

Memento Mori Sewol

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Keywords: mourning, protest, toile, screenprinting



This ensemble, Memento Mori Sewol, is protest and propaganda clothes as well as mourning clothes, expressing condolence to the victims of the Sewol ferry incident of South Korea in 2014 and lamenting the diminishing humanism. It maximizes the advantage of ‘conversational print’ that can induce the viewer to notice uniqueness of the print, have an urge to mention on it, and start a ‘conversation’ with the wearer.

The print that depicts floating bodies in the seawater followed the tradition of toile de Jouy in terms of pictorial style to deliver the narrative message of sadness and criticism. Other artists including Renée Green and Laurel Garcia Colvin previously used Toile de Jouy in furniture or canvas to deliver critical messages. However, the choice of garment maximizes the advantage of conversational print by going out to the world and meet the audience in everyday life. This idea of delivering messages (especially political messages) in everyday life in the form of garment is also found in African commemorative cloth. Both toile de Jouy and African commemorative cloth are very busy print for garment, but rather used with extreme business – covering the whole body with the same print, which can be found in fashion-forward men’s suit today. While the subject is sad and serious, this ensemble represents the subject in the most fashionable way, exploiting the

attractiveness as gravity to get attention from the public audience in our everyday life. Meanwhile, it is intentionally designed as a very basic and unisex style that anyone can wear anytime and anywhere so that many people can join the activism.

The print is applied by silkscreen printing on cotton sateen and denim. For the denim of the jacket and the pants, a simple two-color printing was applied. For the sateen of the shirt, the figure lines were printed by silkscreen in regular acrylic pigment, then potato dextrin resist is applied on the figures by silkscreen printing, and finally synthetic dye mixed with sodium alginate in the background color is applied mostly by silkscreen printing and partially by hand painting.

This ensemble contributes in many different ways. First, in terms of the subject, it delivers the message of empathy and criticism regarding the Sewol incident of South Korea. Second, it raises a question on how visual art can be more effective by crossing the border of fashion and commercialism. Third, it shows the possibilities of the conversational print as a pictorial art that deals with the contemporary topics in the most contemporary style.

