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Description Outlining Design Concept and Materials Used.

Title: A-tisket, a-tasket

Design Concept

Inspired by idyllic childhood adventures, storybooks, make believe, magic and nostalgia.

For many years I have drawn on my childhood and memories of the beautiful sundresses and special occasion party frocks my mother made me in colourful prints and patterned cotton fabrics. Much of my wearable art garments are dresses or frocks, representing the feminine. Evoking memories of childhood, imaginings of domestic life, and the journey of women. Universal symbols revisited again and again.

In this never-ending time of covid and lockdowns, social distancing and staying safe at home, a strange thing has happened... our lives have slowed down. No longer are we rushing from one activity or appointment to another. People have begun baking bread, and cooking meals from scratch, gardening and buying house plants, learning to play cards and board games and taking up crafts and art projects. We are walking and exploring our neighbourhoods. It feels like my childhood, the pace of farm life and the seemingly never-ending long summer days of school holidays. It is from this place that this work has evolved, within a type of (perhaps) idealised escapism where everything is beautiful and without responsibility. A place in time where we can relax and play and explore. A place filled with picnics and treasure hunts and tea parties of make-believe expeditions and a bubbling imagination. What a precious time.

The nostalgia of reflecting upon my own childhood but also looking through the eyes of a child is a recurrent theme explored in this work.

I began with the source of the paper. Brown paper flour sacks collected from the local bakeries form the foundation of this work. A robust and strong material, that I have found, can be sewn and handled in all manner of ways. I like to use recycled and reclaimed materials in my art practice, and this was a gift. No matter how I wanted to use this material with my original plans, I kept coming back to 'it' – the brown paper flour bags. The life 'it' had before I found it in a shopping trolley bound for the bin outside a bakery. I felt that the paper had its own story that kneaded (pun intended) to be told. And so began a diversion from my original design ideas.

I realised that bread and baking are interwoven in our lives (especially now). So, I let my imagination run wild and decided to create bread inspired fairy tale fashion. I drew from real life, where we were being encouraged to go on picnics outdoors and I thought of the fun childhood adventures I had playing having tea parties, dressing up and playing pretend. This was my new starting point.

As a child I drew pictures and wrote stories and played pretend. I began thinking about how often bread and baking and food were touched upon in the nursery rhymes, story books, songs and fables of my childhood. The work ethic of the little red hen, pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake baker's man, I am the baker man, Five currant buns, Sing a song of sixpence, Little Jack Horner, Hot Cross Buns, the Queen of Hearts, Do you know the muffin man, Little Miss Muffet, I'm a little tea pot, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood and her basket of goodies for her Grandmother, songs like My Favourite Things from The Sound of Music. Which led me to thinking about types of bread that are unusual and delicious and celebratory – pretzels and plaited loaves, artisan breads and bagels. I thought of story book illustrations I loved; Madeline came to mind. I thought of far-away places to travel that had exciting breads like pretzels and bagettes and so the ideas flowed.

A-tisket, A-tasket would feature a fashionable storybook character who is preparing to go on a picnic adventure. She is well prepared with a basketful of goodies, a picnic rug and accessories. My love of fashion and hand-crafted details would be explored. Linework and mark-making on her clothes reference

folk style embroidery and motifs, naive botanicals, and patterns found on artisan breads. Decorative gingerbread, and plaited rolls, pretzels and buns all supply much inspiration in the surface design of the garment fabric and trims.

Materials

Found and purchased papers. Flour sacks, paper raffia, greaseproof kitchen paper, masking tape, magazine images, washi papers, Zipper, thread, embroidery floss, cotton tape, ribbon.

Techniques

Construction - Machine and hand stitch. Papier mache. Momigami.

Surface embellishment - Faux batik (candle wax, crayons, Sumi ink), collage, printmaking, paint – acrylic, watercolour, ink, coloured pencils, oil sticks and other mark-making tools.