

# *Longing and Belonging*

**16 August – 12 October 2024**

## **Artist Statement**

### **Valerie Kirk**

While studying at Edinburgh College of Art, I discovered my passion for woven tapestry. It allows me to combine my love of art and textiles.

Tapestry takes time to weave, but rather than this being a burden, it allows me to enter a space where I am completely connected to the work. This happens physically as my hands work with bobbins and yarn, swiftly moving them between the vertical warps and beating down the weft to form the dense fabric. There is also a connection to an inner world of thinking, processing and making – a space beyond logic that summons the senses and all that I know.

#### *Croxxes*

This body of work focusses on my experience of migration, choosing to move from Scotland to Australia. Although this country is now my home, physically and psychologically, I constantly move between two. The crosses represent the movement between places and reference the Scottish flag, The Saltire or Saint Andrew's Cross.

#### *The Traveller*

While leading a textile tour in Peru, I noticed my shadow over rocks at an archaeological site near Ayacucho: a light, unfixed, impression on the land. It looked as if I was holding a large walking stick and in that moment I recognised myself as a traveller exploring the world and not deeply rooted in a particular place. The photograph I took was adapted and re-drawn for the tapestry design. The image was woven over six weeks, from bottom to top, building the form with attention to the detail of every mark of weft over warp and through my deep immersion in the process.



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### *Ayrshire Slates*

In Scotland I made studies of a family collection of heirloom textiles and at the same time I was drawing on pieces of natural slate picked out of the hillside. Coincidentally at the same time I salvaged wee “peggies” (small roofing slates) from a derelict building and brought them back to Australia. When I experimented and combined the drawings of Ayrshire needlework and slate I became excited about the incongruous light of the paint on the dark surface, suggestion of fabric on the hard and brittle material, warmth of cloth and cold of the slate. Gouache mixed with water painted on the surface of the slates evokes the white muslin or cotton lawn fabrics used in Ayrshire needlework. The opaque paint applied with a no. 0 brush sits like stitches on the surface. The series developed as a reflection on the textile tradition, heritage and culture and they also remind me of the weather, seasons and natural environment of Scotland.