

ZANDRA RHODES

50 FABULOUS YEARS IN FASHION

DISCUSSION PACK

1. Zandra Rhodes is well-known for doing things differently. The wool felt coat below (fig. 1) is often referred to as the 'dinosaur coat' because of the unusual, external pointed seams. She commonly uses the term 'aggravates the eye' when referring to her sewing techniques that are alternative to clean or sleek lines.

- What is your first reaction to this coat?
- What does the term 'aggravates the eye' mean to you, and do you associate this concept with any other designers?
- Why do you think designers use unconventional techniques?



fig. 1

2. Zandra Rhodes is credited with the nickname 'Princess of Punk' for her innovative use of strategically placed holes, ornamented with chains and beaded safety pins. The dresses and ensembles taken from her 'Conceptual Chic' collections amalgamate street-style punk and couture.

- The French satin jersey used to construct these dresses (fig. 3 & 4) is incredibly expensive and no longer made. Why do you think Rhodes chose to work with this material?
- Marylou Luther claimed that Rhodes was the first designer to bring punk up to the couture level. In which fashion houses do you see a reflection of Zandra Rhodes punk designs?



fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 4

3. A principal signature of the design house of Zandra Rhodes are her delicate use of intricate patterns on screen-printed silk chiffon, or printed wool felt. However, fashion trends change and the 1990s saw a resurgence in the use of heavier fabrics such as velvet. The black devoré velvet and satin evening gown (fig. 5) is from the Autumn/Winter 1999 'Floral Explosion' collection. In the close-up (fig. 6) you can see that the devoré technique has allowed Rhodes to incorporate a highly-detailed pattern in the dense velvet fabric.

- How do you understand the idea of staying true to your individual style as a designer?



fig. 5



fig. 6

4. Virtually all of Zandra Rhodes garments are made entirely by hand. Rhodes owns one of the last hand-screen printing tables in London. The process begins with her hand drawing or painting the design on paper, then creating screens of the print for each layer of colour, which is then hand-screen printed onto the fabric, hand sewn, and hand finished—all in Rhodes's London Atelier. The dress below (fig. 7 & 8) is made from 52 individually cut and attached circles printed with her 'Chinese Water Circle' design.

- In your opinion, what is the importance of a designer's process? Do you think fashion has geared further away from, or is more appreciative of, its art?



fig. 7



fig. 8

5. Pierpaolo Piccioli has worked as the Creative Director of Valentino since October 2008. For the first eight years of his career with Valentino, he worked alongside creative partner Maria Grazia Chiuri. After her departure from the brand in 2016, Piccioli was left as the sole Creative Director of Valentino for the first time. Piccioli states that he had to look deep inside himself to idealise his true vision of beauty. As it approached the time for a new collection, Piccioli thought of two revolutionary people: medieval painter Hieronymus Bosch and fashion icon Zandra Rhodes.

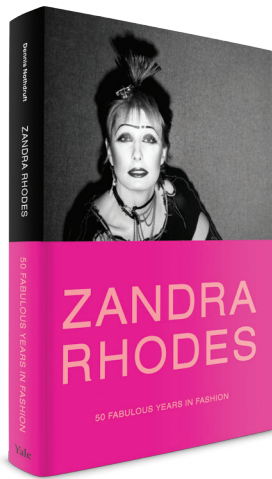
Together, Piccioli and Rhodes created a collection with prints inspired by Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* in hot pink and black (fig. 9), inspired by Rhodes' early punk aesthetic. The pair went on to design three collaborations under Maison Valentino, incorporating ad hoc prints Rhodes created, inspired by her original 'Lipstick' and 'Starwarz' print designs.

- Is collaboration integral to innovation in fashion?
- Do different perspectives in the creative process inspire or hinder your own work?



fig. 9

Want to learn more about the work of legendary British designer Zandra Rhodes?



Zandra Rhodes: 50 Fabulous Years in Fashion

Zandra Rhodes provides a luscious documentary of this leading British designer, spanning her 50-year career in fashion and textile design. The book honours the centrality of textile design in Rhodes's work, while exploring the versatility of her imagination throughout her long career; contributors include Pierpaolo Piccioli (creative director of Valentino), Suzy Menkes (editor of *Vogue International*), and celebrated fashion designers Anna Sui and Rajeev Sethi.

Image Credits

Fig. 1 - Autumn/Winter 1971, 'Paris, Frills and Button Flowers' collection. Wool felt coat with seams on the outside and 'Button Flower' printed satin accents. Photograph by Jon Stokes. Project managed by UCA and funded by JISC.

Fig. 2 - Detail of garment from the Spring/Summer 1977/78 'Conceptual Chic' collections, including strategically placed holes ornamented with beaded safety pins, blue satin accents and topstitching, a satin bodice and sink chains. Photograph by Jon Stokes. Project managed by UCA and funded by JISC.

Fig. 3 - Polly Eltes in a punk bride ensemble from the 1977/78 'Conceptual Chic' collections. Make-up: Richard Sarah. Photograph by Clive Arrowsmith.

Fig. 4 - Polly Eltes and Louise de Teliga in punk ensembles from the 1977/78 'Conceptual Chic' collections. Make-up: Richard Sarah. Photograph by Clive Arrowsmith.

Fig. 5 - Autumn/Winter 1999, 'Floral Explosion' collection. Devoré velvet and silk evening gown with a pearl-beaded, low-draped back neckline, floor-length with train, style 20/141. Photograph by Jon Stokes. Project managed by UCA and funded by JISC.

Fig. 6 - Detail of 'Floral Explosion Square' design from the Autumn/Winter 1999 'Floral Explosion' collection. Photograph by Jon Stokes. Project managed by UCA and funded by JISC.

Fig. 7 & 8 - Spring/Summer 2009, 'Dandelion' collection. Silk organza mini dress, constructed from 52 individual fabric circles printed with silver and gold 'Chinese Water Circles' designs, separately attached, with a deep laced-up neckline, style 09/02. Photograph by Jon Stokes. Project managed by Dakota Amber Scoppettuolo and funded by FTM.

Fig. 9 - Rhodes's rendition of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1500) for the Valentino Spring/Summer 2017 collection. Personal Files of Zandra Rhodes.