

Theme – The Afterlife

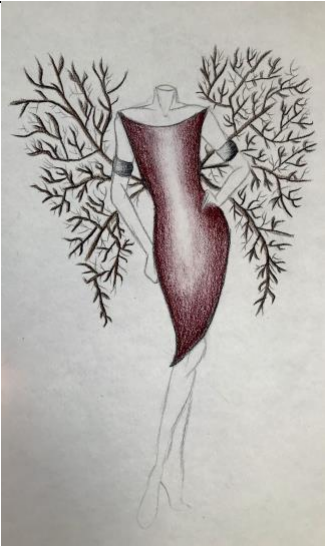
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The Afterlife

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Coming from a family closely interested in Roman and Greek mythology, discovering Dante's *Inferno* and reading it opened a completely different place in my mind that woke up the idea of designing an exhibition inspired by the 9 Circles of Hell, Greek and Roman Goddesses and creatures. The book itself is awakening – giving an experience of our lives, a perspective of how the underworld works with people who have sinned under the eyes of God or who have lived before him. Dante has always been fascinated by the Greek mythology and for that reason he has used many influencers from it, which looks and behaviour have helped me to design the dresses for the exhibition. Inspired by three of my favourite artists and two of my favourite books I decided to design nine costumes that are closely influenced by every circle of hell, adding my knowledge from the outstanding designers to improve the final product.

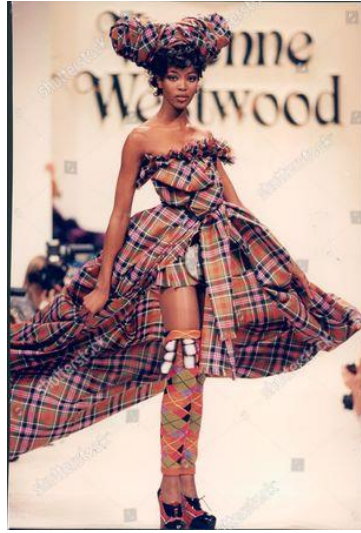
The aim is to bring the atmosphere of 1500B.C into a remodelled round temple sanctuary in a gallery. The theme inspiration comes from the home of the Oracle Apollo, a place where civilians from all over Greece have gathered. The whole complex, built in Delphi, is well known as the priestess – Pythia helped to decide key political and private issues of ancient Greece, the reason why this place has been so important and is still easily recognised by many citizens and tourists. The connecting point with the 9 Circles of Hell is that it is one of the little places with round temple. Divine comedy is full of well-known Greek philosophers, mathematicians and physicians like Aristotle, Socrates and Plato which have been held in Limbo – the first of nine circles. Those who have lived in limbo are unbaptised or haven't followed any religion. The material used to build the temple, and the sculptures of the dresses, is marble as it represents supremacy, fortune and durability. The poses of the sculptures are exactly the same as I want the focus to be on the dresses. In order to transform the gallery into a sanctuary-like exhibition the lighting has to be soft.

The main artist who has provoked me to be more extravagant is Alexander McQueen, who gave me the idea of designing the nine pieces of clothing from his ready to wear fashion show. To be even more accurate, one of his most memorable shows will always be his final one. A month after taking his own life, a small group of the world's best editors, journalists and family gathered in March 2010 to see his last pieces of work deeply influenced by the Dark Ages that took place the same time as release of the *Divine Comedy*. Alexander McQueen has always had spectacular, breath-taking fashion shows, making them outstanding and remarkable in the history of fashion. Seeing his works is an inspiration to many of the designers and followers of his line – the reason why the dresses I designed were influenced by him. For example, the fallen angel wings drawn on the back of one of the dresses. "He had ordered fabric that translated digital photographs of paintings of High-Church angels and Bosch demons into hand-loomed jacquards, then taken the materials and cut stately caped gowns and short draped dresses."



says one of the Vogue's authors, proving that not only he worked hard but used modern techniques to put into effect the thoughts in his mind on the dresses.

Vivienne Westwood is another artist who caught my eye. A designer with a similar charisma and passion, she has had many meaningful shows. What is so different about her is the ability to mix lots of patterns and textures that I have applied to my dresses. Vivienne is the kind of artist that evolves over the years and creates trends that can be worn by anyone and are lifelong compared to other design lines. Many of her clothes and accessories can be seen worn in the late 1980s as well as today. Her style is well known for being edgy and punk, allowing her to experiment with a variety of jewellery and accessories. One of her best-known quote says, "You have more interesting life if you wear impressive clothes", stating what role her line plays in her life. On the other hand, her followers and people who have known her from the beginning say that her distinguishing feature is, in fact, being carefree.



Last but not least is Valentiano, or Valentino Clemente Ludovico Garavani. Another frequently mentioned artist in the world of fashion who produces millions of products every year. Valentino is more established and formal designer, who is pickier when it comes to details and signature prints that are well known by his younger audience. The fashion show that affected me the most is his 2016 Spring Couture inspired by 20th century Romanism which emphasises the use of older velvet and by wearing gold jewellery to represent wealth. No shoes were worn, except gold accessories unlike his previous shows. The reason behind this is to represent freedom and comfort. "But really, it's the incredible things these designers and their Roman workforce can do with fabric that makes each dress a paradox of age-old hand-wrought elaborateness and youthful simplicity." says the author of Vogue, Sarah Mower proving the talent of the designer and his team to turn old style dresses into newer versions, adding details and not changing a lot so that historical value remains the same.



Limbo is the first circle. Representing all scientists, philosophers and people who have lived before the existence of God. Here I have been focusing on the Greek style dresses – soft colours, loose clothing with gold bracelets and a Greek gold belt that if you look closely has the shape of swastika- a symbol of happiness, pleasure and good luck.

Lust, the second circle, is where we meet the sexually promiscuous Francesca da Polenta and Paolo Maletesta, as well as Cleopatra, a strong character which I wanted to impersonate on my dress with a leather corset to accent her waist and a blood red organza.

*“The other is she who killed herself for love,
And broke faith with the ashes of Sichaeus;
And there you see the lustful Cleopatra.”* (Canto V, p.66, line 61)

Gluttony includes a creature, monster from the Greek mythology well known for having three heads and being one of the Heracles’s twelve labours. The dress designed is made to look worn out as if it has been ripped off by the Cerberus creature.

Greed represents the wealthy and materialistic people who waste or steal money. The idea of the dress comes from one of Alexander McQueen’s final dresses. Made of silicon, and leather for the gloves, its purpose is to make an illusion of wealth.

*“He answered: ‘How foolish people are!
How great is the ignorance which strikes them down!’”* (Canto VII, p.75, line 70)

- Proving the selfishness of the people who live in this part of the underworld.

Anger is often referred to as black, with real leather and fur to exaggerate the aggression of a person wearing the dress. The shape represents confidence, and for that reason it looks so tight and evil. This circle is also the gate of lower hell.

Heresy is the sixth circle, Lower Hell. It includes a lot of violence as heretics and false teachers are locked in burning stone coffins. The Gorgon is also here, teasing Dante to look in her eyes. The theme of this costume is Gorgon – black, dark green colours with snake looking gold bracelets, wrapped around the hands of the sculpture.

Violence is one of the last circles with burning souls- people who have died intentionally through a suicide or other circumstances. There is constant rain of fire- the reason why this costume has wings of dead, dry tree sticks covered in mud and blood. It is a place full of blasphemers who are people against God and sexual perverts – people violent against nature.

Fraud is another place for thieves but for alchemists, procurers and seducers. The idea behind the dress comes from demons and the count Dracula. Similar to Lust it is made out of organza with a leather corset.

Treachery is the last circle closely related with the Cocytus – a river leading to the underworld, well known from the Greek mythology. Treachery is related with betrayal and in this case disbelief of God and even believing you are more than him. As the Treachery is the coldest place from all circles I have focused on colder tones like light blue which represents the ice and the cold that Dante speaks about in the poem.

The idea of my exhibition is to be able to travel back in time, to recognise and distinguish the 9 pieces of work just by seeing them, and to leave a mark as all the designers that motivate me to do more every day.

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