

Jewellery vocabulary...

Patina - Patina is a chemical film formed on the surface of metal through wear, corrosion, or oxidization due to exposure to the elements. A patina is often deliberately added by metalworkers. It creates a blackened appearance on metal.

(Technique used by Leane in the thistle brooch to create the blackened colour)

Enamel – Enamel is a powdered glass material which, when melted down, transforms into a glass like, glossy surface. A material used by both designers to inject colour into their pieces.

Plique à Jour – french for letting in daylight is an enamelling technique that has the look of stained glass. The metal of choice act like a frame and the enamel is poured into it creating a cell-like appearance. It has no backing which is why the enamel, when set, looks like transparent glass.

(Technique used by Lalique in the ivy brooch to create the blue tinged leaves)

Pave – A technique where stones are set very tightly, as in a pavement; the stones are set low and very closely spaced.

(Technique used by Leane in the thistle brooch with the black diamonds on the leaves)

Lost-wax Casting – The process of creating a wax model of the object that is being made. The wax is sculpted into the desired form, plaster is then poured into a walled area such a box to create a mold. The wax is then melted away to leave a hollow chamber in the middle of the mold, liquid metal is then poured into a mold. When the metal is set and the mold is opened the piece is then removed from the mold. *(Technique used by Lalique and Leane create their small pieces of detailed jewellery such at the thistle brooch)*

Live casting – The subject or object is immersed in alginate. Alginate is a liquid gel substance which is made by mixing the alginate powder with water, when set it has the characteristics of rubber. The mixed gel is then poured over/around the object; it is then covered with bandages to contain the gel. When completely set, it sets within 15 minutes, the subject or object can be pulled out and the negative space that is left is the mold. Plaster/concrete can then be poured in to create a cast of the object. This is how the concrete cast was made to fit the coiled corset.

(Technique for Leane's the coiled corset, also the technique used to cast the real human skeleton for the spine corset.)

3D printing – This process builds objects out of plastic and metal directly from computer generated drawings. The drawings are transformed into objects that have been cross sectioned into thousands of layers.

Links...

Youtube clips about Leane and his collaboration work Alexander McQueen ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHqnh70wF78>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSol6Lzs9f8>

Background...

Shaun Leane is a London based jewellery designer who is inspired by traditional jewellery, in particular, Art Nouveau and its pioneer, Rene Lalique. He is also well known for his collaborative work with fashion designer Alexander McQueen on his theatrical and elaborate fashion shows.

His designs have been called 'Antiques of the Future', due to their acknowledgement to traditional, fine jewellery and their futuristic, fresh feel.

His life...

Leane left school at 15 and enrolled on a foundation course in jewellery design. His tutor encouraged him to train as a goldsmith and he went to work as an apprentice in London's Hatton Garden jewellery district with a company making and restoring historic pieces – everything from diamond solitaires to tiaras – for Bond Street.

In 1992 Alexander McQueen, iconic British fashion designer, approached Leane to make pieces for him, adding an extra element to his fashion shows. McQueen was inspired by both the past and the present. The shapes of his silhouettes were extravagant and were inspired by Victorian fashion, bustles, puffed sleeves, corsets and ruffles. But the themes of the shows were often inspired by mortality and the fragility of life, which was shown through skeletal structures. World culture, in particular African tribal civilization, was also a source of inspiration throughout the collaborations between Leane and McQueen.

Following the success he had with McQueen Leane was inspired to start up his own company, House of Shaun Leane, in 1999. The jewellery house combines traditional craftsmanship with computer-aided design techniques to push jewellery creation even further.

His work..



Shaun Leane, Thistle brooch, 2006

*"My key inspirations are all that is beautiful in **nature** – the elements that surround us. **Organic forms are fragile and beautiful**, yet there are hidden elements of **strength and danger**."*

A brooch by Shaun Leane finds Tahitian pearls nestled within spiky black diamond leaves.

*"I take inspiration from my antique restoration days working on many beautiful pieces from the **Art Nouveau, Art Deco** and **the Victorian period**."*

Art Nouveau is a style consisting of fluid lines, floral and nature themes and natural colours. It was first popularised in the late 1800's to the early 1900's.

A dominant designer in the Art Nouveau design movement was Rene Lalique (1860-1945). Lalique worked in early 20th-century France, and he achieved fame for his jewellery creations that were widely admired and collected.

Lalique and Leane careers share similarities, for example they both designed and produced jewellery for French fine jewelers, Cartier and Boucheron.

Another parallel the designers share is their use of unusual materials to create unique pieces of wearable art. Lalique incorporated many materials not widely used in his time for high end jewellery including glass, horn, semi-precious stones like pearls, enamel and ivory. He only used the typical valuable gemstones of the period for what they brought to the piece artistically and not for their value as gems.

Similarly, Leane uses semi-precious stones such as pearls and moon stones. He also uses silver, aluminium and feathers. Leane used these materials to create to his pieces as they are lightweight and easy for the models to move in. These materials are also relatively inexpensive which is important as his pieces were so large.

They both share a source of inspiration in nature. Both designers have referenced organic form and female form in their pieces by using long, flowing, sweeping lines. As a result of this their pieces

often feel feminine and delicate, although Leane adds a touch of macabre to his work by adding harsh blacks and sharp points.



*Lalique, ivy brooch, 1900
(shown on a chain)*

Lalique's colour palette was softer and more natural, introducing colour through enamel or coloured stones.

The main difference between the work of the both designers is the time periods in which they worked and the technological developments. Lalique used techniques such as lost-wax casting (see *Jewellery vocab for description*) to create pieces. However Leane can now create using live casting and 3D printing (again see *jewellery vocab*). Even the original drawing stage would have change as drawing can be create using computer design software.

Use of materials has also made a difference. Leane used aluminium for a number of his bigger projects for McQueen due to it being inexpensive and lightweight. However this material would have been classed as a building fabric.

The attitude toward scale has also changed dramatically from Lalique's period to the present day. Jewellery was relatively small and delicate and often seen as a status symbol, showing wealth. Although this is still the case with fine jewellery today, the philosophy and opinion of jewellery has evolved. Jewellery makes a statement about the wearer, and larger pieces, such as the McQueen/Leane collaboration pieces challenge people to thinking outside the box and seeing jewellery as pieces of wearable art.

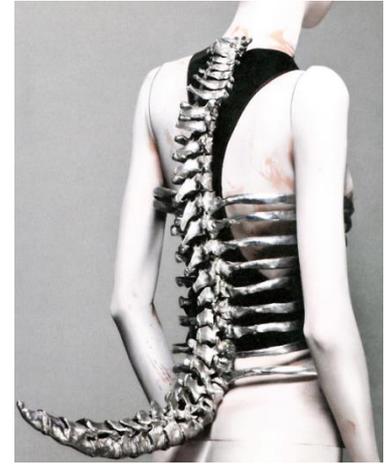


Leane, Feather earpiece, 2003

On working with Alexander McQueen... *“This was such a departure from my classical background creating pieces for Bond Street jewellers like Garrard. There were no boundaries with McQueen; no commercial constraints. It was a creative platform which allowed me to use my traditional craftsmanship to express these incredibly innovative concepts. I found my **signature style**; fusing tradition with fashion.*

McQueen was inspired by both the past and the present. The shapes of his silhouettes were extravagant and were inspired by Victorian fashion, bustles, puffed sleeves, corsets and ruffles. But the themes of the shows were often inspired by mortality and the fragility of life, which was shown through skeletal structures and nature imagery.

The construction of the **spine corset** piece was complex, and Leane used a human skeleton to cast the corset, crafting each bone by hand. The corset fastened like armour with three black leather buckle-straps.



Spine corset, 1998



The coiled corset, 1999

The Coiled Corset, Leane made for the Alexander McQueen in 1999, took many weeks of work to build, as he had to cast the model's body in concrete first to create a mold and he then used this to hand-shape every coil to fit exactly to her body. Malleable and light with a polished finish, aluminum was the perfect material for such an ambitious creation. The corset was made in two part, a front panel and a back panel and held together with hinges.

‘What I love about this piece is its play on surfaces; it has the appearance of armour but a silhouette that shows the beauty, softness and curves of the female form. It is this delicate balance that defines that era of work between myself and McQueen.’