

TITLE: Lee and Tinks: The Fairytale as Muse in the works of Alexander McQueen

PRESENTER: JENNIFER RICHARDS

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION: ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

EMAIL: jennifer.richards@rca.ac.uk

ABSTRACT:

*“Life to me is a bit of a Brothers Grimm fairytale” Alexander McQueen*

For Alexander McQueen, Annabelle Neilsen was both a model and a muse. Known as “Tinks” after the mischievous fairy in JM Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904), she was introduced to McQueen by their mutual friend Isabella Blow, in 1993. The pair quickly became friends and Neilsen would become McQueen’s inspiration for many of his collections over the next 18 years. Neilsen’s huge impact can be felt through McQueen’s early work to his collections at Givenchy and beyond. She also served as an influence on what would be his final collection, *Angels and Demons* in 2010.

Throughout his work, McQueen celebrated the notion of the powerful woman, often choosing to locate his collections around the empowerment of women and also through his sense of high drama and theatricality. Intertwined with this, was his love of storytelling and myth.

Often drawing on folklore and the faery realm, he also created his own fairytales, such as his 2008 collection titled *“The Girl Who Lived in a Tree”*. Neilsen produced a manuscript to accompany the collection ‘based around a magical girl who travelled like his shows to the end of the world’ and it was on this fairytale that the show was based.

Exploring elements such as mythical creatures and warrior princesses, McQueen created his own elaborate fairytales. This paper will therefore examine the impact of Neilsen’s collaborations with McQueen and how she served as an inspiration within his collections.

BIO:

Jennifer is a Tutor (Research) in Fashion at the Royal College of Art. Her work explores a wide range of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practices. She interrogates the idea of the meta discourse, language, ritual, identity and the body.

Recent research publications include articles on aesthetics, performance and the body within film and visual culture. Her current work explores the “Influence of the (Gothic) Genre in High Fashion’ in C Bloom (ed) *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*. This chapter explores the re-emergence of Gothic modes within contemporary Fashion from street style to haute couture.