

# SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ART OF ALEXANDER MCQUEEN AND SALVADOR DALÍ: THE ROLE OF AVANT-GARDE IN ART AND FASHION

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**ANNOTATION:** This article is dedicated to the in-depth study of the artistic legacies of Salvador Dalí and Alexander McQueen, analyzing their distinctive features in the avant-garde style. It demonstrates how Dalí's role in the world of surrealism and McQueen's avant-garde approach to fashion altered the boundaries of art and fashion. The article deeply examines the interconnections between art and fashion, as well as their cultural influence.

**KEY WORDS:** surrealism, avant-garde, art, fashion, design, aesthetics, psychoanalysis, innovation, creativity, postmodernism, consciousness, symbolism.

## INTRODUCTION

Art and fashion have long been among the most powerful tools for reflecting the human psyche. Salvador Dalí and Alexander McQueen, through their innovative and avant-garde approaches, expanded the possibilities of art and fashion in their respective times. Avant-garde is considered a macro style, and within it are micro styles such as Surrealism, Post-Impressionism, and Expressionism. Analyzing and comparing the works of creators who contributed to these styles allows for a deeper understanding of the macro style-avant-garde.[1]

Salvador Dalí became recognized as the most significant representative of the Surrealist movement in the 20th century, portraying unconventional and fear-driven aspects of the human mind. McQueen, in turn, revolutionized the world of fashion with collections that went beyond aesthetic norms, illuminating society's darkest and most dramatic sides. Exploring their creative legacies provides insights into how art and fashion have evolved through an avant-garde approach.

In Dalí's art, psychoanalysis and dreams held a central place. He sought to express mysterious and ambiguous elements of the human psyche through his works. Religious symbols, dream imagery, and the subconscious were dominant themes in Dalí's creations. Through Surrealism, he aimed to explore the inner world of the human mind and represent it in artistic forms.[2]

Alexander McQueen also employed a similarly avant-garde and unconventional approach in fashion. He presented themes of rebellion and protest, fear, and dramatism. His collections frequently featured elements resembling weapons, metallic accessories, achromatic colors, and strong symbolic signs. In doing so, McQueen created avant-garde fashion that closely aligned with the imagination and dreamlike quality found in Dalí's Surrealist style. McQueen's collections often reflected Post-Impressionist and Expressionist views within the avant-garde macro style.[3]

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Salvador Dalí became famous in the art world with his sensational movements and extraordinary style. Likewise, Alexander McQueen left audiences stunned with his theatrical and rebellious elements in fashion shows, often transforming them into artistic performances. McQueen's many collections revolutionized fashion presentations, turning them into art.

In his works, such as “The Persistence of Memory” and “The Galatea of the Spheres,” Salvador Dalí showcased the harmony between realism and fantasy. The themes in his creations emphasized the mysterious and immutable aspects of the human mind. By creating bizarre forms and images, Dalí sought to disconnect from real life and craft a new visual world.[4]

For Salvador Dalí, his wife Gala was at the center of his creative life. Gala not only played the role of a spouse but was also deeply involved in his works, managing and promoting his art. Through her, Dalí realized his most vibrant religious and psychoanalytical themes. Gala was his source of inspiration, support, and an integral part of his creative process.

Alexander McQueen mentioned that he experienced psychological aggression within family circles during childhood. This traumatic event influenced his creative activity, leading him to incorporate dark and dramatic elements into fashion. McQueen's creative approach, as seen in many collections, aimed to explore his inner pain and transform it into fashion aesthetics. This was his way of expressing and sharing personal grief through art and fashion. His collections often contained bizarre and sometimes terrifying elements to visually express psychological and physical pain.[5]

McQueen's fashion shows frequently featured dark, dramatic, and sometimes harsh themes, reflecting his attempts to convey his psychological processes and traumas aesthetically. For instance, the “Highland Rape” collection (1995) symbolically addressed both Scottish political and social pressures and McQueen's personal experiences. His designs, particularly those for women, embodied themes of fear and protection. He aimed to present women in the fashion world as more powerful and self-confident figures rather than fragile or victimized, reflecting his intention to portray women as strong and protected based on his personal experiences.[6]

Protection and struggle were recurrent themes in McQueen's collections. The layers in his garments, metallic accessories, and weapon-like designs symbolized the need for self-protection and internal fears. This helped convey the feeling of fear and the desire for protection, rooted in his childhood experiences, to the audience.

McQueen's role in fashion can be seen through collections like “Highland Rape” and “Plato’s Atlantis.” He dramatically displayed historical, cultural, and global themes in his designs, reflecting on human psychology and societal issues through fashion. His collections often left audiences astonished, presenting them with new perspectives, which brought revolutionary approaches to the fashion world.[7]

Through avant-garde art, Dalí depicted religious and social themes, defying normative rules. Salvador Dalí meticulously analyzed and transformed social and religious norms in his art. His distinctive style involved breaking traditional ideas and revealing the strange constraints of the human mind. Dalí often adjusted religious and political symbols to suit his artistic vision, prioritizing the internal meaning over the external appearance. His art frequently confronted social stereotypes.[8]

McQueen, too, explored complex and sometimes dangerous aspects of society in his collections, drawing attention to painful societal issues. His shows, particularly collections like “Highland Rape,” illuminated political and social conflicts in human history. In fashion, he sought to portray human fears and vulnerabilities, shedding light on uncertainties and threats present in society.

Salvador Dalí’s Surrealist works aimed to explore the hidden and peculiar side of the human mind. His Surrealism delved into the deepest and strangest parts of the human brain. His works featured distortions of time and reality, physiological and psychological changes, incomprehensible objects, and bizarre forms. Similarly, Alexander McQueen applied this approach to the fashion world, striving to merge dreams, fear, and beauty through clothing. McQueen brought Surrealism into fashion by deforming the human body, creating unusual proportions, and developing extraordinary structures.[9]

In his works, Salvador Dalí created symbols that represented dreams and the subconscious. Through Surrealism, he depicted a world detached from ordinary life and filled with illusions. Alexander McQueen adopted a similar style in fashion, filling his creations with elements that reflected human psychological issues, fear, and transformation. For example, McQueen’s “Voss” collection expressed internal emotions through fashion.[9]

Salvador Dalí attempted to change people's perceptions through aesthetic shock in art. Many of the images and symbols in his work evoke strong emotions. Alexander McQueen employed a similar style in fashion, aiming to alter viewers' notions of fashion and beauty through aesthetic shock. His “Widows of Culloden” collection combined concepts of beauty and death, inviting the audience to profound reflection. However, their difference lay in mood-while Dalí’s work evoked laughter and smiles, McQueen's creations had a more melancholic tone.[10]

**Fig 1. The elephants (Salvador Dalí, 1948) and Plato’s Atlantis collection (Alexander McQueen)**

Salvador Dalí extensively used symbolism in his work. In “The Galatea of the Spheres,” planets



and astronomical objects represented the infinity and mysterious nature of the human mind. Alexander McQueen also demonstrated symbolism through fashion, often using animal shapes, plant patterns, and other symbolic elements to depict humanity’s relationship with nature.

In Salvador Dalí’s works, elements of Eastern culture occasionally stand out, showcasing the connections between various cultures. Similarly, Alexander McQueen sought to link fashion with global issues by merging different cultural themes in his collections. His Plato’s Atlantis collection was dedicated to ecological issues and global warming, reflecting the future of the planet through fashion.[10]

Both creators delved deep into societal issues and the inner emotions of humanity. Salvador Dalí’s works reflected the complexities of the human psyche and dreams, while Alexander McQueen used fashion to highlight social and cultural problems within society. Through avant-garde art and fashion, they shed light on the internal contradictions of society.[11]

### DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Alexander McQueen and Salvador Dalí paid special attention to redefining the concept of beauty in their creative endeavors. Dalí shattered aesthetic norms in art, reworking conventional and flawed concepts of beauty through strange and sometimes frightening images. His works featured deformed figures, distorted proportions, and complex ideas, illustrating the ambiguity between notions of beauty and ugliness.[9]

Likewise, Alexander McQueen attempted to alter aesthetic concepts in fashion. He sought to erase dry and smooth boundaries of beauty, instead introducing more natural, raw, and sometimes terrifying elements, thus creating new standards of beauty in the fashion world. His collections merged concepts of death, damage, and protection, illustrating that fashion is not just about appearance but also a means of expressing psychological states.

Salvador Dalí and Alexander McQueen pushed the boundaries of art and fashion’s technical and aesthetic potential by creating innovations through the use of advanced technology. Dalí utilized unusual materials, special effects, and optical illusions in his paintings and sculptures, displaying new ideas in art from technical and aesthetic perspectives.[12]

Dalí’s Face of the Great Masturbator (1937) reflects the profound human psyche and the fragility of life. This piece expressed Dalí’s thoughts on the wartime situation in his native Catalonia and its psychological consequences. Through surrealism, this image shows an individual's inner fears and the impact of hard days in the past.[11]

McQueen’s Voss collection, created in 2001, reflected humanity’s instinct for self-preservation and the threats posed by the environment through works displayed in transparent boxes. This collection conducted a comparative analysis of issues like individualism and isolation in society, resonating widely in

the fashion world.

McQueen's Plato's Atlantis collection demonstrated the interconnectedness between the natural world and fashion. It showed his interest in issues related to ecological problems and environmental pollution. This collection combined elements of history, culture, and ecology, showing that fashion is not just about beauty, but a medium for social consciousness and responsibility.[12]

Salvador Dalí also had an interest in fashion and influenced it. He collaborated with Elsa Schiaparelli on several unique fashion projects, the most famous being the Lobster Dress (1937), which introduced a surrealist style to traditional clothing. Dalí demonstrated the limitless possibilities of art in fashion, serving as a source of inspiration for fashion designers. This relates to Alexander McQueen's approach to blending fashion and art. McQueen created collections that could be considered works of art, presenting garments not merely as a means of dressing, but as expressions of humanity's social, cultural, and philosophical facets.

### CONCLUSION

The work of Salvador Dalí and Alexander McQueen brought significant changes to the world of postmodern art and fashion. Their avant-garde styles aimed to reveal the deep, ambiguous, and sometimes dark facets of the human psyche. Dalí's surrealist approach and McQueen's drama-rich fashion fulfilled the task of renewing, rejecting, and recreating aesthetic and normative concepts of their eras.

The avant-garde styles of Dalí and McQueen continue to exert a strong influence on the ever-changing world of fashion and art today. Their creative works were not only significant for their own times but continue to inspire future generations. This article explores the commonalities between Dalí and McQueen and the invaluable contributions they made to art and fashion through their avant-garde approaches. It provides a deeper understanding of the role of avant-garde style in fashion and art, as well as the role of social and personal traumas in artistic expression.

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