

2012 Higher Level Question 6

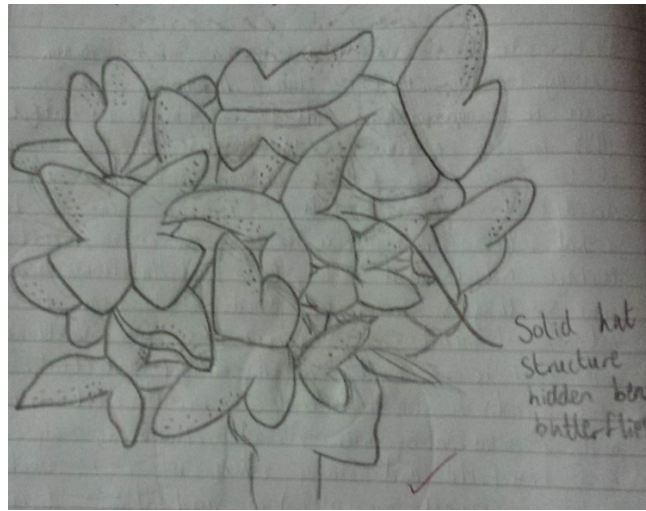
Describe and discuss the work of Philip Treacy (b. 1967) making detailed reference to two specific works. Refer to style, subject matter, materials/media, techniques and influences. Illustrate your answer.

Philip Treacy is an Irish milliner from Ahascragh, County Galway, born in 1967. He studied fashion in NCAD in 1985 where he began making hats to compliment his outfits. In 1988 he won a place at the Masters fashion design course at the Royal College of Art, London. That same year he decided to focus solely on making hats. The following year he brought a hat to Tatler Magazine to show to fashion director Michael Roberts and style editor Isabella Blow. Isabella saw something in Treacy and asked him to design her wedding hat. This launched Treacy's career more than anything else and Blow became a close friend, colleague and client. Over the following decades, he would become the world's most renowned milliner, collaborating with Alexander McQueen, Ralph Lauren, Karl Lagerfeld and many others. Two of his works caught my attention and I will discuss them in this essay.

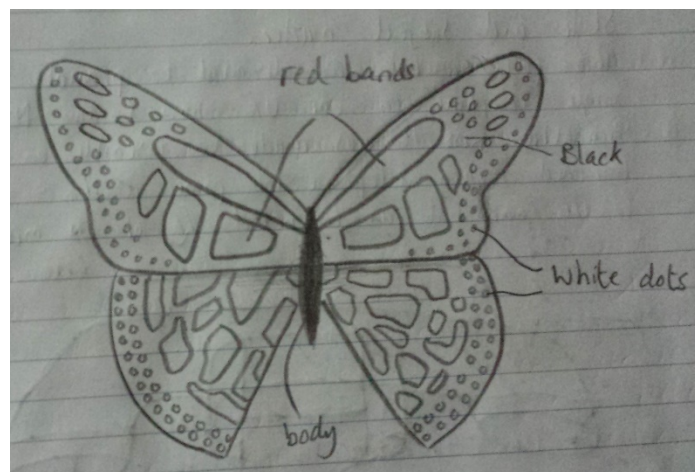
“Butterfly” headdress (piece one)

After the tragic suicide of Isabella Blow in 2007, Philip Treacy and Alexander McQueen joined forces to create a spring/summer collection as a tribute to Blow, a dear friend of the two designers who had been crucial to their careers. One of Treacy's main pieces was the “Butterfly” headdress.

The “Butterfly” hat possesses Japanese style qualities. The butterflies are red and delicate. And Treacy managed to bring an oriental feel to the hat with hidden Japanese symbolism: butterflies are adored in Japan as they are believed to be the personification of the soul.



Treacy starts all of his hats with what he calls “boring” fabrics and then begins to build up on this using more unorthodox materials. In this piece, he uses hand painted turkey feathers to create the butterflies which are then singed to take on the appearance of fine gossamer. His techniques are those of a traditional milliner but to a very high standard of skill, involving both mathematics and aesthetics to achieve balance, fit and proportion.



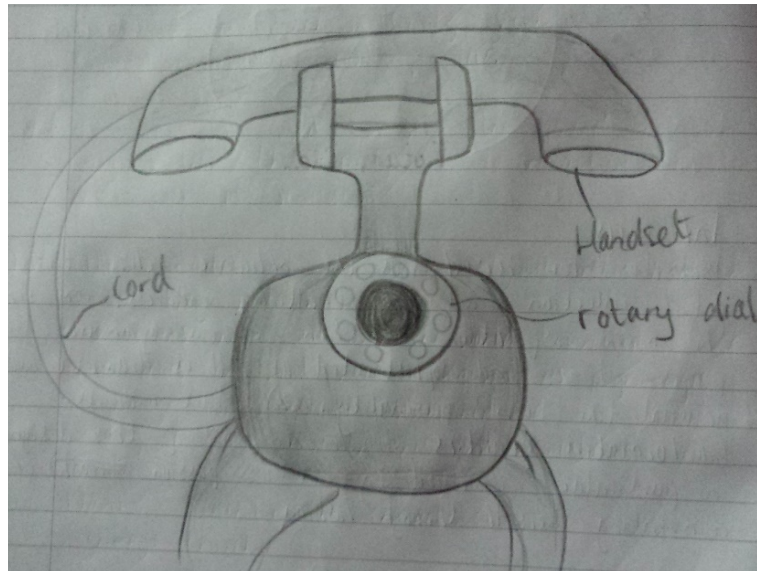
Isabella Blow herself was the influence behind this entire collection including the butterfly headdress. The main inspiration came from “extreme glamour”, the pieces delicate and sophisticated as well as dramatic and unusual, like Blow’s personality. Nature and its transformative qualities was a key part of this design influenced by Isabella’s passion for reinventing herself through fashion.

“The Telephone Hat” (piece 2)

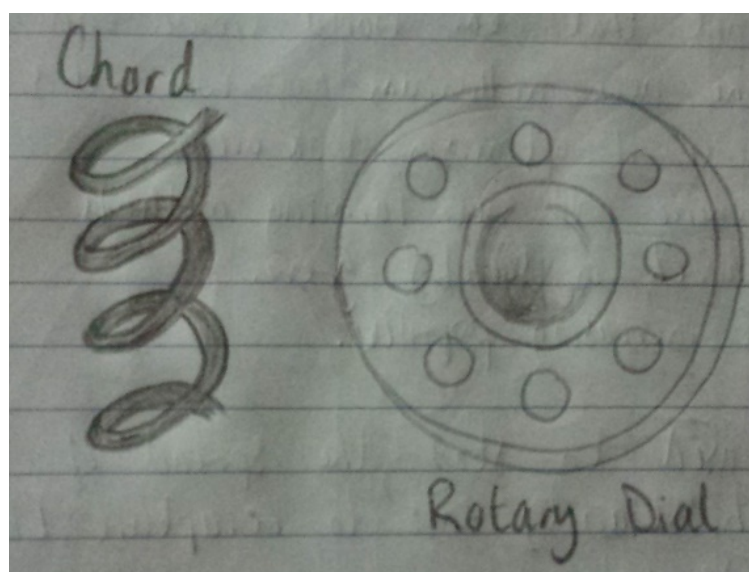
Lady Gaga met Philip Treacy backstage after a show in 2012 and they formed a bond over their common interest in the unusual. Gaga soon appeared on the Philip Treacy catwalk during London Fashion Week and has since been recognised as one of his most frequent clients. Treacy

is responsible for a great deal of her famous headwear in music videos and on-stage, one of the most memorable being “The Telephone Hat”.

This hat was designed to promote Gaga’s new single “Telephone” on the UK show Friday Night with Johnathan Ross. It was made to resemble an old-fashioned rotary telephone. The phone itself is attached to the chord but can be lifted off the main headdress.



The main materials used in this hat are wood, plastic and plexiglass. Treacy makes a drawing of the hat and then a mock-up of the shape in 3-D, which he then sends to Paris where it is carved from wood. With this hat Treacy would have covered the hat in material and then hand-painted it in black for the authentic, old-fashioned look he was aiming for. The chord is a regular plastic one and the dial is made from a disc of plexiglass.



Treacy's sole influence behind this piece was the intended wearer of it. Gaga is his perfect muse, perfectly unafraid of wearing elaborate, bold hats. He admires her greatly for her different idea of what is perfect for fashion, describing her as a "21st Century pop version of Isabella Blow".

Philip Treacy's work in the fashion industry and beyond has changed how the world sees hats and their limitations, combining traditional techniques with unusual materials to create unforgettable designs.