

...How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
And how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind...
The answer is blowin' in the wind
Bob Dylan (1962)

“How many times must a man look up?”

Flag Triptych, 2021 (each flag 2.7mts x 1.3mts)

Like many I felt a need to create something in response to living through the pandemic. Much has been said about our health care services and our politicians; heroes have been hailed and villains vilified, there has been clapping and jeering, survivors have been embraced and those lost have been mourned. Gaps between people have been magnified, social spaces sterilised and barriers have encroached everywhere. Distance became the status quo and difference appeared in the cracks.

This triptych of flags is an attempt at addressing the cracks and closing the distance. Declarations of identity and autonomy that everyone has the capacity to care, to heal and to suffer, these are not job titles to define individuals, they are basic human tenets.

The flags have been stitched together from deconstructed hospital garments; patient's gowns, medic's scrubs and health care worker's tunics. The materials themselves broken, repaired and re-appropriated. Everything has changed yet still familiar.

The lines from Dylan's 60 year old song resonate like words penned by a journalist surveying the terrain of the past 18 months. The song became a motivating mantra for me and was the catalyst that flags blowing in the wind could in some way disseminate a message of unity, solidarity and humanity.

The flags will be flown at public venues across Scotland over the coming year...

Hans K Clausen, 2021