

Fashion Forward

By Hitoko Okada

Predicated on systemic violence and a vulnerable workforce, patterns of imperial and colonial extraction, domination, dehumanization and wealth hoarding between the Global North and the Global South continue to echo across time and space throughout the garment supply chain.

Deregulation of social, environmental, and labour protections at the behest of corporations through free trade agreements and international policies enable extremely low, fast, and limitless volumes of production that reap massive corporate profits when only a fraction of the purchase order is sold.

As technology accelerates work from machine pace to digital pace, garment production at a human pace becomes obsolete.

Massive volumes of garment and textile waste from limitless production and consumption are off loaded across the shores of the Global South overflowing landfills and destroying vital waterways to the detriment of local people's health, economic and land sovereignty.

80% of workers in the global garment sector are women living and working in extreme precarity to sew the seams of disposable fashion for ravenous consumption in the Global North.

Environmental racism and racialized gendered capitalism are designed to flourish without accountability at every link throughout the garment supply chain. The crisis of fast fashion is not a cry for help but a call to action.

This exhibition lifts its gaze upwards to the practices of artists, fashion designers, activists and cultural heritage craft masters who look to the past to re-imagine a thriving future of possibilities for garment workers, land and seed sovereignty, ancestral cultural craft knowledge, and indigenous trade

systems, that inspire whole relationships to clothing and garment production in scalable and contemporary ways.

Aboubakar Fofana's practice of traditional regenerative farming and heritage Malian indigo dyeing that once thrived in the region prior to colonialism is a sacred practice that heals and honours the land, pre-colonial histories, and traditional heritage craft.

Kavita Parmar's *IOU Project* produces collections using a prosperity chain model centering and investing in traditional heritage handweaving of Madras check cloth and employs digital technology to make visible all the workers throughout the prosperity chain.

Meera Sethi's research-based body of work, *Unskilled*, reconnects us with interdependent relationships with fibres and the clothes we wear, and honours sacred relationships with indigenous cotton and the ecosystem.

Sage Paul, whose practice centers and uplifts indigenous textile craft and fashion, explores the Hudson Bay Company's violent trade and commerce relationship with Indigenous Peoples. Her work calls in ancestral ways of trading that centre abundance, mutual thriving, and collective relationship building.

Sweatshop abolitionist, Hoda Katebi, founding member of Blue Tin Production's worker-centered garment production co-op writes,

"Above all, we must recognize our power—our collective power—as a people fighting for and alongside our transnational communities... It's recognizing that the tools to build our collective power, to educate and meet the needs of our people, and to fight for our liberation, already exist within our neighborhoods, our communities, our histories, our spiritual and religious guidance, our ancestors' examples, our art, and the simple knowledge that we can be free if we alone will it."

Their practices wrap our soft bodies in sovereign fibres, grown in rich, regenerated loam, woven with time, spirit, collectivity, indigeneity, stitched with ancient memory imbued with stories of belonging, thriving, and healing that illuminate our deepest knowing and nourish interconnection, biodiversity, and Love.

May we re-imagine, resource, re-create, resist, and remember ways to live and produce from this source. May we contribute through small acts of

change toward an imperfect practice, like the butterfly effect, to grow a collective practice that turns the wheels of systemic change in *Fashion Forward*.