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BUF 4900: Internship

Statement Sleeves

Statement sleeves are exaggerated or distinctive sleeve designs that draw attention and add dramatic flair to an outfit or garment, as described on the Fashion Institute of Technology's website (Statement Sleeves, 2024). This paper will discuss a pair of printed polyester chiffon sleeves from Jun Takahashi's Undercover Spring 2005 collection, displayed at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Undercover's Spring 2005 collection paid homage to Czech film director Jan Švankmajer, who used everyday objects to create his stop-motion films (Holgate, 2004). Inspiration from Švankmajer's films can be seen in these sleeves, as the flower print is taken from a floral wallpaper shown in his 1989 short film *Darkness, Light, Darkness* (Statement Sleeves, 2024). The sleeves are more of an accessory, as they are not attached to a garment and can be worn independently. However, the embellished prints and slight puff make this accessory stand out.

The base color of the polyester chiffon sleeves is white, while the print on the sleeves is a shade of yellow. Takahashi chose the color white, inspired by the floral wallpaper in Švankmajer's 1989 film *Darkness, Light, Darkness*. White represents purity, innocence, and integrity (Van Braam, 2024). The print on the sleeves is a shade of yellow, likely amber or gold. Amber signifies comfort and nature (Van Braam, 2024), complementing the symbolism of white.

Gold symbolizes prosperity, elegance, and prestige (Van Braam, 2024), also aligning with the qualities of white.

The direction of lines plays a crucial role in composition, significantly influencing the impact and effectiveness of the presentation (Bell, 2022). The line direction of the print on this sleeve is diagonal, creating a sense of dynamism (Bell, 2022). The interpretation of the diagonal direction can vary; some may view it as ascending, while others may see it as descending. The ascending diagonal direction is appropriate, as depicted in Švankmajer's film *Darkness, Light, Darkness*. Additionally, an ascending diagonal line represents positivity and progress (Bell, 2022), which aligns with the color and floral design of the print.

Rhythm is the contained movement between elements, guiding the viewer's eye from the primary object to secondary objects (Bell, 2022). These sleeves can be seen as either a primary or secondary object. As standalone sleeves, they can function as an accessory or a secondary part of an outfit. However, they can also serve as the main component of an ensemble, depending on how they are worn and styled.

Form refers to the three-dimensional qualities of an object or the illusion of three dimensions within a two-dimensional space (Bell, 2022). It creates a sense of depth and volume, making objects appear to occupy space and possess mass (Bell, 2022). As previously mentioned, the print on one of the sleeves is derived from the floral wallpaper featured in Švankmajer's 1989 film *Darkness, Light, Darkness*. Although the wallpaper itself is flat and two-dimensional, Takahashi added depth and volume by transforming it into sleeves. The depth and volume of the sleeves can also be adapted based on the wearer's arms.

Balance refers to the distribution of visual weight within a composition (Bell, 2022). It aims to create a stable and aesthetically pleasing design (Bell, 2022). The prints on the sleeves

are balanced as each sleeve features a distinct design, preventing any overlap. The prints are evenly distributed on each sleeve rather than placed randomly. The sleeve with the smaller print allows for more instances of the design, while the sleeve with the larger print features fewer occurrences to ensure the design remains visible and clear.

Contrast involves arranging opposite elements to create visual interest and excitement (Bell, 2022). It highlights differences and emphasizes specific parts of a design (Bell, 2022). In this instance, the floral print and the figure print are contrasting elements and placing them on separate sleeves enhances their visibility. For example, the figure print is significantly larger than the floral print, and each print carries different meanings: the floral print is inspired by a Švankmajer film, while the figure print is from Takahashi. Combining both prints on a single sleeve could create visual chaos rather than generating interest and excitement.

Dominance refers to the area in a composition that initially and most strongly captures the viewer's attention (Bell, 2022). It establishes structure within a design, guiding the viewer's eye to the most significant parts of the composition (Bell, 2022). On this sleeve, the floral print is the dominant element because it is more eye-catching than the figure print. Additionally, this floral print appears on other garments from the collection. Although the floral print is smaller than the figure print, its repeated pattern makes it more prominent.

Proportion refers to the relative size and scale of various elements within a composition (Bell, 2022). It aims to create balance and visual appeal by sizing and arranging elements in a visually pleasing and cohesive manner (Bell, 2022). As previously noted, the prints on each sleeve vary in size and scale, so placing them on separate sleeves helps achieve overall balance in the design. Combining both designs on a single sleeve would disrupt the composition, as their differing sizes and scales could create confusion for the viewer.

Repetition involves repeating or reinforcing an idea or motif to create consistency (Bell, 2022). It helps unify various elements of a design, making it appear more cohesive and balanced (Bell, 2022). In this sleeve, repetition is evident as the two print designs are featured throughout. This repetition brings balance to the overall design, enhancing the sleeve's prominence compared to simpler, less distinct sleeves. The repeated prints capture the viewer's attention, making the sleeve stand out due to the cohesive ideas behind the prints and their arrangement.

The sleeves are made from polyester chiffon (Statement Sleeves, 2024). Chiffon is a lightweight, sheer fabric with a canvas weave, created using crepe twist yarns ("Chiffon fabric," 2022). While chiffon is often crafted from silk, giving it a lustrous texture, this pair is made from polyester, resulting in a more uniform shine ("Chiffon fabric," 2022; "How to," 2022). Despite its typically smooth appearance, the polyester chiffon used here has a somewhat rough texture, as chiffon is known for its "rough to the touch" feel ("Chiffon fabric," 2022).

This Statement Sleeve is influenced by everyday life, as it transforms "fashion out of the domestic environment" (Holgate, 2024). Takahashi crafted his style using available resources and surroundings, such as home decor (Holgate, 2024). Jun Takahashi deserves recognition for creating this Statement Sleeve and for his broader contributions, as his homage to Švankmajer's work made his collection stand out and unique (yourfashionarchive, 2022). Takahashi's seasonal themes are widely celebrated for their cinematic quality and memorability, as he consistently introduces fresh and innovative themes each season (Clarke, 2024). His work has made a significant impact on the fashion industry.

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Figure 1:

Undercover (Jun Takahashi)



Note. Photo of Undercover printed polyester chiffon sleeves taken from The Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Own work.

