



KAMBRIEL

# *Betwixt Today and Timelessness*

**In** Salem, Massachusetts, the spirit of fashion haunts fashion designers Kambriel and Curse. Their line, Kambriel, has been making "eerily beautiful clothing for those of a darkly elegant nature" since 1994. Still "Keeping it goth" in the city of witches, they seem to be unaffected by erratic fashion trends of the moment. Instead, they choose to create timeless renditions of formal wear that would generally bring tears to the eyes of any old-school goth or sentimentalist. Regarding the direction that gothic fashion has gone these days (think mass-produced club kid), don't expect to see them including fluorescent blinking lights or reflective vinyl in their new collections anytime soon. Do expect to see finely tailored garments inspired by silent films and period costumes. They bend their rules for no one. With seamstress abilities akin to that of their inspirational counterparts, they manage to pull it off even in the year 2002.

**TEAR:** How did you get started making clothes?

Interview with Kambriel and Curse by Justine Waters

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

(portrait): Robert Butcher

(fashion): Rachel Kleinman

**HAIR AND MAKEUP:** Courtney Covino

**MODELS:** Lindsay Frias (Next), Lauren Hill (Wilhelmina), Wai Reynolds (Wilhelmina)



**KAMBRIEL:** We couldn't find the type of things that we actually liked. We were into more of a classical aesthetic, when at the time everything was sort of fetish. So we started making our own, and then started to sell it. I would watch old horror movies and wish that I had those gowns. I would try to make the dress of the bride from Dracula circa 1931, as though I were raiding a Hollywood wardrobe closet from old screen movies. So I started making things like that as well, and that was another aesthetic that wasn't really out there.

# *Betwixt Today*

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**OPIATE JACKET**

made from a lushly embossed black velvet, worn with a "Velvet Beret" embellished with satin-stitched woven bat trim.

# and Timelessness



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#### DRACULA BRIDE GOWN

Ivory flocked, sheer organza inspired by vintage horror films—with dramatically flared, floor-length sleeves and sweeping train.

**TEAR:** In what direction would you like to see Kambriel going in the future?

**KAMBRIEL:** I would like to expand by doing more one-of-a-kind creations. I'm an artist at heart and I want to delve into that side of fashion instead of the business side of it. Once you start being mass-produced, it's less about the art.

**TEAR:** How would you describe your approach to designing a collection?

**KAMBRIEL:** We don't really do the seasonal thing. A lot of designers will do a spring collection and a fall collection, etc., but we don't want to design something that's so flash in the pan. We want something that's going to be beautiful for ten years. It should reflect who you are, not what the fashion is. I know myself and that I'll progress naturally over time. It's not like, "OK, who I am this spring will be tossed away," and suddenly I'm not going to be that person anymore. We keep items around for a long time because we build on them instead of replacing them.

**CURSE:** A lot of designers just toss away their designs.



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#### WISTERIA GOWN

Elaborately woven silk jacquard worn with a customized "Rappaccini's Daughter Veil" with double 2-layered glistening black veil and handsewn velvet headpiece accented with silk flowers.

#### CRYSTAL PALACE VICTORIAN ENSEMBLE

features a perfectly fitted tunic made from iridescent silver taffeta edged in black lace, worn with a full-length matching taffeta walking skirt with lace overlay.



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**KAMBRIEL:** I'm too sentimental to do that. It seems to me that if your clothing is an outward reflection of your inner self, then if you're just changing it every season depending on what some designer says, then what does it say about how well you know yourself? I don't want people to change because I say they should be looking like this.

**TEAR:** The craftsmanship of your clothing is remarkable...

**KAMBRIEL:** We're completely self-taught! I started in my single-digit years, just sewing things for my Raggedy-Ann dolls, making them satin Geisha dresses and things like that. Then being in the eighties, punk rock sort of stressed DIY clothing and things. People were individualizing their items, for embellishment. I remember people would take magic marker and scrawl band names in their jeans. Instead of marker I would actually embroider band names! (laughter fills room) I even did this denim jacket that was completely covered in embroidered portraits of Robert Smith! So I think those were some early signs that I would be doing things the difficult way. My inspirations are never easy, I'll say at the last minute "Oh, lets make this skirt have 20 layers of gathered ruffles."

**CURSE:** and I say, "Sure, no problem."

**TEAR:** I've noticed that although your clothing is period clothing, I often see more than one period involved in one piece, is that a conscious choice?

**KAMBRIEL:** I've really never made a conscious effort to do a past era's clothing, with the exception of something like the

Dracula bride gown. I'm not really into just recreation because I feel like that would be cheating myself. It wouldn't be showing my inspiration or creativity, but just my ability to make something that's already been made in the past. But I do see that there are some incredible styles in the past that I get inspiration from. Currently the *Ballet Russes* is my main inspiration. [Paul] Poiret was also inspired by them.

**TEAR:** He was extremely controversial for his time.

**CURSE:** He was condemned by the Pope.

**KAMBRIEL:** When we first began *Atrocities*, we thought, "Wow, now that's success!" It was the hobble skirt. He sort of liberated women from their corsets, but the women couldn't walk! He "freed the breasts and shackled the legs." I'm also inspired by the ornamentation of Victorian clothing, but I don't like how rigid it is. I'm not a corset girl, so I guess that's why I have more of an affinity with Poiret. Our new logo says "betwixt today and timelessness," and that's kind of how I want the clothing to be, so that you really can't place it. I'm not trying to be overtly futuristic or a reproduction of the past, just something that's gorgeous forever.

**CURSE:** Whether it's the Victorian Bustle Gown or an Asian costume with big, heavy folds of silk, there are certain outfits that will always speak, and that's something that I really admire.

Find more classic gothic fashion at [www.Kambriel.com](http://www.Kambriel.com)

You can order printed *Atrocities* catalogues featuring Kambriel's designs by sending \$5 per catalogue (\$10 each outside U.S.) to:

*Atrocities* c/o Kambriel

P.O. Box 162

Salem, MA 01970



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