

14AW - Dissertation on "patina"

Patina, in the literal sense, is a layer of buildup that appears on the surface of metals after years of oxidization. This green-hued layer is considered by many to be aesthetically pleasing, hence a second, more literary meaning that is now commonly used to describe an object that has aged well over time.

I loved the idea of objects aging well over time, but something about this usage seemed lacking. As I was designing the visvim Fall and Winter 2014 collection, I started to develop my own definition of "patina."

What I eventually came up with turned out to be central to this season's theme, and the inspiration for this new definition came from the unlikeliest of places.

I was in the corner of a dilapidated barn in rural Ohio, staring down at an old motorcycle that had probably been left in that barn for a very long time. Most of the metallic parts were rusted over, and what looked to be a red coat of paint had a thick layer of dust covering it. I doubted whether it would even move properly, let alone start up.

As I gazed at this dusty old bike, I couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness, wondering what this bike would look like with just a little bit of love.

That hazy image began to gain clarity, and the next day, I found myself on the way back to California, with a rusty old motorcycle in tow.

Back in Los Angeles, I immediately began cleaning the bike and removing the rust by hand.

The work was tough, but being able to witness this metamorphosis was a profound experience. This once abandoned hunk of metal had transformed into a beautiful motorcycle, full of character and overflowing with warmth. I didn't repaint it, and I didn't replace any parts; I simply did my best to take care of it.

I considered again the word "patina," and how it carries a very passive connotation. To me, passive couldn't be any further from the truth. I witnessed firsthand the effects of passive aging on the bike sitting in my driveway, and that was not beauty. Beauty was the result of deliberate love and care.

I want to design clothing like the motorcycle I restored, products that age well if cared for properly. Something that is cared for, and something that is not cared for; these two things will yield completely different results.

Perhaps a pair of leather boots or a denim jacket might be easier to visualize, but I believe that the same concept applies to human beings as well. I have to remember to take care of myself, because who I am on the inside will be reflected on the outside. My way of transferring this philosophy to my products is to show each individual item as much love as possible throughout the design process.

This means using natural materials and dyes, and designing our clothing not from the pattern up, or even from the fabric up, but from the yarn up. Concentrating our energy into

yarn design and yarn construction will not yield immediately observable results, but our hard work at the heart of the garment will slowly reveal itself over time.

In order to fulfill my definition of patina, we need love.

As a clothing designer, this love covers my products throughout the entire development stage, but on a more basic level, patina comes down to people.

Loving yourself, and caring for others. These simple actions will produce people who age beautifully, who have the inherent tools to make beautiful, honest products.

-Hiroki Nakamura





14AW Granger Shirt Chambray (Patchwork)

14AW Granger Blazer (Cotton/Wool)