

## The Use of Plastic Materials in Alexander McQueen's Fashion Work: An Analysis of Innovation and Its Influence on The Fashion Industry

Novi Yuniarti<sup>1</sup>, Adlien Fadlia<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>noviyuniarti@ikj.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>adlienfadlia@ikj.ac.id  
Faculty of Arts and Design, Jakarta Institute of the Arts

### Abstract

*This research aims to analyse the use of plastic materials in Alexander McQueen's fashion work, with a particular focus on how these innovative materials affect the aesthetics and overall concept of his designs. Through a qualitative approach, this research examines key collections such as 'Plato's Atlantis' (Spring/Summer 2010) and 'What a Merry-Go-Round' (Autumn/Winter 2001), which are known for their extensive use of plastic and synthetic materials. The main objective of this research is to understand the aesthetic and conceptual impact of the use of plastic in McQueen's work, as well as how this reflects the application to technology and the future of fashion. Methodology This research utilises case study methods, visual analysis, and literature review. Data sources include documentation of McQueen's collections, interviews with fashion experts, and analysis of relevant academic literature. The results show that McQueen's use of plastic is not only technically innovative, but also serves to reinforce conceptual themes such as transformation, evolution, and critique of consumerism. In the 'Plato's Atlantis' collection, for example, plastic is used to create textures and shapes that depict underwater life and future human evolution. While in 'What a Merry-Go-Round', plastic and other synthetic materials are used to create dramatic and sculptural visual effects. Conclusion The use of plastic materials in Alexander McQueen's work successfully redefines the boundaries of fashion and art. Through this material, McQueen not only creates innovative and aesthetically pleasing designs, but also conveys a strong message about the relationship between man, technology and nature. This research confirms that non-traditional materials such as plastic have an important place in the fashion industry, especially in the context of experimental and conceptual design.*

**Keywords:** *innovation, conceptual fashion, fashion technology*

### Introduction

Material Innovation in Fashion is one of the important pillars in the development of the fashion industry. New and innovative materials allow designers to create shapes, textures and functions that were previously impossible to achieve with traditional materials. These innovations not only affect the aesthetics of design, but also deform and damage fashion products. The use of innovative materials can result in more interesting and unique designs, for example, plastic and synthetic materials will create textures and shapes that cannot be created with conventional fabrics, New materials can also improve the functionality of clothing, such as weather resistance, coldness, and comfort.

The fashion industry is undergoing a shift towards more sustainable practices, and innovative materials play a significant role in this. The use of recycled or biodegradable materials, including recycled plastics, helps to reduce waste and the environmental impact of fashion production (The Fashion Studies Journal). Relevance of Alexander McQueen as a Research Subject Alexander McQueen is one of the most innovative and influential designers in modern fashion history. His boldness and creativity in using unconventional materials make his work a highly relevant research subject.

McQueen is known for his experimental boldness in using new materials and innovative techniques. He often combined elements of technology and art in his designs, creating clothes that were more like works of art than ordinary fashion products (The Fashion Studies Journal).

A clear example of McQueen's innovative materials is his use of plastic in collections such as 'Plato's Atlantis' and 'What a Merry-Go-Round,' where he managed to combine futuristic aesthetics with profound social commentary (The Fashion Studies Journal).

McQueen has left a significant legacy in the fashion industry, influencing the next generation of designers to dare to experiment and go beyond traditional boundaries. His influence can be seen in the way modern designers adopt and adapt new materials to create innovative and sustainable work (Spectrum Repository). As a designer who often explores complex themes such as identity, transformation, and humanity's relationship with technology, McQueen offers a unique perspective that is invaluable to academic study.

The research on the use of plastic materials in Alexander McQueen's fashion work is important in discussing and explaining the role of material innovation in pushing the boundaries of fashion design, it also provides insight into how a visionary designer can influence the fashion industry and culture as a whole through in-depth analysis of McQueen's works, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the relationship between materials, technology and artistic expression in fashion.

This research has deep and broad significance for the field of fashion and design, both from an academic and industry perspective. Here are the main reasons:

- A deeper understanding of materials, analysing the use of plastic in Alexander McQueen's work, this research provides insight into the potential and challenges of non-traditional materials in fashion design. This is important as innovative materials are key in creating unique and functional designs.
- Design Technique Development, this study can inspire designers to explore new techniques in integrating plastics and other synthetic materials into their work, pushing the boundaries of creativity and technicality in the fashion industry.
- Futuristic and experimental aesthetics, this study helps identify how futuristic and experimental aesthetics can be achieved through the use of plastic materials, providing inspiration for designers to adopt similar approaches in their work.
- Social criticism and reflection, understanding the way McQueen uses plastic to convey themes such as consumerism, evolution, and desire, this research highlights how fashion can be a medium for social criticism and cultural reflection.
- Academic literature: This research adds to the wealth of academic literature on Alexander

McQueen and material innovation in fashion. It is important to the academy of studies as it provides an in-depth case of how materials can be used to support narratives and design concepts Practical Guide for Designers: The results of this research can serve as a practical guide for designers and fashion industry professionals, providing concrete examples of how to overcome material challenges and utilise new technologies to create innovative designs.

Sustainability and Ethics in Fashion focus on the use of plastics, this research highlights the importance of exploring alternative materials in an effort to achieve desirability in fashion. It encourages designers to consider the environmental impact of their chosen materials and look for more environmentally friendly solutions. Awareness of the analysis of McQueen's work, this research can also raise consumers' awareness of issues of interest and ethics in fashion, encouraging them to make more conscious and responsible decisions in fashion consumption.

- Influence on artists and designers, this research can inspire not only fashion designers but also artists and other creatives to explore the use of non-conventional materials in their work, opening up new opportunities for artistic expression and creative innovation.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration, the study highlights the potential for collaboration between disciplines such as art, technology and design in creating innovative and impactful work, encouraging interdisciplinary approaches in research and creative practice.

This research not only enriches the understanding of Alexander McQueen's work but also makes a significant contribution to the development of materials and techniques in the fashion industry, raising awareness about interests, and encouraging impactful creative innovation.

Theories and concepts in the use of materials in fashion introduction to material theory in fashion, materials are fundamental elements in fashion design that not only function as raw materials but also as a medium for artistic and symbolic expression. Material theory in fashion explores how the materials used in clothing can influence the form, function and message of the design. New and innovative materials, such as plastics and other synthetic materials, have opened up new opportunities for designers to create work that challenges traditional boundaries and communicates complex ideas of context.

The Use of plastic materials in fashion plastic, as a flexible, strong and versatile material, has become an attractive option for many avant-garde and innovative designers. The use of plastic in fashion can be seen through some of the following lens theory materials:

- Plastic has unique physical properties, such as transparency, smoothness, and the ability to be moulded into different shapes and textures. This allows designers to create visual and tactile effects that cannot be achieved with traditional materials. In this context, materiality theory emphasises how the physical and sensory qualities of plastics influence their perception and experience of use.
- Function and aesthetics, plastic is often used to create designs that are futuristic and experimental, depicting visions of the future and technology. Designers such as Alexander McQueen use plastic to shape innovative aesthetics and break conventional boundaries. Aesthetic theory in fashion examines how the use of materials such as plastic can communicate certain aesthetic concepts, such as modernity, minimalism, or deconstruction.
- Sustainability and ethics, although plastics are often criticised for their environmental impact, some designers seek to use recycled plastics or more eco-friendly synthetic materials to promote desirability in fashion. The theory of travelling in fashion explores how these materials can be used in an environmentally and socially responsible way, as well as how they can help reduce the fashion industry's carbon footprint.

## Examples of Plastic Use in Alexander McQueen's Work.



Source: <https://inhabitat.com/sustainable-style-alexander-mcqueen-fall-09/>

### **Alexander McQueen Trashes Fashion with Killer Line for Fall 2009**

Alexander McQueen's Paris show yesterday meandered around piles of rubbish. The motif of rubbish carried over into the styling, models' heads were taped to cans, wrapped in Wrap, or used as counterweights to wheel rims and what looked like broken manhole covers. The nylon on one black dress was made to look like a black garbage bag. Zoolander's Derelict Mugatu collection took only eight years to transcend the realm of make-believe as one might guess, every component of the show, from the trash to the reruns of popular looks of the past, had to be taken literally. With the economy and the environment crumbling simultaneously, high fashion's pattern of wasting clothes is now coming under serious scrutiny.

Oscar Wilde once said, 'Fashion is simply a form of ugliness so unbearable that we are compelled to change it every six months.' McQueen's show clearly captured that. Expressionless models disappeared behind hideously large red lips as they paraded around in replicas of famous fashion looks with the song 'The Beautiful People' by Marilyn Manson playing in the background. It certainly makes one wonder what kind of strange interiors lie beneath all that charming make-up that attracts and gives us a great sense of inner peace.

### **'Plato's Atlantis' (Spring/Summer 2010)**

In this collection, McQueen used plastic to create designs inspired by marine life and the concept of future human evolution. Plastic materials were used to produce visual effects that resembled reptile skin and bioluminescent structures, creating a futuristic and organic look (The Fashion Studies Journal). The use of plastic in this collection illustrates how non-traditional materials can be used to convey complex narratives and themes, such as the relationship between humans and nature.



Source: <https://thoughtoverdesign.com/alexander-mcqueen-platos-atlantis>



Reptilian prints with recycled plastic appliques



Acrylic embellished mimicking corals



Layered fabrics imitating waves



Holographic paillettes evoking scales

Source: <https://thoughtoverdesign.com/alexander-mcqueen-platos-atlantis>

### ‘What Merry-Go-Round’ (Autumn/Winter 2001)

McQueen uses plastic and other synthetic materials to create dramatic and experimental sculptural forms. These materials allow McQueen to explore the concepts of mechanisation and control in his designs, this collection shows how plastic can be used to create powerful visual effects and communicate deep conceptual themes. Concepts and Themes Communicated Through Plastic

Futurisme dan Technology:



Source: <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2001-ready-to-wear/alexander-mcqueen>

Plastic is often used to describe a futuristic and technological vision in fashion. It reflects how new materials can change the way we perceive and experience clothing. McQueen often incorporates elements of technology in his designs, using plastic to create innovative and provocative looks. McQueen's use of plastic often illustrates themes of transformation and evolution, both literal in the form and function of the garments and symbolic in the narrative of the collection. This shows how materials can be used to communicate deep and complex ideas, making fashion a medium for artistic and intellectual expression.

### Research Methods and Techniques

The methodology of this research will use a qualitative approach that includes several stages in data collection and analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the use of unconventional materials in Alexander McQueen's works. This approach allows the researcher to understand the context, motives and meanings behind the use of these materials. The qualitative approach provides meaning and depth in understanding complex phenomena such as the use of unconventional materials in Alexander McQueen's works. Here are some reasons why a qualitative approach is the right choice in this research.

The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore the use of unconventional materials in McQueen's works in depth. It involves a deeper understanding of the historical, creative, and cultural context behind the use of such materials. Focusing on the context, motives, and meanings behind the use of unconventional materials, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore more than just what is physically visible. This opens up opportunities to understand the motives and messages contained in McQueen's designs. In qualitative research, researchers have the freedom to capture unique and unexpected perspectives from respondents, such as fashion experts or individuals who have worked with McQueen. This can yield rich and varied insights into the use of non-conventional materials.

The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to present the data in a rich and in-depth narrative form. This allowed the researcher to explore the differences and similarities among McQueen's various works and how the use of unconventional materials inspired and shaped the narratives in his designs. In qualitative research, researchers tend to use a variety of analytical techniques, such as thematic analysis, semiotic analysis, or narrative analysis, according to the specific research needs. This allows researchers to explore various aspects and dimensions of the use of unconventional materials in McQueen's works.

Overall, a qualitative approach is an appropriate choice for this study as it allows the researcher to explore in depth, understanding the context and meaning behind the use of unconventional materials in Alexander McQueen's works. Books, articles and other publications about McQueen's works will be important sources of information. Monographs on the designer, exhibition catalogues, and journal articles will provide in-depth insights into McQueen's various collections, including his use of unconventional materials.

Photography, videos, and other visual documentation from fashion shows and exhibitions featuring McQueen's works will provide a clear picture of the designs and use of unconventional materials in the collections. Alexander McQueen's official website, fashion museums, and other online archives provide access to more extensive documentation of McQueen's works. This can include photographs, videos, collection descriptions and other materials that are accessible to the public. Seeing McQueen's collections in person through exhibitions or fashion events can also be a valuable source of data.

Direct observation of the design and presentation of the collections will provide a deeper understanding of the use of unconventional materials in a wider context. By combining these various data sources, the researcher can gain a comprehensive understanding of McQueen's collections and the use of unconventional materials in fashion design. This will enable a more in-depth and insightful analysis of McQueen's contribution to innovation and aesthetics in industrial fashion. Data will be obtained from the study of McQueen's collections, both through literature, visual documentation, and publicly accessible sources.

Interviews with fashion experts, fashion conversations, or individuals who have direct experience with McQueen's works will be an important source of data to gain a deep insight into the use of unconventional materials in his designs. Documentation from exhibitions featuring McQueen's works will be an additional source of data to gain an understanding of the context and presentation of the works. Data collection will begin with a thorough literature study of McQueen's works, fashion theory, and trends in the use of unconventional materials in design. Data collection will involve visual analysis of McQueen's documented works, to identify the use of unconventional materials and emerging design patterns. Interviews with selected respondents will be conducted to gain first-hand views on their experiences and perceptions of McQueen's works and the use of unconventional materials in his designs.

The data collected will be thematically analysed to identify key patterns in McQueen's use of unconventional materials, as well as the meanings that emerge from such use. Semiotic analysis will be used to understand the symbolic meanings of the use of certain materials in McQueen's works, as well as how these meanings interact with the wider social, cultural and political context.

Through this approach, it is hoped that this research will provide a deeper insight into McQueen's works and the utilisation of unconventional materials in fashion design, as well as his contribution to the development of the fashion industry as a whole.

An in-depth literature study is a very important first step in this research. An in-depth analysis of McQueen's collections and works will be the main focus. This involves searching literature, articles, books and other publications that discuss various aspects of McQueen's works, including manufacturing techniques, themes and design concepts.

**Fashion Theories** The literature review will also include coverage of relevant fashion theories. This could include theories on fashion aesthetics, fashion history, fashion semiotics, and other theories that help in understanding the context and meaning behind McQueen's works. **Creative Design Approach:** An analysis of the creative design approach will also be part of this literature study. It contains a literature search on the creative process in fashion design, including how ideas are conceptualised, materials are selected, and pieces are constructed.

**Trends in the Use of Unconventional Materials:** The research will also include literature insights on trends in the use of non-conventional materials in the fashion industry in general. This helps to understand the context in which McQueen's use of such materials becomes relevant and innovation through this in-depth literature study, the researcher will gain a solid understanding of McQueen's works, relevant fashion theories, and creative design approaches in industrial fashion. This will provide a solid foundation for further analyses of McQueen's use of unconventional materials and his contribution to innovation in fashion design.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Alexander McQueen is a British fashion designer who is widely recognised as one of the leading innovators in industrial fashion. He was born on 17 March 1969 in London, and showed a keen interest in fashion from a young age. After completing his formal education at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, McQueen began to make waves with his controversial and experimental designs. McQueen's career in industrial fashion began in the early 1990s, when he started working for renowned fashion houses such as Givenchy in Paris. At a relatively young age, McQueen became the creative director of the house, transforming and reinvigorating the brand's aesthetic with revolutionary designs.



Source: <https://www.biography.com/history-culture/alexander-mcqueen>

McQueen's influence on fashion is vast and diverse. Some of the elements that stand out from McQueen's work include: McQueen was known for his innovative approach to fashion design. He often explored controversial themes and presented pieces that reflected surprise and suspense. Use of Unconventional Materials: One of McQueen's signature traits was his creative use of unconventional materials in his designs. He often used materials such as metal, glass, and even organic materials such as bird feathers or bones to create dramatic and eccentric effects. McQueen's work was often inspired by history, culture, and politics. He integrated these elements into his designs in a provocative and moving way.

McQueen was known for his innovative approach to fashion design. He often explored controversial themes and presented pieces that reflected surprise and suspense. In 2010, Alexander McQueen tragically passed away at the age of 40, leaving behind a powerful legacy in the world of fashion. Although he is gone, his creative legacy lives on through the revolutionary works he left behind, and the inspiration he gave to the younger generations of designers who came after him. An in-depth analysis of one or two of his most relevant collections. Details about the designs, materials used, and themes collection.

How plastic is used to achieve certain visual effects and contexts. The relationship between the use of plastic and McQueen's themes. For this case study, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of the "Plato's Atlantis" collection (Spring/Summer 2010) which is one of Alexander McQueen's most iconic collections.

Design: "Plato's Atlantis" features futuristic, organic, and striking designs. The dresses presented have dramatic silhouettes with intricate and innovative details. McQueen used a variety of materials in this collection, including traditional textiles such as silk and organza, as well as unconventional materials such as plastic, glass, and metal. The collection was inspired by the myth of Atlantis and McQueen's vision of the future of humanity. McQueen imagined Atlantis as a fictional entity that lived in a post-apocalyptic era, where humans have evolved into more genetically advanced beings.

### **Aesthetic Analysis, Use of Plastic**

Plastic is used in the form of transparent panels that resemble reptile scales or organic structures. Plastic gives an additional dimension to the dresses, creating a futuristic and impressive visual effect. Texture and Color, the plastic in this collection often has different textures, ranging from smooth and transparent to rough and colorful. This creates complex layers in the design that reinforce the collection's organic and futuristic theme. Concept and Theme, relationship to Atlantis Theme: The use of plastic in this collection reflects McQueen's vision of Atlantis as a futuristic and innovative world.

Plastic creates the impression that this material is a new material used by the more advanced beings in Atlantis. Fusion of Nature and Technology: McQueen uses plastic to illustrate the complex relationship between nature and technology. Plastic here is not only a man-made material, but also a symbol of the evolution and transformation of nature. Therefore, through the "Plato's Atlantis" collection, Alexander McQueen not only explores the aesthetic potential of plastic in fashion design, but also illustrates his vision of the future of humanity and its summary with nature and technology.

Plastic is a powerful medium for conveying complex philosophical and aesthetic messages in McQueen's work. Thematic and Aesthetic Analysis: Discussion of how the use of plastic affects the overall aesthetic of McQueen's work and the message he is trying to convey. The use of plastic in Alexander McQueen's work not only affects the overall aesthetic aspect, but also becomes an important tool in conveying deep philosophical and artistic messages. Here is a discussion of how the use of plastic affects the overall aesthetic of McQueen's work and the message he is trying to convey.

### **Overall Aesthetic**

Futuristic and Experimental, the use of plastic in McQueen's designs creates a futuristic and experimental aesthetic. Plastic adds an added dimension to the works, creating complex structures and dramatic silhouettes. The use of plastic in Alexander McQueen's designs does create a futuristic and experimental aesthetic that is his signature. Here are some ways in which the use of plastic adds an added dimension to McQueen's work and creates a unique aesthetic:

1. Complex structures, plastic allows McQueen to create complex structures that would be impossible to achieve using conventional materials alone. With plastic, he can form futuristic, geometric, or organic shapes with great precision.
2. Dramatic silhouettes, plastic is often used by McQueen to create dramatic and striking silhouettes. For example, the use of plastic in the form of transparent molds or panels can have a dramatic effect on his dresses, adding a strong visual dimension.
3. Effects of light and transparency, plastic often has transparent or semi-transparent properties, allowing it to catch and reflect light in unique ways. This creates interesting and dynamic visual effects, especially when combined with the movement of the model as she walks the runway.
4. Visual tension, McQueen's use of plastic often creates interesting visual tensions between hardness and softness, futuristic and organic, or technology and nature. This creates dramatic contrasts and enriches the viewer's aesthetic experience.

The use of plastic in McQueen's designs not only adds an extra dimension to the pieces, but also creates an aesthetic that is futuristic, experimental, and captivating. This is one of the aspects that makes McQueen's work so distinctive and innovative in the fashion industry.

- Texture and Color, plastic often has varying textures, ranging from transparent to colorful. This creates interesting layers of texture and contrast within the design, adding a rich and dynamic visual dimension.
- Contrast with Traditional Materials, the use of plastic often contrasts with traditional materials such as fabric or leather, creating a unique blend of modern and traditional aesthetics. This creates an interesting visual tension and enriches the viewer's aesthetic experience.

## Messages Conveyed

- Transformation and evolution, McQueen's use of plastic often reflects themes of transformation and evolution. Plastic becomes a symbol of technological advancement and changing times, as well as the possibility of transformation of self and environment.
- Relationship with nature and technology, McQueen uses plastic to illustrate the complex relationship between nature and technology. Plastic here is not only a man-made material, but also a symbol of the evolution and transformation of nature, and its implications for sustainability and the environment.
- Provocation and questioning, McQueen's use of plastic often aims to provoke the viewer and challenge conventions in the fashion industry. Plastic is used to raise questions about new possibilities in design, as well as the ethical and social implications of using unconventional materials in the fashion industry.

The use of plastic in McQueen's work is not only an aesthetic element, but also a medium to convey profound messages about transformation, the relationship between nature and technology, and the challenges facing the fashion industry and society more broadly. This reflects a complex philosophical and artistic approach to McQueen's work.

## Conclusion

The use of plastic in Alexander McQueen's works has become a distinctive feature that distinguishes his designs and creates a futuristic, experimental and provocative aesthetic. Through the use of plastic in various forms and textures, McQueen has succeeded in creating works that are not only tempting to the eye, but also stimulating to the mind. The use of plastic in McQueen's designs adds an additional dimension to the works by creating complex structures, dramatic silhouettes and interesting light effects. Plastic also allows McQueen to create strong visual tensions between different aesthetic elements, such as hardness and softness, futuristic and organic, and technology and nature. More than just an aesthetic element, McQueen's use of plastic also carries deep philosophical and artistic messages. It reflects his vision of transformation, evolution and the relationship between humans, nature and technology. The use of plastic also challenges conventions in the fashion industry, provoking viewers to rethink traditional concepts of beauty, sustainability and self-identity. Thus, McQueen's works using plastic are not only a remarkable aesthetic achievement but also represent an innovative and exploratory approach to fashion design. McQueen's legacy in the use of plastic will continue to influence and inspire future generations of designers, while his message of transformation and evolution will remain relevant in this ever-changing world.

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