



View of “Sleeping Songs,” 2017–19.
PARIS

Annette Messenger

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY | PARIS

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Soft, colorful, and haunting, Annette Messenger’s latest sculptures are made from sleeping bags, puffer jackets, and quilts. Collectively titled “Sleeping Songs,” 2017–19, these mostly wall-mounted works have been folded, pinned, draped, and sewn in ways that suggest various anatomical forms—including many whose central droopy cowed openings are undeniably vaginal. In addition to playing with existing elements like hoods, sleeves, and zippers in order to reinforce her materials’ human scale and functionality, Messenger incorporates one or more pairs of black acrylic hands into each sculpture. Emerging from the textiles, these appendages bring a hint of life (and death) to otherwise-vacuous cocoons.

In many cases, the imagery in “Sleeping Songs” is playful or even euphoric. In *Sleeping Arms*, 2019, a hand sprouting from a pair of crossed coat sleeves gives the finger, and in *Birth*, 2018, a long gray coat delivers a small baby-blue jacket from its unzipped nether regions. But this series also possesses a dark side. *Seule (Lonely)*, 2017, is a deflated khaki coat that has been positioned on the floor so that its puffed-up hood is encircled by sleeves capped with black hands. An embodiment of destitution, this withered figure, made from a universally familiar article of clothing, is part of Messenger’s ongoing commentary on the European migrant crisis.

Underscoring this political sub-context, an earlier work on the gallery’s lower level, *3 Pantins PQ (3 Toilet Paper Puppets)*, 2015, was inspired by the artist’s multiple visits to Calais, a port town in Northern France that was greatly impacted by a vast and squalid

migrant encampment. Mounted on the wall, three anonymous lumpen fabric bodies have on their chests different-colored rolls of toilet paper, which have unfurled to reach the floor. Even more so than the nearly ubiquitous puffer coat, toilet paper is a material that unites all humankind. While evoking the camp's atrocious sanitary conditions, Messenger's work reminds us that what is shameful is the existence of such outrageous injustices.

— Mara Hoberman

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