



‘A Hill For My Friend’ by Maureen Hodge

A Hill For My Friend was woven in 1975-76. It is a Gobelin high-loom tapestry warped in black mohair at 6 threads to the inch and was purchased by Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in 1979.

Maureen Hodge worked through a series of tent forms from the late 1960s, a variety of large and small scale tapestries which developed in the early 1970s into a series of both triangular and rounded hill shapes, sometimes with differently shapes in a group of units, sometimes with only one solitary hill. In the period of 1975 - 78 many versions of these *hills and skies* were woven.

A Hill For My Friend had a long gestation period. In 1972, she saw a painting by Harold Sohlberg, dating from 1905 in The National Gallery in Oslo called *Blomstereng Nordpa* - a landscape with a daisy-covered field stretched out beneath a pale blue sky. Several years later in 1975 on a visit to Glamis, Hodge and her friends had picnicked there, on a little mound-type hill, in an incredible field of daisies which immediately recalled the postcard pinned to her studio wall. She began to weave almost immediately.

The hill, a simplified childlike image, is a dark green mound strewn with white daisies set against a water blue sky and is balanced by a white moon on the left. The daisies retreat up the hill diminishing in size till they are a white mass at the top. Hodge has always used a small thumbnail sketch to work from; not a full scale cartoon or a colour sketch; she scales up the sketch at one tenth of an inch to an inch and drawing straight on to the warps and picking colours from the preselected palette of yarns lying around the studio.

In *A Hill For My Friend* she supplemented this framework with many photos of different daisies which she used as a guide as she went along.

Along the bottom of the tapestry she continued the medieval tradition of incorporating lettering into tapestries. – “*There were stars in the grass; stars in our eyes, once, before tears and rain, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring. Les milles fleurs pour mon ami. A Hill for my Friend*” The work related to a specific friendship at that time.

“It is a work of many juxtapositions, combining the simple shapes of the mound and moon with the more complex and impressionistically realistic designs of the daisies and the cloud-colours of the sky; the dark shape is silhouetted against the lighter sky and also by an internal tension with the more complex pattern of the flowers. The presence of the moon not only serves to balance the composition in formal terms, but also to punctuate and focus this pattern, with the image of a moon in a daytime sky (borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, from *Blomstereng Nordpa*), an image at once real and apparently surreal. The white distance into which the carpet of flowers recedes almost suggests the snow-cap of a mountain: when combined with the round curve of the mound, it seems to mirror the white face of the moon, it emphasised the dialogue of space within the work; but the suggestion of distant snow also provokes a paradoxical seasonal contrast with the flowers in the foreground.” Paul Urquhart, Oxford 2012.

