Weaving a more modern narrative

VENICE

Contemporary artists recreate the loom, with spectacular results

BY ROBERTO CONDELLI WOOLERY

During the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, tapestry, embroidery and carpet weaving were among the most prominent of arts and crafts, used as decorative elements in churches and palaces. But subsequently tastes changed, painting and sculpture be- came more highly esteemed, and works of the past came to be regarded, even by the Venetian arts and crafts advo- cates of the 17th century, as products of “the lesser arts of life.”

The number of contemporary artists have been reinvigorating weaving with a variety of new materials, as shown by theFantastic Tapestry: Works at the Venice Biennale 2013 show. The show, curated by Adam Low and Joyce Bout- ton opened at the Fondazione of the island of San Giorgio Maggiore on the eve of the Venice Biennale.

The British artist Alice Kettle brought together her aesthetic and artistic visions to create an animating and profoundly moving work. “Mammal” (2013) is a site-specific tapestry that explores the tapestry as a connection between the living and the dead. The work centers on the idea of the dead rising from the grave, as the body crumbles and is transformed into the fabric of the tapestry. The piece aims to explore the idea of life and death, and the cycle of life.

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As it was about to be exhibited for the second time, in Venice, Rino Mladineo, now superannuated. The ultimate innocence in the “Moments in Waiting” killer will be permanently displayed in the exterior of the Hoge as a memorial to the Venetian victims of the war. Interpreted traditional, and even antique, techniques are arranged before us in another variation of the same. The long rows of beautifully constructed tapestries, wove and woven by women in a large number of workshops, are on display in the exhibition. The tapestry was a product of the Venetian Republic, and it is a symbol of the city’s rich history. The tapestry is a form of art that has been passed down through generations, and it is a reflection of the city’s cultural and historical identity.

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