

Artists Statement

Stephanie Kellett, Robert E. Livingood

After Eden is an exploration into landscapes of barren desolation. It is a journey that is both physical yet simultaneously imaginary and dreamlike. Drawn by the energy of Spirit Animals, we travelled for two consecutive autumns to the far, boreal, sub-arctic North. We needed to share space with their forms; needing to be in proximity to their embodied consciousness; to breathe the same air as them; to receive what each individual species has to teach, and to feel that still, in some far out places where the dominant forces of industrial culture have not penetrated too deeply, things might still feel okay.

We needed animal medicine. Modern civilization takes its toll.

We had found it before, learning to re-wild in far out northern landscapes, living out of a tent for many weeks at a time on ground hallowed by grizzly bear paws. We knew where to look. Nonetheless, on these two journeys, the presence of the wild ones was faint.

This inspired us to imagine and wonder about what vacant landscapes in the future might feel like-landscapes that modern industrial culture seems determined to create, where all that remains of these creatures are faint traces, diaphanous ghosts.

How lonely to exist in such a human centric world!

In our imaginings, a character emerged: veiled, solitary, clothed in funeral black. We allowed space for this energy, and began to look through her eyes as she scanned the vast expanse of parched tundra (Paleoclimatologists say the Yukon is the warmest its been in 13,600 years); walking with her as she moved over ancient topography and feeling it crunch under heavy boots; listening through her ears to the frequencies of wind, sky, water, and rocks. She came to represent the witness acknowledging the increasing emptiness of the wild world, and a means by which to honor whatever of it will remain.

From the exhibition *After Eden*, originally shown at the Kootenay Gallery March/April 2020.