

ATROCITIES

*Monica Richards Interviews Designers
Kambriel and Curse*

In the distinctly atmospheric realm of Salem, one can find the Classical clothing and accessories of Atrocities, the moniker under which two of the truest artists we know, Curse and Kambriel, work tirelessly. Specializing in the sensual shape and form of precious fabrics, Atrocities reminds one of the heyday of Hollywood's Gothic costuming, as well as the stark brilliance of early German Expressionistic clothing. All of their pieces are eerily beautiful and quite ageless: from velvet purses and jackets to hand-quilted pillows (our cat, Tish, has her very own Atrocities pillow which she sleeps on exclusively). Whether you wish for a carefully crafted full-length cape or a hand-quilted silk and velvet bed throw, one can order through their catalogue online or through traditional mail. We have been proud to wear their costumes over the years, for tours and photo shoots, and I got the chance to ask the formidable duo some in-depth questions. Please read on!



*The Lovely Kambriel in Victorian Elegance
Photo by Curse*

Can you give us some of your background in clothing design? How long have you been designing?

I remember my first experience with "fashion design" was when I was a very young child. I don't quite remember how it began, but I was suddenly taking scraps of red slipper satin and

transforming them into an elegant oriental style dress for one of my Raggedy Anns! Of course at that age, I didn't understand things like seam allowances, thinking they were a waste of fabric, but I've learned a lot in the decades since then! My teenage years were spent in the eighties, spanning through the punk/new wave/gothic scenes, so of course that always meant "personalizing" my outfits! I'd try to do something new each day, waking up early or staying up late so I could give myself time to bleach symbols onto a vest, stud crosses/phrases on a purse, sew fringe onto a jacket - I embroidered like mad; I would embroider various Cure images onto my jackets and paisleys galore, I even embroidered a pair of pants with all of my favourite band's names, using my mother's DMC thread. Can you imagine "7 Seconds", "TSOL", "Black Flag", etc in sweet shades of pale yellow, pink and seafoam?! Usually people would simply scrawl these things in black marker, but I guess I've always been one to take things a step further!

What is behind the name you chose for your company? It seems a complete irony given the beauty of your costumes - is that what you were trying to convey?



F&TM Evidence Photo
in Atrocities' Costumes

We were trying to figure out a name and Curse had a vision in which it appeared. Atrocities had a certain ring and we went with it - quite simple really! When we began, the word itself was much more seldom used than it is today, so it seemed more abstract. Given the horrific connotations though, and as you have said, the complete irony compared

to the beauty we try to create, we have given this some real thought. We have decided to think of it as a blessing to take this word which has been surrounded by horror and to transform it with a completely new energy by surrounding it instead with an aura of the beauty which can come out from the darkness.

Speaking to the two of you, I know that you get very excited when imagining a new costume. What made you wish to create clothing?

It's true, but of course it's so exciting to embark on a new piece since at those times, the imagination is unleashed! It's that moment when anything is possible and it speaks to an integral need to create. There is so much fulfillment which comes from bringing something out of the world of thought and into the world of being. Plus, we genuinely enjoy seeking out the exotic materials to use, and then envisioning exactly how they could most perfectly be used. These things, the luster of a silk, the shadowy folds of velvet, the ghostliness of a sheer, and the textures of embellishment are all quite captivating. - The wish to create clothing is rooted in a desire to reflect the inner spirit unto the outer body.

Working as a duo, does one do the designing,

and one do the sewing, or are both of you working together throughout the entire process?

We are both very much involved together throughout the entire process. Of course all people have their own strengths, so we tend to gravitate towards ours. Overall though, we reach a balance. Luckily both of us can handle most all aspects of fabric research, designing, cutting/sizing, sewing, etc, so that helps a great deal!

Do you have a favourite era that you design from?

The best era to design from for me is one which exists somewhere between today and timelessness. I adore and draw inspiration from so many past eras. I once wished so strongly to live in the past since I felt so out of place in the current world. I have since realized that the benefit of living today is we can draw that which we adore from past eras and leave the ugliness which also existed in those times behind - to romanticize the past into a place of pure dreams. I think we can collage all of the most enticing parts of our human history and create an environment which lives outside of time and place.

What has been or will be your ultimate creation?

Of course I would certainly not say it has already been done, for that would be absolutely limiting to all of my grand hopes for the future! The ultimate creation for me would be the earthly manifestation of a dream vision, an alchemi-

cal creation which would make the wearer feel as though the spirit of the deepest part

of their soul was visibly and tactily reflected before them. This creation would be as such that if you could speak no words, the truest essence of whom you are would be conveyed to anyone who saw by means of a sort of visual incantation.

The best part about this is if you have many sides to your personality, you could essentially create an "ultimate" piece several times over!

Can you tell us about how you became involved in designing for the theatre?

It somewhat came to us, perhaps because we are such dramatically inclined people ourselves. In the world of theatre, there is oftentimes an encouragement for things to be larger than life. From a costuming viewpoint, it's all about helping to create a character to the point where in that moment when the performer first sets foot upon the stage, before the first line is given, the audience has already fallen under a certain spell of enchantment knowing much about the character by sheer presence alone. Designing for Faith and the Muse is a very theatrical experience in itself. We try to infuse our designs with the spirits of the people who will inhabit them and do honour to the music. You and William have such strong and limitless personalities that they are able carry off just about anything, and a real magic happens for us in that moment when they take the stage, and the clothes are no longer ours, but have been made -yours-.

Do you wish to be known as designers for the type to have actual fashion shows, or attending functions in your designs, or is this

Luminous Byzantine Moon costume for Oscar Wilde's "Salome"





Erie inspired, custom made wedding gown

not of interest to you?

Ultimately all artists must create to fulfill their own needs, without regard to how others will accept their work. When an artist becomes shy about what they do, they lose the spark which attracted others to them in the first place. We of course are always deeply honoured when people want to attend a function in one of our designs! We haven't quite gotten to the point of having Helena Bonham Carter showing up at the Oscars in one of our creations, but give us time, you never know! We have done several fashion shows, always in a choreographed vignette style - never as basic catwalk types because we enjoy catching our audiences off guard. The closest we came to a catwalk style show was a recent one at the Salem Vampires and Victims Ball where our models crossed the stage in a funerary procession inspired by a puppet show put on a few years ago by Edward Gorey on Cape Cod. In the puppet show, the black-clad puppets glided slowly across their little stage with the occasional painted raven suspended from a wire hovering overhead. The silent procession just went on and on for so long, and it was the most macabre puppet show, we couldn't help but laugh! We decided to do this fashion show as a little tribute to him.

What are you currently working on?

Currently we are undergoing an intense period of personal growth and learning. We want to gain knowledge in many areas (a quest which will never cease!), quite a few of which will serve to open even more possibilities for designs to come. Some aspects include fabric manipulation, printing, painting, etc, to create rich new textures and gilded patterns. Kambriel is also working on more of her own extravagant creations, and planning to introduce them under her own label in the not too distant future!

What do you ultimately wish for Atrocities?

Our ultimate wish for Atrocities is simply to be proud of it. Exactly what that means will likely change over time, but we envision creating something of dignity and quality, with a continuous aesthetic integrity where you will always be able to tell that the people behind it genuinely love what they do and are constantly growing.

For a catalogue, please send \$5 (\$8 International) to:

Atrocities

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Classically mysterious black velvet cape