

Kasia Tons ✿ After

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Kasia Tons, Untitled 1, 2020. Photo Dave Laslett (small)

Valerie Kirk writes about an artist who used embroidery as a diary to record a lost world that may be our future.

The title of the show begs the question.....but what came before? Was there an event? What happened?

Textile Artist, Kasia Tons was inspired by the science fiction short story, “The Machine Stops” by E. M. Forster. The novella presents a future world where humans live underground, governed by a machine. When it was published in 1909, the ideas presented must have seemed like a total fantasy: people ruled by a device made by humans, completely removed from the natural world, living alone under the surface of the earth, restricted, locked down and socially distanced. However, in 2020, battling COVID 19. we are faced with questions about our reliance on technology, disregard for our natural environment and coming to terms with “the new normal”. Kasia searches for answers to

what we have lost through dependence on the internet and social media, with its distance from nature and presence. She values the work of William Morris as a social activist and champion of handmade textiles embodying nature.

Growing up in the country she enjoyed the freedom to explore and have adventures, build shelters and learn navigation skills through paying attention to the details of nature. As an adult, Kasia returned to this world by spending two months walking in New Zealand, crossing rivers and mountains, exposed to the elements, her inner world and sometimes other hikers. Her backpack contained a cloth for hand embroidery as a constant companion. Day by day she drew in pen on the fabric as she walked, then stitched in the evenings or while staying in one place for a couple of days. Like a diary, it became a record of her thoughts and responses, reflections and interactions with others. It carries the physical patina of being in the environment, not washed clean but holding the experience and memories.



Kasia Tons, Untitled 3, 2020. Photo Dave Laslett

Back in the Adelaide studio, new work could develop using materials and processes that are not so easily transportable: beading, felting, stitching into paper and three-dimensional sculpting of materials. The mask form with varying transparencies holds ideas about opening up to other people face to face in the real world. A new exploration sewing on paper conveys a feeling of rocks and being comforted or hugged by the mountain.

“After” makes us think about the possibilities beyond the world of technology we have grown so accustomed to. It encourages us to reconnect with the freedom of self-expression through making, building on our traditions to reflect our world and tell new stories.

After – Kasia Tons, Craft ACT (Canberra, Australia), 24 August – 17 October 2020

Valerie Kirk is an artist and tapestry weaver.



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