

MODERN PAINTERS

CHICAGO

Ebony G. Patterson

Monique Meloche Gallery // September 12–October 24

A KINGSTON-BORN artist who splits her time between Jamaica and Lexington, Kentucky, Patterson is best known for her ornate, hand-embellished artworks that draw inspiration from the colorful Jamaican dance-hall culture while commenting on the underreported and unacknowledged brutalization of the poor in the region.

The point of departure for the artist's third solo show at Monique Meloche is a previous body of work in which she enveloped and veiled images of murder victims, culled from social media sites, with dazzling patterns and ornamentation. Consisting of three massive tapestries and two large-scale mixed-media collages, the work here is the result of a number of layers of adornment. Patterson makes flamboyant costumes, has them photographed on models, and then digitally removes the figures' heads and any sign of skin in postproduction—leaving hats, clothes, and shoes to show the volume of the missing bodies. She sends the digital files to a textile house, where the imagery is transferred in sections to a jacquard tapestry.

After stitching the woven segments together, Patterson decorates the surfaces to morbid effect with materials that include beads, gems, printed fabrics, fake flowers, bejeweled broaches, decorative trim, and appliqué butterflies. The tapestries are then cut around the edges to suggest that the scene is a fragment of a larger setting; a handmade sneaker is placed below on a bed of knitted leaves to evoke the victim's having fallen from a tree. The shoes, which require activation by a person, also recall street-side memorials and shrines.

Part of the artist's ongoing series "Dead Trees," the pieces play with the concept of presence and absence inherent in the saying "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" In Patterson's interpretation, the question becomes, If a person disappears or an

anonymous body is found, does that life still matter? Dealing with tough issues in a seductive style, her work is the flower and the viewer, the bee. One is attracted to the beauty, where a darkness is revealed.

—Paul Laster

Ebony G. Patterson
Detail of *Between the leaves and in the bed*, 2015.
Mixed media collage on paper.



FROM TOP: TEPPEI KANEUJI AND JANE LOMBARDO GALLERY; EBONY G. PATTERSON AND MONIQUE MELOCHE GALLERY

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