

KAMBRIEL

Are you stuck in a cyberpunk, fetish-gear rut? Do you long for the traditional styles of days long gone by? Are you getting tired of showing up at clubs only to see that everyone is clothed in some sort of variation of your own PVC get up?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may want to check out www.kambriel.com. Kambriel, the purveyors of "fantastical designs betwixt today and timelessness", offer long, flowing, traditional gothic clothing with names like the "Dracula's Bride Gown" and "Rappaccini's Daughter Veil". Their website includes a full catalogue, complete with a "one-of-a-kind" page. Each item on this page is the only one of its kind, as the name suggests, so if you see something you like you'd better snap it up before someone else gets it. If you're bigger than the size 2 that many Gothic boutiques are notorious for carrying exclusively, Kambriel is happy to take custom made orders to fit your shape and size. They've even been asked to design for a Neil Young impersonator who needed stage clothes!

Kambriel is not just the name of the company - it's also the name of the head designer. She started her clothing company with a young man named Curse way back in 1994 in the puritanical stomping grounds known as Colorado. They called their line Atrocities, and soon had to leave Colorado because they were constricted by the strong religious overtones. "We had to go through five different printers just to find one that was "willing" to print our catalogue!" Kambriel recalls. "We found out the other printer's main clients were large religious organizations, and they didn't want to jeopardize losing that business, obviously concerned about our "devilish" black velvet skirts!"



So, Kambriel and Curse took their whole business elsewhere. They drove around the States for awhile, and one day decided that Salem, Massachusetts, would be a nice place to base their business. "Being known as "The Witch City," and "Halloween Capital of the World" lends itself rather well to being very goth-friendly," Kambriel says. They have been in Salem for seven years now. They have designed for Monica Richards of Faith and the Muse, as well as for a production of Oscar Wilde's Salome in Boston.

At the time they started Atrocities, the word atrocities was more abstract than it is now. After the terrorist attacks of September 11 were constantly described as "atrocities," Kambriel and Curse decided that the time had come to change their name. They chose Kambriel because it conveys "an atmosphere of opulence and timelessness, with a sense of the fantastical". Their printed catalogue is still called Atrocities, and Atrocities items are still available, with the addition of new styles.

Kambriel does not have a storefront in Salem because the rents are high and the tourist season (Halloween) is short. Some of their items are carried in boutiques, but most of their business is done by mail order. "We have always loved doing mail order," Kambriel says, "through either our website or our printed catalogue, because it is such a great way to reach out to all of the people who appreciate our work, no matter where they live!" The majority of their customers are in North America, but they do have some overseas clientele. "We do have loyal European customers whom we adore, and our designs seem to fit in nicely with a certain classical, romantic aesthetic that many Europeans have," she says.

Kambriel and Curse make all of the clothes with their own hands. "Most of our skills have come from being self taught," Kambriel explains. "By studying the histories of designers we admire, researching and learning new and innovative, alongside age-old techniques, learning from gifted mentors, and making new things everyday." They have also attended an intense fashion program in Paris.

When asked how her experience in Paris has changed how she approaches her designs, Kambriel jokes "I need to add a "0" to the end of all our prices!" More seriously, she recalls being disappointed by ultra high-end shops that featured unimaginative designs that were obviously ripped off from the underground scene. In contrast, she found a little cobbler's shop where she saw "piles of scattered shoes and boots that were more creative than any Fluevog. I could see that even though this man is never going to be as well known as Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, Prada, etc, that his vision and skill far exceeded what I had seen from the "top" designers. This made me strive to remain independent and to always follow my own creative vision."

If she could design for anyone, dead or alive, Kambriel would choose legendary designers like Erte, Poiret, Worth, Vionnet, and Schiaparelli. "Being a designer, I know that I am always surrounded by my own work, and as wonderful a luxury as that can be, it is also such a treat to have something made for you by someone else!" As for the living folks, Kambriel would love to design for a Tim Burton film. "Something dark - not another Planet of the Apes!" she exclaims. "I would also like to deck out Helena Bonham Carter, and since she and Tim Burton are collaborating now, that would make things easy!"

Kambriel is continually inspired by Monica Richards, whom she designs for. "Overall, I am inspired by people who have a certain presence about them, a depth of character that is perhaps a bit mysterious, someone who revels in imagination and creativity, thoughtfulness, bravery, and who are in their own way, some kind of visionary." **Annette Bordeaux**

kambriel.com



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Photo of *Atrocities*
taken by Curse