

## V&A Acquires Behind-the-Scenes Photographs by Ann Ray of Lee Alexander McQueen at work

Unfallen Angels II, 2009 © Ann Ray



As the V&A prepares to open its major exhibition *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, the V&A has acquired 13 photographs by Ann Ray (also known as Anne Deniau) from an extraordinary body of work described by Lee Alexander McQueen as ‘my life in pictures’.

McQueen and Ray formed a close friendship in the 1990s and between 1997 and 2010, Ray was granted great freedom to photograph in McQueen’s studio and at his shows with ‘no guidelines’. The resulting photographs capture the frenetic activity behind-the-scenes of every catwalk show, the intense preparations for each spectacular performance as well as portraits of the designer in reflective and joyous moments. In total Ray shot approximately 35,000 photographs, all on film.

Ann Ray was born in Brest, France, in 1969. She took up photography in the 1990s and lived in Tokyo from 1995 to 1997, working for clients such as Cartier and Givenchy. Her images appeared in publications including *Elle*, *Marie Claire* and *La Seine*. She began working with McQueen when she moved to London. They shared a passion for the handcrafted and unique. Ray is fascinated by 19th and early 20th-century processes and employs printing techniques such as bromoil and gum bichromate, even hand painting on lith prints with watercolours and oils.

The works acquired by the V&A include a gum bichromate print from 2002, two unique vivid blue cyanotypes from 1998, and 10 gelatin silver prints dating from 1998 to 2010. Four of the photographs were purchased by the V&A through the Cecil Beaton Fund, a further nine were given to the Museum by Ann Ray. Three of the photographs have never before been published.

Ann Ray said: “*Beyond the true honour and joy it represents for an artist to enter a photography collection like the one of the V&A, I am deeply convinced that it makes so much sense. Lee Alexander McQueen treasured the V&A and enjoyed being there. With these 13 iconic photographs entering the Museum collection, as the Savage*

*Beauty exhibition is about to begin, I just feel that they are at the right place, at the right time. As for the man himself, I knew him well, and I loved him well... Being gifted with his trust, and being keen to do my duty and manage his 'life in pictures', I cherish the idea that these photographs made with a fierce passion and full dedication – art for art, indeed – are now at a place that Lee would joyfully approve. I warmly thank the V&A, Claire Wilcox and Susanna Brown in helping me doing what I believe is right. Lee is at home at the V&A. After five years when I missed him every day, I can smile.”*

Susanna Brown, V&A Curator of Photographs, said: “*Ann Ray’s photographs are filled with poetry, lyricism and drama. Through Ann’s generosity, the V&A has been able to acquire a wonderful selection of photographs spanning Ann and McQueen’s long collaboration. It is particularly exciting to be the first museum in the world to include her work in our permanent collection.”*

The photographs are available to view by appointment in the V&A’s Prints and Drawings Study Room. The details of all 13 photographs can be found on the V&A’s online collection database <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>.

*Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, the only major retrospective in Europe of the work of the visionary fashion designer Lee Alexander McQueen opens at the V&A on 14 March 2015.

**ENDS**

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- The V&A Photographs Collection is designated the UK’s national collection of the art of photography. The Collection includes approximately 500,000 photographs and is international in scope, spanning the whole history of the medium from the 1830s to the present day.
- *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* in partnership with Swarovski, supported by American Express, with thanks to M·A·C Cosmetics and technology partner Samsung, will run at the V&A from 14 March until 2 August 2015. Advance booking is advised – this can be done in person at the V&A; online at [www.vam.ac.uk/savagebeauty](http://www.vam.ac.uk/savagebeauty); or by calling 0800 912 6961 (booking fee applies)
- In celebration of *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty* opening, two prints in a limited edition of 75 by Ann Ray will be available to buy in the V&A shop.

- The never before published images are marked with \* as below.

**Details of the Ann Ray (aka Anne Deniau) photographs acquired by the V&A**

1. *Erin as Angel*, 1998

Unique vintage gelatin silver print, printed by the artist

2. *XIII Pale blue Eyes*, 1998

Unique cyanotype, printed by the artist

3. *Insensé*, 1998\*

Unique cyanotype, printed by the artist

4. *Inside*, 2000\*

Gelatin silver print, printed by Hervé Caté

5. *Les Oiseaux*, 2000

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

6. *The Naked Truth*, 2002

Unique gum bichromate print, printed by the artist

7. *Wind Tunnel, II*, 2003

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

8. *No Game*, 2004

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

9. *Birdy II*, 2006

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

10. *Red featherweight*, 2008

C-print, printed by Hervé Caté

11. *Deep Dive*, 2009

Gelatin silver print, printed by Hervé Caté

12. *Unfallen Angels II*, 2009\*

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

13. *Disappearance*, 2010

Gelatin silver print, printed by Didier Leger

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