



"...SHARPER TEETH THAN TEETH OF
MICE HAVE GNAWED AT ME."
GREAT EXPECTATIONS, CHARLES DICKENS

KAMBRIEL

INTERVIEWED BY NEIL GAIMAN

NEIL GAIMAN : Do you ever sew wishes into garments? Or dreams? Or spells?

KAMBRIEL : Absolutely...in every piece I've ever made. I believe when an artist is in the process of creating their work, a kind of magical alchemy can't help but be involved. For me, this often comes in the form of the energy with which a piece is being made, the thoughts that are running through my head, the wishes I have for the person's future, and what I hope they will personally experience and feel whilst wearing the creation. It is vitally important to me when creating something for others that only positive enchantments be imparted...I want them to be able to -feel- there is something more than just cloth, buttons, lace, and thread. I want them to feel the energy, love, inspiration, care, and admiration with which it was made. That said, when creating something for myself, I am willing to go to a much darker place, using my own pains, sadnesses, the memories of tragedies, and turning those into an energy that ultimately can be used to create something beautiful out of what was once a very dark place. For instance, the entire time I was making my Miss Havisham gown, my heart felt torn to pieces, and it was tragically all too easy to embody her spirit of penultimate disappointment whilst trying so hard to hold onto dreams which might once have been.

NEIL GAIMAN : How do you know when you've made something that changes someone for the better?

KAMBRIEL : I'm not sure if I can change someone for the better so much as that I desire to help bring out the best of who they truly are - and by best, that could mean connecting with some mystical aspect of their spirit that's normally hidden beneath the surface, a dark luxury, a sense of freedom in outwardly expressing that which normally resides deep inside. In some cases, such as with a performer, I know this magical combination has been reached when I see them on stage and there's a sense of fullness, of oneness...a sense of them revealing something of themselves, of beginning to tell a story before a single word is sung or spoken.

NEIL GAIMAN : The gulf between what you dream of making for someone and the reality. How big is it? How easy is it to cross?

KAMBRIEL : Sometimes this can depend upon how much freedom I have to follow my own vision and imagination, or if I need to make a more concerted effort to work within another's own more particular, personal desires. Of course, the real magic happens when both of these can overlap. In some instances, I've worked with people who will give me as little to go on as a colour, but once I combine that with my knowledge of their personal style, or in some cases their own art/music/stories, the picture begins to fill in, and layers are added until a point is reached wherein they can see themselves in the reflection I've created.

NEIL GAIMAN : If you were forbidden from crafting things people could wear, what would you do?

KAMBRIEL : First of all, I'd be rather impressed and bemused to have gotten to the point of being forbidden! This reminds me of when Paul Poinet received a Papal condemnation from Pope Pius X for his harem-slave pantaloons and hobble skirts which for all (im)practical purposes, shackled ladies ankles, even though he was ironically a forerunning designer in liberating women from being engaged in restrictive corsets. I suppose it would all depend on if I'd need a job to earn a living in this textile-crazed world, or if I could simply do and go wherever else my heart leads me. If money were no issue, I'd perhaps disappear to some far away island with a little-known animal sanctuary and do what I could there to help preserve both the endangered animals, as well as the land itself. Ultimately, the most important job any of us have is to be good stewards of the amazingly generous and rare planet that supports us - to make sure we do no harm to maintaining its exquisite natural balance, that we do not stand idly by while species of plants or animals go extinct due to our own pervasive usage and potential destruction of its resources, to learn to see animals as equals with every bit as much entitlement to a nurturing living space as we take for ourselves, and to make sure those around us feel more loved, appreciated, and cared for than they would if we were not here.

NEIL GAIMAN : If you could bring one fashion back from the past -- one thing swept away into time -- what would it be?

KAMBRIEL : Whilst it was once more in the realm of jewelry/accessories than fashion per se, I've always been intrigued by sentimental/mourning Victorian hairwork. These pieces, created from the locks of loved ones, sometimes dear hearts who were still alive, but often for those who had recently died, provided a way to continue to carry a bit of that person with you - a tangible bridge between life and death or togetherness and being apart. The designs of these pieces ranged from having a simple plait or lock of hair pressed beneath a glass locket or ring's cabochon, to artistically dimensional renderings of flowers filled with hidden meanings. This could include the sombre grace of a weeping willow, or other scenes made entirely from human hair upon stark backgrounds, sometimes using several different colours of hair from a multitude of generations of different family members. Intricately braided and interwoven "chains" or ropes of hair became daily wear, used to hold pocket watches and other items. With its roots in mourning, I find the incorporation of such an intimately personal element, worn so close to the body, a deeply touching gesture to our intrinsic wish to maintain some physical connection with those we love. It combines beauty, sentiment, mystery, a touch of the macabre and an enchanting sense of impermanence that, with love, can endure.



KAMBRIEL

photo of Kambriel by T. Dolin



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