



Tek Hod - Embroidered Wrestlers of the North - David Ellison

Lou Stoppard David Ellison
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Tek Hod is a contemporary photographic response to an ancient tradition: Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling. Documenting a legacy of romanticism on one hand and industrialisation on the other, David Ellison's photo series speaks to the complexity of the landscape's tradition via costume and archive as well as the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Ellison, whose Northern heritage dates back at least as far as his distant relative William Wordsworth, has been returning to Cumbria, Northumbria and Scotland for more than a decade. A testament to the incredible spectacle of the region's traditional wrestling, his photographs capture the dance-like movements of athletes against the Lake District's idyllic countryside. Equally mindful of the area's post-industrial context, Tek Hod foregrounds the importance of local fairs, sporting events and other shows; of communal gatherings and their lingering rituals.

The flamboyance of hand-stitched birds and flowers in the wrestlers' costumes; balletic 'backhold' throws and 'tekkin hod' grips; crowds moving with the weight of sparring bodies and wind from the Cumbrian fells. Ellison's images are full of contrasts: here, intricate embroidery meets waning monoliths of rural masculinity in tableaux transported from another era. This book examines a kind of double struggle - against an opponent, and against the threat of dwindling tradition - epitomised within the grasp of Ellison's wrestlers.

Ellison's work spans both portraiture and landscape, offering both a contextual and intimate story.

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