



Doingtime, Muslin Brothers

A CRIME AGAINST FASHION

Jeans are banned in prison.

In some prisons you're not allowed to wear your own clothes and in others you are. But absolutely not jeans.

It's part of the material of the very institution – you're locked away to be removed from society. You wear uniforms so that you're stripped of a societal structure: fashion.

Have you ever heard of the phrase "time flies when you're having fun"? Time is made up of memories. When you're incarcerated, you're removed from a lot of the things that mark time in that way, the things that take up time, so that time is suspended. That's why it's called 'Doing Time' in the first place.

The uniforms are an extension of that intersection of identity and time; there are no trends, no fashion statements, no expression, no personality, no traces of time.

For fashion designers-cum-artists Tamar Levit and Yaen Levi, known as Muslin Brothers, the uniforms worn in correctional facilities were something that sparked their spatial work called 'Doing Time', in which they examine the appearance of disappearance from society. In an open, empty space, the designers dot cuts of gradient orange jumpsuit and pillow stuffed orange patterns across the floor. Visitors are invited to lay among the flat

jumpsuits and strips of fabric on the ground. Tea is served in white cups and some teacups are broken and scattered on the ground. The ceilings are high, there are no windows. According to Tamar, "It's like this limbo space that is, somehow, maybe a bit boring, where the emotions are suspended as well as time."

The most interesting obscure thing in the room is a simple wooden ladder leading to nowhere which is kind of representative of social hierarchies even in a prison. They can't show it in traditional ways like appearance, but that pecking order or 'class' still exists.

Time is made up of memories.

Over lockdown, the society we had been familiar with broke down; we were restricted and in enduring those restrictions, time was suspended. The things we used to pass time were taken away; dressing up and going out, work, people, and levels of freedom. While it would be arrogant to equate those lockdowns to prison life, being restricted on different levels to work and home, just home, or having no home or place to go was a form of confinement that proved that, as Tamar told me, "Time stopped moving and we all realised it's fake." Time is what we make of it, a human construct.

ust like time is suspended by the prisons' infrastructure as much as it is by law enforcement, the individual's body is suspended in this very purposefully shapeless, synthetic overall with just the acronym of the prison on the chest – in Australia, they have a slang term for it 'flesh bags'.

When Muslin Brothers spoke to Belgian and Israeli inmates for their project, they spoke to a guy who couldn't take it anymore, the drab, impersonable uniform. He understood everything that it implied, so one day in a textiles class he stole a seam when the supervisor wasn't looking and tightened up the arm on the jumpsuit with this colourful thread. It differentiated him. According to him, it showed off his biceps.

Mostly, the inmates Tamar and Yaen met with looked forward to the outfits or wardrobe staples they were going to wear upon their release; it was an intimate thing to acquaint themselves with a wardrobe they'd been separated from, an identity they'd been stripped of, at least dress-wise, for some time. In their installation, *Muslin Bros* included a projector that beamed statements from inmates onto the ceiling – anonymous quotes about what they were going to wear when they were free. <