



Vivienne Westwood, "Statue of Liberty" corset and skirt, silver leather, pink leather, silver metallic lamé, white silk tulle, *Time Machine* collection, fall 1988, England, museum purchase.

Vivienne Westwood, 1980-89 has been organized by the graduate students in the Fashion Institute of Technology's MA program in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice.

Sarah Altman	Education Coordinator
Jessica Barber	Researcher
Clara Berg	Media Relations
Rebecca Beyth	Researcher/Design Assistant
Audrey Chaney	Curator
Ariele Elia	Project Manager
Laura McLaws Helms	Researcher/Exhibition Historian
Emma Kadar-Penner	Curator
Miriam Murphy	Exhibition Designer
Cassidy Percoco	Education Coordinator
Tatiana Sol Verdon	Registrar

We would like to thank the many people who helped make this exhibition possible:

Dr. Joyce F. Brown, President, Fashion Institute of Technology

From the School of Graduate Studies: Acting Dean Frank T. Koe, Professor Rebecca Shea, Professor Denyse Montegut, Professor Lourdes Font, and Umilta Allsop

From The Museum at FIT: Director and Chief Curator Dr. Valerie Steele, Deputy Director Patricia Mears, Assistant Curator of Accessories Colleen Hill, and Publications Coordinator Julian Clark; Acting Senior Curator Fred Dennis; Senior Conservator Ann Coppinger, and Marjorie Jonas and Maria Fusco of the Conservation Department, and Museum Photographer Eileen Costa; Sonia Dingilian and Jill Hemingway of the Museum Registrar's Office; Exhibitions Production Coordinator Ken Nintzel, and Michael Goitia, and Tommy Synnagon of the Exhibitions Department; Lynn Sallaberry of the Costume Department; Curator of Education Tanya Melendez and Associate Curator of Education Melissa Marra, and Media Manager Tamsen Schwartzman; Special Museum Consultant Ward Mintz

From the Saturday and Sunday Live Program: Michele Nagel

From the Gladys Marcus Library's Special Collections at FIT: Karen Trivette Cannell and Juliet Jacobson

From Communications and External Relations: Cheri Fein, Carol Leven, and Smiljana Peros

Special thanks to: Jen Pressley, Creative Director, Mirror NYC

Special thanks also to: Laura Levine, Mercedes Velgot of Video Fashion, SONY Music Entertainment, and Martin Cohn

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD, 1980-89

March 8, 2011-April 2, 2011

Cover: Vivienne Westwood, *Rocking Horse* boot, black leather and wood, *Harris Tweed* collection, fall 1986, England, gift of Francisco Melendez A.K.A. François.

All photographs © The Museum at FIT, New York, unless otherwise indicated

The Museum at FIT

Seventh Avenue at 27th Street
New York City 10001-5992
www.fitnyc.edu/museum

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, noon-8 pm
Saturday, 10 am-5 pm
Closed Sunday, Monday,
and legal holidays
Admission is free

Museum information line: 212 217.4558

VIVIENNE WESTWOOD, 1980-89

March 8, 2011-April 2, 2011

The Museum at FIT



VIVIENNE WESTWOOD, 1980-89

Vivienne Westwood, 1980-89 is the first exhibition to focus on Vivienne Westwood's transformation from Punk provocateur to high-end fashion designer during the 1980s, a decade when underground style grew to prominence on the runways of London. The refinement of Westwood's design aesthetic during this period established her as a leader in contemporary fashion. Today, Westwood continues to energize the industry with her rebellious sensibilities.

Born in 1941 in Derbyshire, England, Vivienne Westwood briefly studied fashion before training to become a schoolteacher. In 1965, she met Malcolm McLaren, a brash young artist who encouraged her to explore her creativity. Soon they opened Let It Rock, a boutique on King's Road in London, and began producing clothing characterized by rips, safety pins, and antiestablishment graphics. Westwood and McLaren gained exposure when the Sex Pistols, a rock band briefly managed by McLaren, wore Let It Rock designs on stage.

While the store began as a center of Punk style, its name and focus would change several times before it finally became World's End in 1980. In that year, a thirteen-hour, backwards-running clock was installed over the doorway, and the store was redecorated to recall the interior of a ship. Westwood and McLaren had previously sought to promote anarchy through their designs; they now wanted to shake up the fashion establishment with their first-ever runway presentation. For the *Pirates* collection (autumn/winter 1981), male and female models sported headphones as they danced down the catwalk. *Pirates* evoked an imagined past: unisex ensembles inspired by eighteenth-century men's undergarments were styled with bicorne hats, slouched boots, and sash belts.



Laura Levine, *Annabella Lwin*, NYC, 1981. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist. © Laura Levine.



World's End (Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood), unisex ensemble, multicolor striped cotton, *Pirates* collection, fall 1981, England, gift of Barbara Hodes.

These swashbuckling styles were immediately embraced by the New Romantics, a style group that included music acts, gallery owners, and street fashion insiders.

Pirates and subsequent World's End collections of the first half of the decade were featured prominently in an alternative press that catered to a young audience interested in nightclub life, style, music, and art. Publications, such as *The Face* and *i-D*, saw the World's End look as part of a larger sartorial trend for layered, baggy clothing. While some members of the London street style scene found the designs to be highly desirable, the pricing was often beyond their reach. In 1982, *The Face* featured a *Buffalo* collection ensemble (autumn/winter 1982-3), but lamented, "You'd have to own a herd or two to afford some of these clothes. Guess it's the thrift-store look again for the rest of us."

Many well-known musicians began wearing World's End designs in music

videos, a new phenomenon that quickly became influential. Celebrity fans of World's End—such as Boy George of Culture Club and the pop group Adam and the Ants—were established as style icons when they appeared on MTV in 1982. Members of McLaren's music project, Bow Wow Wow, wore World's End garments for their concerts, videos, and album covers. This increased exposure drew the attention of the mainstream fashion press, and international fashion buyers flocked to London's fashion shows.

By 1984, in spite of the company's growing success, creative differences forced Westwood and McLaren to end their partnership. The iconic *Mini-Crini* collection (spring/summer 1985) was designed solely by Vivienne Westwood, and a new aesthetic emerged in her work. Westwood focused on women's wear, cleverly using tailoring techniques traditionally associated with menswear to draw attention to a distinctly feminine figure. Flirtatious elements,

"If you look at any movement...it's people rejecting what's just behind them and pulling something out of the past."

—Vivienne Westwood, 1986

such as plunging necklines and revealing hemlines, also entered her design vocabulary. A new clientele responded favorably to this assertive femininity, which provided an alternative to the broad-shouldered power-suit that dominated mid-1980s fashion. Romilly McAlpine, wife of a conservative British MP, recalled what first attracted her to Westwood's silhouette in 1985: "Maybe because I was leading such a conventional life...as a politician's wife, and participating so much in what was then the current establishment, it was fun to have something irreverent, but classical."

Westwood has often professed an admiration for the eighteenth-century paintings and decorative art objects displayed in the Wallace Collection in London. Paintings—such as the amorous scenes by Boucher and Fragonard—provided inspiration for Westwood's updated version of the corset. *Harris Tweed* (autumn/winter 1987-8), *Time Machine* (autumn/winter 1988-9), and *Civilizade* (spring/summer 1989) all featured corsets reworked in soft materials that allowed freedom of movement. Her "Statue of Liberty" corset (*Time Machine*) was crafted from supple leather, dyed a lustrous silver, and fitted with a bold zipper running down the back.

Vivienne Westwood's work from the 1980s unites historical costume, street culture, and mainstream fashion in a rebellious style that is unmistakably Westwood. The decade that saw her rise from shop owner to runway fashion maverick culminated with a *British Vogue* cover in 1989, as well as the British Designer of the Year Award in 1990. Westwood was recognized and applauded as an interpreter of British heritage. In acknowledgement of her contributions to British culture, Westwood was awarded the title of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2006. In keeping with

her commitment to culture, Westwood now leads a campaign called Active Resistance, which bears the motto "Get a Life!" and encourages eco-awareness, as well as freedom of expression. Her

activism takes the form of a cultural challenge: resist propaganda, self-educate, and exercise individuality.

Audrey Chaney and Emma Kadar-Penner, Curators



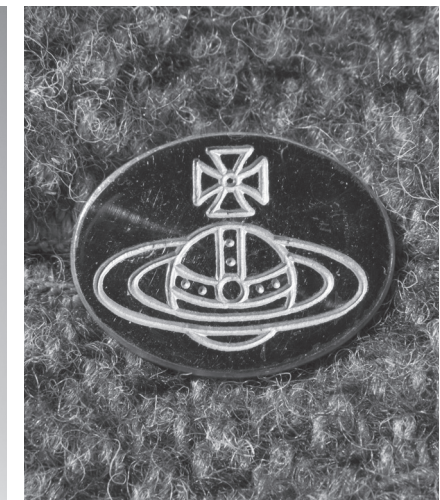
Laura Levine, *Boy George*, London, 1982. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist. © Laura Levine.



World's End (Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood), bra top and skirt, brown satin, brown printed cotton, *Buffalo* collection, fall 1982, England, museum purchase.



Vivienne Westwood, woman's jacket and skirt ensemble, purple tweed, red tartan wool, white cotton, *Time Machine* collection, fall 1988, England, museum purchase.



Vivienne Westwood, detail of woman's jacket, purple tweed, gold metal, *Time Machine* collection, fall 1988, England, museum purchase.