

# **A Study on Jean Paul Gaultier's Costume Design in Film**

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## **I. Introduction**

Since his debut in 1970, the bad boy Jean Paul Gaultier, who has continuously shaken the world of design, is now in his middle age. However, his energy and destructive imagination will continue entertaining us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Like many other fashion designers, film was the original source of his imagination. But his success in film was considerably unusual. A successful marriage between a designer and film could be seen with Givenchy collaborating in the series of films where Audrey Hepburn appeared, Ralph Lauren in <Annie Hall>, and Prada and Dolce & Gabbana in <Romeo & Juliet>.

However, the involvement of those designers on the films was partial. They only lent their signature clothes to them for a short time. Gaultier, for his part, started working with directors, exchanging ideas on the pre-production of each film he participated in, and adding his visual imagination and creativity.

Gaultier has always been collaborating freely with stylists whose shows were visual feasts at their best. All the films he did as a designer were SF fantasy films and fable-like stories. His joint collaboration with SF films, the genre that will give him great freedom as a designer, and with stylists already ensured him of success.

Therefore, this article will analyze the films in which Jean Paul Gaultier worked as a costume designer, and bring out creative design concepts in modern costumes by studying his imagination and ability to create ideas.

## **II. Main Subject and Conclusion**

Gaultier first came into contact with films when he was recruited as a costume designer for <The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover> in 1989 with famous director Peter Greenway. Later, he took the job of art and costume designer for <La Cité des Enfants Perdus> by Jeunet and Caro, where he realized the perfect harmony between film and high fashion design by

devoting all his imagination, making him the best designer in bringing out sexual and shocking, avant-garde images. In <Kika>, particularly, the costumes for each of the four main characters were under the supervision of four internationally renowned designers, namely, Jean Paul Gautier, Gianni Versace, Giorgio Armani, and Paul Smith. They expressed their own ideas toward the mentality and the behavior of each character. In addition, Gautier's touch gave <The Fifth Element> by Luc Besson its originality and futuristic flavor.

1 <The Cook, The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover> – 1989, Director: Peter Greenway

The restaurant, "The Hollandais," which is located in the middle of the city of London, is owned by Albert, a notorious thief and mafia boss. To satisfy his peculiar taste, he hires Richard, the best cook in France. His beautiful wife, Georgina has a secret lover, Michael, a calm and intelligent man. They secretly meet each other in the restaurant. Albert discovers her infidelity soon. Running away from his fierce rage, Georgina and Michael hide in Michael's study room. However, Albert's gang finds Michael. Covered with blood and filth, Michael is killed with his mouth filled with the bits of the book he liked most. Georgina, who found out that her lover was murdered, cries her heart out, and her sorrow rapidly transforms into rage. She plans an unimaginable form of revenge, and asks Richard for help. Thus, the last supper is prepared.

Each space in the film is assigned with a specific color, resulting in stereotypical images and meanings. So does the costume, which is designed according to the color of the given space. In other words, in the restaurant, the space of consumption, bloody red is used, while green, the color of the jungle, is used in the kitchen, and white is used in the bathroom, where the secret lovemaking takes place.

2. <Kika> 1993, Director Pedro Almodovar

Kika, a makeup artist, Ramon, her husband and photographer, Nicholas, the father of Ramon, a novelist and secret lover of Kika, and Andrea, a TV program anchor who commissions broadcasting scripts to Nicholas, are the main characters in <Kika>. As always, the film exhibits the complex and intertwined relationships among these characters, dazzling colors, a crazy love that drives the film toward the dramatic ending, shadows of death, and dormant desires expressed through insatiable impulses to kill. This is the most typical film of Almodovar.

It is sensational that the film was made with four internationally renowned fashion designers, namely, Jean Paul Gautier, Gianni Versace, Giorgio Armani and Paul Smith. They joined hands in designing the costumes of each main character. Their costumes portrayed the behavioral patterns, the mentality, and the characteristics of each protagonist.

3 <The City of Lost Children> 1996, Directors: Jean\_Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro

A single and lonely scientist creates nine humans out of boredom. However, Bismuth, who was supposed to become his wife, is born as a dwarf, as her genes were wrongfully placed, and

another would-be six sons are sleepy heads. Krank, whom he created to succeed to him, cannot dream while sleeping, a fatal defect that makes him grow old as soon as he is born. Finally, Irvin, who is supposed to be his friend, is unfinished, and his brain floats on the aquarium. Very disappointed by his creatures, he hid himself deep in the sea, observing the human world. Some time later, Dr. Krank, who grew old because he could not dream, works as the boss of all the creatures, and lives at an oil drilling ship at sea. Wanting to regain his youth badly, he decided to steal all of his children's dreams. The two very talented directors come up with uncanny storylines and episodes. One of the most creative costumes in the film portrayed the grotesqueness of the film: That of a twin sister showing the coexistence of beauty and ugliness. In addition, the costume of Krank, a genius without the capacity to dream, whose appearance reminds us that of a skeleton, enhances his grotesque look as the leader of all the creatures in this nightmare-like reality.

#### 4. <The Fifth Element> 1997, Director: Luc Besson

The film, based in New York in 2003, tells the story of a group of people who bet their own lives to save the Earth and humankind. It is a joy to read the fashion codes of the future. The task that the characters have to complete is to find the five elements based on the legend of the pyramid, where the five elements refer to soil, water, fire, wind, and one unknown element. The film's synopsis is like a comic book. Korben, a former secret agent in the federal special unit and now a taxi driver, and Leeloo, confront aliens and eventually save the Earth. The shocking costume of Leeloo, the main female character, appears in the beginning of the film. Borrowing a bondage look (a costume that uses straps and strings, giving the impression to cover the body, or the costume using similar kinds of ideas), it lets us peek at some parts of the future in fashion, letting users enjoy maximum body exposure. Later in the film, orange short pants and suspenders, and tight T-shirts and stockings made with light materials are highly stylized to give you the sense of the future.

This study, based on the results of the analysis performed above, is aimed at rediscovering free imagination and the creative spirit of designers at a time when original ideas are lacking, and providing them with a foundation on which they can engage in more creative design activities to develop modern costumes.

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