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FTA: The Loli-Pop Exhibition

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Circa 2007, there was a Gothic Lolita exhibition at the Auckland Museum, called [Loli-Pop](#). It explored the origins of the Japanese street subculture, how it had developed so far, and what different aspects made up the lifestyle of those who took part. I remember being very excited to go to it, and then being shouted by my awesome, subculture-heavy workplace, [Illicit Clothing](#).

The exhibition featured photos of Lolita's from Japan, and costume work by some of my old fashion tutors from [AUT](#). I'd only just graduated from AUT the year before, so I was well proud to be seeing cool and quirky work from some of the tutors who used to give us feedback on our own cool and quirky work.



WHEN GOTHIC MEETS LOLITA

LOLI-POP EXAMINES the phenomenon of the Japanese "Gothic Lolita" culture.

Twenty-four percent of Auckland residents are registered as Asian in the 2006 census, of which 31% falls into the 15-29 age bracket. This thriving youth culture has its own mark on fashion and art in the downtown precinct.

This exhibition will explore the origins of gothic and Lolita; its significance in Japanese pop culture, the fashion's history and relationship with music, the use of "Pullip" dolls



I love when the museum gets behind niche interests like this, because they always do really good job of presenting legit information and history, alongside wonderful visuals, and more recently (like in the [Air New Zealand exhibition](#)), fantastic interactive elements. You get to immerse yourself in another world or time, that you may not have had the privilege of experiencing first-hand. With the Loli-Pop exhibition, they acknowledged the spreading influence that the Gothic Lolita style, and wider Asian culture, had had on the Auckland community to date.

If you're not super-duper familiar with Gothic Lolita or what it was all about, the style is best summed up by the exhibition's curator and lecturer in Contextual and Theoretical Studies at AUT, Kathryn Hardy Bernal:

"The Gothic Lolita, or Loli-Goth, style is designated by fashions inspired by the Rococo, Romantic and Victorian periods. It is based on a particular notion of the Gothic, represented by historical mourning garb, maidservants' wear, children's dresses, and dolls' clothes. The Loli-Goth thus demonstrates a predilection for bloomers, petticoats, pinafores, ribbons, ruffles, bonnets, lace headdresses, parasols, and Mary Jane shoes. The appearance, therefore, often evokes that of a Victorian doll."



Photos from *Tokyo Fashion*





So, before our personal space was encroached on by the petticoats of pinups, the frothy, lacy realm was ruled by the Loli-Goth, and her sometimes sweeter Loli-Sisters. Lace-makers, merchants of velvet and purveyors of corsetry were kept happy and busy. The style's origins held pride in quality of fabrics and trims, and all the intricacies that comes with dressing Victorian. But, as the popularity of the subculture grew (as they tend to do), cheaper mass-produced options came to market, diluting the meaning behind the style. The style got stripped down from its rich beginnings, and adopted as a 'costume' option for Halloween by those outside of the lifestyle.

As a lover of music, art and design, I live for the richness that surrounds subcultures, and it makes me sad to see something usually so full of life, spread so thinly across the masses. But such is life, and when one subculture expands and bursts, there's always another interesting movement in the wings, sparked from the imaginations of creatives.

Life and Death; it's necessary. So it's great to capture the life of a subculture while it's still full of it, and makes exhibitions like Loli-Pop MUSTS.

Source: [1](#)





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