Sport. Culture. Heritage

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‘On the Mountain, in the Valley, on the Land and in the Sea’ is about symbolism – in art, culture and sport, played out through the geographical partnership between the UK and Japan in this instance. The work is based on the artist’s British nationality, Christian faith, preoccupation with the human body in motion and the notion of ‘animal versus human’ within a sporting context. By considering ‘tracings’, ‘projections’ and ‘intersections’ in terms of Olympics and Culture, this piece celebrates Japanese conventions in traditional art through the use of colour, decoration, the application of marks and hilly subject matter. Conversely, the landscape depicts a British location, coloured using an iconic Japanese palette. The scene is a metaphorical stadium which inhabits and records the performance of ‘life’ in its environment. Therefore, the overt performative aspect of sport and athleticism is respected here.

Three digitally printed woven bamboo fabric panels illustrate a mountainous landscape initially painted out on paper using textile dyes and gouache paints. The triptic design borrows inspiration from an altarpiece formation typically found in a historical Christian church and the evocative verse of a gospel song bearing the s title – ‘On the Mountain, in the Valley, on the Land and in the Sea’. The scene also simplistically portrays movement by using linear paths to suggest motion through the landscape. The scale and configuration of the artwork represent both the enormity and sense of occasion the Olympics Games bring. It has been designed to draw the viewer into the environment. Each panel features a decorative border design in a repeating tile motif which was generated by reinterpreting the five Olympic rings. The borders frame the fluid painterly marks of the landscape and linear elements of the image. Individually, the panels assume the status of banners. In this guise, they exist as long strips of cloth, each bearing a unique design suited to public display and celebration.

In the creation of this artwork, it was important to undertake hand process although the final piece would be a digitally printed piece of textile. Involvement in painting using dyes and paints helped to maintain a connection to tradition by observing, recording and interpreting traditional and historic artistic features first-hand. The physical act of mixing media enriched the making experience. It retained the appearance of hand qualities on the cloth and added sincerity to ideas and perspectives embedded in the work. A decision to develop and complete the piece using digital printing technology is akin to the artist’s practice as a textile designer. The piece utilises bamboo fibres (combined with rayon), which is symbolic and are abundant in Japan, often used for handicrafts. In doing so, the humble bamboo fibre has been elevated by combining this natural material with a contemporary technological design process. This artwork examines new concepts which link art, design, culture and sport specific to interactions between the UK and Japan.