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Combustionⁱ

Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiroⁱⁱ

This series of tapestries depicts the combustion of fossil fuels, disasters that have manifested from the use of petroleum products.

Cross-stitching - a time intensive process, is used to represent a number of historically significant yet fleeting moments. The small details depicted within each piece are taken from images of events that have become iconic and many ways have defined the age we are all living in.

We live in a world of novelty and sensation: a world that constantly offers new experiences and visions. It is an age that will never again be repeated in history. It is an age that is literally fuelled by the remains of a bygone era: fossil fuel. We are the inheritors of a power that has taken millions of years to produce, a power that we have the pleasure of combusting and exhausting within several generations. But the power that drives our age is so ubiquitous, it almost becomes invisible, it is almost impossible to imagine a world without it.

Cross-stitching is an action that slows down the pace. A craft about time, this process is the reversal of the time period associated with fossil fuel combustion. We are taking an instant -- a tiny moment and stretching it out into months by re-depicting it in cross-stitch. This is the inverse of the way fossil fuels are formed over ages in the earth for us to combust for our comfort and pleasure in an instant. So in essence it is more the process, than the actual material that is communicating the themes that we are interested in.

We exploit fossil fuels for our lifestyle but we don't really have the power to control the polluting by-products of our fossil fuel use- whether chemical or political. The tapestries are an immediate representation of fossil fuels combustion. These images are highly abstracted due to the narrow focus of the image and the inherent reduction of colour pallet used in cross-stitch. The actual source images of each combustion are taken from significant historical moments. Varied but abstracted, we want to reference these moments but we do not want to create another memorial to these specific historical moments as they already hold a gravity that is greater than anything we can add. We have used these images as a starting point: the self immolation of Thich Quang Duc (Figure 1); a plane crashing into the twin towers during the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Centre (Figure 2 and 3); the fire from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill (Figures 4, 5 and 6); a napalm attack during the Vietnam war (Figure 7); and car bombs from Columbia (Figure 8) and the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts (Figures 9, 10 and 11). These are extremely loaded images but we have focussed on the moment of combustion within these images. The flames become abstracted moments, a chaos of colour and form.

We also wish to highlight the fleeting moment that we are living in. Fossil fuels are not like 'the goose that lays a golden egg', the fuel doesn't keep popping out. On a geological time frame our fossil fuel age is fleeting one. The fuels that are the result of millions of years of biological and chemical process will be combusted within a few generations of man and "puff!" all the fuel burning cars and airplanes will be gone.



Figure 1. Tapestry of Disaster, Immolation, 2012, cotton cross stitch
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Figure 2. Tapestry of Disaster, Tower One, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 3. Tapestry of Disaster, Tower Two, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 4. Tapestry of Disaster, Deepwater, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 5. Tapestries of Disaster, BP Spill, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 6. Tapestries of Disaster, Unknown Rig, 2013, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 7. Tapestries of Disaster, Napalm, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 8. Tapestries of Disaster, Columbia, 2013, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 9. Tapestries of Disaster, Carbomb, 2012, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 10. Tapestries of Disaster, Sedan, 2013, cotton cross stitch.
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Figure 11. Tapestries of Disaster, Improvised Explosive, 2013, cotton cross stitch.
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ⁱ Healy, Claire. and Sean Cordeiro. “Combustion.” *An A to Z of Shadow Places Concepts* (2020).
<https://www.shadowplaces.net/concepts>

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www.claireandsean.com.