

Skawennati, *Calico & Camouflage: Demonstrate*

October 28, 2020 to January 5, 2021 at ELLEPHANT, Montréal, QC.

Calico & Camouflage is a fashion collection of ResistanceWear defined by traditionally-inspired ribbon shirts and military-style cargo pants—two articles of clothing that are intertwined with the history of colonization on Turtle Island.

Colourful silk ribbons and floral calico fabric were first introduced to our communities in the 1600s through trade with European settlers and were adopted and adapted by our innovative ancestors to become the ribbon shirts and dresses that have since become widely-recognized signifiers of traditional Haudenosaunee (and others') regalia. In contrast, military garb has been adopted in defiance of the repeated attempts by colonial forces to eliminate us. From Wounded Knee to the Oka Crisis to Standing Rock to Mauna Kea, our land- and life-defenders have claimed camouflage clothing for their own to show that we are not afraid to fight. Indigenous artists and designers such as Katsi'tsakwas Ellen Gabriel and Tammy Beauvais have connected camouflage, activism and the Indigenous body to make fashion statements. Skawennati has remixed the clothing patterns, creating ribbon shirts with an updated camouflage pattern, and army pants with an original calico. She chose powerful pink, cool blue, olive green, and gun-metal grey to reflect contemporary landscapes of activism, including demonstrations in city streets, rural roads, cyberspace and courtrooms. The ribbons are joyously multiplying, lengthening and finding their way to new configurations on the clothes. More than just decoration, they represent our inextinguishable spirit.

Calico & Camouflage exists in both the digital and the physical world. The basic elements of the collection were designed first for the avatars that Skawennati and her team have lovingly customized. In addition to their clothing, accessories, hair, and makeup, each avatar was given a protest sign. It soon became clear that the collection had to be brought into the physical world to be worn by Real Human Beings who wish to simultaneously proclaim their Indigeneity and their readiness to resist ongoing assimilation.

Calico & Camouflage: Demonstrate brings together the digital and fabric versions of the collection. The brightly coloured calicos and camouflage patterns cover the gallery windows, while inside, avatars and mannequins fill the space, demonstrating that resistance is fertile.