



Trend Report

Sweet Ritual

Punk is accenting boho riffs right now. Designers have looked to the late 70s subculture every decade since it hit loudest in the US, UK and Australia, proving that the icon of attitude still persists.

BY ALEXANDRA KOHUT-COLE

IN 1994, John Galiano was the British designer of the year, Hussein Chalayan launched his label and the late stylist, Isabella Blow, bought Alexander McQueen's entire graduate collection. Gianni Versace put Elizabeth Hurley in 'that' safety pin dress, the Damned had reformed and their sometime supporter band, The League, headlined a 14-band punk gig dubbed "F*** Reading".

A pastiche of Sid Vicious' spirit — grommets, spiked hair, studs — seeped through the autumn and spring runways like little veins of steel. Sarah Burton's McQueen offered zipped kimono sleeves, Hedi Slimane toughened Saint Laurent's fluid-dress-floppy-hat vibe with leather-fringed biker vests and glam LA rock chicks via crystal-studded biker jackets and shimmering sequined luxe punk.

Chunky-chained Chanel padlock pendants glimmered glamour with wry humour, Meadham Kirchoff invitations enticed to 'reject everything', Jun Takahashi — a collector of vintage Seditonaries originals — slashed his tough slogan tees at Undercover, and Azzedine Alaïa had a laugh — wittily waiting until the fashion hordes had left Paris before deigning to show.

"Punk to me is attitude," says LA-based stylist Marjan Malakpour, designer of tours for David Bowie, Cher, Shirley Manson, the Killers and the Strokes. The double MVPA award-winner and co-creative designer of NewbarK shoe label is a big fan of "its rebellious style, rule breaker, leather and studs. Personally, I love mixing it in my styling, it gives an edge. I don't

IT'S THE ATTITUDE Clockwise from top left: Ebony Walton opens Rebecca Paterson's show as a tribute to Ruth Tarvydas in her bejewelled Dadadada silk georgette top; British singer/songwriter Paloma Faith in Michael Cinco at the Met Gala in 2013; a couture piece by Tarvydas shown at her memorial show; British Punk band the Clash in their heyday circa 1978

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF AFP





PUNK IS HERE
 Clockwise from top left: Vivienne Westwood RTW SS1; the Seditionaries boutique stacked with designs by Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren; an unidentified man with punk-style spiked hair tours the dinosaur exhibit in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History.

think punk will ever die.”

This punk attitude oozed out of Galliano’s Dior couture AW99 show and McQueen’s SS99 robotically spray-painted dress modeled by Shalom Harlow. Nicolas Ghesquière’s Balenciaga SS11 ‘Children of Punk’ and Donatella Versace’s AW13 ‘Vunk’ paid tribute to the genre — by now completely chic.

In 2013, Andrew Bolton curated ‘Punk: Chaos to Couture’ at the Met in New York; to the launch, Zandra Rhodes wore her own vintage 1977 ‘Conceptual Chic’ bejeweled safety pin dress. Bolton’s point, haute couture and punk being “about creating one-off pieces”, resonates with Asian Couture Federation founder and chairman of Fide Fashion Weeks, Frank Cintamani, “If you think of every couturier that succeeded over the long term,” he says, “much of their work was in its time branded ‘rebellious’, ‘controversial’ or ‘subversive’. It doesn’t seem too far off the zeitgeist of punk.”

The ACF and Fide Fashion Weeks, co-organised the 16th Telstra Perth Fashion Festival in September. ACF member designers — the leading Asian couturiers Sebastian

Gunawan from Indonesia, Frederick Lee from Singapore and Dubai-based Michael Cinco from the Philippines — showed at the festival to introduce an inaugural international element. Perth, as a gateway to Asia, is expected to mushroom as a future fashion and luxury hub owing to oil and gas revenue.

“Punk is as relevant today as mainstream rock was in the 70s,” says Cinco — who is internationally celebrated for the Swarovski-embellished fantasy couture that he designs for his predominantly Arab, Russian and Kazhak clients. “Punk is here to stay,” he continues, “It’s an expression of one’s individuality and personal views; Vivienne Westwood or Jean Paul Gaultier. It is love, a way of life; a massive influence in fashion.”

Elements of the aesthetic are mainstream — chains, tartan, ripped fabric, studded anything, body piercing, “It has to be practical, wearable and sellable,” says Sebastian Gunawan. “Creativity is an important part. It works up to the point its sellable and market-accepted.”

Frederick Lee says punk style is always iconic. “It captures a unique sense of rebellion individualism, finding a look that’s anti-materialistic and edgy. The new version of punk is about femininity, rebel, girlish, wearing accents to create a look with subtle punk appeal.”

The punk movement was as resounding in Australia as in New York and London in the late 70s/early 80s. “Perth, having a large British migrant population was almost like a satellite for punk, as in Britain. It had hopped over, mixing it all up,” explains the internationally renowned Australian designer, counter culture expert and academic, Rebecca Paterson, whose designs are collected by museums worldwide including London’s V&A.

Paterson has famously collaborated with renowned Japanese textile engineer, Junichi Arai and works with Shibori, the Japanese dying technique, “in an Australian and random way,” experimenting with ancient Asian — Indian, Chinese and Japanese — textile traditions. “I’m interested in how a ‘Larikan’ Australian touch can mix it up with these traditions. I like to muck-up something like Arai does, pinch from Indian, UK, US and Kuta”. Punk is her



THE HOMAGE COLLECTION From left: A punk take on a 1920's dress as part of Rebecca Paterson's 'Homage' collection featuring the Tarvydas ripped stockings and red rose (photo: Stefan Gosatti); An example of Paterson's Shibori textile work that she makes herself.



favorite pop culture. Paterson arrived back in Perth following five-years in Mumbai, in time to design a capsule collection for the festival by her label 33Poets — in honor of her close friend, Ruth Tarvydas, who had committed suicide last year. The internationally acclaimed couture designer, Tarvydas, was a unique pioneer of Australian fashion since 1970 and the first to export outside Australia.

Tarvydas' design ethos was classic, relaxed yet razor sharp couture, pieces that held red carpet goers enthralled globally. "She was a very, very good cutter like Galliano — she was sexy and could make it work on the body," says Paterson, "and her personal style equally strong. She would wear the officer's hats with sexy legs, off the shoulder and short. That was her signature, and we never saw her without it." Festival director, Mariella Harvey-Hanrahan, initiated a tribute runway show celebrating her most iconic designs. "I think everyone was inspired and humbled by the beauty and genius of her life's work," says Paterson. Harvey-Hanrahan invited Paterson to show at the festival because she wanted to bring something different to the audience "I knew she would deliver something special," Paterson says.

Paterson's punk, sub culture perspective honored Tarvydas' classic couture "in respect of Ruth's beauty, her genius, her questing — and love of roses. I chucked in a whole heap, it could not have worked without her roses," she says. The collection titled 'Homage' "was back to the 70s" and heavily featured ripped stockings: "I wore them in the 80s, she appropriated them in an evening look in a 90s collection, so I did that homage to her collection — with my punk roots. It was romantic punk — flowers, stockings, putting contradictions together," says Paterson.

Tarvydas was to feature in a book of famous people wearing Paterson's clothes. "I was inspired by Ruth liking and wanting to wear the silk georgette Dadadada top with over knee boots and her signature officer's hat. She was a Dadadada girl, party girl and also deeply spiritual." Poignantly, Paterson says designing 'Homage' "was like a pilgrimage — in part, my creative process reflecting aspects of her unique romantic work — so it was a sweet ritual".

Paterson explains that "Ruth and Rei Kawakubo would

definitely look at punk, but in an intellectual way. I think that the way Rei looked at what she was doing; 'I am going to do whatever I like' — punk in general allowed that. Rei is looking at it in art terms and she would place it onto the frock. I think that Ruth took that freedom that Rei took to the world. It came from questioning and counter questioning."

Enduring punk appeal is such that in 2004, a Sheikha from Abu Dhabi bought Paterson's entire 'Selfh' collection; "not evening stuff but punk". The princess arrived with bodyguards. Everything had to be made ten inches longer; a short skirt would be made right to the ground. It was Bauhaus — I flipped it around but kept the original font so it was Hausbau — she loved it!" Paterson says.

Twenty years on, the late Alexander McQueen has passed the gauntlet to the courageous Sarah Burton, a transformed John Galliano is at the helm of Maison Martin Margiela, Hussein Chalayan has revived Vionnet couture. And the couturiers are rebel heroes displaying an enduring punk attitude that will never die. ▀