese avant-garde designers such as Kawakubo, who deconstruct the fetishistic, erotic staging of the body at the heart of Western fashion and seek to find an intimate, physical symbiosis of clothes and embodiment, one that allows space (*ma*) between garment and wearer’s body, as Akiko Fukai suggests, and thus a more subtle interplay between wearing and the “garment’s evolving into three-dimensional form.”⁷ Watching the models in the videos, in all those moments when they must wear particularly striking and constricting headdresses or garments which create a certain mechanics of moving, McQueen’s wonder at mythical creatures, at specimens as they might be shown in medical or natural history collections, seems apparent. He is like a boy, attracted

to the bizarre beauty of curiosities. This attraction informs McQueen's aesthetics, his interest in nature transformed into extreme artifice getting mixed up with his views of the politics of the world, "the way life is," as the catalogue quotes him. But the way life is does not translate into movement choreography for models. Erin O'Connor, Debra Shaw, or Snejana Onopka (who wears the bird's nest on her head) create a manner of walking that intensifies space just enough, not in the sense of theatrical projection of character, emotion, or action, but through a calculated minimalism which charges movement to a garment. Postures become dramatic, with a light tilting of the head, a soft sensual lifting of hands, eyes averted or closed, a sudden animated, exaggerated motion cocking the hip out, torso slightly shifted out of axis: contrapposto evocations of an invisible (depth) hiding behind the often glazed look of models, on the brilliantly void surface.

Sam Gainsbury, show producer on most of the runway presentations since spring/summer 1996, told the curators that "McQueen could never begin a collection until he had developed an idea or concept for the show. Most designers develop their fashion before their presentations, but McQueen was the opposite. For him, the runway was not only critical to his creative process, it was the catalyst."⁸ This is a significant statement that encourages us to situate McQueen's art direction in the wider context of conceptual and performance art, comparing fashion's theatrical constructivism to cinematic/kinetic art that energizes the visual form through movement and the narrative or symbolic resonances of the form. It also justifies McQueen's huge impact as an artist in the contemporary museum world.

McQueen's pervasive interest in film, soundtracks, and photography is documented by collaborators John Gosling and Nick Knight. Gosling worked on numerous edits for *The Overlook* aiding McQueen's cinematic treatment of sound to build dramatic suspense or create temporal ruptures in the fashion show (such as the surprising entr'acte when ice-skaters suddenly appear in the snow landscape) that mimic Kubrick's play in *The Shining* with the time frames in the Gold Room (when Jack Nicholson is transported back to 1921). Film titles and visual tropes, as in *The Birds*, *The Hunger*, or *Deliverance*, point to the designer's keen ambition to develop visual interpretations of narrative film in his fashion medium. The dancers borrowed for *Deliverance* (from Michael Clark's dance company) are also featured in "Blade of Light," a staged photography by Knight which transposes the frantic dance inferences from McQueen's staging of Sydney Pollack's *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* into a Hokusai-like woodcut showing the figures whirling though the air like a wave or gust of wind.⁹ Knight also photographed McQueen's "Fashion-able" series with paralympic athlete and amputee Aimee Mullins for *Dazed & Confused* (September 1998)—after Mullins had walked on stage at the end of No. 13 on a pair of prosthetic legs hand-carved in

wood—and he captured the live fashion performance *The Bridegroom Stripped Bare* (2002) for SHOWstudio's *Transformer* series, during which McQueen transforms a male model in a white trouser suit into a bride, working frantically with scissors, tape, paint, cloth and other props. It is a strange *déjà vu*, seeing McQueen paint the bride, conjuring the ghosts of Jackson Pollock and the uninhibited action art by Gutai.

If McQueen scripted the cinematic scenography first, which also seems true, for example, in his set for *In Memory of Elizabeth How, Salem 1692* (autumn/winter 2007), where he evokes the Salem witchcraft trials in New England—building a huge forty-five foot inverted black pyramid suspended over a blood red pentagram traced in black sand—then he must have believed that his art can function on a film set/soundstage for his runway shows. He must have believed that fashion is about more than fashion, that it can comment on a world of nightmares and dreams, dystopic landscapes of wasted beauty and phantasmagorical cruelty. I think McQueen really was a designer who had a similarly astounding creative eccentricity as Matthew Barney displayed in his *Cremaster* film/sculpture cycle, which I remember watching with my painter friends at Houston's MFA auditorium. We all were wondering what on earth we were looking at, not having seen anything like it before.

What is unique to fashion, obviously, is the surplus beauty or vanity of excess. McQueen's velvet underground elaborations, for example, and the way in which he also tries to ironically meta-stage luxury designs (haute couture classics of Dior, Chanel and Givenchy) and lampoon them via goth- and drag-queen caricatures or trash and bubble wrap references, are formidable. His runway performances are eye-opening live punk movie-theatre. They take me into different states of consciousness, and I would only have liked the museum to understand the impact of performance more clearly than it did. Offered in such immersive runway spectacles, fashion performance needs to be re-evaluated from the bottom up, as we are probably not accustomed enough to its aesthetic pulse and rhythm, or too easily turned off by its accursed share and conspicuous waste.

NOTES

1. *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, in partnership with Swarovski, supported by American Express, with thanks to M•A•C Cosmetics, technology partner Samsung and made possible with the co-operation of Alexander McQueen, ran at the V&A from 14 March–2 August 2015. www.vam.ac.uk/savagebeauty.

2. Rejecting the idea that the show can be considered a "blockbuster," the Metropolitan Museum curator Andrew Bolton mentions that the exhibition's success came as a complete surprise to everyone, evidenced by how badly equipped they were to handle the mass of

visitors. Cf. "In Search of the Sublime," in Claire Wilcox, ed., *Alexander McQueen* (London: V&A Publications, 2015), 15–21. This essay appears in the catalogue for the V&A exhibit, which is different from the New York catalogue. My reference to "Savage Beauty in Numbers" is to the V&A website (<https://vimeo.com/135467907#at=126>).

3. Bolton in *Alexander McQueen*, 19.

4. Herbert Blau, *Nothing in Itself: Complexions of Fashion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 241. If Debra Shaw wearing the square metal frame constitutes a surface image, whose "symptomatic emptiness is not without depth," does the alluring or perverse fashion image play in a "theatre of cruelty," Blau asks, citing Deleuze's book on masochism (footnote 86, page 289)? And does the image, even if performed on the runway, freeze into the kind of still posture that underlies the condition of fashion's fetishistic disavowal?

5. Alexander Fury, "Show, and Tell," in *Alexander McQueen*, 227.

6. As Akiko Fukai points out in her introduction to *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, Japanese designers like Issey Miyake understood the significance of fashion as cross-over media and performance, and began using museums or galleries to stage their work already in the 1980s (cf. Miyake's *Bodyworks*, 1983, which toured Tokyo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and London). Kawakubo and her *Comme des Garçons* label published magazines and photographic books in Paris. Yamamoto worked with filmmaker Wim Wenders, and both Miyake (with William Forsythe/Ballet Frankfurt, *The Loss of Small Detail*, 1991) and Kawakubo (with Merce Cunningham Dance Co., *Scenario*, 1997) collaborated with choreographers. The challenging exchanges (and distinctions) between fashion and the performing arts deserve much more detailed attention than I can offer here. Akiko Fukai, *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion* (London: Barbican Center, 2010), 13–25.

7. Fukai, *Future Beauty*, 16.

8. Bolton, in *Alexander McQueen*, 18.

9. Cf. Alistair O'Neil, "The Shining and Chic," in *Alexander McQueen*, 261–79; the image is reprinted on 256–57.

JOHANNES BIRRINGER is a contributing editor to *PAJ* and co-director of the Design and Performance Lab at Brunel University, London. He is the author of *Performance, Science and Technology*, a *PAJ* title. The DAP-Lab's new *metakimosphere* installations were exhibited recently in Madrid and London.