



See You in Ten Years by Ali Forbes

November 2020

Welcome to the See You in Ten Years time capsule!

I was delighted to have been the artist selected to design and make this intriguing object. When I first read the brief I was immediately captured by all the possibilities my imagination could get carried away with in the making of it!

It feels like we are currently living in a moment that is historically significant, we are learning to live with a global pandemic and ongoing uncertainty which is impacting the way we live on a day-to-day basis. Who knows when life will return to what we all knew pre-Covid-19, and whether life will ever return to that we knew in 2019. I wanted to create an object which captures the current issues we are facing while also celebrating the beauty of Scotland's rural and urban landscapes.



Front of the time capsule

For the front of the time capsule I decided to portray the wild nature of Scotland and some of its indigenous beasties. Using bench skills I learned as a trained jeweller, I cut and pierced small copper and brass leaves you would find on Scottish trees out of metal sheet for the woods. For the beasties I hand cut with a surgical scalpel all the layered leather detailing to make the capercaillie, the fox and the pine marten peeking out of the trees, the trees themselves and a Scottish thistle.

I then fixed the layers of leather to the archival book board used to make the structure of the time capsule with archival bookbinding glue. It has been an interesting, informative experience, making the capsule within a list of conservation parameters. I had no idea that certain materials and processes give off VOCs (volatile organic compounds) that can have



an adverse effect on the environment around it, and so to display the time capsule in the National Library of Scotland, which houses hundreds of very old precious books, materials containing very low VOCs were essential for the making.

Inner door

The inside door features an urban scene, the Barrowland Ballroom. This iconic Glasgow music venue is just around the corner from my studio and it is a building which I walk past daily. It is also symbolic of an industry that has been one of the worst hit as a result of the pandemic, the live music industry. Like for many people, going to watch live music is one of my favourite pastimes, so seeing this old friend locked up and unused indefinitely is poignant. Just below the Barrowland Ballroom entrance you can see a fox running past in the street and a discarded facemask lying in the gutter on top of double yellow no parking lines. In real life there are no double yellow lines outside the Barrowland Ballroom, but I wanted to introduce this motif to symbolise our inability to go into this music venue. These double yellow lines say: Do Not Stop Here, and the yellow no parking line continues on to form the trim of the door of the box.

Inside the time capsule

Inside we see a scene that begins with a unicorn holding a book, surrounded by a pile of books. The unicorn is the national animal of Scotland, and the piles of books are inspired by the wonderfully chaotic bookshop Voltaire and Rousseau, a Glasgow institution in the city's West End, where books are piled up in drifts for the enchanted visitor to wade through. To the left of the unicorn is a creature that is part-stag, with the horns of the markhor, an animal which is native to Pakistan, the Himalayas and Central Asia. It is wearing green leafy attire to symbolise characteristics of the Green Man, a pagan symbol used to herald spring after a long winter, and the renewal of lush vegetation and greenery.

Springing upwards from behind the unicorn there is a tree. On the side of the box above the Green Man creature the tree is full of healthy, full foliage, and on the ground next to the tree the ground is scattered cheerfully with leaves. To the left of the tree there is an okapi springing mid jump. An okapi is a magnificent creature native to the Republic of Congo and is reminiscent of a small giraffe with zebra markings.

The creature to the right of the unicorn is a more sinister fellow, a fox-headed sly beastie with clothing the colour of car exhaust and factory chimney fumes. Above him the tree is no longer glowing with health and high summer leaves, instead what leaves it has are dull



and polluted. There is no wildlife here perched in this tree, only the watchful beady cyclops eyes of a cluster of CCTV surveillance cameras. On the ground here there are no fallen leaves, instead there is an infestation of small plastic Monopoly houses.

Behind the tree there is a row of tenements. On the 'Utopia' side of the box, which is blooming with green nature, the tenement colours reflect this greenery. Behind the 'Dystopia' side of the box, the polluted future, the tenements now reflect the smoggy, dusty, atmosphere of this toxin-congested world.

By using the concepts 'Utopia' and 'Dystopia' I wanted to explore the idea of what our world may be like in ten years' time when this time capsule is opened. We are living in a time when we are really starting to consider the climate crisis and the effect humankind has on our planet, our home. I chose to feature the okapi and the markhor in the Utopia side of the box, these two creatures are just one of many, many species which are currently endangered. Will they still exist in ten years? I also wanted to use animals from outside Scotland as a way of representing the rich, multicultural aspect we have in our communities here in Scotland. In addition, by representing animals in far off places it represents our current situation with the pandemic, the world going in and out of lockdown for most of 2020 means we are for the most part grounded where we live and unable to visit these fabulous creatures in lands abroad. My hopes for life in ten years' time is freedom of movement again, freedom of movement for those who currently could not anyway before the global pandemic, inclusive behaviours become the norm, and on an ecological standpoint, our natural world no longer in swift decline.

On the 'Dystopian' side of the box the natural world barely exists; it is now a hostile, polluted world barely fit for habitation. I chose to put CCTV cameras in the trees to represent the paranoia that I felt was palpable throughout lockdown. Not only did it feel like we were being watched and judged by the government and officials in terms of whether we, the public, were properly following restriction rules, it felt like we were also being encouraged to report those around us for not following the rules. And all this while those in offices who were setting the restrictions were publicly not following them themselves! It feels like the world is becoming increasingly authoritarian, a George Orwell nightmare. Is this what the world could be like in ten years' time when the time capsule is opened? The cluster of Monopoly houses represents greed and the way that mankind steamrolls nature and burns it to the ground for a quick profit. These houses represent an infestation, an infection and a disease which blights the natural world. We currently live in world where so many are homeless, yet property is being made purely as an asset, often these properties are not even inhabited and are outside the budget of most. It is criminal. I am part of a generation who literally cannot afford to get on the property ladder. I want this to be a different story!



Some of the CCTV cameras are decorated with vintage wallpaper scraps, an ironic nod to an idea of 'Home Sweet Home'.

So really the inside of the time capsule is a cautionary tale. What kind of world do we want to be living in in the future? One where we care about the world around us, care about the people around us, where kindness, community, and conservation of our planet are the most valued and widely practiced behaviours? Or a world we have reduced to rubble, where animals only exist in storybooks, we betray our neighbours, and we trade our natural ecosystems in for fast money?

Sides of the time capsule and the light behind the tree

The left side of the box is a continuation of the Utopia part inside, while the right side shows an animal caught inside a tenement, and the long, grey block decoration mimics city pavements. The light behind the tree is a dog collar light. I wanted to use something that combined elements of the animal world and the human world – the light has been made by humans to protect the safety of animals which have been domesticated by humans.

I hope you have enjoyed looking at the time capsule, and I hope that you leave today with many questions and thoughts about all the things that you, yourself, can do to be part of big, positive changes in the world around you!

Much love,
Ali Forbes x

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