

Dance Macabre

Abbey Sloman Smith

My final body of work is titled '*Danse Macabre*' and is a fashion collaboration between Adelaide based designer Paolo Sebastian, and the characters of Arcadia, who were created in order to promote Paolo Sebastian's work. The collaboration consists of illustrations, depicting the characters wearing a variety of Sebastian's designs, both old and new.

Throughout the design process, the characters were heavily inspired by *Transistor*, especially Jen Zee's, an illustrator working for Supergiant games, work and design for the characters. Next was Hirohiko Araki's, a famous Japanese manga artist, own characters from *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*. There was also the dark and gory aesthetic within the artwork for *Alice: Madness Returns* which greatly interested me. These aesthetics were unique and were executed expertly within their respective medias, which is what I also wanted to achieve with the characters I designed. The dark aesthetic mixed with eccentric designs is something rarely done. Each artist's work interested me greatly, and I admired their unique use of fashion and colour for their characters, which is what I wanted to convey as well. The villains within *Transistor* and *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* share an eccentricity and style, which is what I wanted to also convey with my own characters. This combined with the previously mentioned dark and gory aesthetic, justified the characters being villains in their own fiction.

The creation the characters, that would later become Arcadia, involved creating a mood board which contained images that inspired or linked to the type of character I wanted to create. For example, with Ares a lot of child-like images and models were used, which played part in how Ares has a child-like nature, style, and appearance. I created initial sketches based off the mood-boards, then further refined the designs, playing with alternative hair styles that suited the character, and further exploration of colour palettes. The names of the characters were found using key words such as religion, mythology, and figures within history. A lot of the characters names eluded to the idea that they were villains, which is why they are so important. For example, Hecate's name comes from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, where Hecate is the queen of the witches. Another is how Ares is named after the Greek god of war and violence, contrasting his childish nature.

With the characters designed, there was the question of *how* they'd be used to promote high-end fashion. Tying back to the influences of the characters, Hirohiko Araki famously did a collaboration between *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* and *Gucci*, where he created a small graphic novel and various illustrations using his characters. Lauren Tsai, an American illustrator, collaborated with renowned fashion label, Marc Jacobs, but she designed illustrations for bags and jackets, making it more about a physical piece of fashion. This contrasts Hirohiko Araki's work, which mainly consisted of the representation of fashion via illustrations, rather than the creation of garments and accessories that could be sold commercially. In order to still maintain individuality within my own work, my body of work was to be a similar fashion collaboration, but using elements from Lauren Tsai's Marc Jacob's collaboration and personal ideas. I decided to use both elements, as it broadens potential audiences. The duality of this broadens the target audience, going from avant-garde and high-end fashion, to what can easily be commercially produced at a more affordable level.

The final body of work comprises of two 90x180cm banners, an assortment of framed illustrations, and a painted small bag and purse. These have been created mainly using a Wacom tablet, but for the physical pieces I used a variety of acrylic paints, Posca pens, and an assortment of fine-tip art-line pens. I used this range of media because it added more variety and texture to the body of work, which was befitting of the themes and aesthetics.

The bigger pieces, the banners, proved to be the more difficult, and only one seems to have fulfilled its purpose to promote the outfits. The one depicting Jack came out too dark, and lacked any depth and dimension, which contrasted the statue beneath him, making his outfit blend in. The entire piece seems uncoordinated, and only after editing it in Photoshop and adjusting colours and values, did it begin to slowly come together. This was compromised greatly, though, as it enabled me to take advantage of the darker tones and explore that darker aesthetic seen within *Alice: Madness Returns*.

Initially, the showcasing of the sketches was originally a graphic novel/art book, similar to *Jolyne, Fly High with GUCCI* by Hirohiko Araki. Partway through the completion, it became evident that the creation of so many designs and pages would take away from the complexity and skill required with creating just a few characters. There was no purpose for more, when doing something simple and small delivered the meaning and purpose just as well. This was overcome by selecting five finished illustrations, one for each character, and displaying them within picture frames.

Altogether, the collaboration and body of work fulfils its purpose of delivering the brand across, I wanted to highlight what struck me as iconic to the Paolo Sebastian brand: which was the intricate lace and beautiful gowns. Through the pieces I attempted to highlight the intricacy of the designs by using a variety of contrasting tones to make the lace and patterns stand out and attract the viewers' attention. Within both banners this was achieved by editing and adding a glow to the dresses and bodices, while darkening and desaturating the surrounding areas, making it the key focal point.

As a final outcome, everything came together excellently, as each piece complimented each other, either with trending colours, or a focus of the intricacy of the Paolo Sebastian brand. The use of different media shows a variety of different techniques and textures, unique to both Arcadia and Paolo Sebastian. Overall, the outcome of this body of work highly represents my own ability and technical skill within digital painting and character design, making it very effective.

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