

the Whitworth

Audio Descriptions transcript

April 2021

AUDIO DESCRIPTIONS

Audio descriptions of artworks from the collection of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester.



AUDIO DESCRIPTION 6: War Rug Kizzin, Farah, Afghanistan (2009) Afghan. Wool, Goat Hair (?), Hand Knotting

All of the Audio Descriptions are available to listen to at:
<https://aplacebetweenthetrees.com/audio-description/>

Social tags:

Instagram – @whitworthart

Twitter – @whitworthart

Hashtag – #WhitworthAudioDescriptions #TheWhitworthAtHome
#GalleryInThePark

Afghan War Rug

The Afghan War Rug is a large decorative textile, a tapestry in eleven colours. It could be hung on the wall or laid on the floor. It is made to be a rug, part of the home and daily life. It depicts a world in repeated motifs. The first we notice are the cars, lines of small bright blocks of flat colour. Pale green, pale peach and pale brown - light colours against the dark blue background. Then we see the patterns woven around the cars. They fill the space between them. We begin to see that these patterns have form. They are the forms of war. The cars sit nestled between large military helicopters, tanks and artillery cannons. They have architectural presence - are temple-like - patterned like the tiles of an ornate bathroom or mosque. The images are all flat, simplified. They have the openness of a child's drawing or an ancient carving. The wheel of the canon could at the same time be a pan cooking something like beans. A border surrounds the rug filled with decorative discs of black, brown, red and white.

The rug is the product of an unknown artist. It was made recently, in 2009. It could as much be an object of subversion as a depiction of plain reality. In general, the rug is an object of settled peoples. It belongs in the settled home.

It is an object of peace. It is lived on, perhaps prayed on. A rug of war then is a contradiction of terms. It is perhaps also a recognition of the contradictions of reality - that normal life contains violent conflict, military occupation, looming machinery - is inseparable from it for many. The home and the warzone are one intermingled space. The dark blue rectangle of the Afghan War Rug accepts this intermingling and contains it in a border of coloured discs which we can now see for what they are - bullets and grenades.

Textile Gallery : 2010 : What do Textiles Say? : Political Messages : Object

Label

War rug, 2009. Afghanistan (Kizzin, Farah province) Knotted wool pile on a wool foundation Purchased in Kabul in 2010 Contributed and transported to the UK by the British Embassy, Kabul T.2010.37 Rugs have been part of the tribal culture of Afghanistan for centuries. In response to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, rugs reflecting the war began to be produced and they have continued to be made through subsequent conflicts. Rather than imitating traditional geometric or floral motifs these rugs convey their makers' experiences of warfare and modern life by depicting tanks, machine guns, helicopters and cars.

Rectangular rug with knotted wool pile on a two-ply warp (Z-spun, S-ply) of beige wool (6-7 ends per cm). The knot is asymmetrical. The selvedges are made from dark brown goat hair (?) and are wrapped with similar yarn. Both ends are tapestry woven and finish in long fringes. Dark blue ground with field patterned with rows of cars, tanks and helicopters, framed by a border of helicopters, using at least eleven colours of wool (mid blue, pale blue, red, pink, green, mustard, grey, white, pale brown, dark brown, rust brown).