




  
**Gothic: Dark Glamour**  
**FIT Exhibit**  
 By Acid PopTart

**F**ashion has long been a form of art, a story to tell, a world to create. For me and so many others, fashion is drama. It's passionate, compelling and if it's for me, it's over the top. When I discovered "Goth," there were no mall stores or magazines to look to, we all shopped at thrift stores and antique shops and the occasional department store and then we tore it apart, pinned it together, dyed it black or revamped it. The term Goth wasn't even used. My mate and I were frequently referred to as the "ghoulie girls" or the deathrock chicks. Music was moving our subculture, but it would be the fashion that began to weave the story and as the scene evolved, so did the clothing. It's almost shocking to see we have a magazine dedicated to the myriad of different looks the scene now offers. It's slowly made its way into the mainstream sneaking in here and there through commercials and TV series and movies as well. The darker edge of life doesn't have to scream devil worship as the mainstream media once thought and it's just now being looked at without fear and scorn (although we have a way to go).

Gothic fashion has now taken center stage at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City where so many amazing shows have taken place. **Dr. Valerie Steele**, curator of the Gothic: Dark Glamour exhibit, has also written a book to coincide with the event. It's a well thought out exhibit that explores the gothic street scene, the couture element and how each drew on the same influences. One of the highlights to note is the inclusion of one of our own esteemed designers from the scene being showcased, the talented Kambriel, who's been making a name for herself and her "fantastical designs" since 1994, when she first designed under the name Atrocities.

From the subtle to the obvious, vintage to modern, street wear to haute couture; this is a darkly glamorous journey through gothic fashion divided into several different sections that explored the themes common such as "the ruined castle" where one of my favorite Alexander McQueen dresses was on display, the sort of fashion mad lab that focused on Kei Kagama's surreal steampunk visions, "the graveyard" where appropriately veils and masks were the unifying theme, and of course the famous Bat Cave. It was exhilarating to see information in abundance instead of gross misinterpretations and assumptions. Naturally varying opinions will frequently bicker, but the mainstay in this conversation is that fashion is so much more than just cloth and thread.





Above: Both outfits by Thierry Mugler  
Left: Dress by John Galiano

Walter Benjamin once said, "Fashion mocks death." This quote is proudly plastered next to the "strange beauty" display. By celebrating novelty and artificiality, fashion promises seasonal renewal and eternal youth. Yet although fashion is the modern measure of time, it exists outside the organic cycle of birth, death and decay. According to Benjamin, the essence of fashion is fetishism, because it is based on the sex appeal of the inorganic. As a result, he argues, the living person becomes a kind of mannequin, "a gaily decked-out corpse."

"Unlike the living and the dying body, fashion is neither dead nor alive. Like the vampire, fashion is undead."

Fashion tells a story, it always has. No matter how garish, outlandish, or even the repetitious day to day, a story is being told. It matters little if the wearer has submitted themselves as willing characters; the tale weaves itself and presents a picture to the viewer. Appearances from the first, second or even hundredth, can and will set forth some kind of reaction, whether slight or epic will depend on how bold the words are written.

The exhibit will run from September 5, 2008 till February 21, 2009. *Gothic: Dark Glamour*, the accompanying book, is beautifully illustrated and well researched. ♦

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