

Loli-pop

TUESDAY, 14 AUGUST 2007

Asian popular culture and fashion has forever changed the look of downtown Auckland. Auckland Museum's latest exhibition, Loli-Pop, explores the extreme edges of this culture: the Japanese Gothic Lolita phenomenon.

The pulse of Asia beats strong in Auckland City. This was reflected in the 2006 census which identified 24% of Auckland residents as Asian, 31% of the bracket of 15 – 29. This thriving youth culture has made its mark on fashion and art in Auckland's downtown precinct.

Auckland Museum will explore the origins of gothic and Lolita; its significance in Japan's pop culture, the fashion's history and relationship with music, dolls and New Zealand's growing fascination with the street fashion. This is an exciting exhibition for those into fashion and Japanese subculture. It is the opening of the Museum's new Arts of Asian Gallery.

Curator Kathryn Hardy Bernal, lecturer in Contextual and Theoretical Studies at AUT says that the exhibition aims to explore the relationships between fashion and popular culture.

Having started in the seventies, its rise to prominence and media attention occurred by the late nineties, around the time of Japan's economic instability. In the field of psychiatry observing its relation to deep anxiety and a longing for childhood security. Purveyors of this culture also disassociate it with Vladimir Nabokov's novel, noting that they're looking "cute" and "elegant" rather than overtly sexual.

Hardy Bernal explains that "The Gothic Lolita, or Loli-Goth, style is designated by fashions inspired by the Rococo, Romantic and Victorian periods. A particular notion of the Gothic, represented by historical mourning garb, maidservants' wear, children's dresses, and dolls' clothes. The Loli-Goth has a predilection for bloomers, petticoats, pinafores, ribbons, ruffles, bonnets, lace headaddresses, parasols, and Mary Jane shoes. The appearance, therefore, is that of a Victorian doll."

Loli-Pop brings together the relationships between the Loli-Goth and popular culture, and the strong association of the Loli-Goth with the doll, including Hardy Bernal's personal collection of Japanese Lolita dolls. This display is supported by the highlight of the show, five full-sized garments created by Auckland University Fashion staff members, Angie Finn, Yvonne Stewart, Lize Niemczyk, Gabriella Trussardi, Carmel Donnelly and Kathryn Hardy Bernal, who have created their own interpretations of Gothic & Lolita, inspired by Japanese street style. The exhibit is complimented by a backdrop of photographs that show the outfits when worn, modelled by AUT University Bachelor of Fashion Design students, Emily Huang, Shangshang Cookie Wang, Emily Wang, Shi and Yanling Wang.

A visual framework is incorporated by two further photographic series, taken on the streets of Tokyo, documenting current incarnations of Gothic & Lolita, supported by images of local Loli-Goths, contributing to the New Zealand context of the Exhibition.