

## Blog: Pip Christmass Dark and moody at S2

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Earlier yesterday I had a quick chat to S2 designer Chrissie Catling ahead of her first solo show at Perth Fashion Festival.

I asked her to describe what the mood and atmosphere of her show was going to be like, and once she had, I said, "It sounds very gothic".

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There was a long pause, before she replied: "I've never thought of the label as being gothic."

Well, after having seen last night's show, I am going to stick to my first thought: it was, indeed, a very gothic mood that prevailed at S2 last night.

If a soundtrack of thunder and rain, white-faced models with blacked-out lips and eyebrows, a hooded male swinging a censer of incense down the runway and a lot of black clothing isn't gothic, then I'm not quite sure what is.

On top of this, the models walked at a somnambulist rate. It made rather a change from the previous show, where Zhivago's models tore down the runway at such a breakneck pace that I barely had time to raise my camera up to take a picture before they were gone.

When I use the word gothic, I don't mean it in a disparaging way. People hear the word "gothic" and think of badly dressed emo kids. I think of gothic as something dark, bewitching and beautiful - elegance with a mysterious edge.

Some of my favourite labels, like Haider Ackermann and Givenchy, draw deeply from the gothic well. And when it comes to runway presentations, I also like a bit of dark moodiness, although for the photographers sitting at the end of the runway trying to catch clear images of the clothes, it was apparently a nightmare to photograph.

Catling's show team had set the lighting to groping-about-in-the-dark low. I set my camera on to night portrait and managed to

get some fantastically eerie images, but of course you can only see the basic outlines of the clothes.

Last night's events were sponsored by Deloitte and there were a lot of suited corporate types in the crowd. I couldn't help but wonder what they made of the night's parades, which were the least mainstream all week.

But the mood of S2's show perfectly suited the clothes, which were mostly black or white, draped and layered, asymmetrical and artistic. There was a white and red check print in there, and some beautiful red-lined white jackets with a Japanese feel that I loved.

There was also a fair bit of black lace - again, a very gothic fabric - which I was surprised to see. I am not sure I have ever seen a lace garment from S2 before, but Catling had told me she was revisiting the archives, so the lace was either a reference to previous collections, or a brand-new introduction to the S2 style.

Whichever, it worked and was quite beautiful.

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