



Title	<i>sigil magic mask 3, 2025</i>
Artist's dates	B. 1985 (40 y.o.)
Gallery/source	MARS Gallery, Windsor
Date of purchase	2/10/25
Buying Circle	Sarah George, Fiona Hardie, Wendy Kozica
Shadow members	Fiona Brockhoff, Fiona Edwards, Susan Jones
Dimensions (H X W)	56 x 49.5cm
Medium	Reclaimed material and threads with mild steel armature

CONTENT/SUBJECT/AESTHETIC QUALITIES

- This work is titled '*sigil magic mask 3*', yet the pdf of the work came with the name '*Isabelle Eberhardt (sigil magic mask)*', hinting at the inspiration behind this work, and others in the MARS show, titled *The Mage*.
- The Mage or Magician as archetype is widely considered the wise and all-knowing one, the one who perceives hidden forces and makes them visible. The Magician is one card in a group of cards (the Major Arcana) in the Tarot that represent significant life lessons and spiritual themes. The Magician is understood to perceive not by magic, but by achieving a state of concentration without effort.
- In this collection of works, Kasia refigures the archetype of the Magician through the lens of the heroine, drawing from the lives of women whose lived experiences pushed the boundaries of their realities. Her heroines include: Emma Gatewood, Ada Blackjack, Isabelle Eberhardt, Commandante Ramona, Julia Butterfly Hill and Lhakpa Sherpa. Many of these women disappeared into a self-imposed challenge of endurance in order to reappear transformed. Through their stories Kasia reveals a model for knowledge made visceral by attention, endurance, improvisation, courage and intimate dialogue with the natural world.
- In this show, the characteristics of these heroines have been enshrined in Kasia's series of Sigil Magic Masks - to be summoned through ritual activation when they need to be embodied.
- Our mask, *sigil magic mask 3*, appears through the naming of the file (see above) to reference Isabelle Eberhardt, a Swiss-Russian writer and explorer, who in Switzerland published short stories under a male pseudonym, then in 1897 at the age of 20 moved to Algeria, where she dressed as man, converted to Islam, married an Algerian soldier, was shunned by the local European society, wrote for a local newspaper, and died aged 27 in a flash flood! She was seen posthumously as a feminist and advocate of decolonisation.

TECHNIQUE

- Kasia is a textile artist. Her work takes various forms, including hand embroidery and mask making. This work comprises both these forms. The mask itself is made from found materials, predominantly heavy-weight wool, which is densely stitched together to create a bird-like mask in strong colours – red, purple, blue, yellow, orange. The mask is affixed on a steel armature, which adds another dimension to the work – adding solidity and permanence to the ritual mask.

CONTEXT

- Kasia Tons is a young artist (born 1985) living in the Adelaide Hills. While she works primarily in hand embroidery and mask making, photography and video have also become important tools in her practice. Kasia's process is slow and intuitive, colourful and expressive. The labour and time invested in creating her work acts as an antidote to the fast pace of the modern world and the addictive seeking of instant gratification through digital means. She travels extensively, often walking, living and practising her art in the bush.
- Kasia has exhibited nationally and internationally and has participated in residencies in Iceland, the US, Latvia and the Slovak Republic. The Rothko Art Centre, Latvia, holds two of her pieces as part of their permanent collection and her work was selected as a finalist for the 2021 Ramsay Art Award, Art Gallery of South Australia.

COLLECTION STATEMENT

- Fiona was introduced to Kasia's work on the recommendation of Atong Atem, when we met with Atong on an Art Walk to Mars in 2024. We were shown a number of Kasia's works in the stockroom that day. Through following Kasia's Instagram, Fiona grew to appreciate her unique practice, and in early 2025 she saw more of Kasia's work in a group show of textile artists at RMIT.
- As the then shadow buying group came together in June 2025 to discuss their ambitions for the 25/26 buying year, textiles – and Kasia – were on the list. The MARS show came just at the right time.
- In adding *sigil magic mask 3* to the Circle Collective collection we are thrilled to be supporting a young, highly original, deeply intuitive, committed artist. We are really taken by how she creates such beautiful objects from found materials and while living a nomadic life. She is clearly a free spirit whose sensory relationship with the world she inhabits is very rich indeed.
- We are stimulated by Kasia's practice, and the way it challenges us to think about relationships – interpersonal and interspecies; the social impact of emerging technologies; and the effects of human impact on the environment. This is the kind of art we are keen to add to the collection – representing other ways of thinking and seeing the world.
- Another consequence of this is that Kasia's work and perspective takes us into worlds we might otherwise not explore – in the case of *sigil magic mask 3*, we are drawn to find out more about Magic, the Tarot, and to google and explore the fascinating lives of six largely unsung heroines.