

FEBRUARY 11, 2010

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Fashion: Victim

8th February 2010

Dear Mr McQueen,

Please forgive me the intrusion and allow me to introduce myself to you. I am a jeweller, based in Scotland, and for some years now have been following your work with interest. In the last few months, I have been working up to actually writing to you with a view to discussing the possibility of a collaboration between us as I have convinced myself that there is some level of aesthetic and philosophical common ground which we both tread. While I am sure that you must receive requests like this all the time, I would be grateful if you could spend a few moments looking at the images I have enclosed. If these appeal to you, you can either email or write to me at the address above.

I thank you for your time and wish you every continued success.

Yours,

Dauvit Alexander.

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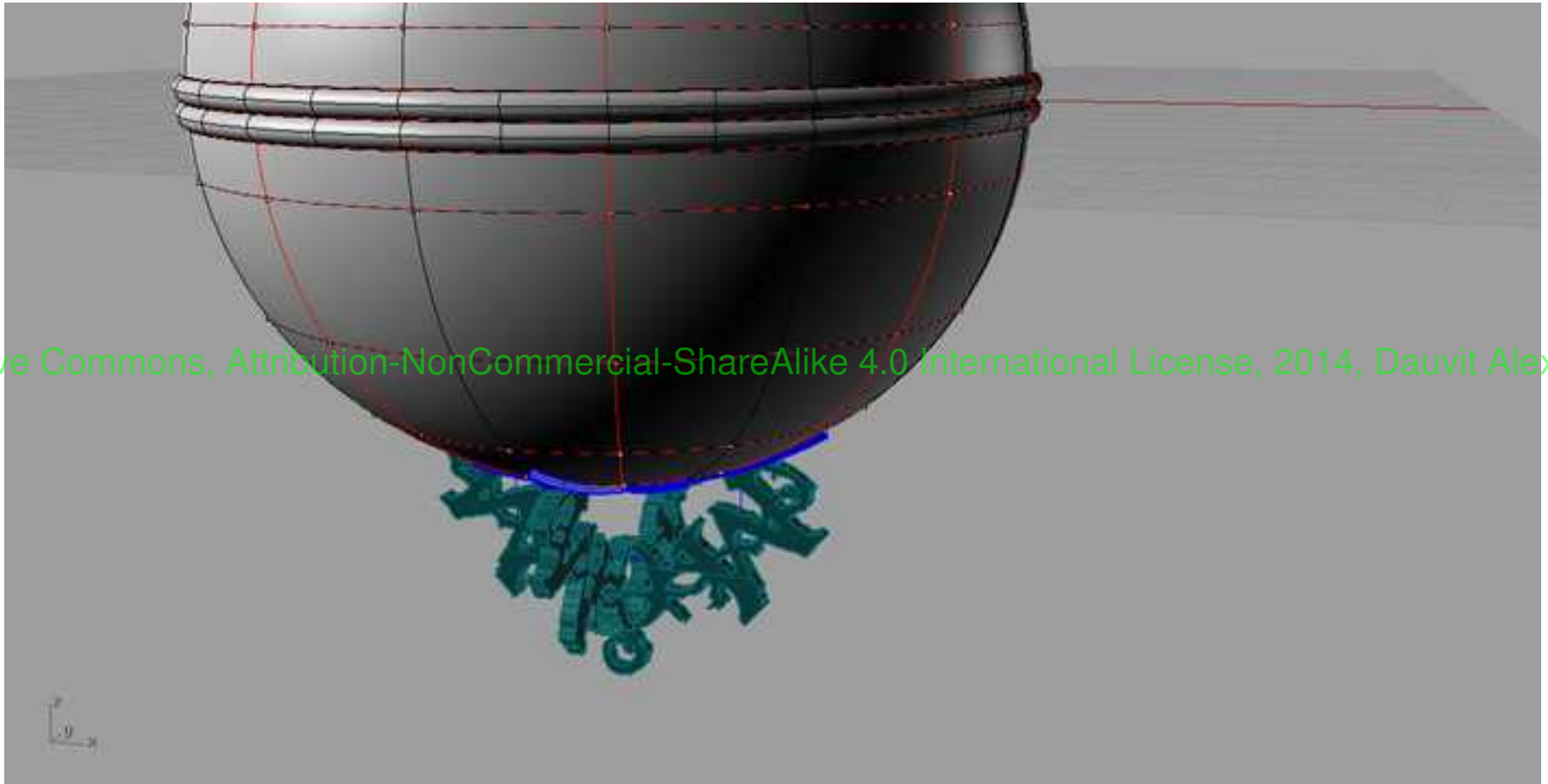
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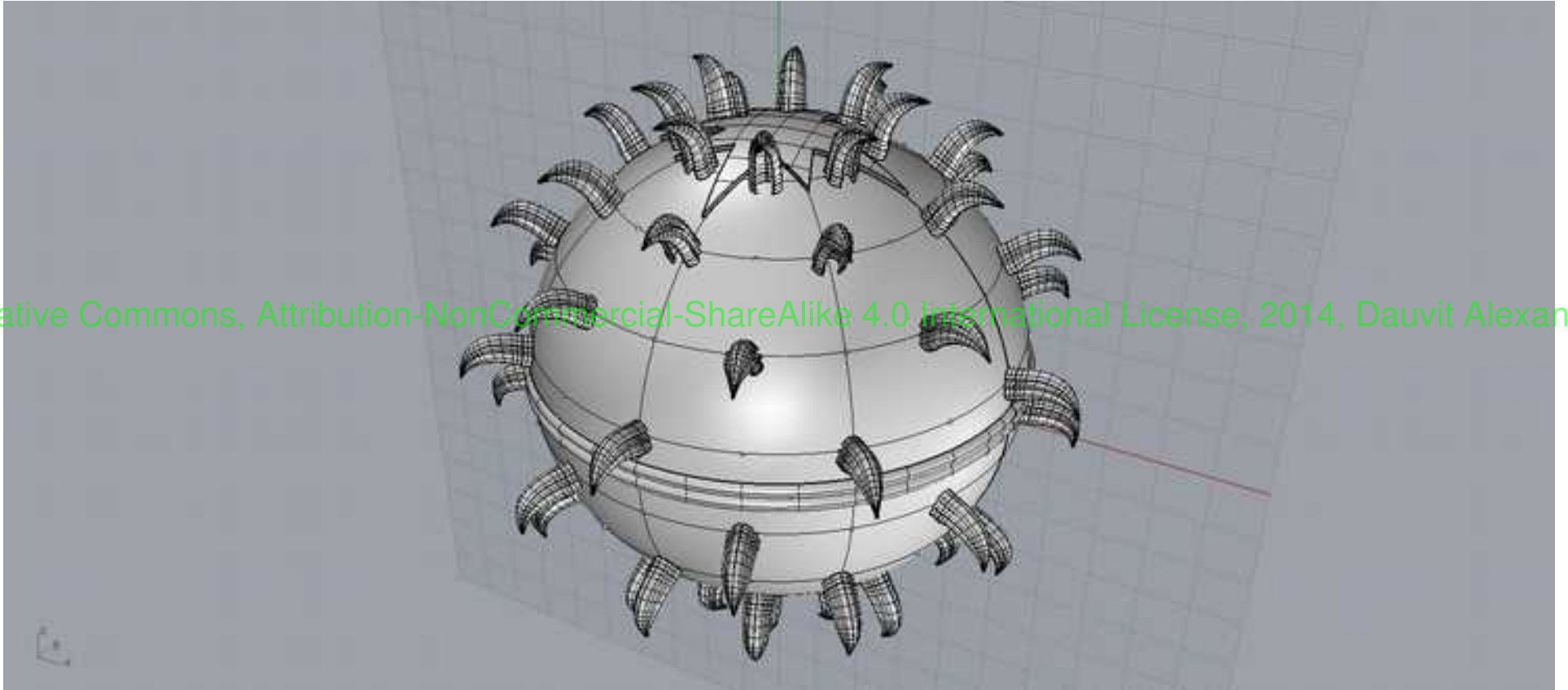
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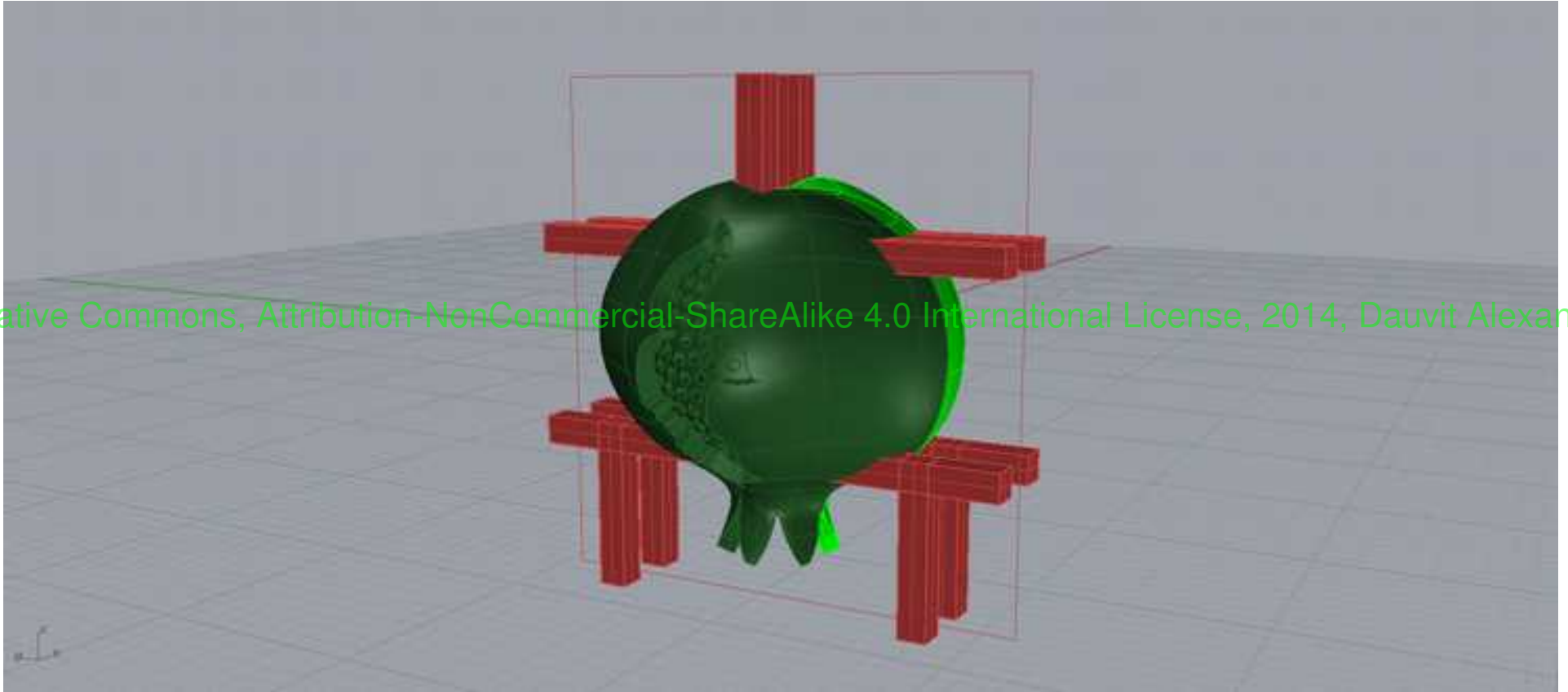
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- <http://www.shaulneane.com/diary/view/retrospective-the-coiled-corset>
- Carol Docherty (wax carvings) - <http://jewellerydoc.com/>
- Inness Thomson (stone settter) - <http://innessthomson.wix.com/jewellery>
- Lisa Stevens (ceramic artist) - <http://c-urchin.blogspot.co.uk/>
- Carradale Foundry (large precious metal castings) - <http://www.jewellerycastingscotland.com/>
- Cólín Ó Dubhghaill, Shibuichi - <http://www.coilin.com/>
- Judy Clark - <http://judyrclark.com/>

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The Talk

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FEBRUARY 11, 2010

Over the weekend of the 6th and 7th of February, 2010, I had plucked up enough courage to write a letter to Alexander McQueen – a proper letter, on paper, using a pen and ink. I posted it on Monday 8th February. He killed himself in the early hours of Wednesday 11th.

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8th February 2010

Dear Mr McQueen,

Please forgive me the intrusion and allow me to introduce myself to you. I am a jeweller, based in Scotland, and for some years now have been following your work with interest. In the last few months, I have been working up to actually writing to you with a view to discussing the possibility of a collaboration between us as I have convinced myself that there is some level of aesthetic and philosophical common ground which we both tread. While I am sure that you must receive requests like this all the time, I would be grateful if you could spend a few moments looking at the images I have enclosed. If these appeal to you, you can either email or write to me at the address above.

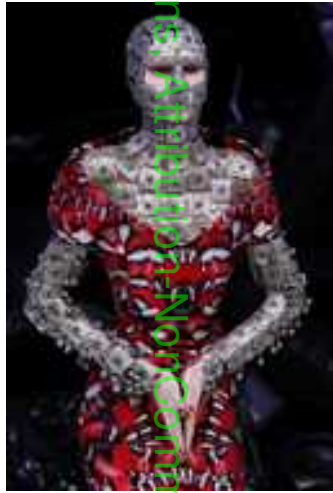
I thank you for your time and wish you every continued success.

Yours,
Dauvit Alexander.

Although I am normally a fairly well-dressed individual, I don't consider myself to be versed in Haute Couture – this scarf is the only piece of McQueen's work I own – and although I appreciate the role that British designers of the 20th and 21st Centuries have played in the world of fashion, it wasn't until Alexander McQueen came along that I started to take note.

This is the text of the letter I wrote to him.

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To suggest that McQueen was a “Fashion Designer” is to entirely miss the point. McQueen was an artist of the highest order, a top-notch craftsman but he was so much more...

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He was a sculptor...

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A maverick...

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A dramatist...

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And an historian...

Perhaps it is wishful thinking, but I like to think that my own work represents a small fraction of these elements too... drama, history, craftsmanship, a maverick streak. Whatever it was, I felt compelled to watch out for McQueen's work whenever I saw it after having seen his infamous VOSS show in 2001.

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VOSS was a piece of theatre rather than a fashion show, a scripted drama which turned fashion journalism on its head. For me, I became interested in it as I read an article in, of all places, Retail Jeweller, about the involvement of Shaun Leanne in the creation of a piece for the show, the spectacular silver necklace set with Tahitian pearls worn by Kate Moss who proceeded to destroy a pair of trousers covered in razor shells...

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Everything about this piece appeals to me as a jeweller and everything about the image appeals to me as an artist.

From that moment on, I became aware of McQueen's own interest in jewellery in the broadest sense and I started to notice that he worked with many jewellers to create the accessories for his shows...

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So it was that I was determined to contact him.

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It took nearly ten years for me to pluck up the courage to write. And then...

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The work that I made for this ICONS show is a reflection of McQueen's life and how I feel about his death. It is not celebratory in the usual sense of the word and, like much of his own work, deals with the macabre

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The first element of the piece is the cuff, made from corroded iron – which I found on a beach in Caithness - sterling silver and it is set with garnets. This piece can only be attached and detached from the wrist only with difficulty; it is a form of handcuff, it relates to ideas of bondage, subservience and repression and reflects the way that I feel that McQueen the artist was shackled to both his genius and his demons.

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Hanging from the cuff are two, detachable “handbags” made from corroded iron spheres which I found in a burnt-out factory in Kent. The factory was beautiful in its destroyed state and I collected eight of these spheres in 2008, without really knowing what I wanted to do with them.

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This is the factory, a kind of accidental Frank Gehry building.

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The steel balls are shown in this picture.

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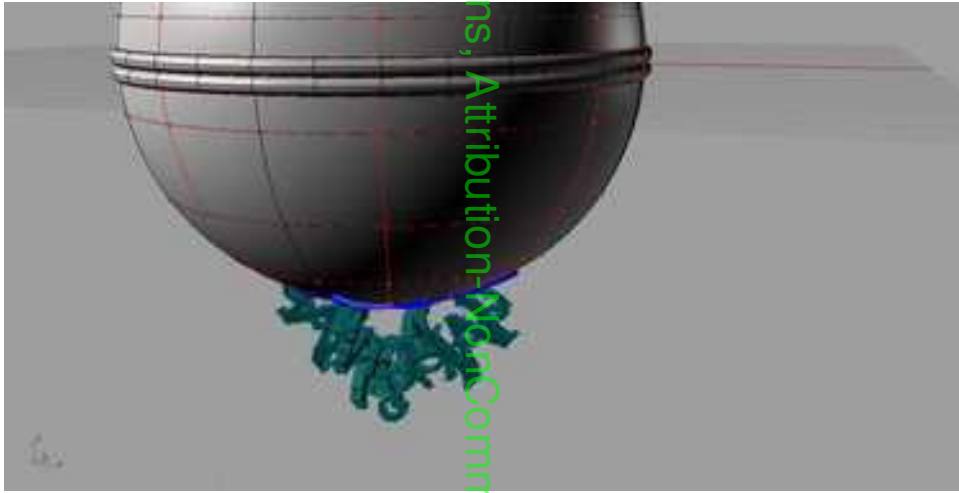


This sphere is titled “The Illusion of Freedom Buys The Power of Destruction”. It isn't really known that Alexander McQueen was quite the expert at hunting with raptors. He kept hawks on Isabella Blow's husband's estate in Gloucestershire. Apart from the sheer mediaevalism of falconry this theme seemed to suit my perceptions of his life, free to explore his flights of imagination yet bonded and tethered to many obligations.

This sphere is covered in defensive talons and the top features a hooded falcon-head. The claw below – cast from a real falcon's foot – holds a large rock-crystal and the falconry bell around the leg is made to a traditional pattern and sounds when moved.

The structure supporting the claw is an extravagantly pierced and engraved monogram on the letters M-C and Q.

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Some of you will know that I use a lot of digital technology in my work, even though that may not be immediately apparent, and it was important to me that these pieces took as multi-disciplinary an approach as possible, including digital work, traditional work, collaborations and a range of precious and non-precious materials, rather as McQueen approached his own design work.

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Here you can see the porcelain hooded falcon head made by ceramics artist, Lisa Stevens

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As part of this process, I had to learn to make falconry bells! Here you can see the bells in process, being made from 40/60 Shibuichi which was made by Cólín Ó Dubhghaill... I have one here if anyone would like to handle it.

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The foot was cast from a real falcon's foot and then modified. I took a silicone mould from the foot and then re-shaped the wax so that it would grip the large quartz crystal when cast.

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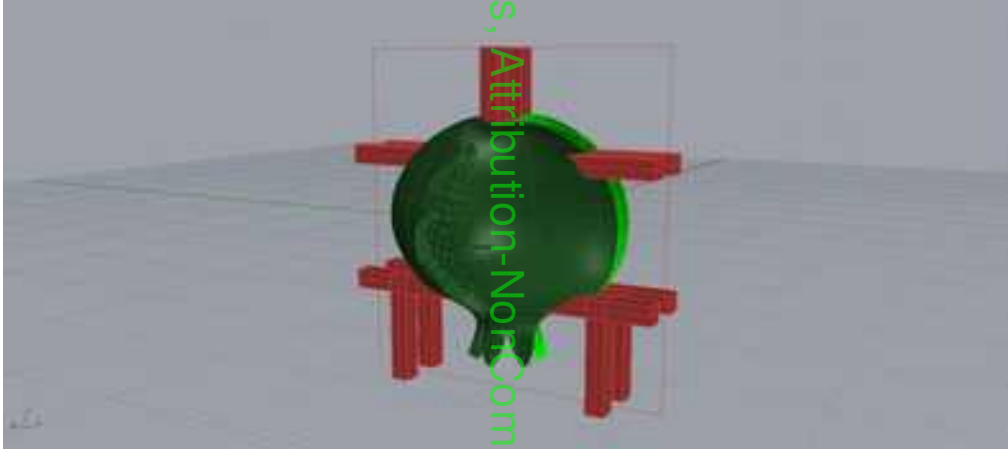
The second sphere is titled "Before The Fall" and represents the legend of the fall and the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. It represents the other side of his life, again using a theme which I feel would have appealed to him, the idea of temptation and fall. Although this piece seems colourful and lively, I personally feel that this is the darker of the two pieces as it deals with his drug addiction and suicide.

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Once more, this is a collaborative piece: I worked with Carol Docherty, a talented wax carver who carved the wax for the snake

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I have a bit of an obsession with pomegranates and so it was a delight to me when I discovered in my researches that the “apple” of the modern bible translations was actually a pomegranate! The original apple design was replaced. Taking a cue from Faberge, I created this digital fruit...

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Which was then cast. I normally do all my own stone-setting but I really couldn't face doing this – there are sixty garnets in the split alone – so it was set by a fantastic stonemaker, Inness Thomson.

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This sphere was far more complex than the other as it is covered in individually-set carved gemstone flowers, each of which is paired with a silver leaf which was hand-cut and hand-engraved. In case anyone is interested, the skulls on each sphere are the catches and rare-earth magnets which I recycle from old electric toothbrushes are used inside the skull to keep the sphere closed.

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I was delighted recently when Scottish Womenswear designer, Judy Clark asked me if she could borrow the Falcony-themed sphere for her catwalk show at Milan Fashion week: it seemed to close the circle as she had trained under Alexander McQueen in London in 2009.

Thank you.

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Thank you.