

MUSIC *in their* HANDS and MAGIC *in their* EYES

BY KAMBRIEL

If the Gothic—an aesthetic made of both the somber and the fantastical—were to be represented by fabric, it would be a combination of sumptuous crushed velvet catching the light in fluid cascades both shimmering and deep, antique tattered lace woven with an intricacy as fine and alluring as spiderweb, and ghostly silk chiffon that seems to float ethereally on its own, casting delicate shadows with even the subtlest of movements. These threads embody the rich decadence of glories past as well as the fragile decay of the passage of time. The Gothic as an aesthetic skillfully weaves incomparable delicacy and depth to convey an intimate chiaroscuro of shadow and light.

If Gothic were a scent, it would perhaps best be captured by the dark and heady nostalgia of clove, combined with a bouquet of amaranthine flowers that live only in the timeless realm of our most closely held wishes and memories. While countless other aesthetics have come and gone, in the Gothic there is something vastly more enduring—indeed, something of the eternal. It's a haunted aesthetic, comfortable with its ghosts and other immortals. After all, ghosts and vampires, *yokai*, banshees, and the like are a natural fit for the Gothically inclined, for they too dwell in shadows, with movements guided by darkness, seeming somehow to exist in a different time and place than those surrounding them. Their memories, their pains and passions all run deep, so deep even death itself is not enough to subdue them.

A cornerstone of Gothic is finding beauty in the darkness. There is, after all, much elegance to be found in the macabre. Imagine a delicate footstep cushioned by the loamy soil of a seaside graveyard enshrouded in a cold, billowing mist. A late-night drive amidst faraway mountains while an all-encompassing music fills the air and wild winds blow through your unbound hair. Envision the stark silhouettes of trees grasping ever outward with sharply branched, skeletal hands. This is a world where even sullen skulls are not feared or shunned, but are viewed as revered companions and carriers of the wisdom of the ages.

Some cathedrals are historically Gothic in an architectural sense, but those which have become truly Gothic in their essence now lay half in ruin, with lofty roofs transformed through

time into something loftier yet. A space that once served as a grand and holy enclosure has now—through some element of destruction, whether an abrupt tragedy of fire, or gradual deterioration of centuries of neglect—opened itself anew to the greater sky beyond. In joining the art of humankind with the art of Nature, an even more sacred space is created where one can stand within the once hallowed, now hollowed, interior framed by filigree walls. Once where there were heavy archways of stone, now one can find clouds, moonlight, and stars. After all, no painted mural on a ceiling could ever truly match the majestic grandeur of an infinite parade of stars shimmering overhead.

Gothic dance resembles an elegantly somber ballet with its graceful, flowing movements drawn out dramatically to echoing, dreamlike sounds. It is not merely a dance for others, but also for oneself. Gothic dance is a form of poetry in motion, a freeform incantation, an expression of that which lies within, set to a spectral soundtrack that could just as easily be created by traditional instruments as the untamed voices of nature. Sometimes the only music needed to inspire this dance is the sound of a breeze blowing through the trees. The most dramatic and atmospheric dance-floor lighting is that of icy moonlight filtered through boughs of swaying leaves overhead, while the ideal drumbeat is that of a low rolling thunder in the distance, the ebb and flow of crashing waves, or the sudden, nearby sweep of a nighthawk's wings.

When I originally set out to design my first collection of Gothic clothing and accessories in the early 1990s, as much as I wanted to offer these designs, I wanted to create a little world of its own within those catalogue pages, a place somewhere “betwixt today and timelessness.” Within those blackened pages filled with firelight and moonlight, of nocturnal portraits and darkly elegant designs, was a realm of pure Gothic dream. Ever since, I've continued to strive to create a welcoming place for those who know how to view the world through a blackened veil, yet see even more of the world of enchantments that surrounds us all. For Gothic is a home to those who find comfort in the shadows, who hold poetry in their hearts, music in their hands, and magic in their eyes.



Kambriel believes in finding magic where it is and creating it where it lacks. You can find her fantastical design work at kambriel.com and personal updates on Twitter @[kambrieldesign](https://twitter.com/kambrieldesign).



Shadow Puppets bustle jacket by Kambriel, made from intricately woven brocade accented with artful pleat work and ribbon tendrils

Paper Angel mask by Phillip Valdez

Portrait of Rhienium by Elisa Lazo de Valdez



Phantasmal chiffon Dracula's
Bride gown by Kambriel
Portrait of Ophelia by
Elisa Lazo de Valdez



Cabaret Noir coatdress and
Veiled Chimera headdress
by Kambriel
Portrait of Kambriel by
Elisa Lazo de Valdez