Weevils, Mats, and New Guinea

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of

the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

at

James Cook University

by

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2008

School of Creative Arts

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The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H 1827).

Marie Elise Lorraine Lamothe Date

Statement on the contribution of others including financial and editorial help

Support for the completion of the thesis and practice was obtained via the following sources:

Fees:

Study was supported by James Cook University.

Supervision:

Supervision was overseen by

- Professor Diana Davis – Principal Supervisor
- Dr. James Brown – Associate Supervisor

Any other assistance:

Financial assistance was provided by James Cook University to attend the conference Clothing the Pacific, held in London, England, June 23-25, 2003.

Professor Rosamund Thorpe ably provided assistance for final hurdles.

Academic assistance was provided by Drs. Hartmut and Susanne Hartmut, especially in regard to Morobean languages and anthropology as well as the Lutheran missionary presence in Morobe Province.

Dr. Janos Gyarmati of the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography not only found objects for me but also provided invaluable assistance in cracking the Hungarian language barrier.

Summer Institute of Linguistics bible translators helped me with verifications of spellings and meanings of words in local languages. Dr. Bob Bugenhagen and his wife Salme helped with the Yaga words but also provided assistance in Yaga Settlement (and in Ukarumpa when I got stranded). Bill and Diane Eckerman commented on the words I collected in Bukaua.

Acknowledgements

There are always many people to thank at the conclusion of such a major piece of work. Although I single out several individuals there are also many others who have been there offering general encouragement.

Firstly I would like to thank my friends Drs. Susanne and Hartmut Holzknecht. It was Susanne who encouraged me to make the initial Weevil Rugs of New Guinea. Both she and Hartmut provided immeasurable friendship over the long period of my studies.

At James Cook University I would like to single out the immeasurable assistance of my supervisors, Professor Diana Davis and Dr. James Brown. Dr. Brown made valuable contributions to the theoretical and practical aspects of my studio practice. Professor Davis visited me in Nepal, provided a consultation in Singapore and continued supervision throughout the period of my candidature. She was always there for me, and I am profoundly aware of the magnitude of her input.

The Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Germany, Australia and America provided assistance in my search for primary source material. In Germany thanks are due to:

- the Reverend Drs. Hermann Vorlander (Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bayern) and Traugott Farnbacher for allowing me to access their archives and providing accommodation at church headquarters;
- Pastor Manfred Keitel (Emeritus), the Curator of the Archives in Neuendettelsau, for his invaluable help;
- Herr Fischer and his wife who made our stay most comfortable.

In Australia I thank the Archivist, Mr. Lyall Kupke but also Dr. Myra Oster who assisted while I was searching those archives. In America I thank the Reference Archivist Mr. Joel Thoreson.

I visited several museums in the course of my research. In England I visited the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology as well as the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University. In the first instance I thank Dr. Anita Herle for allowing me access to the collection and Ms. Tabitha Cadbury for assisting me in my work. At the Pitt Rivers Museum I was ably assisted by Ms. Zena McGreevy. With the permission of Dr. Zoltan Fejos, Director in Chief, I visited the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography. In Australia I visited the Louise Flierl Museum in Hahndorf courtesy of Mr. Flierl. In Papua New Guinea, Mr. Eroi facilitated my visit to the Papua New Guinea

National Museum and Art Gallery where Sebastian helped with locating the mats in which I was interested.

Although I did not visit them, I also contacted many other museums in my search for Morobean mats. I met unqualified kindness from all the curators with whom I corresponded including Drs. Fuli Pereira (Auckland Museum), Anita Herle (Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology), John E. Terrell (Field Museum), Mrs. Tarisi Sorovoi-Vunidilio (Museum of New Zealand), Bente Wolff (National Museum of Denmark), Andrew Moutu (PNG National Museum and Art Gallery), Leslie M. Freund and Joan Knudsen (Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology), Jeremy Coote (Pitt Rivers Museum), Robert Welsh, Janos Gyarmati (Hungarian Museum of Ethnography), Ingrid Heerman (Linden Museum Stuttgart Staatliche Museum fur volkerkunde), Susie Davies (Macleay Museum), Catharine Thorpe (Monash University), Mr. Andreas Bucher (Museum fur Volkerkunde unde Schwesizeerisches Museum fur Volkerkunde Basel; Museum der Kulturen Basel), Barry Craig and Sylvia Ohnemus (Ubersee Museum).

I visited as well the Textile Museum of Canada where I was permitted to study their collection of hooked mats and I thank the Curator, Ms Roxanne Shaughnessy, for providing this opportunity.

I would not have been able to undertake this project in Papua New Guinea without the proper and relevant research permits. For this, and all the help he provided when my backpacks were stolen, I thank Jim Robins.

In Papua New Guinea I received the assistance of many people, old friends and new. Firstly I would like to thank all the villagers in the communities where I conducted field research. They kindly welcomed me and offered generous hospitality. I would like to particularly thank the women who shared not only their skills and knowledge with me but also their joy in the world: Galiki Peter, Galiki Jonas, Kobec Dabuyŋanoo, Miream Donga and Siwon Janamdangeo in Malesiga, Gebing, Leah Alung, Miti Tuling, Mondo Tisam, Saking Christian, Tamaris Lini, Tita Amos and Yaeng Nathan of Bukaua (including Busong) and Gida Dive, Helen Ligiman, Jopa Abur, Malel, Malua Vogana, Pitum Taiwaluo, Sagwale Sukey, Shirley Abila and Tamaris Sakail of Yaga Settlement. Two men also acted as informants: Malum Kasae of Malesiga and Donald Kobak of Yaga Settlement. Many people extended the hospitality of their homes to me and for this I express sincere thanks. Siwon and Malum of Malesiga were my first and main hosts and informants; I could not have asked for a better and nicer couple. In Bukaua, Titi and Erika Solomon took me in. Titi worked especially hard to make my research

successful. In the Yaga community on Umboi, I visited twice, staying with Buai (Hagar) on my first visit and then with Monica Day (in the absence of Colin). Everyone opened their doors to this strange woman asking seemingly bizarre questions; they were very generous to me.

I was supported indirectly throughout my research period by two important groups of people - the textile group to which I belong on the Atherton Tablelands and the visual arts post-graduate students of James Cook University Cairns campus. While we have been away from Lake Eacham, Chris Lucas looked after our house…and bailed me out when I ran out of supplies or had forgotten to take critical measurements. She has also been studying fine arts and providing insights into arts theory and history. Thanks, Chris.

My family in Canada gave me the foundations from which all my endeavours spring. How can one thank one's parents enough? It is matter of enduring sadness that my mother did not live to see her first baby succeed at this latest challenge.

James Leech designed the catalogue, making my words and images look very good indeed. Thanks, James for being the design and computer genius that you are.

And always - I thank for all his support, under sometimes trying circumstances, my husband Frans Arentz. He provided the necessary funding for all field work. In the final instance he provided editorial input. He also kept me going when discouragement set in. Thank you always, Frans.

Abstract

This research was foregrounded by my 2002 exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea,* a fictionally based body of work which, through motif, technique, materiality and allusions to form and function, made reference and paid homage to mat makers/textile artists in Canada, Papua New Guinea and Australia. The use of insect motifs was underpinned by my familiarity with insects (through a prior natural resource management degree) and an appreciation that the insect motif could sustain a long term examination both as a design base and as a vehicle to critique arbitrary standards and preconceived notions. But what of other textile makers who use insect motifs? How do they come to the use of entomological designs? In particular, how do women of Papua New Guinea, the country in which *my* weevil (the genus *Eupholus*) *was* found, adopt such imagery? What does this indicate about them and their art practices? How could the practices of the Western artist and the Morobean women of Papua New Guinea be documented both visually and in a written form to illustrate the parallel practices of mat making that incorporate entomological motifs?

This research addresses these questions, and seeks to expand the understanding of the paradigms of art and science, by exploring the creative processes of two similar, yet culturally radically different, sets of textile practices, both of which employ entomological imagery: my practice as a Western textile artist and the practices of Papua New Guinean (from Morobe province) makers of stitched *Pandanus* mats. Based on an *a priori* assumption that textiles are valid sites for artistic expressions that include culturally appropriate decorative motifs, often of a symbolic nature but also conceptual imagery, the research behind *Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil* focuses on the developments and processes common to both practices.

While the research is informed by the extant literature on women's material culture in Papua New Guinea, as well as an overview of mat and entomological culture, in fact stitched *Pandanus* mats of the Huon Gulf are not well represented in the museums of the world or in documentation by the first expatriates (missionaries) to live in this area. Since the missionaries' arrival in the 1880s, and despite several independent museum expeditions, only a handful of mats and rain capes (approximately 25) have been collected from this area. Similarly, with the exception of brief mentions in relation to mats as economic items in the trade cycles of Tami (Huon Gulf) and Tuam Islands (Siassi), the sites of the current research, the literature and primary source information is scanty.

Mat making persists in these communities. This research documents the extent of historical continuity and current practices through the interrogation of histories, ideas and imagery coupled with photo-imagery of historical mats from the region. Interestingly, only one group of Morobean mat makers used an entomological motif as part of its lexicon. Nevertheless, the majority of all designs referenced nature intimately and reflected the overarching aims of the science/art paradigm. Photographs reveal the rarely documented processes of stitched *Pandanus* mat making from the villages of Malesiga, Yaga Settlement and Bukaua.

As part of the studio practice component of this research, formal aesthetic qualities in hooked mats, with relation to design qualities of the stitched *Pandanus* mats of the Huon Gulf and Siassi, were explored. Mat hooking, thought to have originated on the eastern seaboard of North America as early as the 1850s, is considered to be a true North American art form. Because this researcher's ancestry can be traced to Eastern Canada, similar historical parameters are maintained between the two research focus groups.

A number of strategies were employed in gathering data on the creative practices and the designs of the Morobean stitched mats. Of central importance have been studies of archived and museum objects combined with field work with contemporary Morobean mat makers. These initiatives have lead to the development of the resultant body of exhibition work that not only documents research efforts in terms of formal aesthetic experiments as well as literature research, but also presents the findings of the research as a visual discourse on creative process. The potential for future research, with respect to continuing investigations into stitched *Pandanus* mats but also into the broader categories of female material culture in Papua New Guinea, the teaching of textiles both in the developed and developing world as well as the further development of a personal artistic practice, is canvassed in the final chapter.

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Chapter 1: Delineating the Environment

1.1 Women in the Background

As a non-western culture, Papua New Guinea has had significant contact with the western world for well over a century (Swadling, 1996). Furthermore, that western world has been interested in and documented much male activity and ritual while apparently either ignoring or neglecting the female side of this culture to the extent that, in the early 20th century, Western art, particularly art of the Surrealist movement, referenced male artefacts from Oceania directly (Heerman, 2001). The neglect of female material culture is quite marked. While some studies are now directing attention to female material culture (MacKenzie, 1991; Bolton, 1997, 1999), given the interval since colonisation, many practices and much memory may already be lost. Ohnemus (1997) for example, talks about the loss of knowledge regarding bag plaiting in Manus, a loss that also impacts on respect for copyright and an understanding of the deeper meanings of family connections. Loss of knowledge of any sector of the visual culture of a community must reverberate throughout the whole community. Female material culture is contextualized within an integrated visual entity; its loss must therefore also resonate within that system.

Visual documentation exists of some art objects but, as Thomas (1995) points out, the documentation of many art forms has been neglected, including those of performance art, body art and ephemeral art. Women's art forms, partly because they are made of softer materials and are less enduring, have also suffered from neglect; objects made by women are underrepresented both in museum collections (Bolton, 1980) and in published material. This neglect, however, may have exerted a subtle benignity on female material culture, leaving it free to develop without the pressures of foreign influence. Thomas (1991) discusses the influences and consequences of foreign perceptions of material culture on the continuing manufacture of indigenous artefacts in Melanesian societies. The influence of missionary and other well meaning women, with their zeal for teaching indigenous women new skills, must also not be forgotten as, often this meant overlooking already existing crafts and skills as inferior/inadequate (Langmore, 1982; Pollock, 1989; Jolly, 1991).

Thomas (1995) further stresses the need to understand the making of art in reference to the cultural environment in which it is made without overemphasising the stereotypical notions of exotic and mystical primitivism. He sees much that is universal in Melanesian and other Pacific art, not only in terms of design elements but also in dealing with social issues

> …that enter into virtually all art traditions: the fact of death, the relationship with the dead that a community seeks to sustain or erase, and the problem of creating continuity out of contingency and impermanence…(Thomas, 1995, p. 12).

To a practising textile artist of another culture, yet one who has experienced many years of living and learning in Papua New Guinea, it is this sense of universality that intrigues.

The current researcher, while dominantly a Western artist, has important interconnections with aspects of Papua New Guinea material culture in terms of gender, textile art focussed on rug making, entomological references in artwork and a long-term residency in Papua New Guinea. These interconnections shape this practice in ways that forge commonalities across Papua New Guinean and Western practices with the potential to contribute to the understanding of the universalities of women's art practices.

1.2 The Papua New Guinea Context

Although the earliest contact with New Guineans is believed to have come from Southeast Asia in the period 6,000 to 2,000 years ago and was primarily trade related, it was not until the 1800s that Western contact with New Guinea and, more specifically, the political entity now called Papua New Guinea, began in earnest (Swadling, 1996). Initially that contact was commercially oriented, with European nations looking for plants, animals or minerals that would increase their own wealth and power. Scientific, anthropological and religious expeditions followed as funding and access permitted.

In the south-eastern quarter of New Guinea (called Papua), the British, at the behest of the Queensland government, established a protectorate with all the attendant administration. The north-eastern portion (New Guinea) was controlled by German commercial interests who also administered the area. At the end of the First World War Australia took over the administration of both the German and British protectorates (Nelson, 1982). At this time, the number of expatriates who came to Papua New Guinea (PNG) increased. For reasons of societal, financial, and other considerations, most of the Europeans coming to PNG were men, although wives, especially missionary wives, often accompanied their husbands.

Just weeks before Papua New Guinea gained its independence (September 16th, 1975), I joined the then miniscule ranks of single female expatriates employed by the government, in my case at the Papua New Guinea Forestry College (Plate 1.2.1). My

work involved the establishment of a wildlife and conservation management course within a forestry curriculum. I also carried out small-scale research projects relating to birds within natural and plantation forests. My employers, colleagues and the majority of my students were males. This was typical for women in the sciences in the 1970s (Kelly, 1993) and working in Papua New Guinea exaggerated the effect.

Plate 1.2.1: In context with Forestry College staff, circa 1976

I left Papua New Guinea briefly at the end of 1977 but returned ten months later to marry Australian Frans Arentz. We left Bulolo in December 1987 but after one year in Australia we returned, to Lae, for a further two years. Between 1978 and 1984 I completed a Master of Natural Resources through the University of New England in Armidale, New South Wales researching the control birds exerted on insect populations in a forestry plantation in Papua New Guinea.

When we moved to Australia in 1991 my career change to the visual arts, begun in Papua New Guinea, accelerated. I completed a two-year diploma in visual arts (textiles) at the Canberra School of Art (part of the Australian National University) (Plate 1.2.2) and immediately began making one-off pieces for exhibition. I drew on my accumulated scientific experience for both the metaphysical ideas and the concrete images through which to portray them. My colleagues among the textile community were, with one or two notable exceptions, female.

Plate 1.2.2: Valerie Kirk and Liz Williamson, Head of Textiles and Lecturer respectively, with Lorraine Lamothe

The insect imagery I employ in my artworks has always connected me to Papua New Guinea, beginning with the insects I portrayed during my art school training and continuing intermittently with references to New Guinea insects and colours. In 1999 I began making the body of work, Weevil Rugs of New Guinea, which explicitly linked rug making, weevils (of New Guinea) and the women of Canada, Papua New Guinea and Australia (Plate 1.2.3). This body of work was exhibited in the Cairns Regional Gallery in 2002 and was the prelude to the current research.

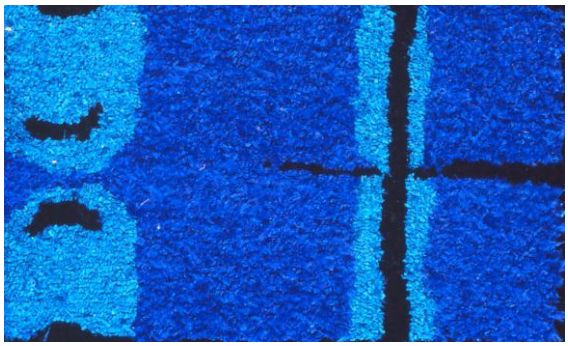

Plate 1.2.3: bennett's common eupholus I, 2000, hooked

1.3 The Niche of Women

1.3.1 The Indigenous Women

While there have been extensive changes to PNG society since the influx of the Europeans and their western influences, and these changes have accelerated since independence in 1975, much of the essence of life remains unchanged. Although some urban women have paid employment, most do not. According to Philp (1986) the resource rich environment and a low population density mean that even subsistence villagers are relatively affluent in world terms. Although women are increasingly engaged in the cash economy, they do so within traditionally defined spheres.

Women's responsibilities include the provision of food, both its production and preparation, as well as child bearing and rearing activities.

Women's work is conducted mainly in the public sphere, excluding sexual matters (such as menstruation, sexual intercourse and childbirth) and rituals associated with these, which are secretive subjects surrounded by taboos. Women not engaged in wage earning occupations are busy during the growing season with preparing and maintaining gardens and, subsequently, with harvesting vegetables. In more remote communities women collect insects for themselves and their children to eat, although some insects such as sago grubs are important food items for the whole community and for sale (May, 1984; Menzel & D'Aluisio, 1998). To various degrees women on the coast engage in fishing (Crawford, 1981; Specht and Fields, 1984).

Child care and food preparation are also time consuming daily activities with many women still gathering and cooking with firewood. At all other times, women are at work making *bilums* (see Appendix A for Glossary) and other goods. Associated with these activities and providing for them, women engage in the making of objects closely concerned with their role with food including fish trap construction, *bilum* (Plate 1.3.1) and basket making, and pottery. Hurley's photographs of Papuan women in the 1920s show women potting, preparing canoe lashings and washing sago (Specht and Fields, 1984).

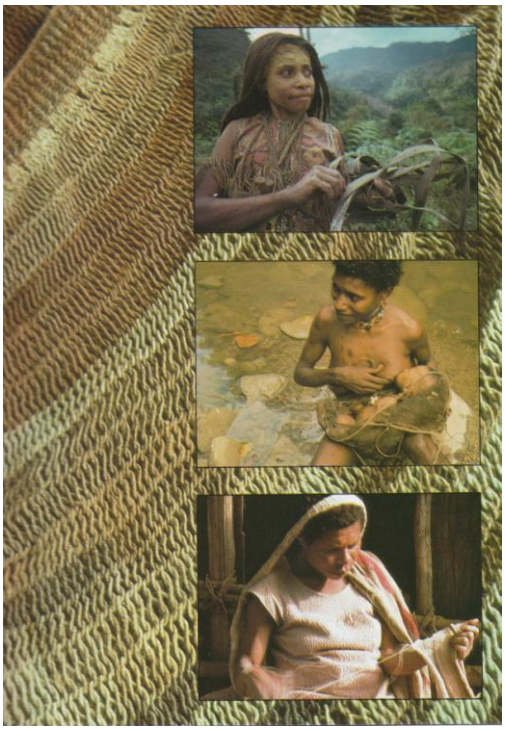

Plate 1.3.1: Women making and using *bilums* (MacKenzie, 1991, p. 256+ iii)

Women make other objects fulfilling both domestic and ritual roles, including floor mats, items of clothing and *bilas*, both for everyday and ritual use. *Tapa* (bark) cloth is widely made throughout the Pacific. In Papua New Guinea its production is found in culturally diverse areas. Women make *tapa* cloth for ordinary clothing (such as the bark capes of the Anga people of the Morobe highlands) but *tapa* for ceremonial and ritual use is usually made by men (Neich and Pendergrast, 1997). Included in the category of *bilas* are tattoos. Women's tattoos are incised by women (Saville, 1926; Barker and Tietjen, 1990).

While some areas no longer produce pots at all, pottery is largely confined to mainland coastal and riverine areas of the northern and eastern regions of Papua New Guinea (May and Tuckson, 1982) (Plate 1.3.2). Women are the primary potters at the eastern and western ends of pot making traditions although decoration, especially for ritual purposes, has been the province of men. Pots were distinctive in shape and decoration according to their provenance and were valuable trade as well as domestic items (May and Tuckson, 1982).

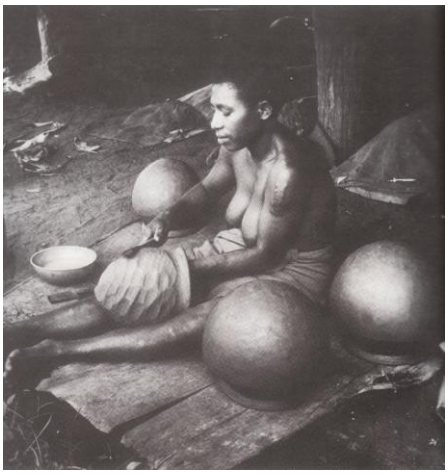

Plate 1.3.2: Woman making pots, Madang (May and Tuckson, 1982, p. 172)

Decorative elements from pot-making traditions represent plants, man-made artefacts (net sinker), clouds and animals including fish, insects, bird, reptile and amphibia (Saville, 1926; May & Tuckson, 1982). Bodrogi (1961) cites scrolls and spirals as well as bamboo imprints as pot decorations in the Huon Gulf region of north eastern New Guinea although he does not mention what these represent. Pattern in plaited objects include snakes' teeth (Ohnemus, 1998) centipedes and fish bones (Hanneman, 1977). Traditional images on *bilums* represent centipedes, among others, flying fox in flight and seven brothers (Choulai and Lewis-Harris, 1999). Within contemporary *bilum* making, a wide range of images, including such images of natural and manmade objects as power lines, tyre tracks, pine trees, butterflies (Plate 1.3.3), the PNG flag,

kundu as well as patterns which bear some resemblance to quilt patterns, is being incorporated into designs (Lamothe, personal observation, 2001).

Plate 1.3.3: *Bilum* with butterfly motif

The visual vocabulary of a clan meant that all motifs could be found on artefacts made and used by either sex. All members of the clan would understand the imagery to a certain extent but only initiated men would attach deeper meaning to the motifs Heerman (2001).

Although some (especially *bilum*) patterns are becoming ubiquitous, there exists, for certain decorative motifs and techniques, indigenous copyright. Bodrogi (1961); Rossitto (1995); Bolton (1999) and Heerman (2001) show the existence of copyright in various areas of Melanesia in both men's and women's material culture. Choulai shaped her contemporary Papua New Guinean art practice around the restraints and parameters of an understood copyright over certain designs (Choulai & Lewis-Harris, 1999).

Many of the traditional artefacts are no longer being produced (Wronska-Friend, pers. comm. 2007). Where there is continued production, underlying reasons for its production, materials used in the production and decorative elements applied to the products have all changed dramatically (e.g., Barker and Tietjen, 1990; Rossitto, 1995). Traditions and stories have also begun to be lost to the community and to the larger world. Kyakas and Wiessner (1992) demonstrate that Christian religious beliefs adopted by Papua New Guineans have severely impacted the preservation and continuation of Engan women's traditions although attitudes and values central to these traditions may still exist.

Although we can now ascertain that historical documentation, both of women's activities and the products of these activities was limited (MacKenzie, 1991; Jolly,

1996), it was not merely anthropologically that women were obliterated but economically as well. Waring (1997) documents the inclusion of male subsistence labour but not female subsistence labour in the calculation of Papua New Guinea's GDP. Furthermore, objects made by women and circulated (or not) within trade cycles are largely ignored. Weiner (1976, 1994) examines some of these objects, particularly those kept out of trade cycles, arguing an inherent cultural density that elevates their worth beyond mere monetary value.

1.3.2 The Exotic Woman

Most expatriate women who went to Papua New Guinea, including myself, did not engage with the material culture of women except on a very superficial scale. Being in a male profession may have exaggerated that impulse in my case. I interacted with men during my working day and I wanted to interact with them socially. Nothing in my life or training enabled me to engage with women or women's culture meaningfully. This included women's ritual life as well as their material culture. The little I knew about Papua New Guinean women's material culture centred on the collection of *bilums* which we owned. Initially I disliked the extruded plastic *bilums* and it was not until we returned to Australia that I saw these as innovative, adapted to local conditions, and as sites for creativity.

Growing up in Canada I had been exposed to textiles through my maternal side; my university studies, however, were in forestry, a reflection of my father's influence. These studies brought me to Papua New Guinea two years after I graduated. I began making quilts as a hobby within the first year of arriving in PNG. In 1989 when I returned to PNG and I first started exploring textiles as art, my impulse was to copy rather than reflect the art and environment of PNG and regrettably I did make a quilt which was a direct copy of a piece of *tapa.* It was my struggle with visual expression during these years which propelled me into art school.

1.4 The Art Environment: Issues of Conservation

From the beginning, stories as much as commerce emerged from the frontier that was New Guinea. Traders, missionaries, funded anthropologists on expeditions and, much later, resident anthropologists recorded and conducted research on a number of fronts including the collection of cultural artefacts. The earliest collections were taken to Europe and other parts of the western world and still form the basis of scholarly study. The repatriated collections of Sir William MacGregor seeded the collections that are now the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery (Quinnell, 2002).

The study of material culture separate from social anthropology has been controversial. It is more widely accepted now and studies are made not only of objects as part of ritual but also of objects as art (Bodrogi, 1961; Hanneman, 1969; Winter, 1975; Chick & Chick, 1978; Mead, 1979; Ewins, 1982; May & Tuckson, 1982; Mead & Kernot, 1985; Teilhet, 1985; Morphy, 1989; Waite, 1989; Simons & Stevenson, 1990; Thomas, 1995; Bonnemaison, Huffman, Kaufmann & Tyron, 1996; Walter, 1996; Neich & Pendergrast, 1997; Beran, 1999; Bolton, 1999; Choulai & Lewis-Harris, 1999; Craig, Kernot & Anderson, 1999; Kaufmann, 2000; Cochrane, 2001; Dark, 2002; Heerman, 2001; Herle, Stanley, Stevenson & Welsch, 2002; Kaeppler, 2002; Fukumoto, n.d.).

Although items made by women have been collected, if in lesser numbers than artefacts made and used by men (Gosden, 2000), it is only recently that there have been studies and books devoted substantively to Pacific women's ritual, their work or the artefacts they produce (Winter, 1975; Weiner; 1976, 1994; Ewins, 1982; May & Tuckson, 1982; Teilhet, 1985; Barker & Tietjen, 1990; MacKenzie, 1991; Hauser-Schaublin, 1996; Mabonlala, 1996; Walter, 1996; Neich & Pendergrast, 1997; Ohnemus, 1997; Rinder, 1998; Bolton, 1999, 2003; Choulai & Lewis-Harris, 1999; Howard, Sanggaenafa & Katz, 1999; Hamby, 2001; Kaeppler, 2002; Fukumoto, n.d.). Mitteness (1985) pointedly remarks that

> Reading much of traditional social anthropology might lead one to think that cultures other than ours [American] consist entirely of men of indeterminate adult age who have mothers only in order to have mother's brothers (Mitteness, 1985, p. 325).

And, in a similar vein, MacKenzie comments that

> …until recently the mainstream of anthropological enquiry has not been interested in studies of technology and material culture; and secondly it has for too long been male-dominated, focussing almost entirely on what men say and do (MacKenzie 1991, p. 21).

In fact, the scattered references to artefacts of women's making too often contain factual errors[1].

Another important aspect of indigenous art practice is the tension between traditional and contemporary art. Thomas (1999) addresses this dichotomy with respect to indigenous peoples living in countries now numerically dominated by settler populations. He comments on the values placed by settler populations on indigenous traditional practice with the implication that traditional practice somehow equates to a

[1] Reference the terminology used for the construction of *bilum* (called net bags) in Kyakas and Wiessner, 1992, p. 115, which are said to be woven, as opposed to netted, a technique which uses a single strand.

moment frozen in time. Errington (1998) also engages with the subject in an examination of how the western world has classified art in general and so-called authentic primitive art in particular. Her premise rests on the dichotomies inherent in the classification systems, the strong connection between what is perceived as art and its market and the Eurocentric basis for these classifications. Thomas (1999) discusses at some length the difficulty artists experience in establishing distinctive identities and identification with place, culture, nationality or other markers. Heerman (2001) addresses the question of non-western art from the perspective of art from New Britain. She contends that early collectors tended to treat Oceanic art as an anonymous canon of traditional imagery when, in fact, it was alive with copyrighted designs and respected artist-makers. With respect to Vanuatu and the material culture held by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Bolton (1997) maintains that objects from the past are valued for the information they hold about past skills; that is; they are valued for historic reasons, rather than as immutable representations of a people or place.

In discussing the artefacts made by Melanesian women and held in western collections, Bolton (1997) states that the interpretation and significance of indigenous objects to the western museums which hold them has been at variance with the interpretation and significance to the indigenes whose ancestors made them. Both Bolton (1997) and Thomas (1999) stress that culture and the objects associated with culture cannot be static while museum ethnographic practice and understanding is predicated on an association with place rather than the past (Bolton, 1997). Bolton (1997) notes in relation to the return of a woven pandanus fabric from the Australian Museum to Vanuatu that,

> …unlike art historians however, museum anthropologists characteristically construe objects not as signs of their times, nor as distillations of the spirit of an age or personality. An ethnographic artefact is nearly always construed as a sign of its place (Bolton, 1997, p. 21).

While this may be a reaction by museums against the use of age (antiquity) to establish a market value for so-called authentic primitive art, it neglects the context of the maker and the conditions prevailing at the time of making.

O'Hanlon (1989) elucidates four propositions which have informed much of the influential writing on ethnographic art: firstly, that art traditions can be analysed systematically; secondly, that art communicates or has meaning; thirdly, that meanings cannot be elicited through direct questioning of informants; and fourthly, that meanings can only be adduced by examining the component parts, and the interrelationships, of the art in question. These propositions have been applied primarily to ritual arts and

have strong ethnographic (as opposed to art) associations. O'Hanlon (1989) focuses on a level of evaluation, by spectators and performers alike, of an art tradition and postulates that a qualitative evaluation is crucial in deciphering meanings in the study of Waghi body adornment and display.

1.5 Rationale for and Aims of the Research

The art practices of the present are grounded in the past, making an understanding of both integral to any contemporary study. Material culture is constantly morphing in response to changes in their society generated both from within and without. Outside influences in Melanesian art practices of course include the westerners (explorers, traders, missionaries and administrators) who came to this region but also include other Pacific islanders who moved between local groups or large island entities (Winter, 1975; Bolton, 1997; Thomas, 1999) as well as movement from other non-western entities such as Indonesia and China. Therefore historic studies of female material culture must be intimately tied to contemporary practice (and vice versa) not only in terms of illuminating changes in practice but also in terms of relationships perceived by contemporary practitioners. Such research, engaging with Morobean mat makers in their own environment, would extend the current (limited) body of knowledge beyond its anthropological parameters into artistic forums.

Although we know, as identified in section 1.4, that there is a dearth of published material on Papua New Guinean women's activities and artefacts, we also know (Bolton, 1997) that there are possibilities of unearthing information from historical collections, from archival documents or from the transitional memories of contemporary makers. By researching a specific aspect (mat making) of Papua New Guinea's rich and diverse female material culture and investigating this important field from the perspective of a creative artist, there is strong potential for significant and different insights into Papua New Guinean mat making.

A number of anthropologists have identified difficulties that beset the conjunction of art and anthropology (Schneider, 1996; Losche, 1999). The latter, for example, summarises the main problem as stemming from the notion that

> …art has been defined as a separate and distinctive domain since Kant, then anthropology's philosophical stability for much of the twentieth century has lain in its insistence on holism where, as Marcus and Myers point out, „no dimension of cultural life is naturally to be considered in isolation from others' (Losche, 1999, p. 212).

Anthropologists as early as Speiser, however, (collecting in Vanuatu from 1910 to 1912) did have ideas about individual creativity operating within local cultures and particularly with regard to widely used motifs and ornamentation (i.e., visual language) (Kaufmann, 2000). However, Kaufmann (2000) concludes his paper on Speiser's collections with the comment that,

> If there is a lesson for the discipline, it is that we still have to come to grips with questions of form, style, type and structure through fieldwork, if we do not want to abandon the study of art and material culture again (Kaufmann, 2000, p. 223).

More recently, Kaeppler (2002) goes to the heart of the creative concept with regard to the making of *tapa* cloth in Tonga. She asks

> Do they use similar steps from imaging to imagining? Or did they reverse the process, first imagining and only later „construct an image in the presence of an object from which the image is fashioned' (Kaeppler, 2002, p. 291)?

Kaeppler (2002) poses a very pertinent and germane question although she seems to approach it from an either/or perspective. It is, however, the niche of the creative practices associated with a particular art form and community of (female) artists on which the present study focuses. The critical factor informing the current research is the open lens of a practising textile artist, an open lens that searches for the many strands that inform and transform a creative process. This niche of creative practice associated with female artists is not one on which anthropology has focussed to any degree.

Studies of creative process in western artists indicate that several major factors inform artistic practice. Leclerc and Gosselin (2004) postulate that artists need to solve problems within what they call artistic, career and economic spaces. In their particular case study of an artist, they found

> …a number of environmental elements playing a role in the artistic practice space (e.g., the artist's studio, equipment, time and financial resources, knowledge and skills to produce her work, etc.) and…defining the complex cognitive space of her artistic creativity (Leclerc & Gosselin, p. 805, 2004).

While it would be inappropriate to apply this model directly to the practices of Morobean mat makers, Dark (2002) elucidates the skills, strategies and context in which the Papua New Guinean artist works:

> He has to be able to conceive the nature of his product, its form and function, be it a carving, song or dance. He has to know the context in which it will serve, the technical stratagems and

> observances required, and have the skill with which to pursue them. Knowledge of the strategies embraces understanding of a number of factors:
>
> 1. Dimensions, parameters of form and its intended function;
> 2. Resource; and
> 3. Working practices, physical factors, procedures and performance, and observances, and the restraint and constraint on these. (Dark, 2002, p. 27)

In discussing the study of art by anthropologists for the last half century, Dark (2002) comments on two factors of critical relevance to the current study: firstly, the dearth of artists studying art in an ethnographic context; and secondly, the recognition of process as being significant to our understanding of Pacific art. Extrapolating from the Leclerc and Gosselin (2004) and Dark (2002) papers as well as applications from a Western textile artistic practice, the domains of creative practice can be summarised as comprising materiality, technical processes, history, visual vocabulary and market forces.

Therefore an artist conducting systematic studies into particular art practices, and elucidating these from a creative art perspective, has the potential to isolate commonalities or universalities of art making. Parker and Pollock (1981) align all women, although acknowledging individual and cultural responses, as coming from the non-dominant group in any society. This non-dominant societal position would serve to reinforce commonalities in women's art across cultural divides. The process or creative practice, and its parameters, is recognized as being as important as the product. The study of both the artistic process and the resulting products by a practising artist within a research discipline has the potential to yield new insights into a field that starts from an artistic base which necessarily interacts with the traditional world of anthropology, albeit not in any intrusive or expert sense.

Finally, and critically, it is necessary to consider what is meant by art and who assigns this meaning to an object. Bolton (1997) discusses the principles of aesthetics that have been applied to objects from Oceania, including style, object type and the nature and meaning of the conveyed aesthetic experience. She further implies that art theory, as opposed to anthropology, ignores the context in which the object is made:

> There is nothing inherently wrong about the Western system of assigning value to objects as art: it is as much a local cultural practice as any other. However, with the partisanship that most collections staff develop for any apparently underrecognised [sic] part of their collection, I began to take exception to an art-based approach that focussed on sculptural and painted

> objects and overlooked textiles and other kinds of objects made by or associated with women (Bolton, 2003, p. xxii).

Western art, however, is irrevocably situated in the periods both of production and of precedence. Perhaps it is only that western art is so pervasive, so widely written about and western histories so intertwined that we forget that its art also reflects the context of its making. The current study, by a western female textile artist, deriving from historical and contemporary mat making practice in Papua New Guinea seeks contextually to extend the understanding of the universalities of women's art practices.

Combined with these interconnections are those essential dilemmas of the complex, oppositional realities of self as artist. Springing from an androcentric science (forestry) education and career into a (largely) female occupation as textile artist with a preoccupation with colour and insects (particularly weevils), both with strong male overtones, this researcher's niche is far from simple. Yet it offers the opportunity to marry science and art in ways that reflect commonalities of concern in the women's art form of mat making.

Given the research focus on the intersection between entomology and mat/rug making within the context of Papua New Guinea female material culture and by examining a specific art practice, this study has the potential to expand the understanding of the paradigms of science and art by exploring the ways that contemporary female creative practices, across cultures, navigate these often opposing dualities. In scientific terms, this research concentrates on the unknown species (used by the Morobean women in their mats), the artistic niches that the unknown species and the weevil inhabit in their respective mats, and the parallel evolution that may characterise these niches. This understanding will then be communicated within both the written and visual environments.

Specifically the research aims, within the context of the general aim outlined above

a) to identify, through relevant cultural lenses, developments in characteristics common to mat makers who use entomological motifs;
b) to utilize the filter of a Western mat maker's experience to create a visual documentation of Morobean mat design with specific emphasis on decorative entomology; and
c) to document the processes of parallel mat making that emerge from the research.

1.6 Framework of the thesis

How does this fledgling idea become an adult reality? This framework lays out the development of the idea, beginning with a review of the characteristics, an outline of

the plot, new developments and their meaning, and, finally, what it all means. Because this thesis contemplates the boundaries between art and science, and particularly for the researcher the boundaries between the weevil and the mat, the chapters of this thesis, while conforming to the general principles of thesis organisation, have been named to reflect this interest.

In essence the story that unfolds concerns locating, both in the physical sense but also in the ecological sense, the weevil used by the Western artist and the unknown insect species used by Morobean mat makers in their work. Having located and described it, this thesis then moves on to analyse these insects in relation to the textile works on which they are located and to the makers who utilize them on these textile works. Finally the story draws some conclusions about makers and their creative processes and about potential for future developments, both those personal to the Western artist but also those which reflect on the larger body of textile artists.

Because this body of work comprises opposing strands such as art/science, Papua New Guinean/Western and insect/textile, the thesis divides into two strands throughout. From the methodology onwards, each major section deals first with the Melanesians then with the Western artist, weaving them together in the final analysis. This is analogous to the dichotomous key, a taxonomic device for species identification which works by presenting two opposing choices, starting with the broadest and then becoming more detailed, until an identification is made. In this thesis the initial division is between the Western and Morobean artists. Within each of these strands, particularly notable in the Morobean research, there are further divisions into historical (subdivided to archival and museum) and contemporary studies.

Chapter Two presents the background of the main characters, that is, the mat makers, the mats and the insects. In the absence of a strong body of literature directly pertinent to the research question, particularly in the area of Papua New Guinean female material culture, this literature review draws on such related sources as inform the fields of creative process and the use of entomological motifs in a worldwide context but especially within Melanesia The Morobean mat makers are foregrounded with the Western artist taking a lower profile in the first instance. In the examination of the mats and the insects, the view is initially global but then focuses more narrowly on Melanesia and Papua New Guinea. These characterisations are critical for the understanding of the plot; however our knowledge at this point in the thesis is limited by the extant knowledge available through the literature.

The plot is developed in Chapter Three. The many strategies necessary for such a complex study are elucidated in this chapter. Possibilities are explored before giving way to potential data sources servicing these possibilities. These vary from archival and museum studies dealing with historical objects to field research of contemporary Morobean mat makers – while simultaneously personally pursuing an active art practice in tandem with the other strands. The final parts of this chapter detail the actual implementation of the planned methodology, while outlining the limitations that impacted upon the study.

The ongoing development of the plot continues in Chapters Four and Five as the respective insects are revealed in their peculiar settings. Historical Morobean mats, details of mat design (both historical and contemporary) and contemporary practitioners in their own cultural setting are discussed in Chapter Four. The researcher's practice, in particular the decision making process in the formal aesthetic research, is detailed chronologically in Chapter Five. Analysis of and discussions about the growth of ideas not only from an historical perspective but, more importantly, from a creative artistic practice vantage point are also presented in Chapters Four and Five. The impact of this research is gradually revealed through the exhibition process and exhibition chapters (Six and Seven). Informing these are the analyses of the Morobean data as well as the personal data concurrent with the decisions underpinning the translation of that information into a coherent visual discourse.

The fully realised idea is canvassed, together with future possibilities, in the final (seventh) chapter. Having gained an understanding of the ecology of the existing insects in the contrasting art practices, it is now possible to draw conclusions that marry current knowledge with future trends. Several concluding scenarios have been generated by the fledging idea relating to the practice of the researcher but also having implications for the broader community with respect to the learning of textile techniques and the background to creativity that facilitates learning. These scenarios include the potential for future research with regard not only to the practice of the artist but also in terms of anthropological and visual arts research.

Chapter 2: Women, Mats and Entomology

2.1 The Papua New Guinean Women

As pointed out in 1.4, the earliest literature concerning Papua New Guinean ethnology scarcely references women. This is especially the case with books depicting the art of New Guinea. For example, Firth (1936) includes approximately 90 pages of plates only one of which depicts women's art, a Sepik *bilum*. In his text, he does not acknowledge the contribution of women in communal efforts. Discussing the making of a *lakatoi,* a whole page is devoted to the choice of canoe boards, the imbuing with magic of the adze and so forth until...

> The sail is then made (and the vessel is ready for launching) (Firth, 1936, p. 21).

By the women! (Specht and Fields, 1984).

Contemporary literature continues to foreground male material culture rather than female material culture. In her overview of contemporary art in Melanesia, Cochrane (2007) presents some female artists from a number of countries. It is significant that under the category of artists, women artists warrant an index entry. No such entry exists for male artists as they constitute the major part of the work – 88 per cent in fact.

Contemporary practices are attracting some attention and study, in particular the research into Trobriand banana leaf bundles (Weiner, 1976), Telefol *bilums* (MacKenzie, 1991), Maisin *tapa* (Barker and Tietjen, 1990; Rinder, 1998) and ni-Vanuatuan mat making (Walter, 1996; Bolton, 1999, 2003). Weiner's (1976) and MacKenzie's (1991) books remain the only books devoted exclusively to women's material culture/art in Papua New Guinea. May and Tuckson's (1982) overview of pottery illustrates the involvement of both men and women in that sector. Larger fields of female material culture, such as mat making, remain undocumented.

Most of the artefacts made by women (see section 1.3.1) are in soft material, even hard pots starting out as malleable clay. Teilhet (1985) hypothesizes that the materials used by women have become imbued with a lower status (by both the males of the society and male observers) although she does concede that, in respect of Oceanic women's art, the observers' and makers' aesthetics and cognitive responses would differ. However, Teilhet (1985) also argues that,

> As women rarely have their own ritualised process of manufacturing and their art is usually not hieratic, it follows that women artists can be more self expressive in the arts than

> men, albeit that they are restricted in their use of materials, have only limited technology and lack specialised tools, but they have, relatively speaking, freedom in the way they interpret the existing (iconographic) elements and introduce new (iconographic) elements (Teilhet, 1985, p. 52).

As a result, their artwork should be a more immediate and accurate indication of the society's aesthetic norms (Teilhet, 1985). This would seem to be the case in Maisin society, where designs made by women have been and are "constrained only by aesthetic convention" (Barker and Tietjen, 1990, p. 229).

Women's artefact production continues with *tapa* cloth marketed by church and government agencies (Barker and Tietjen, 1990) and cross cultural exchanges such as those documented by Rinder (1998) who examines the collective nature of tapa manufacture as a model for western artists. Rinder (1998) discusses the way in which women on this exchange viewed production of contemporary, non-sacred (e.g., not produced for and within ritualized, hierarchical cannons) *tapa*, and how they aligned together a number of other practices (e.g., sacred *tapa*, canoe and shield carving, as well as necklace/armband manufacture) because they did not consider that these designs invoked design, planning or creative skills. As with tattoos (Barker & Tietjen, 1990), the Maisin view *tapa* production as reaffirming of Maisin identity and, as a viable commodity strongly associated with self identity, also a potent and unifying tool to fight exploitation of local forest resources (Rinder, 1998).

The context of Papua New Guinean society has changed unequivocally from a stone-age society with restricted movement, high infant mortality and a low life expectancy to a modern society in just one generation. Life was very hard for pre-contact Papua New Guineans, with all energy directed towards day-to-day survival. Rituals, seen as life enhancing, were valid arenas for the expenditure of extra energy in the fields of decoration, disguise and performance. Everyday items, although important enough to warrant particular types of design and embellishment, were much simpler than ritual items.

Once contact had been made with Papua New Guinea, and particularly as the twentieth century advanced, there was an influx of western and other goods and, as importantly, foreign ideas, technology and imagery. All of these impacted on the aesthetic productions of Papua New Guineans. Health provision meant lowered infant mortality and increased life expectancy while road infrastructure as well as air travel facilitated the movement of goods and ideas. Education and religion also delivered new ways of seeing the world. A cash economy emerged with crops as well as paid employment providing purchasing ability. Part of the cash economy included the

production of items formerly used for domestic and gift purposes within a cultural context but which could now be sold, as commodities, to an expatriate community working in and visiting Papua New Guinea.

The context in which art is made can be shown to have changed in specific ways. MacKenzie (1991) (Plate 2.1.1), at the end of her detailed and insightful study of the *bilum* in Telefol society, reports that

> The new *naamba men* [a decorative technique used by Telefol women but associated with the *bilums* of the Central Highlands] reflect the post *Rebaibal* [Revival, as in religious] decline at the expense of the cult, an increasing lack of differentiation between the sexes, and an emphasis on egalitarian rather than differential and hierarchical values (MacKenzie, 1991, p. 207).

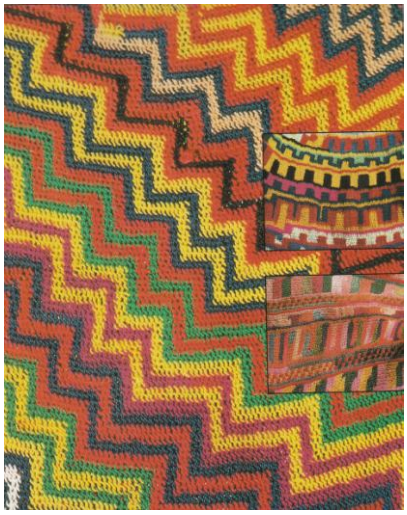

Plate 2.1.1 *Naamba men* reflecting change in Telefol *bilum* making (MacKenzie, 1991, p. 256 +viii)

MacKenzie was working in a relatively isolated region where, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the impact of western industry and its attendant needs was only beginning to accelerate change in the traditional community. In other parts of Papua New Guinea, especially along the coast, such changes had commenced a century earlier as a consequence of cultural contact and the introduction of trade goods including steel tools (Bodrogi, 1961).

The fact that certain artefacts continue to be made, or are being revived, reflects new motivations including national pride and tourism. Additionally, although the changes to society may have resulted in the loss of some objects and rituals, replacement artefacts are still being constructed but from manufactured goods and used in similar contexts to the original objects, such as on festive occasions. In Manus, for example,

Ohnemus (1998) shows a young bride wearing a cloth apron instead of a *tapa* one; however the modern replacement is decorated in the traditional manner (Plate 2.1.2). As with contemporary *tapa*, the cloth may be decorated with a mixture of traditional (seeds) and imported goods (strips of cloth and glass beads) placed in the traditional way (Ohnemus, 1998).

Plate 2.1.2 Bride Betty Wowok wears a contemporary cloth apron decorated traditionally (Ohnemus, 1998, p. 100, fig. 116)

Barker and Tietjen (1990) also describe the changed context of a female art form, facial tattooing of the Maisin women of Oro Province:

> ...both puberty rites and traditional notions of womanhood have changed for the Maisin and become far less important than they used to be….
> In short, Maisin women continue to tattoo each other not only because this is a culturally appropriate way for them to mark their female natures, but also because they wish to display their identity and artistic ability in the pluralistic society in which they now live (Barker and Tietjen, 1990, p. 232).

As well, the availability of new materials (e.g., cotton, wool, extruded plastic) has vastly extended the repertoire of artists such as *bilum* makers. New fibres, in an increasing array of colours, have led to an intriguing diversity of *bilums*.

Colour has always been prized (Teilhet, 1985) but not universally available (Mennis, 1982). Colour could come from naturally occurring colourful objects, such as bird feathers, animal skins, shells and insects, as well as leaves. Colour could also be

made with dyes and body paints. But colour from natural sources was difficult to access, of limited palette and often ephemeral. Teilhet (1985) discusses the process of dyeing

> …in most Oceanic cultures, [as] a magico-symbolic process that is utilised by both men and women (Teilhet, p. 49, 1985).

From this researcher's observations of old *bilums* in the PNG National Museum, they are drab browns with some vestiges of darker colours. This is possibly due to the depredations of age, coupled with repeated use and washing, highlighting the ephemeral nature of the natural dyes. *Tapa* cloths are mainly coloured in brown/black and a red-brown on a natural background, although modern versions make use of chalk, felt pens and commercial oil paints to apply the designs (Neich and Pendergrast, 1997).

Prior to the coming of westerners and their trade goods, colour was not available to everyone in the community. Among the Telefol, only men had access to the ritual red pigment and colourful bird feathers (MacKenzie, 1991) even though red symbolized women's blood, and hence women, at certain stages of Telefol initiation (Thomas, 1995). Father Ross (in Mennis, 1982) recorded that feathers were worn by men, not women, in the Hagen area of the 1930s. Certain feathers were further reserved for men of status, including feathers of hawks, cockatoos, cassowaries and various species of birds of paradise. In Papua New Guinean art, many associations are made, from many different areas of the country, between the colour red and women. Stewart and Strathern (1999), in discussing female spirit cults Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea, comment that

> The stones used in the Hagen and Pangia cults [female spirit cults] were covered with pig grease (equivalent to semen) and red ochre (equivalent to blood) in Hagen and yellow (a colour that often evokes healing and cooling in the Highlands), red and white earth colours in Pangia (Stewart and Strathern 1999, p. 352).

The red which symbolises blood can be associated with men and killing or with women and reproduction. Mackenzie (1991) gives us many examples of the use of the colour red (and white) in the Telefol region of the West Sepik Province including the following:

> The female and male elements suggest an interplay of red and white imagery that is constantly played out in male rituals; in this case the contents of the *bilum* invoke the primary connotations of red womb blood and the nurturing capacities of the placenta, with the white nurturant qualities of the female *kong togol*, associated with breast milk, and the whiteness of

male sperm represented in the phallic cucumber (MacKenzie, 1991, p. 177).

Table 2.1.1 indicates the way colour, line, shape and disposition of pictorial elements were historically influenced by cultural and environmental constraints.

Table 2.1.1: Design Elements Used by New Guinean Women: Historical

Element	Selection Criteria	Outcome/s
Colour	• Cultural constraints dictated which colours could be used, by whom and when. • Red, white, black and yellow had significant meanings in many areas of New Guinea, red being most closely associated with blood, both women's menstrual blood and the blood of death. • Environmental constraints meant that colour was not readily available or easily obtainable. For example, feathers and insects could provide colour but were difficult to obtain with available weapons or within traditional boundaries. • Dyes generated by plants or earth were limited and often ephemeral, especially under the harsh living conditions.	• Except for ritual occasions, women used mainly the natural colours of dried plant materials, of which there was a subtle but extensive range. • Small amounts of colour for decoration may have been obtained from feathers.
Line	• Material and construction methods dictate that *bilums*, plaited and woven items were worked in a linear fashion.	• Incorporated designs were necessarily geometric, although this could be minimised in *bilums*.
Shapes	• Cultural constraints such as certain shapes having symbolic meanings; for example, triangles in the Sepik can represent female or male elements depending on orientation. • Animals were represented by stylised outlines of either part or the whole animal, or as abstract imagery ascribed to a particular animal. • Some marks were trademarks, marking ownership of a design. • Geometric shapes could be achieved either through different sized materials, different materials or dyed materials.	• Patterns were plaited or woven into items. • Women's pots had some marks, usually on the upper edges of the pot. • *Tapa* cloth was decorated; in Oro Province *tapa* and tattoo designs overlapped and were associated with tribal affiliations.
Composition/ Disposition of Pictorial Elements	• Symmetry and balance were important. • Certain shapes would be oriented in specific directions for specific meaning (see above). • These could reflect cultural constraints.	• Balanced simple designs predominated.

Contemporary artists have access to a wide range of dyes, paints, powders and yarns as well as modern tools. In addition they are routinely exposed to a broad range of cultural practices, both indigenous and exotic. When colour was introduced as trade cloth, as coloured beads and as other such items, the Papua New Guineans' application of colour changed rapidly. As new materials or an extended range of colours became available, they were immediately incorporated into both everyday and ritual life. The Goilala are said to have deconstructed cotton cloth(ing) in order to obtain the threads which were then plied and looped into *bilums* (Brennan, pers. comm., 2000). Hauser-Schaublin (1996) records the same thing happening with the Abelam (East Sepik Province) when plain black and plain red fabrics that she brought from Wewak to the Abelam were torn into strips, further separated into individual threads then plied and joined in order to incorporate them into *bilums,* substituting for the faintly coloured string obtained by dyeing. In Manus, woven plastic bags such as feed sacks are still unwoven and then remade into plaited bags (Ohnemus, 1998; Lamothe, pers. obs. 2001). In a more radical departure from tradition, Maisin women, on residencies in the United States, printed their images onto silk fabric in a range of colours not available from traditional sources (Rinder, 1997). Art school students and graduates also have made essays into screen-printing and other western techniques. The differences between these artists and women working within a more traditional environment relate to the difficulties which can beset the western style practitioner in issues of copyright.

The incorporation of new motifs into traditional artefacts such as *bilums* reflects modern life. For example, *bilums* may reflect sporting affiliations, one recent example incorporating the Cronulla Sharks' emblem and colours (Lamothe, pers. obs., 2001). Yet the old styles have not been abandoned in the rush forward. In the Lae markets, dozens of brilliantly, if similarly, coloured sisal *bilums* are displayed, the sisal itself an introduction of Lutheran missionaries early last century, and the *bilums* unchanged in over fifty years (H. Holzknecht, pers. comm., 2001).

Despite the advent of change, there remain constants in artistic design. Art remains part of the life of the community and is inextricably tied to that life. Changes in art practice are mediated slowly through the other changes brought about by outside contacts and access to other influences and consumer goods. These changes, incorporating new materials and colours, as well as the constants of design such as linearity and symmetry, are highlighted in Table 2.1.2.

Table 2.1.2: Design Elements Used by New Guinea Women: Contemporary

Element	Selection Criteria	Outcome/s
Colour	• Cultural constraints have changed with the advent of various Christian denominations, some more conservative than others. To varying degrees cultural constraints are ignored or modified. • Availability of colour has also changed with synthetic dyes and face paints available, as well as coloured fabrics and yarns of natural and synthetic fibres. • Beads, sequins and other non-traditional items are available for embellishment.	• Colour is much more commonly used, particularly in commodity items but also in gifts. • Colour that also sparkles may be used to enhance everyday appearance, e.g. glittery scarves adorning the *bilums* of Western Highlands women. • Western dress and other western accoutrements such as household effects add extra colours.
Line	• Where traditional items are still made and used, then linearity will still be apparent. • New crafts, such as sewing allow for more organic shapes to be portrayed.	• There is still a preponderance of linearity in motifs.
Shapes	• While cultural constraints may continue to operate with respect to certain sacred shapes, modern stimuli from overseas sources but also from domestic sources mean changed visual messages.	• Many new shapes are appearing, relating to technology and other modern stimuli but there are also creative adaptations to old traditions mediated by practitioners of renewed cultural activities such as tattooing.
Composition/ Disposition of Pictorial Elements	• Still symmetrical. • Figure/ground becomes more critical with the portrayal of animal and other outlines.	• Figures may be quite different or quite similar tonally or by hue to the ground, depending on the artist. • Symmetry is still dominant.

An important issue to consider in terms of the artist is individuality. Although part of a community, an artist is also an individual whose talents are recognised within that community. Not everyone is an artist, although most members of a community would have basic skills in making objects. The artist's *oeuvre* is recognised as belonging to him or her, although some imagery may be common property.

Copyright exists within Melanesian cultures and only certain persons have the right to execute specific designs. Heerman (2001) comments that, even though their works lack the signatures which are so important to western collectors, the identity of Oceanic artists is known within their own communities. In Europe, Oceanic works of art

> …have been viewed more as expressions of traditional, anonymous canon of forms rather than as the result of individual creative impulses (Heerman, 2001, p. 193).

Good design is desirable, bringing with it the strength of its attached symbolism. Good design argues for innovation by designers, however subtle. Good designers are recognised. Heerman (2001) insists that there is

> …a traditional intellectual property right to artistic forms of expression and creative design (Heerman, 2001, p. 193),

detailing how this creative gift comes to the individual and how respect must be shown for the intellectual property by the payment of, for the Tolai, traditional shell money (*tabu*). This reinforces the notion that not all designs are identical, but rather that stunning and innovative design is recognised by the community as exactly that. Of course this is within the cosmic and societal relationships which mark the parameters of Melanesian design. Choulai (1999) made the same comment in respect of fibre art designs, especially in her capacity as a modern designer, commenting that she

> …would no sooner fish or even travel through another tribe's traditional land than I would use their design. It is not only my fear of compensation payment but also an identification with my own Papuan clan and respect for PNG custom that prevents me from doing so... (Choulai & Lewis-Harris, 1999, p. 214).

In other Melanesian cultures we see copyright being expressed in a multitude of ways. A woven and stencil dyed textile called *vola Walurigi*, which pictures the landscape of Walurigi (Vanuatu), may only be made by women of Walurigi. By this means, they demonstrate their own location within that place (Bolton, 1999). Certain Papua New Guinean *bilums* associated with high office or specific rituals may also be understood to be copyrighted. For example, a Finschhafen *bilum* given to Frans Arentz, and made by the aunt of Michael Baminiruoc, is decorated with several slits. The design appears to refer to a creation myth and is reserved for those with chiefly attributes. Furthermore it appears that Michael's aunt has the design rights and that no one else may loop such a design without her permission (Lamothe, pers. obs., 2000).

2.2 The Expatriate Woman: Lorraine Lamothe

2.2.1 Canada and Papua New Guinea: 1950-1975

How does one review and synthesize one's life experiences in relation to one's current art practice? One could imagine strands of life braided together, discrete chunks of life stitched together sequentially or of a linear piece of cloth dyed while wet, the colours sectioned but bleeding into one. But as a weaver enchanted by the magic of making cloth from nothing more than pieces of string, the best analogy seems to be the warp and the weft of the cloth.

The warp runs continuously through a piece, creating integrity from start to finish. The adjacent warps, however, can be vastly different: they can be the same material but different colours or different weights; they can be entirely different materials; they can be grouped across the warp width; they can show infinite variation from one side to the other of the warp. The weft, which runs across the cloth at ninety degrees to the warp, can show equal variation or grouping. The weft can have the added distinction of being discontinuous; that is, across the width of the warp, the weft can change, allowing for discrete events to be described within the weave of the cloth. In the end, the integral nature of cloth owes its existence to both warp and weft. Separated, their components mean little. It is their particular combination which gives the cloth definition.

In a life one can depict those events which run throughout as warps, relatively equal in quantity and quality but having, say, different colours. The wefts can indicate sequences in my life. By defining the blocks of warps as science, textiles and books (though not necessarily in that order), those discrete periods of my life marked Canada, New Guinea and Australia can be examined. The warp strands emerge early in my life, although they refuse to stay in tight little clusters. Instead there are a few strands of this colour sneaking into that colour…then reappearing in the furthest group!

Based on the analogy of a woven cloth, it could be argued that all aspects of a life have significance. And, as elucidated by Heilbrun (1979, 1988) it is only by reflecting on the personal that women can define what it is to be women, and, in so doing, provide models for other women. However, in relation to the current research some facts some facts have particular relevance. Our family was oriented to nature with personal and social outings frequently centred on the outdoors. I was involved with the natural world to the extent of being categorised as a tomboy. On the other hand, I was also exposed to the textile arts from an early age, especially from my grandmother Parisée. This background influenced my early undergraduate career in forestry while simultaneously developing personal textile skills. Another important factor in my life was an, ongoing, involvement with books and reading. Two important role models emerged as a result: L.M. Montgomery's Anne (Anne of Green Gables) and Louisa May Alcott's Jo March (Little Women). As expressed by Heilbrun (1990) these role models were critical in my development as an independent thinker and artist.

Armed with a degree in forestry, I left Canada for a position designing and teaching a wildlife and conservation course for forestry students at the Papua New Guinea Forestry College in Bulolo, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. My time in PNG was spent mostly in teaching wildlife or doing scientific research, including that which resulted in a Master's of Natural Resources from the University of New England in

Armidale, New South Wales. This particular body of research centred on birds eating insects; the insects assumed greater prominence later in my life.

I became a quilt maker during these years. An important episode involved my making a quilt based on a *tapa* cloth. It is a beautifully made quilt but, as I later understood, was an appropriation (the equivalent of scientific plagiarizing) of another person's designs.

2.2.2 Australia: 1991-

Our move to Canberra in 1991 allowed me to undertake studies in the visual arts. Quilt making in PNG, struggling to make quilts that were individual and visually appealing, was a strong impetus to undertake such studies.

The two years spent studying textiles were seminal with instruction in both technical skills and design skills. A variety of artists in textiles and other media came to the studio, spoke during Art Forum or were otherwise available. A critical outcome of these two years, and a direct result of teaching policies, was the independence of each textile graduate. Adherence to the styles of the lecturers was severely discouraged while the development of an individual style was conversely not only encouraged but expected.

Once introduced to weaving, cloth rather than conventional yarn became my choice of wefts (Plate 2.2.6). This was a reconnection to my past, especially to my grandmother Parisée, but also reflected the influence of the Canadian/Australian weaver Beth Hatton and the philosophy of making-do. The previous history of the fabric, whether known personally or not, became an important aspect of using recycled material. In hindsight, I also see a strong ecological component in these choices.

Plate 2.2.1: Early student work, Raggiana Revisited, 1992, woven using recycled *laplaps*

A student essay on rag rugs focussed on hooked mats from North America. Although the lack of hooking tools at art school did not allow exploration of this technique, I began that investigating the technique in 1999. At about the same time as the rag rug essay, the art school library acquired the book Tiger Rugs of Tibet (Lipton, 1988). One hundred and eight woven variations on tiger skins had been collected and published in full page imagery. This book was so personally inspirational that I purchased a copy.

The main reasons for commencing to draw insects, during that first year at art school, were that the insects were there in my home; they did not move and they were colourful. They were also tangible reminders of my years in Papua New Guinea. Although in my second year, my imagery related mainly to birds and other vertebrates, the idea of insect, however, was very strong in other people's minds; that is, fellow students and others in the workshop had such a morbid fascination for insects that they associated me with insects even when I was working with entirely different imagery.

After graduation the impetus and need was to design and produce work independently. The first major exhibition I undertook was with Anne Balcomb, a fellow graduate who also suffered from infertility. In 1995 we presented a show entitled *Baelg (Olsem Bilum).* My pieces (see www.mum.org) consisted of five non-baby quilts which documented the chronological stages of my coming to terms with infertility. Aspects of this body of work, especially my use of the colour red as symbolic of women, informed this current body of work.

Several pieces of advice and some gratuitous eavesdropping aided in the decision making associated with the progress from student to professional artist. Two textile artists gave two very good and intertwining pieces of advice: one said that artists needed to find a theme that could become identifiably theirs; the other advised that work in series resulted in bodies of work with greater depth and more potential for solo exhibition. The gratuitous eavesdropping related to a conversation about whether textiles could be considered art or not and helped in deciding what the theme of my artwork should be. Insects were the perfect answer to this art/craft dilemma. Depicting insects would connect me with my earlier career and my familiarity with the subject material. By working with insects, and particularly the most fearful and reviled of them, I could address metaphorically the issues of art/craft or, as more broadly, the issues of preconceived notions and of arbitrary anthropocentric standards. Furthermore I could work with insects in this way almost endlessly; the issues would remain valid and the insects were more numerous than any one artist could ever hope to portray. Furthermore, insects could be (and have been– De Boer, pers. comm., 2002) associated with me as artist. In fact, although insects are now somewhat more popularly depicted than previously, few artists, however, tackle the subjects of cockroaches or weevils (Plate 2.2.2). Recently I have become more concerned with assigning iconic status to certain insects and of strengthening the link between women and such icons.

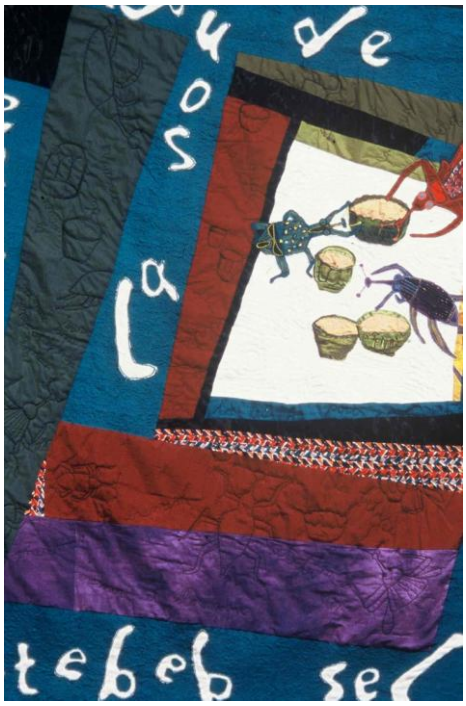

Plate 2.2.2: La Soupe de Mémère (detail), 1994, quilt

I also determined to make one-off pieces rather than multiples. This was partly dictated by the nature of rag weaving, and now hooking, but also had a philosophical component. Making one-off pieces provided a vehicle for visualizing ideas.

The financial support of my husband has allowed me this freedom to develop ideas and images without market pressure. Initially working from home, I then had two years in the (Australian National Capital Artists) ANCA studio complex in Canberra during which time I mounted a solo show *Entomologia lorraineae* with Headmasters' Gallery in Sydney and received an invitation to submit slides of rag rugs for an American book, Allen's (1998) Weaving Contemporary Rag Rugs.

From our north Queensland home, where we moved in 1997, I produced a second solo show *Danse des Insectes* for a 1999 exhibition at the Cairns Regional Gallery in Cairns, Queensland. Subsequently I exhibited *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea,* again at the Cairns Regional Gallery (2002) and also at the Perc Tucker Gallery in Townsville (2003). Since then, during the course of this doctoral study, we have lived in Kathmandu, Nepal and Honiara, Solomon Islands.

My work deliberately sets out to be beautiful, reflecting the beauty perceived in insect bodies and patterns but also for the sake of beauty itself. Sometimes working abstractly, sometimes figuratively, cockroaches, weevils and other beetles, ants, flies and grasshoppers are represented. The names of the one-off pieces, while cryptic, indicate what the pieces are about and do not hide the fact that all the drawing, quilting, weaving and hooking is of insects. It is important to me that the viewer knows that he/she is looking at an insect image which gives a positive impression of creatures so often reviled. Even when I am discussing a subject which is unpleasant and the unpleasantness is revealed to the audience, the work is still beautifully seductive.

Working this way is overtly decorative and uses repeats and patterns. Miriam Shapiro, an American feminist artist who combines painting with collage and fabric, is quoted as discussing both the sexism and racism of those who would classify decoration as a lesser art form:

> Our culture insists that ornamentation and decorations are innately female…Eastern and Islamic cultures don't feminize their decorative arts. What is being done here is sexist as well as racist. The binary concept of fine art above craft is false (Stein, 1998, p. 39).

I like the juxtaposition of the decorative (often equated, pejoratively, to the feminine although see Leznicki and Maffei, 2001 who equate painting with the decorative!) with insect motifs (more often the domain of little, and older, boys than girls). I see this as

another layer of the metaphor about preconceptions, a subtle negation of senseless imposed standards.

I use insects which can be associated with specific places. An early piece featured a Nepalese grasshopper (Plate 2.2.3). *Danse des Insectes* (Cairns Regional Gallery, 1999) featured only cockroaches (Plate 2.2.4), ants and stag beetles of Australia; one of these insects, a cockroach with spotted legs, went on to travel throughout Australia and Canada in the postcard exhibition *Finding Home.* The 2002 exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* used identifiable patterns of New Guinea weevils; although the same genus of weevil (found primarily in New Guinea) was the impetus for the current work it is a less representational and more the abstracted concept of weevil.

Plate 2.2.3: Hassgropper II, 1997, tapestry, mixed fibre weft on cotton warp

Plate 2.2.4: into the red centre (detail), 1999, tapestry, mixed fibre weft on cotton warp

Focusing on specific insects allows for a discussion not only on notions of prejudice and arbitrary standards but also on issues of place and identity. This is vitally important to me as a migrant, holding two nationalities, and also having spent many years as an expatriate. The three countries of Canada, Australia and Papua New Guinea, pull and tug in various directions and the insect metaphor allows me to acknowledge each of them…there are distinct insects in each country's entomofauna. The use of insects also allows me to locate my works without resorting to more clichéd imagery.

As discussed in 2.2.2, work undertaken in forestry (PNG) involved the behaviour and diet of insectivorous birds. Through these studies I came to appreciate a complex and varied segment of ecology that was normally well hidden from view, the intimate world of insects. Insects in Papua New Guinea, as detailed in 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, are numerous and most Papua New Guineans would have some experience of them. The Master's study allowed me, by reading more and looking more (at museum collections, for example) to acquire a greater knowledge of a range of insects.

In Canberra the resources of the Division of Entomology, CSIRO were made available. In north Queensland I was able to study insects in the collection of the Department of Primary Industry, Mareeba, Queensland. Scientists in these places have been generous with their knowledge.

The impetus for the 2002 exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* was not simply an avenue to explore the technique of hooking and to create links to my native land; the impetus goes back to the Tiger Rugs of Tibet (Lipton, 1988). Since first learning of these rugs the concept of making an extremely large series of works, but based on weevils, had persisted. Of all the insects in my repertoire, weevils seemed to come with the most baggage. Everyone had a concept of weevil, not necessarily an accurate concept, but certainly one that was immediate and negative. Beattie (1995) in a paper on biodiversity conservation, reinforces this idea of weevils and equivalent non-charismatic (mainly micro-) fauna as being poorly understood, respected or appreciated for their beauty with his koala curve equating to charismatic (mainly mega) fauna and weevil curve showing a difference in the appreciation of beauty for these non-charismatic type of fauna. Of course weevils are pests of rice and flour but there are also large brightly coloured New Guinean weevils which live on woody plant material.

Because the weevils I was depicting came from Papua New Guinea, I wanted some aspect of New Guinea to be reflected in the exhibition. The first impulse was to name this series *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* but this seemed to resonate with appropriation

and paternalism. A discussion with Dr. Susanne Holzknecht (a linguist specialising in Morobean languages of Papua New Guinea) influenced the direction and development of the exhibition proposal made to the Cairns Regional Gallery. Her husband (Dr. Hartmut Holzknecht) was the son and grandson of early Lutheran missionaries in Morobe Province. Together she and I hypothesized about New Guinea and its material culture. Although I was unaware, at the time, of the published writings of and about early missionary wives (such as Jolly, 1991; Langmore, 1982; Pollock, 1989) at the time of my CRG proposal, it seemed logical that some missionary wife would at some stage have recorded something of the material culture of Papua New Guinean women. There were also publications and reports from German New Guinea of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some of which involved women (for example, the German Women's Red Cross Association for the Colonies formed in 1886 and published a periodical (Sack, 1980)).

The two major elements of the CRG (and the subsequent PhD) proposals (see Appendices B and C) were women and weevils. I postulated a Lutheran missionary wife, in the Huon Peninsula of Morobe Province, documenting the material culture of indigenous women. In reality Lutheran missionaries, both men and women, did go to the Finschhafen area of the Huon Peninsula of Morobe Province from the late 1800s. Working from the accepted standards of the day, and also within the bounds of indigenous societal constraints, the missionaries collected information relating primarily, or only, to men (Wagner & Reiner, 1986). According to their individual inclinations, missionaries made studies of language, customs, ritual artefacts, botany and other areas of knowledge.

Wagner and Reiner (1986) do not specify whether Lutheran wives recorded similar information with regard to native women. There do exist, however, diaries, and letters, of early mission women. Langmore (1982) and Jolly (1991), for example, in examining the interaction between missionary women and indigenous women from the south of Vanuatu and Papua respectively, provide insights and references to certain aspects of the impact of missionaries on the women of various Pacific locations. They do not, however, indicate what the missionary women, who had much more access to the intimate lives of their parishioners than did their male colleagues, learned about and from the indigenous women amongst whom they lived and worked.

The Ph.D. research was initiated six months into the making of the CRG exhibition resulting in the development of a certain amount of tension in the overlapping initial twelve months of this research and the preparations for the CRG solo show. Although the initiating impulse was the same, the conceptual aspects and studio practices

associated with a doctoral study differed significantly from a personal solo exhibition. Eventually it was possible to separate conceptually the two components (the CRG exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* and the doctoral study) and to accept supervisory direction for the latter.

This was the background and setting prior to the 2002 exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea*. As a direct result of discussions with the curators and others, as well as an increased understanding gained through studies, the structure of that exhibition changed. Rather than presenting the intended fictional documentation of the proposed narrative, I merely alluded to the potential for Morobean women's work to have been recorded by early missionary women. The allusion to missionary women and the female material culture of Morobean women took the form of a question (in English, *tok pisin*, Adzera and Kote): If an early missionary women had recorded what indigenous women were making in the early 1900s what would she have documented?

My artist statement for the exhibition (see Appendix D) made reference to New Guinea (the weevil influence) as well as Canada (the hooking technique) and Australia (the materials of the artwork as well as my training as an artist) and linked the three cultures with the practice of mat or rug making. It highlighted textiles as women's art, as an enduring and universal site for artistic expression. It recognized the lack of focus and plain disinterest that western critics have shown for textiles, especially those constructed at and for domestic consumption. The story and the works allowed me to express my individual experience while alluding to a collective female experience. The pieces were small, abstract and (mostly) rectilinear pieces in blues, greens and purples (Plate 2.2.5). Although the pieces referred to New Guinea, they were stylistically and strongly personal.

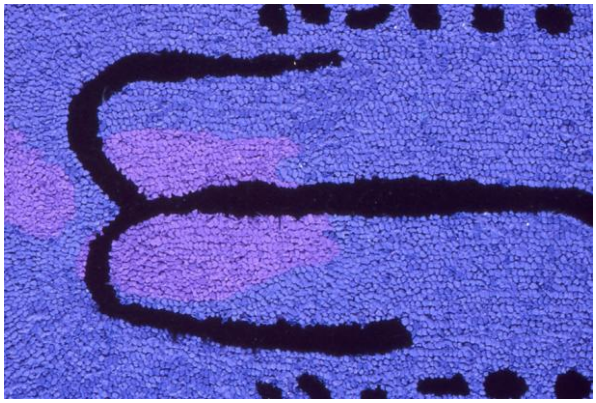

Plate 2.2.5: lorraine's eupholus II, 2001, hooked

The stage was set for the development of the current research, related to but different from the preceding impulse informing *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea.* Prior to doctoral

field research, I began searching the literature for references to mats, both in a global context but also specifically for Papua New Guinea, and entomology, both scientific and cultural, particularly as applied to Papua New Guinea. I also began more intense investigations of rug hooking, beginning with Convergence 2002, the biennial conference of the Handweavers Guild of America. I also categorized the design parameters (Table 2.2.1) of my current practice both as the stage for creating new artwork and to set out my treatment of formal criteria, such as colour, line, shape and composition, in contrast to the use of these qualities by Papua New Guinean women (see Tables 2.1.1 and 2.1.2).

Table 2.2.1: Design Elements: Lorraine Lamothe

	Selection Criteria	**Outcome/s**
Colour	• Informed primarily by mother's taste in clothes. • Reinforced by the use of colour in the Papua New Guinea of the 1970s onwards, including the use of uncoordinated colour in bilums, as well as the colours of the tropical vegetation. • Also informed by scientific painting and illustration especially referencing tropical plants and animals.	• Exuberant, saturated colours predominate in my palette, actual colours varying according to current imagery. • Unusual juxtaposition of colours, especially the addition of small amounts of quite quirky colours.
Line	• Weaving, a major component of my body of work, imposes linearity although eccentric weaving in tapestry is more organic. • Hooking also allows for a more organic image. Pieced work is linear while appliquéd work is organic.	• Style varies between linearity and organic shapes depending on the technique employed.
Shape	• Realistic organic shapes are more easily portrayed in tapestry, some quilting and hooking. • Geometric shapes lend themselves to weaving and pieced work.	• Realistic organic shapes alternate with geometric abstract shapes. It is more likely that woven work will be geometric and that all other techniques will have an organic bias.
Composition / Disposition of Pictorial Elements	• Strongly influenced by Japanese thoughts on symmetry, reinforced by subsequent readings of other western artists, especially textile artists. • More concerned with colour than tone. • Not interested in perspective or contouring.	• Asymmetry almost inevitable in design. • Works usually with strong, tonally similar colours. Outline images.

2.3 The Special Case of Mat Culture as Textile Art

2.3.1 Mat Making: A Global Culture

Bed, floor and wall coverings have existed for a very long time. In temperate climates the early textiles were necessary for survival and took the form of sleeping mats that provided humans with warmth, protection, shrouds and carrying bags (Cohen, 1996). Evidence from Neolithic tools indicates that skins of animals caught for food were scraped and sewn together for use as coverings (Gillow and Sentance, 1999). In Europe, hay and rushes were used as floor coverings. Textiles made from felting, looping or weaving technologies came later.

Textiles are very susceptible to organic degradation. The knowledge of early cloth cultures is more often inferred from illustrations and from tools than from actual fragments of textiles. An Egyptian bowl dated 4000 BC offers the earliest illustration of a loom while illustrations on a Peruvian bowl indicate that back strap looms dated in that area from approximately 600-1000 AD (Hecht, 1989). Based on archaeological, pictorial and written evidence of the technological innovations involved in the production of textiles as well as surviving fragments of textile from such diverse regions as Egypt, Switzerland and Peru, Schoeser (2003) contends that the Bronze and Iron ages should be known as the Dye and Loom age.

Rugs are mentioned in the Old Testament, Homer, Egypt of the Pharaohs and ancient China. An early illustration of a loom for weaving rugs comes from the Beni Hassan tomb paintings, dating to about the same era, circa 1900 BC, as a small wooden model of a loom found in Thebes, Egypt (Collingwood, 1968).

The earliest knotted carpet was found in southern Siberia and has been dated to about 500 BC. Close study has persuaded experts that the carpet was actually of Assyrian origin (Cohen, 1996) and was most likely woven on a vertical frame loom. This is still the preferred loom for Eastern knotted rug makers. Early vertical frame looms date from 1400 BC in Egypt, while a European drawing of such a loom dates only to 1000 A.D. (Collingwood, 1968). The horizontal frame loom, now the most common type, was the latest to be developed with the evidence of surviving textiles placing such looms in Syria by 256 AD (Collingwood, 1968). The earliest known kilim, also known as slit tapestry, predates 2500 B.C. Interlocked tapestry, found in early tapestry-woven textiles from Peru and North America, was not commonly used in Eastern rugs (Collingwood, 1968).

A number of distinct styles of rugs can now be distinguished by technical qualities such as the composition of the materials used, the preparation of these materials, the dyes

used, the specific weave structure and the selvedge and end finishes. Design and pattern are also used but are less important in isolating distinctive groups (Walker, 1997). These groups of rugs include Persian, Indian, Turkish, Caucasian, Turkoman, Samarkan and Chinese rugs as well as subsets of more locally styled rugs. Influences between regions can be traced chronologically, as can the influence of markets. Persian village rugs can, for example, be distinguished by place of origin and unique features while Persian court carpets have a greater uniformity of design, particular to a court, and often with floral motifs (Scobey, 1974).

Textiles have been traded, at first opportunistically then speculatively, from as early as 2000 to 1650 BC. Until the introduction of coinage to Anatolia, in about 750 BC, textiles had served as currency. With the development and greater use of currency, textiles gained value as

> …objects of exchange, valued for their buying (or persuasive) power, their status and their aesthetic and content (Schoeser, 2003, p. 50).

The first rugs to be imported to Europe were Turkish rugs. When wars within Europe blocked trade lanes, the various importing countries were forced to start developing textile industries of their own (Scobey, 1974). Western rugs adapted Eastern techniques to develop tapestry woven rugs (a flat woven technique) and pile carpets (Savonnerie from France, Axminster and Wilton from England) while a distinctive Spanish knot rug was developed in Spain. Rya (a pile fabric) was known from Scandinavia as early as the Bronze Age and was adapted as a rug pre 1000 AD (Collingwood, 1968; Scobey, 1974). Although the Industrial Revolution completely changed the face of rug making, there have been continued traditions of hand weaving in most communities around the world.

In England and North America, two similar methods of rug construction arose as a result of necessity, availability of materials and financial considerations. These were the proggy/prodded mats of England (early 1800s) and the hooked rag rugs of North America (mid 1800s, see Plate 2.3.1). In Scandinavia a tradition of weaving with recycled fabrics arose. Other countries demonstrated the same frugality, among them Japan (Allen, 1998).

Plate 2.3.1: The Abigail Smith Rug, New Maryland, New Brunswick Canada, 1860 (Fitzpatrick, 1999, p. 21)

Weaving, both for rugs and finer textiles, has been primarily the domain of women. In the Americas, Navajo women of the southwest of the USA are documented as weavers from the pre-1700 (Blomberg, 1988; Hecht, 1989). Weaving has been the province of women from such varied areas as the Arab peninsula, Turkey, West Africa (domestic weaving only; men wove professionally), Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, Guatemala and Peru (Hecht, 1989; Hitchcock, 1991; Bohmer, Kwon & Chambers, 2001).

There is a current resurgence of interest in hand woven textiles both for their inherent unique qualities and as an expression of regional pride and individual voice. Traditional methods of dyeing are being coupled with fine weaving and individual design in Turkish villages (Bohmer, Kwon, & Chambers, 2001). In the Western world, rather than traditional weaving ateliers, the designer/makers have emerged as the leaders in this field of hand weaving.

2.3.2 Papua New Guinean/Melanesian Mats

In the tropics, bark cloth served in the same manner as leather did in temperate regions (Gillow and Sentance, 1999). Rugs (more commonly termed mats) were constructed using plant fronds and leaf material (Schoeser, 2003). Coconut and *Pandanus* are the two main plant species used for mat construction although other materials such as banana were used (Plate 2.3.2). The mats were constructed on variants of plaiting and twining techniques, as well as by stitching (Ohnemus, 1998).

Plate 2.3.2: Baby mat (*Kuri)*; 1898; banana leaf, pigment; Mer, Torres Straits (Philp, 2001, p. 43)

In Papua New Guinea, mats are used as sleeping mats, rain capes, funeral shrouds and carrying bags. Mats serve also for seating in domestic situations and during food presentations. As well, mats are used for special gifts, trade and cash income (Winter, 1975). Trade in textiles, and particularly mats, has formed part of the economies of several tropical areas, including the Huon Gulf and Siassi Islands of Morobe Province as well as the Western Province of Papua New Guinea (Harding, 1967; Hogbin, 1947; Lawrence, 1994). This trade continues to be active today, despite the availability of commercial mattresses and a widespread cash economy (Lawrence, 1994; Lamothe, pers. obs., 2004-2005).

Susanne Holzknecht (pers. comm., 2003) reports that Malay bird-of-paradise hunters taught the coastal peoples (from the Sepik to Morobe) different styles of plaited *Pandanus* walls. Winter (1975), in a catalogue of Milne Bay weaving, separates weaving into two broad groups: those made pre-contact, primarily of coconut palm leaf or of stitched *Pandanus* and varying according to community; and those introduced by missionaries, made of *Pandanus* palm leaves and with patterns showing little variation throughout both the province and other coastal areas which had missionary presences. Pre-contact designs depended on the plaiting pattern rather than added decoration or applied colour (Winter, 1975). These missionaries who came from the South Pacific islands of Samoa, Tonga and Fiji introduced not only plaiting techniques but also different species of *Pandanus* more suitable to these techniques. Introduced techniques have been used with traditional materials, as in the Gulf and Western Provinces where swamp grass is plaited using a diagonal weave introduced by missionaries (Winter, 1975).

Ohnemus (1998) documents mats in Manus (the Admiralty Islands) sewn from fire softened *Pandanus* leaves and distinguished by their use for either sleeping mats or rain protection. Plaited, as distinct from sewn, mats from Manus could be subdivided

into three categories based on technique and material, *viz.* diagonal plait work with coconut palm leaves, diagonal plait work with *Pandanus* leaf strips and right-angled plait work made from sago fibres. The *Pandanus* strips diagonal plait work mats were used for sleeping, for rain protection as well as for sails (Ohnemus, 1998). Hurley's photographs (in Specht & Fields, 1984) also show the making of sails from plaited plant fibres in coastal Papua.

Pandanus, which is used as mat-making materials in Manus, is also used in other areas of the country. With respect to stitched *Pandanus* mats and rain capes, Vicedom and Tischner (1943, Groger-Wurm translation 1983) give a summary of the mats and rain capes of the Mbowamb (from the Mt. Hagen region, Western Highlands) as well as their manufacture while Landtman (1933) describes the mats and rain hoods of the Kiwai of then British New Guinea. Nouhuys (1923) makes mention of rain capes of the Pesegem in then Dutch New Guinea and Pospisil (1963) gives a brief description of a Kapauku rain cape, in both cases made using the same techniques as mats. More recently, the stitched *Pandanus* rain capes of the Wola of the Southern Highlands are (comparatively) well documented with regard to technique and associated *Pandanus* gardens (Sillitoe, 1983. 1988). In northeastern New Guinea, Bodrogi (1961) reports the Bukaua (Huon Peninsula, Morobe Province) as making "blankets from pandanus [sic] leaves" (Bodrogi, 1961, p. 32).

Another textile, *terfo*, is apparently woven from nibung palm by women of the Sobei, a tribe from Irian Jaya. It is said to be the only loom-woven cloth produced in Irian Jaya providing links to later weaving practices of Southeast Asia (Howard, Sanggenafa & Katz, 1999).

2.3.3 Mats: Design and Decoration

As soon as rugs began to be made, designs or patterns were incorporated. Sand floor coverings were and are still swept and inscribed with pattern. In eighteenth century America, sand floors were swept into patterns of swirls, scrolls and herringbone designs (Kopp & Kopp, 1995). In contemporary India, floors are decorated for both everyday and festive occasions. The women of Madhubani are especially renowned for their floor and wall paintings (Barnard, 1993).

The Mughal ruler Akbar (r. 1556-1605) had carpets manufactured to reflect designs in other media (Walker, 1997). Repeat patterns in knotted carpets also indicate a close link with other textile designs whose weaving involves repeat patterns. The incorporation of flower patterns, for example, also involves the transfer of designs across media and even across cultures and was a gradual process (Walker, 1997).

Tapestries contain various symbols and, as early as Coptic and pre-Columbian times, were used both as sacrificial object and decorative textile. In Medieval times tapestries served as decorative art, in the same manner that paintings do in contemporary society (Leznicki and Maffei, 2001).

In Australia, tapestry is associated with fine art hangings, primarily designed for visual impact and message rather than for use. As Wood Conroy (1994) comments, in the essay for the exhibition *Texts from the Edge,* that

> The role of tapestries as transmitters of power is evident in this European history, where tapestries represent the classical mythology that then confers distinction on the owner and upholds the renown of the state. Unlike the history of textiles, the prestige of tapestry is not prejudiced by any hint of the daily domestic sphere (Wood Conroy, 1994, p. 3).

Tapestries were traditionally designed by men and woven by persons of unspecified gender. In Australia, and other Western countries, there is now a coterie of designer/weavers. This has resonances with the work of idiosyncratic village weavers in eastern countries that mix traditional elements with contemporary inspiration (Bohmer, Kwon, & Chambers, 2001). The images produced by Australians are personal, reflecting investigations of gender, familial and environmental issues, as well as delving into the power of text and the meanings of journey and loss (Wood Conroy, 1994).

Another form of mat making which is experiencing a revival is that of hooked and prodded (or proggy) mat making. The former originated in the east of Canada and the United States while the latter began in England (Kopp & Kopp, 1995). These rugs have always been the province of female makers and have reflected not only their economic contribution to the family (Fitzpatrick, 1999) but also their interests and perspectives in their immediate and greater worlds.

Hooked rugs from the east coast of both Canada and the United States marked the beginnings of American pictorial floor coverings. In contrast, the prodded rugs of England were primarily geometric in design with central medallions (Kopp & Kopp, 1995).

> Many hooked rugs have the virtues of primitive paintings: uninhibited designs and perspectives, bold and unconventional use of colour, and inventiveness and broad artistic license when attempting complex or detailed subjects…These rugs have the virtue of disregarding professional artistic standards, since they were made to be used and enjoyed by the maker and her family and friends (Kopp & Kopp, 1995, p. 48).

The images favoured by these early artists were scenes that recalled family and home. Pets and other familiar animals, houses, flowers and landscapes depicting work (farming and seascapes) are among those preserved in older rugs (Kopp & Kopp, 1995). Although such a focus still exists, hooked and woven rag rugs are also becoming the site for more conceptual works (Woodburn Colliery Museum, 1997; Allen, 1998, 2001; Fitzpatrick, 1999) (Plate 2.3.3).

Plate 2.3.3: Blue Box, Susan Lindsay (Vail, 1997, P. 35)

2.3.4 The Design and Decoration of mats in Papua New Guinea and Melanesia

Melanesian art forms are dynamic, responding to influences in culturally appropriate ways (Bolton, 1997; Thomas, 1999; Cochrane, 2001). The mats made in all parts of Melanesia are diverse and complex.

Susanne Holzknecht (pers. comm., 2002) owned stitched *Pandanus* mats and she remembers seeing some embellished with intricate cutwork while travelling on the Huon Gulf coast of Morobe Province during the 1970s. The stitched *Pandanus* mats of the Admiralty Islands are adorned with tufts of fibre at intervals through the centre of the mat (Ohnemus, 1998). The decoration of stitched mats in other parts of the country has not been well documented. From two villages (Gedaged and Bel) of the Madang area of Papua New Guinea, Hanneman (1969) illustrates two plaited coconut mat designs, one of an abstracted centipede image and the other depicting fish bones age respectively.

Chick and Chick (1978), in a book of Solomon Islands art, show two line drawings of patterns woven [sic] into a Santa Cruz woman's ceremonial skirt as well a photograph of a woven [sic] Rennellese bag. An exhibition of objects collected by Haddon between

1888 and 1905 in the Torres Straits showed a baby mat. The mat was decorated along the centre of its length by diagonal lines alluding to centipedes (Philp, 2001).

In Vanuatu, Bolton (1997) classifies over fifty contemporary fabric types made on the island of Ambae alone. These *Pandanus* fabrics are classified according to plaiting form and function. A further subdivision is allocated on the basis of their red-brown, geometric, stencilled patterns. Ambae fabrics are exchanged anonymously but fabrics have known places of origin and stories explaining these (Bolton, 1997). Bolton (1999) traces the origin of one such story about the development of a textile type called *vola walurigi*. The narrative, in which a pattern depicting the hills and beach of Walurigi is revealed to Tambetamata's wife, serves to illustrate place as the source of knowledge within the sphere of textile making, but also reinforces the concept of place through the practices which demonstrate the affiliation of the practitioners to a geographical place (Bolton, 1999).

On Pentecost Island of Vanuatu, three kinds of mats (*sese*, *tsip* or *malmal*, and *butsuban*) are made using *Pandanus* (Walter, 1996). A number of different twill patterns may be used to construct the two parts of each mat, which are then seamed together. The most proficient makers know as many as twenty basic designs, of which further permutations are possible. Dyed and printed designs, as well as the size and function of the mats, add another layer of complexity. Motifs may convey specific symbolisms denoting social status, particular powers (e.g., for the maker the *ulun kataptap* motif reactivates the memory of other designs) as well as being a potent reminder of menstrual blood and female lineages. The mats overall, in their abundance, beauty and technical excellence, represent the fertility of women and thus the reproduction and continuity of social life (Walter, 1996). Walter (1996) asserts that for ni-Vanuatu women of Pentecost:-

> A dyed mat is first and foremost the menstrual blood of women, the first feminine principle of the universe, the symbol of the lineages which give women in marriage (Walter, 1996, p. 108).
> The reason why women take such great care and devote so much time to making these red mats is that the mat represents the feminine principle of which they are the natural bearers, a principle which is praised and venerated at all ceremonial exchanges, which thus become a reactualisation, a hundred times repeated, of reproduction and of social life made possible and comfortable (Walter, 1996, p. 109).

Mabonlala (1996) illustrates a number of dyed designs from Pentecost, Vanuatu. Included among these is a design called *butsu metakal*[2].

Fiji, one of the sources of missionary mat making influence in Papua New Guinea, has a strong tradition of mat making both for functional art and for ritual exchange and tribute. Ewins (1982) examines the contemporary mats of Gau, Fiji. Although the quality of mat making has apparently declined from the best museum pieces, there has been an increase in quantity and area of distribution. The women of Gau make variations on a number of types of mats, including coco floor mats, *ibe ni kana* eating mats, *yarayara* baby mats, *davodavo* sleeping mats and *ibe vakabuti* (seen used as) bed covers. Within these types of mats Ewins (1982) identified over twenty different motifs arranged regularly over the entire mat, plaited as rows of simple motifs, arranged in wide bands or simply with the mats subdivided by parallel or intersecting lines.

As sparse as the literature is for Papua New Guinea mats, there is even less documentation on the decoration of mats. For the Huon Gulf and Siassi Islands, we have evidence of mats in journal articles about trade (Harding, 1967; Hogbin, 1994) and about design (Bodrogi, 1961) although the designs on the mats are treated only perfunctorily or not at all.

2.4. The Art and Science of Entomology

To lay the groundwork for a discussion of entomological culture it is helpful to understand something of the insects themselves including their taxonomy and ecology.

2.4.1 Taxonomy: How do we Know Who's Who?

Taxonomy is a system which, by examining characteristics of members of a group, orders the members to show resemblances or relationships between them. The members may be animate or inanimate although we generally apply taxonomic order primarily to living organisms. Each species is known by a binomial name, that is, a genus plus a species name. Species are grouped into genera (singular, genus), family, order and class according to the characteristics they share. Identification is based on a dichotomous key, where each feature is opposed to one other. By working through the choices, based on the anatomy of the organism, identification can be reached.

Depending on which organisms are being examined, different characteristics are critical in determining the relationships. In mammals, for instance, toes and teeth are of

[2] Interestingly this term is also used to refer to a green scarab beetle.

immense importance while, for plants, the reproductive organs, the flowers and fruit, constitute the basis for identification. Within each grouping of organisms, particular parts of the organisms will, of course, have very specific names. Although, as lay people, we can look and perhaps even distinguish one species from another, it is these named parts with which the taxonomists concern themselves. These named parts form part of the taxonomic jargon that informs and is specific to each type of science, including the science of entomology, or study of insects.

Although this methodology is a Western construct, the idea of systematic classification of living organisms is widespread. All cultures have some way of organising their environments in ways that make sense to them. Majnep and Bulmer (1977) document the way the Kalam (from the Western Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea) identify and group the birds found in Majnep's tribal lands. Although far removed from Western scientific nomenclature, the Kalam system includes all bar two birds which Western ornithologists have identified in the valley (the two missing include one which is an occasional migrant and the other which is the female of a dimorphic species). The Kalam system employs not only physical attributes of the birds but also perceived symbolisms derived from observed behaviours in order to classify the birds (Majnep and Bulmer, 1977). Perhaps the greatest difference between local systems and the western taxonomic methodology is the application of western taxonomy across different cultures and biota. This binomial classification system is designed to work for all organisms everywhere, living and dead. There is the built-in capability of the system for the incorporation of previously unknown organisms across spatial and temporal dimensions and for predictions about unknown species based on well known relatives.

Arthropods are believed to comprise 90 per cent of all animal species with insects representing more than half of that number (Zborowski and Storey, 1995) and more than three-quarters of all animal species (CSIRO, Div. of Ent. 1991). The order Insecta is part of a larger grouping of arthropods which includes joint legged creatures such as crabs, shrimps, waterfleas and woodlice (Crustacea), millipedes, centipedes and insects (Unimara) and spiders, ticks and scorpions (Chelicerata) (Roberts. 1995). Arthropods are

> …characterised by having an external skeleton called an exoskeleton which is composed of separate hardened plates or segments joined by softer tissue that allows movement of these segments (Zborowski and Storey, 1995, p. 10).

Familiar insects include flies and mosquitoes, ants, bees and wasps, grasshoppers and locusts, bugs, cockroaches, beetles, butterflies and moths. They are widely

distributed throughout the world. Some are considered pests of mankind while others provide an economic benefit. For example, the Codling Moth is considered a pest because of the damage that larvae cause to apples with resultant wormy apples (Richards & Davies, 1978). On the other hand, bees are important for plant pollination; one bee in particular, the honey bee, also provides a by-product of pollination, *viz.* honey and wax (Richards & Davies, 1978).

In the insect group, the body is divided into the head, thorax and abdomen. There are six legs, as three pairs, which are attached to the thorax. Also attached to the thorax are the wings. The dichotomous key for the insects of Australia (CSIRO, Div. of Ent., 1991) shows us that wings are the primary differentiating feature. The wings of insects have adapted into a variety of forms providing specialist functions.

> …the wings of insects show so many characters of value in classification that they have been used more extensively than any other structure in comparative studies. Their importance is the greater, because they are usually the only remains of insects, that are recognisably preserved in fossils, which often show essential details…with remarkable clarity (Div. of Ent., CSIRO, 1991, pg. 12).

The weevil, the subject of my art work and therefore a large portion of this research, is an insect within the beetle (Coleoptera) class. Beetles are numerous, making up approximately forty per cent of all insects and thirty per cent of all animals with about 300,000 known species. (CSIRO, Div. Of Ent. 1991). Coleoptera are characterized by hardened forewings, known as elytra, which cover the mid-thorax, abdomen and membranous hind wings (used for flying). The elytra protect the flying wings and allow the Coleoptera to hide successfully not only in enclosed spaces but also cryptically (Lawrence & Britton, 1994). The elytra also reduce transpiration water losses. Within the order of beetles, the weevils (Curculionidae) are numerous being, in fact, the largest family within the entire animal kingdom (Porion, 1993). In Australia there are more than 6000 species (CSIRO, Div. Of Ent. 1991). Weevils vary enormously in size and form. The jaws of the adult are comprised of grinding mouthparts located on a long spur, or rostrum, at the end of the head. The rostrum is characteristic of this family.

The insect biota of New Guinea is associated biologically with the Oriental biota, with close links to SE Asia, especially Indonesia and the Philippines. New Guinea may be home to as much as six per cent of the world's total number of insect species. There is a high degree of endemism (Schneider, 1999). Papua New Guinea's birdwing butterflies are among the largest (*Ornithoptera alexandrae* and *O. goliath*) and rarest

butterflies (*O. paradisea*) in the world. The Hercules moth (*Coscinocera hercules*) is the world's largest moth and one of the largest insects. Other large or long insects of Papua New Guinea include the largest katydid (*Silliquofera grandis*), longest beetle (*Batocera kibleri*) and one of the longest stick insects (*Hermachys morosus*) (Schneider, 1999). In New Guinea and the nearby islands, it is estimated that there are 25,000 known species of beetles (Gressitt and Hornabrook, 1977).

Porion (1993) provides multiple images and taxonomic accounts of the genus *Eupholus*, a weevil that seems to be confined to New Guinea and its satellite islands. Ranging in colour from greens through to purple-blues, with a few black and while species, these insects have intricate patterns on their elytra (Plate 2.4.1). Approximately forty species have been identified to date.

Plate 2.4.1: *Eupholus bennetti* (Porion, 1993, No. 131, *Planche* 16, p. 55)

2.4.2 Ecology: What are Species Doing?

Although taxonomy is the key to naming organisms, their ecology, and particularly the niche they occupy, also provides vital information about particular species. A species is defined as a member of a group which can breed with another member of the same group and produce viable offspring. The inability of co-existing species to interbreed is the result of their previous spatial and temporal separations over long periods of time.

Thus, although taxonomy defines the species by the physical attributes it possesses, the physical attributes reflect the environment in which the species is found and to which the species is adapted to survive. We can characterise the species by the niche, or role, it occupies within that environment. The niche includes the precise part of the environment the species inhabits, the food it eats, its reproductive behaviour, its

defence mechanisms as well as positive and negative associations with other organisms (for example, being preyed upon by other species or having a symbiotic relationship with other organisms).

While adult weevil life spans are usually shorter than a few months, members of the genus *Gymnopholus* (a New Guinea genus of weevil) spend up to five years in the adult stage of the life cycle (Gressitt & Hornabrook, 1977). Both larval and adult stages of weevils are phytophagous, although they may specialize in eating different parts of, or even completely different, plants during the life cycle. This feeding trait has caused weevils to be regarded as pests of humankind. It is thought that the rostrum may have developed as a way of boring into plants to form a cavity for eggs to be deposited (CSIRO. Division of Entomology, 1991). Some weevils in New Guinea, living in high altitude moss forests, support such plants and other organisms as algae, fungi, lichens, liverworts, and mosses on the depressions of their protonum, elytra and legs without any apparent injury to the host weevil, an unusual symbiosis (Evans & Bellamy, 2000).

2.4.3 The Art of Entomology

Despite their negative status in the view of many humans, particular insects also enjoy elevated status within specific cultures and on a broader scale. Scarab beetles, based on five genera, are animals of iconic status, relating to eternal renewal and resurrection, in Egypt. In China and other parts of the orient, cicadas provide propitious omens. The Western Tiger Swallowtail, *Papilio multicaudatus*, and the Saturniid silk moth, *Rothschildia orizaba*, were deified by the ancient Mexican Aztec, Mayan and Chichimec cultures (Sear, 1997). Not only do the insects enjoy elevated status but also representations of certain insects are common within these cultures. Cicadas (Homoptera), beetles (Coleoptera), butterflies (Lepidoptera), dragonflies (Odonata) and flies (Diptera) are the most commonly portrayed insects, often used symbolically in jewellery (Liu, 1998). Among the animals that appear in Javanese *semen* (non-geometric patterned batik) are elephants, horses, water buffalo, tigers, monkeys and deer as well as insects and arthropods (beetles, butterflies and scorpions) (Hitchcock, 1991). In Egypt various scarabs have been portrayed hundreds of thousands of times (Andrews, 1994). Native Americans use the image of the dragonfly in their jewellery and, in modern times, on their clothing (Liu, 1998).

Why do humans invoke images of insects? The portrayal of insects is linked to a perception that insects have desirable characteristics which can be transferred to humans, are symbolic of certain traits or are protective either phylactically or

apotropaically (Andrews. 1994). Close study of the natural habits of insects has led to the rise of metaphors and symbolism associated with insects, especially in the context of religious convictions and the desire for eternal life (Liu, 1998). Shiny parts of insects are used in various cultures, associated with either conference of characteristics such as the enhancement of symbolic strength and sexual attractiveness embodied by a healthy sheen on the skin in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea (Strathern & Strathern, 1971) or amuletic protection of reflective surfaces (Rivers, 1999).

There are strongly held beliefs, for example, that cicadas, certain beetles and butterflies can confer the attributes of immortality, rebirth and longevity on humans. Other attributes such as swiftness and courage are exemplified by dragonflies and flies (Liu, 1998). The Chinese also used jade (for the prevention of decay) cicadas (to guarantee resurrection and immortality) in association with funeral rites (Liu, 1998). In Nepal, butterflies symbolize good fortune and prosperity for newlyweds. In conjunction with flowers (symbolic of women) they represent the male force of nature, together symbolizing fertility (Gabriel, 1999).

Morris (1999) and Paine (2004) discuss the range of amulets, charms and talisman found throughout the world. The major animal amulets include the scarab (Egypt), spiders (England, Roman, Polynesia, Native Americans) and ladybirds (European). Minor insect amulets are butterflies, grasshoppers and scorpions. Paine (2004) discusses an array of protective devices including the use of praying mantis in Oceania (said to be the symbol of the head hunter).

Centipedes are portrayed in many cultures. In Arnhemland, Australia, Burarra (women) artists call a three-strand twining above plain twining by the term *jin-guga* or centipede (Hamby, 2001). Women of American Samoa who make bark cloth have a traditional pattern based on the centipede (called *fa'a atualoa*) (Pritchard, 1984). Baby mats from Mer, Torres Straits had plaited centipede patterns running down their centres (see Plate 2.3.2). Other disparate cultures also have traditional centipede motifs. Haddon (1895) records the understanding of the Samang of East Malacca of the potency of the feet of the centipede to irritate a person's skin. There the centipede and the marks made by the centipede's feet were reproduced on bamboo as a magical pictograph against the stings of the centipede (Haddon, 1895) and on slipper soles by the Miao of south-west China (Paine, 2004) as what Andrews (1994) terms an apotropaic amulet.

Insects have also had another long association with textiles, beetle wings in particular being used to embellish garments in many parts of India, Amazonia, Thailand (Plate 2.4.2) and Myanmar. Dresses in Victorian England were also decorated with beetle

wings as well as iridescent feathers, mother-of-pearl, butterflies and other sparkly curiosities. Most of the beetles employed in this decorative manner belong to the family Buprestidae, more commonly known as jewel beetles for the brilliant, permanent iridescent colours of their elytra (Rivers, 1999).

Plate 2.4.2: Singing shawl of the Pwo Karen, Thailand (Rivers, 1999, p. 137)

In contemporary Western art there is a growing depiction of insects in both still and movie photography, perhaps reflecting increasing environmental awareness (Sand, 1998). Peggy Johnson, a contemporary American jeweller, used insect imagery in the 1990s, sometimes for the symbolism associated with other cultures but also for their innate beauty and ecological associations (Little, 1999).

In western history, and particularly rug hooking history, insects are extremely rare. Many other animals, particularly but not exclusively domesticated animals, are portrayed but insects are not (Kopp & Kopp, 1995). In contemporary textiles there is a greater awareness and portrayal of insects. Fairfield Gallery, in Sydney's west, held an exhibition of insects on textiles in early 2003 and recent embroidery books have instructed in stump work beetles (Nicholas, 2004). Although the focus on insects is still an isolated practice in textiles, the insects in my own art practice reference both textile history as well as the wider world entomological culture. The insects I depict, and use as metaphor, are, however, grounded in contemporary Western apprehensions. My *oeuvre* has centred on weevils and other beetles, cockroaches, ants (Plate 2.4.3) and grasshoppers. In this way, I blend historical and current aesthetics and thinking.

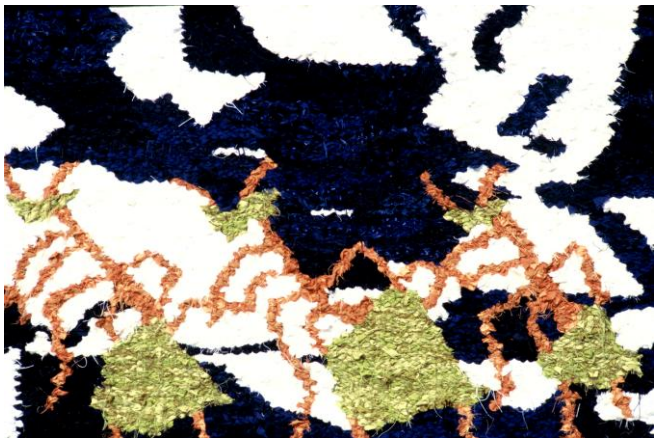

Plate 2.4.3: Weaver Ants I, Lorraine Lamothe, tapestry, mixed weft on cotton warp, 1999

2.4.4 Entomological Culture in Papua New Guinea

Cultural entomology in Papua New Guinea includes the representation of insects either in whole or in part, realistically or abstractly. However, similarly to the use of beetle wings in embroidery in other parts of the world, cultural entomology in Papua New Guinea may also involve the use of real insects particularly in body decoration. The types of insects within these two categories do not seem to overlap. It seems as if insects are used in body decoration if they have certain qualities, including colour and iridescence, which can enhance the splendour of the decorated person. The insects used for body decoration in the highlands of Papua New Guinea are beautiful green iridescent beetles, with the elytra or thorax being appliquéd to a background. In the highlands provinces of Eastern Highlands and Simbu ornate headdresses for men are also decorated with masses of entire green beetles (Sinclair, 1973; Schneider, 1999) (Plate 2.4.4).

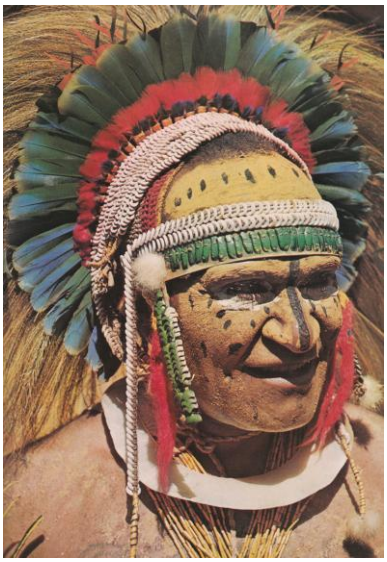

Plate 2.4.4: Goroka (Eastern Highlands Province) man with green beetle head band (Sinclair, 1973, p. 43)

On Manus black rhinoceros beetles parts were incorporated into body decoration (Ohnemus, 1998). No other types of insects (except beetles) seem to be used in this direct manner.

Although represented insects have a role in enhancing some aspect of the person carrying the symbol, in this case it is probably the ferocity or awesomeness, rather than the strength or sexuality, of the wearer which is being emphasised. The success of the insect depicted (in its particular ecological niche) also seems to be invoked on behalf of the bearer. Therefore representations of predatory insects on war canoes, war shields and drums could enhance success in fighting an enemy or convey to the enemy the prowess of the fighter.

One insect which is used to invoke this predatory success is the praying mantis. Symbolically, headhunting and cannibalism can be linked to the creation of life; that is, the warrior who can kill ensures fertility in crops and within the clan. This is particularly critical for the pre-pacification period of New Guinea (Moore, 1995). The praying mantis is shown on war canoes from the Asmat of West Papua (Moore, 1995; Thomas, 1995), on fighting shields from central New Britain as well as on dance masks from throughout New Britain (Jeudy-Ballini, 1999; Heerman, 2001). In some cases the image of the praying mantis is directed back toward the wearer and away from the audience. The Sulka of New Britain discuss the power of certain images to protect the bearer from evil and misfortune (Heerman, 2001). Praying mantids are also employed on lime spatulas and drum handles in the Massim region (Milne Bay) although no reasons are given for these depictions (Meyer, 1995).

Another insect depicted often and across the various regions of New Guinea is the butterfly. A Simbai (Western Highlands Province) shield depicts a six winged specimen (Meyer, 1995) while dance masks of the Baining are constructed to reflect the butterfly (Heerman, 2001). Butterflies were also depicted on the canoe prows of the western Solomons. In the ritual of *tita vagarata*, insects were placed on the canoe prow while ritual chants exhorted the canoe to be effective in catching *bonito* (tuna) and in the conduct of war (Waite, 1989). The actual significance of the insects, presumably butterflies, is not discussed. Chick and Chick (1978) depict canoe and fishing decorations from the Solomon Islands including a mantis fishing float and butterfly canoe ornaments. A *kobokobor* type *malagan* sculpture from New Ireland features two butterflies flanking a *mataling* “eye of fire”

> Many of the *[malagan]* sculptures and masks represent an aspect of a person’s soul, spirit, life source, or life force (Gunn, 1997, p. 49).

The contemporary painter Kauage has used butterflies in his 1978 drawing entitled "*Poret long bataflai*" ("Afraid of butterflies") (Simons & Stevenson, 1990). No explanations are given for the use of the butterfly or what properties it could confer on the bearer. In a possibly more pragmatic depiction, moths were incorporated into clay pot lexicon in the Markham Valley in the 1980s. This followed the introduction of a moth species which was devastating the local banana production (H. Holzknecht, pers. comm., 1990). Butterflies are also depicted on both PNG currency and stamps with other insects also on stamps. In other cultural interpretations butterflies represent a metamorphosis and thus return to life (based on the life cycle of butterflies) but there may also be associations relating to the lightness and elusiveness of the butterfly.

Non-insect arthropods that are depicted include centipedes and spiders. Centipede tracks are depicted in pots made by the male potters of the Markham Valley (May & Tuckson, 1982) (Plate 2.4.5). At least one Baining mask documented by Corbin (1979) represents the head of a centipede. Information about the use of spiders is scanty. Hanneman (1969) shows several designs based on spiders, all designs found in the Madang area, although only one is attributed to an object, a lime container, on which the design is carved. Other insects that are occasionally depicted include hairy grasshoppers seen on the lime container mentioned above. Another object thought to relate to insects is the so-called mosquito mask of the Sepik, a mask which is characterised by a long pointed nose (Meyer, 1995). According to Corbin (pers. comm., 2005) there is also a community in the Sepik where the imagery of cicadas is invoked.

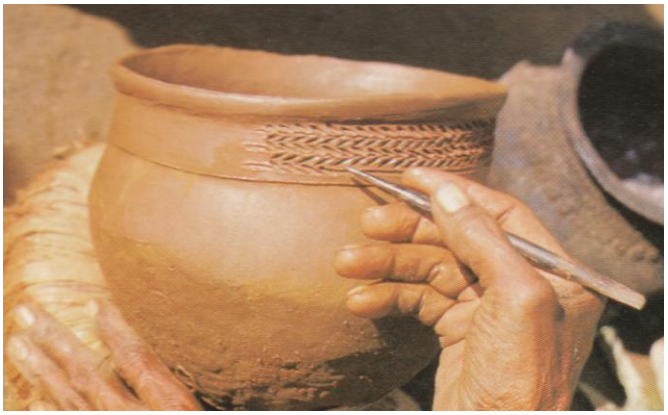

Plate 2.4.5: Markham pot with centipede tracks (May & Tuckson, 1982, p. 140)

All the preceding objects are those made and used by men, in ritual and other situations. According to Heerman (2001), although only initiates (among Melanesian cultures) are able to view and interpret visual imagery in ways relating to cosmic insights, other simpler designations of the available images allow for women and non-

initiates to be familiar with, and employ, the same artistic language in their own making of objects. This ensures "a consistency of visual language…although names and interpretations may differ" (Heerman, 2001, p. 28).

Women also employ insect imagery in the objects they make. These include butterflies and centipedes on *bilums*, centipedes in mat design as well as butterflies on clay pots. As with imagery used by men, the female use of insect and arthropod imagery extends over large areas of Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in Melanesia. The centipede *bilum* design is a Mendi (Southern Highlands) wedding design (Choulai & Lewis-Harris, 1999) while centipede mat designs come from Gedaged, Madang (Hanneman, 1977) as well as the Torres Straits (Philp, 2001). Fukumoto (n.d.) identifies an insect pattern on a *sese* mat from central Pentecost, Vanuatu as the footprints of an insect. The insect may well be a centipede. In Gau, Fiji, only one of the twenty motifs identified by Ewins (1982) referenced insects, and that was *va'kadili vilivili* (like a swarm of black ants). Women potters from Milne Bay incorporate butterfly imagery on their pots (May & Tuckson, 1982). As well as represented insects, women in Manus also used parts of actual insects to make necklaces and armbands (Ohnemus, 1998). Imported trade goods have now replaced the insects used in adornments. There may be other examples of cultural entomology as practised by women although, as acknowledged earlier, female material culture has received scanty documentation.

Two main directions emerge from this survey of insects used as design elements in New Guinea. The first point is the universal nature of the imagery. Through widely separated communities similar, and limited, imagery is used. Beetles, praying mantids and butterflies are used widely with centipedes and spiders also being used although not so commonly documented. Secondly, these representations all have the effect of enhancing certain aspects of the wearer/bearer, especially those traits reflecting strength, prowess or fearsomeness. Elements of protection may also be invoked by the use of insect imagery. Thomas (1995) comments that the

> …meanings and effects of Oceanic art are not wholly alien to those of other artistic systems, in part because they seem to be psychological universals that influence art everywhere (Thomas, 1995, p.11).

Symbols and rituals are necessary to consolidate cosmic and societal relationships and, as these relationships are in a constant state of flux, efforts need to be continual and visible. Moore (1995) demonstrates that, far from being exotic and unusual, Melanesian ritual/religious practices are consistent with other world religions.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Directions from the Fictive Narrative

During the period preceding the CRG proposal for *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* (Appendix B), I discussed various scenarios with S. Holzknecht. Because I wanted to make a number of rugs featuring New Guinea weevils and, because I did not want to step into a minefield of appropriation, S. Holzknecht suggested that I construct a fictive narrative around which to base an exhibition (see section 2.2.3). In the Ph.D. proposal the fictive narrative of the CRG exhibition functioned as background rather than foreground, and lead to the need to investigate the situation as it existed both during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as currently. This constituted a move away from using mythical narrative (as a springboard to recreate, as distilled through my contemporary understanding, documents and artefacts that might be associated with the period in question) to an examination of what actually happened (proposed in the Ph.D. submission as a tool to develop the fictional history). The disadvantages of continuing to work with the fictional narrative in the doctoral study related especially to the close connection of the fictional narrative and the CRG exhibition. Although it was still possible to work on weevils and mats, I needed to distance myself from the underpinning fiction to enable me to conduct rigorous and objective research as a basis for artistic practice.

This lead to the need to understand historic mats as a springboard to understanding contemporary mat making. he fiction largely faded into the distance with reality, both historical and contemporary, being foregrounded. In effect, both fictive narrative and the actual history of the Huon Peninsula form discrete areas of warp intersected by the same wefts of women and weevils. While the fictive narrative had been abandoned, there still appeared to be a potential role for the real mission wives. Had they, in reality, documented mats? How might this be ascertained?

3.2 Directions from the Literature

The literature review provides general information relating to the material culture of women, but this information, with the exception of Telefol *bilums*, lacks detail. With regard to stitched *Pandanus* mats, the information is sketchy and refers mainly to the fact of widely divergent communities making and using mats and rain capes from stitched *Pandanus* leaves. For the Huon Gulf it is known that women made mats and that these formed part of the trade cycle operating from both Tami Island and Siassi. We know that mats continued to be in use through the advent of the Lutheran Church

and into the late 20th century. We have one anecdotal account of the decoration on mats and the general meanings attached to those decorations.

We also know that visual vocabulary encompasses entire communities whose individual members' understanding of the symbols depends on their initiation status. We also know that art work can be ascribed to individual artists and that copyright does exist.

We further know that the Lutheran Church entered the Huon Peninsula/Finschhafen area of Morobe Province in the late 1880s and missionary women were in the field from very early days. From 1886 to 1938 eighty-two men, seventy-two wives and nineteen other single women entered the mission field of the Neuendettelsau Mission of the Lutheran Church. Missionaries from other branches and synods of the Lutheran Church also served in the area (Wagner & Reiner, 1986). The presence of women in the field is therefore established. What is not established is whether mission women investigated and documented aspects of indigenous female material culture, especially that aspect of culture relating to design and motifs on mats. Although some writing by and about early missionary women (not necessarily Lutheran women) exists, this appears to document the impact made by the missionary women (Jolly, 1991; Langmore, 1982; Pollock, 1989).

In 1898-99 a Hungarian entomologist/collector/ethnographer named Lajos Biro visited several villages on the Huon Gulf and collected their material culture. These villages were Tami nugudu and Tami Island as well as Yambo, Tigidu and Busega (Bukaua) (Bodrogi, 1961). Although Bodrogi documented the art of northeastern New Guinea, including that collected by Biro, what is missing from the literature includes a broad historical knowledge of mats in either written form or as accessible objects collected and stored in museums or elsewhere. We also have only scanty knowledge of mat making, most of this from other communities in New Guinea. We lack information regarding the knowledge Morobean women currently have with respect to mat making including how they acquired the knowledge and how they apply that knowledge. The information we do have relates to the general formal aesthetic qualities of female material culture, including the use of colour, shape, line and symmetry (see Tables 2.1.1 and 2.1.2).

What is the entomological culture practised by Morobean mat makers? Are there specific meanings that may be assigned to particular insects or insect designs? How do these mat makers see their connection to the past? Have changes in society impacted upon the use, if any, of insect motifs in Morobean mat culture? The literature

on Papua New Guinea's cultural entomology, literature that constitutes only the beginning of understanding about this subject, reveals an understanding gained largely as a tangential by-product of other avenues of research. There appears to have been no research aimed directly at Papua New Guinean entomological culture. Nor is there any documented research that focuses on the current study areas. How much research, if any, will need to be conducted on entomological cultural research as distinct from mat making research?

To what extent, if any, are there references buried within published articles and books, to the female material culture that missionary women must undoubtedly have seen? Certainly there are unpublished archival and family-held documents that were written by early women missionaries (Holzknecht, pers. comm., 2001). Might these contain information on the subject of female material culture? Where might potential data be found? The Lutheran Church holds archival material in Neuendettelsau (Germany), Adelaide (Australia), Chicago (United States of America) and Lae (Papua New Guinea). It may be possible to identify other avenues of potential data at this point, including the potential for privately held diaries and letters. From this historic and contemporary research could be developed a research project culminating in an exhibition featuring art work reflecting Morobean mat making but which did not emulate it or seek to develop it fictionally.

Thus avenues of research derived from aspects of both the narrative and the literature include:-

- possible documentation by missionary women of the making of stitched *Pandanus* mats;
- historical mats; and
- decorative entomology.

3.3 Directions from Previous Practice

Within the art form of mat making using entomological motifs, as a western artist I am situated in the nexus of non-western historical and contemporary western art, breaking new ground on several fronts. With a background not only in art but grounded initially in the science of forestry, such work has broad horizons. Through the use of motifs such as cockroaches and weevils, a new set of symbols has been constructed. This imagery is unfamiliar to the target audience and charged with negative western perceptions. Some of the imagery is abstract and some is representative but in both cases audiences are often unsure of what they are viewing. It is as if there is no

connection between what they see and their everyday lives. The valorisation of such insects requires a change of outlook in the audience. The aesthetics of my previous practice have been outlined in Table 2.2.1.

As indicated earlier, I am also familiar with Papua New Guinea, having lived there or been associated with that country for over twenty-five years before coming to this study. Time alone, of course, does not make for understanding. Coupled with language skills in *tok pisin* as well as extensive travel throughout the country, however, it sets up a substantial framework for investigating the use of insect motifs not only in my own practice but in the practice of contemporary Morobean mat makers.

The research on which my previous practice was based was neither formalised nor detailed. Much of the decision making was based on previous experience coupled with moderate research. For example, with the exception of *Baelg: Olsem Bilum,* all the exhibitions I have had to date have been based on insects. The insects have been taken from sketchbook drawings, some of which have been of found insects while others have been drawn from scientific specimens. For these I consulted the National Insect Collection in Canberra, the insect collection of the Department of Primary Industry at Mareeba as well as books in my personal library.

The exhibition *Baelg: Olsem Bilum,* a two-person exhibition, was concerned with issues of infertility. In the pieces I contributed to the exhibition, the colour red was strongly symbolic of women, their menstrual blood and their reproductive potential.

For the current study, however, research is a *prima facie* concern. Not only does there need to be an extensive literature search into the Papua New Guinean female material culture but this has to be coupled with archival and museum studies in Australia and abroad, and contemporary field research in Papua New Guinea. Linked with these studies will be research into the formal aesthetics of my own creative practice.

3.4 Translating Aims into Strategies

The aims of this study include the identification of creative processes for mat makers of two different cultures, both engaged in using entomological motifs. Although aspects of this study can be conducted concurrently, the critical delineation of the exhibition requires the fundamental underpinning of the historical and contemporary Papua New Guinean research. Once this research has been concluded, and based on formal aesthetic research within my own practice, it is possible then to formulate an exhibition which visually documents the results. This will include not only the shape of the

exhibition (e.g., number of pieces, focus of the exhibition, series) but also the details of individual pieces.

With regard to this research, it is important to remember the woman who is weaving the others together, *viz.* myself, a practising artist, and a wildlife forest scientist. In these guises I bring pertinent experiences to this particular, and explicit, body of research. This study, and resultant exhibition and thesis, is predicated both on planned, specific and directed research and on the past experience and training of the Western artist. Because the earliest years of this training has been in the sciences, scientific thinking has pervaded all the artistic work made in the past and will continue to do so in this study.

In my past practice the question of influences and changes, both unexpected and ongoing, has always been critical. This current study will be no exception; unexpected exhibitions, meetings or travel bringing their unpredictable but enriching bonuses of insights and information.

3.5 Potential Data Sources

Based on this existing knowledge and the lacunae identified, there are four possible avenues of research: investigations firstly into archival materials, including unpublished written (and pictorial) material held by the Lutheran church; secondly, of objects held in museum collections; and thirdly, into the art practices of contemporary mat makers in the Huon Peninsula area of Morobe Province. These investigations need to be overlaid by the fourth avenue of research, a concurrent investigation of decorative entomology as it pertains to mat culture. These four strands, two archival and two contemporary, form the warp and weft of the research which, when deconstructed, can then inform the continuing investigations and development of my own work, comprising both studio and written work. These multiple strands of the research are tabulated in Table 3.5.1 to demonstrate how one overlays the other, chronologically and spatially.

Table 3.5.1: Realisation of Aims: Overview of Data Sources and Planned Timetables

Aims	Historical Research	Contemporary Research	Artistic Research/ Creation
To identify, through relevant cultural lenses, developments in characteristics common to mat makers who use entomological motifs.	• 2002 - 2004. • Locate museums which have sufficient material to warrant visits. • Visit museums and archives. • Interview Susanne Holzknecht. • Document findings.	• 2005. • Use historical photographs. • Photograph mat makers' processes and products. • Transcription of tapes/notes into initial draft of results chapters.	• 2002 - 2005. • Develop formal aesthetic pieces based on initial knowledge, concurrent with historical research.
To utilize the filter of a Western mat maker's experience to create a visual documentation of Morobean mat design with specific emphasis on decorative entomology.	• Post 2004, isolate design features of historical mats.	• During 2006-07, print selected photographic documentation of Morobean mat making.	• Choose and schedule exhibition venue and date. • During 2006-07 create final body of work, drawing on both historical and contemporary research to inform designs.
To document the processes of parallel mat making that emerge from the research.	• During 2006-07 revise documentation in conjunction with contemporary research.	• During 2006-07 synthesize mat making processes.	• Document in written form the visual process, including exhibition and post exhibition processes.

3.5.1 Historical Research: The Archives and the Museums

Archival research, scheduled to be undertaken at the beginning of the research period, will be conducted using the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of the German, Australian, American and Papua New Guinea branches of the church, all of which were involved in the Huon Peninsula missionary activities. These branches are located in Neuendettelsau, Adelaide, Chicago and Lae respectively. Because Neuendettelsau is the headquarters of the church, initial permission for archival searches will start there. I will be searching specifically for references to mat making activity, especially as documented by women and particularly where motifs and other decorations are mentioned. It is anticipated that such reference will most likely be in women's diaries or correspondence.

As well as material held in church archives, I hope to access privately held material associated with early mission wives. Family-held material will be sourced through informal connections within the ranks of missionary families, many of whom still have connections to the church in Morobe Province. Respect for the privacy of families

holding diaries and letters will naturally be held to be of utmost importance when accessing such documents. It is recognised, however, that issues of privacy may make these sources harder to access.

A further avenue of research to supplement any lack in archival or written material, will be an extensive interview with S. Holzknecht, a linguist who lived in Morobe Province for more than twenty years. Interviews with S. Holzknecht could provide vital information when conducting field research. Her memories will be tested against the memories of current makers of mats and against any archival material to be found.

While it is important to discover what mat culture missionary women documented, it is also important to uncover other historical materials that reference this culture. Probably the most important source of the historical documentation will come from western museum collections. Bolton (1980) has catalogued the extant holdings of Oceanic cultural property in Australian collections although new material may subsequently have been added or, in fact, been repatriated (Bolton, 1997). Writings about early 20th century collections (e.g. Bodrogi, 1961) discuss women's material culture of northeast New Guinea so it is reasonable to expect that the objects on which these discussions are based are likely to be held in museums in Europe and, with respect to the objects mentioned by Bodgrogi, specifically in Hungary. Other collections that have not been researched and published may exist in other western museums. Collections made in Melanesia between the years 1870 and 1930 have been documented by O'Hanlon and Welsch (2001) and could simplify the task of finding museum collections of relevance to this study. Gillow and Sentance (1999) also provide a list of museums with textile collections. Initial approaches to museums will be made using postal or electronic communications.

Personal visits to museums will be pursued where sufficient material warrants it. Ultimately the goal will be to survey as many of the extant mats from the Huon Peninsula as possible. As for the archival studies, limitations are foreseen to be primarily those of accessibility and logistics. It is not possible, as Bolton (1997) was, to be the actual bearer of objects being repatriated but photographs of objects held in collections can potentially be used to stimulate memory within contemporary communities (Ohnemus, 1998). The major difficulty in accessing historical objects, especially historical mats, lies in their being widely and sparsely disseminated.

3.5.2 Contemporary Mat Research

Because of the paucity of material referencing mat culture in Papua New Guinea, both historical and contemporary, a form of inquiry other than researching the literature will be necessary to canvas the questions posed about contemporary makers. Visual research undertaken by working with Morobean women in their own environment has the potential to provide access to such information. This part of the research will be underpinned by

> Four assumptions [which] guide cross-cultural research…(1) the importance of cultural specificity, (2) the necessity of intensive study, (3) the possibility of commonalities among women of different cultures, and (4) the need for a critical evaluation of study materials (Reinharz, 1992, p.111).

These assumptions are manifested in my knowledge and understanding of Papua New Guinean culture and morés, an understanding not based on romanticism but on the reality of having lived in Papua New Guinea for over a decade prior to this study. I plan to stay in villages while collecting data in order to facilitate information exchange and encourage confidence in me as researcher. I have already identified as an *a priori* assumption my belief in the commonalities possible to mat makers of different cultures, well articulated by Thomas (1995).

Prior to going to the village, it will be necessary to fulfil all criteria associated with ethical research. In accordance with these criteria, one important development will be the establishment of an informed consent form and, more importantly, its translation into *tok pisin*, a *lingua franca* for most of the northern half of Papua New Guinea. Fulfilling ethics protocols (from JCU but also in association with the National Research Institute of PNG) and the procurement of the relevant visas will be undertaken in 2004 in preparation for field work.

An important parameter when working with individual informants is to apprise them of the details of the study and obtain their permission to interview them and use the results of those interviews (Reinharz, 1992). The first step in the field study will be to establish contact with an area and negotiate a basis for the exchange of information. Although I lived in Morobe Province, I hope to be introduced to the Bukaua women by mutual friends. That village and two others, on Tami Island and Siassi, are the intended target villages of my research (see Figure 3.5.1).

This area and these villages have been historically involved in the making and trading of these mats (Bodrogi, 1961; Harding, 1867; Hogbin, 1947) and are also the site of Biro's collections (Bodrogi, 1961; see section 3.1). Holzknecht's recollections are

centred on Bukaua. Furthermore, it will be critical to this study that the researcher be seen not merely as an observer but as a maker in her own right. Therefore I will have rug hooking materials with me and engage in a sharing process rather than a one-way interrogative process. These methods are chosen to build connections and avoid researcher/researched alienation (Reinharz, 1992).

It is anticipated that approximately five months will be spent in the village, collecting information on the art practices of various mat makers. The fieldwork will be undertaken after archival material has been collected. The planned fieldwork will consist of short visits interspersed with periods of research consolidation within the studio milieu. The initial visit, to establish *bona fides*, will be the shortest, lasting only one month. Subsequent visits, of which two are planned, will be of two months duration.

Photographs of historical mats will be used as documentation in fieldwork to stimulate memory, comparison with, and information about contemporary mats, techniques, materials and creative limitations. The knowledge, and its parameters, that women possess about these aspects of material culture will be collated with documentation of specific types of mats as well as individual mats. This knowledge will necessarily include oral history stories in order to contextualise the making of these artefacts. The comparisons which indigenous informants make between historical examples, memory and contemporary mat making will be given special attention. Additionally, discussions with regard to trademarks or copyright will probe the extent of these practices, especially as related to individual creativity and recognition.

Direct questioning is rarely successful in soliciting cross-cultural information. For example, informants may be genuinely unable to articulate the meaning of an object or motif. They may, however, be well able to talk about when the object is made, for what occasion, who makes it, what happens to it afterwards, and much more around the subject in question. Furthermore, displaying an interest in the work of the mat makers can work to dispel any feelings of confrontation as well as instil confidence in the process and in the researcher's intentions.

Mead (1979) summarises the problems faced when eliciting information from indigenous informants:

> Informants can comment readily on whether a feature or a composition is correct or inappropriate in terms of style. They do not give answers to the "why" questions because the underlying structure of the art is internalised and subconscious (as in the case of linguistic structures). The structure is understood. Rarely is it verbalized, even by those who probably

> know how it works…Meanings are communicated via the understood stylistic structure to a public that understands the code and therefore, can easily decipher the message (Mead, 1979, p.8).

Hence information will be collected through semi-structured interviews in which feedback determines the direction for further questioning (Reinharz, 1992). The main areas about which questions will be posed include:

- the practitioner, with specific reference to mat making;
- the practitioner, contextualised with specific reference to entomological knowledge; and
- the practice through time and space.

The questions (see below) will be asked in *tok pisin*. This is not the same as *tok ples,* the language of the clan. The interview will be tape recorded, rather than depending on written answers, in order to minimise disruption to the flow of question and answer. Transcripts will be prepared regularly so that further questioning can be developed but also as a safeguard against the loss of, or damage to, the tapes.

The first priority in each interview will be the establishment of the person's identify, including name and clan affiliation; father and mother's name and clan affiliations; marital status; age; rank in the family with regard to all but mainly to same sex siblings; years of schooling; and occupation. This style of questioning is non-threatening and generic, allowing the respondent to become familiar both with it and with the interviewer. Interviews will be restricted primarily to those who currently make or have in the past made mats.

One avenue of questioning will relate to the mat making practices of the respondent. In this section I will elicit information such as:

- how long has the respondent been making mats;
- who taught her to make mats;
- has she taught anyone else to make mats;
- what style of mats does she make;
- what are the design parameters of these mats;
- does she ever do new designs; and
- if yes, where do these designs come from?

The first three questions concern the learning process for mat making. Technical learning processes are likely to be most obvious. These processes should illustrate the connections between the different makers as well as the connections between different designs, both in time (that is, over two or more generations) and space (across family or even clan connections). The next two questions gather more information about the mat making of the particular respondent and are designed to lead into more detailed questions about the creative processes of mat making.

Research relating to decorative entomology will be undertaken during all phases. During archival research in museum collections, attention will be given to aspects of cultural entomology encountered as mat patterns. Names of unidentified patterns will be sought during fieldwork, or through cross-referencing other archival material. The focus in written material, published and unpublished, will also be on mat design, specifically decorative entomology particular to mat design.

In the field, material about decorative entomology with reference to mats will be solicited from informants. The meanings and associations of the insect imagery will be sought for intrinsic reasons but also for their potential to inform with regard to commonly understood visual language and symbols. Developments in decorative entomology, as potentially evidenced by individual makers, will also be identified in this study.

An integrated line of questioning will be directed at the degree of familiarity that mat makers have with insects. If any designs related directly to insects, this will provide and entry point for questioning about that insect. Where there are no design motifs symbolising insects, it will be necessary to ask about the respondent's behaviours relating to insects and insect mythology. For example:

- has the respondent eaten insects;
- if yes, which insects;
- what does she know about these insects;
- is she afraid of insects in general or in particular;
- which and why;
- what does she know about these insects (the ones of which people are fearful); and
- does she know of any stories/myths about insects of any kind?

The questions about insects are formulated to illustrate the mat makers' degree of familiarity with insects as well as the degree to which insects are integrated into the cycle of life in the village.

Tying together threads of both the previous sets of questions will be queries related to all mat making practices known to contemporary makers. Issues canvassed will include:

- which patterns existed in the past but are not made now;
- how are patterns transferred;
- who designs new patterns;
- how is this done; and
- what stories can they tell me about previous mat makers?

If possible, this genre of questioning will be aided by visual documentation of historical mats. These queries are meant to collect information that ties the past to the present, adds information about the creative process and also adds information about the women who achieve status as mat makers. Information collected in the field will be cross-referenced to archival materials and writings, as well as to aspects of cultural entomology.

3.5.3 Personal Practice

The concurrent studio practice will be informed by the interconnecting triangle of historical collections, archival documents and the transitional memories of contemporary makers, including the incorporation of personal history as background to my own artistic practice.

The plan for studio practice involves the creation of a body of work referencing the known Papua New Guinean design criteria while still encompassing my own visual language. Furthermore, this schema could allow for the incorporation of technical elements relating to traditional Canadian rug hooking. The elements of the earliest historical material culture could be used to inform the beginnings of my own explorations within this body of research with contemporary Papua New Guinean design elements incorporated into later art works, recognising the source but avoiding appropriation of specific imagery.

This is important because one of the issues that arises when working with another culture is that of appropriation. I had previously confronted this problem (see 2.2.2) and, since 1988, have never copied another artist's work. In a doctoral study which

has as its object the study and documentation of another culture's creative process, both in written and visual work, the line between appropriation and culture is one that may be difficult to negotiate.

Textiles take time to make. A dense mat (**Ravenshoe Two Ravenshoe One**) hooked with polyester (of more than 100 loops to approximately 6.5 square centimetres) and approximately 45 by 90 centimetres in size took ten weeks to hook. It is anticipated that each piece (series of pieces) will take three months to make, working five hours per day at the task. Therefore it is anticipated that five pieces (series of pieces) will be made during the study over a period of fifteen months.

In the current study I will be hooking with wool on a hessian ground, in order to reference historical Canadian hooked mats (Fitzpatrick, 1999, 2005; Kopp & Kopp, 1995). Wool sourced through second hand shops will form the basis for much of the work. The history of the second hand fabrics used in rug hooking has always, for me, conjured up thoughts about the history of the material. When possible I have sourced my second hand fabrics from family; then histories of particular fabrics have been passed on to the purchaser of the pieces. When not possible to discover the actual history of a textile some aspects of them may allude to this history. For example, the tapestry **For FA**, made for the *Romantics* exhibition in Townsville (2000) was constructed from discarded wedding dresses and red lingerie, textiles that conjured up powerful symbolism. The following traditional poem illustrates this sentiment regarding recycled fabrics, particularly with respect to Canadian hooked mats.

> *I am the family wardrobe, best and worst*
> *Of all the generations, from the first; Grandpa's go-to-meetin' coat,*
> *And the woollen muffler he wore at his throat; Grandma's shawl, that came from Fayal;*
> *Ma's wedding gown, three times turned and once let down,*
> *Which once was plum but now turned brown;*
> *Pa's red flannels, that made him itch;*
> *Pants and shirts; petticoats and skirts;*
> *From one or another, but I can't tell which.*
> *Tread carefully, because you see, if you scuff me,*
> *You scratch the bark of the family tree.*
> *(Nineteenth Century Canadian Rug Rhyme, Tennant, 1992)*

While I am conducting historical and field research, the adding of layers of mat culture and its design elements to my knowledge will provide the impetus for the creation of subsequent pieces or series of art works. It is anticipated that the making will be intermittent, occurring at moments of breakthrough or discovery in the research process. I anticipate two pieces (series) to result from the historical research.

Fieldwork with Morobean mat makers will also provide a stimulus for further art work. The final piece(s) will be made after completion of fieldwork and while the thesis writing is being undertaken.

At the stage of beginning this research I can assert that the work will reference both the research as well as past practices; although, it is not possible to predict exactly what the final pieces will look like or, obviously, how they will be mounted in whatever space is chosen for the exhibition. However, at the Convergence 2002 workshop conducted by Marcel Marois, Jane Kidd and Barbara Heller (all Canadian tapestry artists) I gained fresh insights into my design process. Understanding that my doctoral works needed to reference Papua New Guinean female material culture, and also understanding that the earliest objects made by Papua New Guinean women were restrained in both colour and pattern, the advice given by Jane Kidd was to keep the initial works simple. This was good advice, as limited parameters with solutions found within those limitations have been a hallmark of my previous practice.

In June 2002 I was able to view the exhibition "Past Time: Torres Strait Islander Material from the Haddon Collection, 1888-1905", shown at the Cairns Regional Gallery. One item in particular provided a totally unexpected impetus to my designs. The item was a baby mat from Mer Island of the eastern islands of the Torres Straits. Collected in 1898, the mat is approximately 65 by 17.5 centimetres in dimension and made from banana fibre with pigment colouring (see Plate 3.2.1). It contains a centipede motif (an invertebrate closely related to insects) running down the centre of the mat. The incorporation of such a symbol when I was researching entomological motifs was a coincidence too strong to ignore. Moreover, although I had read about insect motifs, this was the first time I had seen them personally.

I had never seen a Melanesian baby mat prior to this, not even as an illustration. Because of the connections with fertility, (see section 2.2.3), the entomological motif and the relatively small size of these mats, I have chosen to work my initial exploratory series in approximately this size. It is also likely that this current study, based as it is on women's material culture, will use the colour red in the manner of my previous practice.

3.5.4 Issues in Practice and Research

Cross-cultural research that focuses on entomology as it intersects with mat making, and an understanding of its attendant creative processes, opens the doors of possibilities, but also implies constraints. The choices involve achieving a balance between my own previous practice and Morobean mat makers with respect to design

issues while also deciding how much use of Morobean mat culture constitutes quotation rather than appropriation. In the first instance, the way forward is constrained by a dearth of information about stitched *Pandanus* mats and can only commence with formal aesthetic studies exploring design criteria (from both sets of mat makers) with which I am already familiar (see Tables 2.1.1, 2,1,2 and 2.2.1). The creation of future art work in this study can then proceed based on the results of historic and contemporary field work.

A major decision for the personal practice will be locating the exhibition. Because the research is being undertaken through James Cook University, with both my supervisors domiciled in Townsville, a gallery in Townsville would seem a logical location. During the periods when I am in Townsville I will examine the exhibition spaces available. I have twice previously exhibited at the Cairns Regional Gallery and that will continue to be one of the possibilities to be evaluated for the exhibition culminating from this research.

Chapter 4: The Unknown Species Found

4.1 The Unknown Species

Finding Huon Gulf/Siassi mats and potential entomological motifs on these mats occupied many months, beginning with the archival researches which took eighteen (18) months to complete in accordance with the plan, over 2002-3, with further information added later as it became available. Historical research was carried out in the same period.

Fieldwork involving contemporary mat makers took place in the three villages of Malesiga, Yaga Settlement and Bukaua (see Figure 3.5.1) during 2004-6 in three week block periods interspersed with periods of consolidation spent in my studio. The initial period of fieldwork was short (two weeks in October 2004) and aimed at the contextual establishment of the *bona fides* of this researcher. This initial establishment of *bona fides* took place in only one village, Malesiga, the first village targeted for in-depth work with mat makers. The subsequent periods (Table 4.1.1) in the field included two more visits to Malesiga, two to Yaga Settlement (Siassi) and one to Bukaua, with the bulk of the research taking place in 2005 over a total of 10 weeks.

Table 4.1.1.: Field visits

Village Visited	Dates	Duration	Observations
Malesiga	October 2004	Two weeks.	PNGNM&AG* research. Establishment of *bona fides*.
	February 2005	One week.	Conducting field research. Curtailed by family death.
	November 2005	Two weeks.	Final field study visit.
Yaga Settlement	February 2005	Eleven days.	Untranscribed field notes stolen during October 2005 trip.
	January 2006	Ten days.	Second and final field visit.
Bukaua	October-November 2005	Seventeen days.	Only field visit.

*PNGNM&AG: Papua New Guinea National Museum & Art Gallery.

The family death (of Siwon and Malum's niece) which occurred during the February 2005 field visit and the theft of field notes, including untranscribed material, in October 2005 had both deleterious and unexpected positive impacts on the research effort in terms of logistics and timing but also in terms of results. In the case of the death of

Siwon and Malum's niece, it meant that I eventually made three visits to Malesiga; some of the best insights were obtained during the last visit.

I expected the October 2005 field trip to Papua New Guinea to be my final one. I took hooking materials, tools and sketches for the second piece. While waiting for my informants to make contact, this piece was begun. When news arrived that my informants had gone back to the village, I prepared to follow them there. At this stage nearly one third of the second piece had been completed. Then, one of the ghastly pieces of bad luck that can befall a person happened; my entire luggage, with the exception of the *bilum* I use as a handbag, was stolen from a locked car.[3] I visited the villages of both Bukaua and Malesiga in that trip. Both of these trips gave me vital information. I returned to Australia in late November 2005. The theft of all field notes was most serious. Although most of my field notes had been transcribed, or otherwise duplicated, the notes from Yaga Settlement, Siassi had not been dealt with adequately. I felt that I needed to revisit this site. I left for Lae on the 17th January 2006 and then took the boat to Siassi on the 19th. Despite the difficulties and delays this entailed to progressive research developments, the new material that was obtained on this trip added substantially to previous data. I anticipated being in Honiara, to continue the making of exhibition pieces, in two weeks.[4] By late January 2006 all field research was completed, with the remaining time devoted to the consolidation of the studies into written and visual documentation of the process.

While few historical objects were located in museums or mentioned in writing of the time, mat making was found to be thriving in the villages although memory of mats, motifs and stitches from the historic mats was sketchy. Some stiches and decorative elements no longer appear in the current repertoire although others have persisted. Only one motif related to entomology (the centipede motif from Yaga Settlement) was identified. However, most of the motifs, such as shark's teeth, snake around the tree, and frigate bird, related to the natural environment.

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[3] Included amongst this luggage were all my field notes, a small sketch book, the sketches for the Morobean literature review series as well as the work in progress with materials and tools. Other things also went missing but they were replaceable. Although I was very distressed, my husband persuaded me to continue with the field work (for which I am enormously grateful). He came from Honiara bringing an office camera, spare underwear, suitcase and other articles. We purchased replacement clothes and equipment sufficient that I could continue with the research.

[4] On my return from Siassi to Lae a week later it was to the news that my mother had had a serious fall and that I was needed in Canada. I received another month's deferment of my candidature, taking my overall deferment to 13 months commencing February 2006. I went from PNG to Australia and on to Canada. Meantime, the partially hooked second piece was waiting for me in Honiara.

4.2 Historical Research Results

The results of both the archival and museum research indicate that female material culture in the form of sewn *Pandanus* mats of the Huon Gulf of Morobe Province had been largely ignored by expatriate missionary women in the area at the time and was also largely ignored by collectors, including trained anthropological collectors.

4.2.1 Archival Research: The Bare Lutheran Limb

During 2003, letters and emails of inquiry were sent out to branches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) in Germany, Australia and America. Initial responses from these three branches of the ELC yielded a nil result. Even though the archivist in Germany reported that they had no material relating to mat making, I was able to gain access to these archives as a result of the connections of H. and S. Holzknecht to the (German) Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria. I searched the Neuendettelsau archives in mid-December 2003. While in Neuendettelsau, a lecture delivered by H. Holzknecht presented an opportunity to meet and interrogate a number of missionaries who had worked in Morobe Province. This meeting led to the documentation of a mat presented to Rev. Bamler in Malesiga on his departure from the field in 1975.

Material from the Neuendettelsau investigation lead to further investigations in Australia, specifically a visit to the Australian archives in Adelaide in April 2004 where I documented some references. On my initial visit to Lae, Papua New Guinea (October 2004) I was able to access the PNG archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The American archivist, Mr. Joel Thoreson searched their records and, although able to locate several oral histories and published works by and about Lutheran missionary women, was unable to find any information to Papua New Guinea women's material culture. Although he intimated that some references could possibly be in two Lutheran magazines, I could not justify a visit to search their archives on such a weak premise.

The archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Germany and Australia yielded some interesting, though quite brief, allusions to mat production and trade, including information from Flierl Senior, Boettger, Rohrlach, Stoll and Dolling; those references are summarised in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1: Lutheran Archival Mat References

Instrumentality	Archive Reference	Year	Author	Basis of Reference
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria	Nr. 65/s.1-8*	9th May, 1887	Flierl, Johannes Sr.	Trade
	A2 52/21*	09.0401889	Flierl, Johannes Sr.	Not noted
	A2 52/21 B*	30th June, 1924	Boettger, H.	Manufacture or Process
	52/22B*	8th June, 1963	Rohrlach, Clara	Manufacture or Process
Lutheran Evangelical Church of Australia	Australian Lutheran Women's Association, No. 51	1st April, 1959	Stoll, Daphne	Use in mission houses as housegirls' bedding
	Obituary	D. Rohrlach file	Rohrlach, Clara	Not noted
	The Lutheran magazine	April 5th, 1971: p. 185	Dolling, Barbara	Photo of Sr. Dolling only but see Tables 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

* Numbers refer to the archival system of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria

These allusions occur over a span of nearly a century and are concerned with the trade in mats, their manufacture and use. Flierl Senior, Bayer and Boettger all comment on the importance of mats in Tami trade, particularly for the procurement of food supplies which could not be grown on Tami. In her letter to the Lutheran Herald, dated 8-6-63 and written in German, Rohrlach discussed a picnic to Tami Island where she observed mats being made. Even earlier, in a letter dated 30 June 1924, Boettger writes about the mat making process. Writing from Logawang, Boettger discusses the sewing of mats:

> On the village place are beautiful fruit trees which give it a wonderful shade and under which women and girls are sewing mats and mat umbrellas which are used to feed their men, so cynical people describe it. Already 8 year old girls take part in this activity. The mature leaves of a Pandanus species are collected – but don't dare to pick a leaf from the wrong plant – dried, bleached, ridded of the little hooks, then rolled up, the latter done in the evening when the dew remoistened the leaves. The leaves prepared that way are then sewn together with bast fibre until they reach the right width. Early on this job got done with bone needles, now with darning needles (Boettger, letter from Logawang, 30 June, 1924; Lutheran Archive Ref. No. Aus. A2. 52/21 B, translated by Christina Barhdt).

Although efforts were made to trace descendants of Boettger in Australia, and perhaps obtain further material referencing mat and rain cape manufacture, these were unsuccessful. It is noteworthy that some of what is mentioned in this letter contradicts

what S. Holzknecht remembers being later told by native informants - that is, that spineless *Pandanus* was and always has been cultivated.

While it was planned to source family-held material through informal connections within the ranks of missionary families, issues of privacy made these sources very difficult to access. For example, in one case, where I knew that a diary existed, the family decision was to keep it within the family circle. It proved thus to be impossible to access privately held written material associated with early mission wives and this line of research was consequently abandoned. However, every recommendation to check with other sources was diligently followed. For example, the Australian archivist of the ELC, Lyall Kupke, suggested that the many women who read the Lutheran Women's Newsletter might have the kind of memories for which I was searching. A request was thus made to Merna Thamm, the editor of the Lutheran Women's Monthly, for any information that women missionaries might have acquired during the course of their work in Morobe. Only one response was received and it referred to woven woollen mats (an introduced art form) in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea rather than Morobean stitched *Pandanus* mats. While in Adelaide for archival research, the opportunity was taken to visit Rorhlach's son, Lester, to query his memory of his mother's work (her name having been uncovered in the Neuendettelsau archives) and the possibility of surviving diaries of the years in question. No diaries were available nor were L. Rorhlach's memories able to augment existing knowledge.

An added investigation following on from the Adelaide archival visit involved a visit to the Louise Flierl Museum in Hahndorf, just outside Adelaide, which housed a twentieth century stitched *Pandanus* rain cape, collected by Sr. Dolling, of a hitherto undocumented type. This rain cape has a relationship, in its sawtooth decorative elements, to one mat held in the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography (HME 63928). A reference to Sr. Dolling in the church archives, as well as indications from other people, would suggest that this rain cape was collected in the Huon Gulf region in the period between 1950 and the 1980s. The rain cape included applied sawtooth bands as well as decorative stitching (Plate 4.2.1).

Plate 4.2.1: Rain cape collected on Siassi by Sr. Barbara Dolling, between 1950s and 1980s

Overall, however, it seems that missionary women did not record or collect material relating to *Pandanus* mats. Bolton's (2003) suggestion that the missionary process was based on the imposition of different knowledge and value systems and perhaps would have precluded, especially among women, the collection of information about processes which were not perceived to be worthy of special note, is supported by Biro noting that Johann Flierl (head of the Lutheran mission in the Finschhafen area) insisted on converts giving up traditional ways (Molnar-Bagley, 1993). Missionary women of many denominations, including the Lutherans, conducted sewing classes for native women (Bolton, 2003; Jolly, 1991; Langmore, 1982; Pollock, 1989) (Plate. 4.2.2), but did not, as far as can be ascertained, investigate or record native craft traditions.

Plate 4.2.2: Sewing Class with Frau Mission. Decker, Deinzer Hohe, German New Guinea, pre-1914 (Courtesy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria)

One of the Malesiga informants, Kobec Dabuynanoo, was involved in this Lutheran sphere, working for 29 years with expatriate missionary women in the Lutheran church women's group Gejamsao in teaching domestic crafts such as embroidery and housekeeping skills.

A formal interview with S. Holzknecht (2003) revealed information about mats in use by missionaries and in the villages in the period from about 1969 through the seventies. S. Holzknecht is probably the closest to my original imagined missionary wife (see 3.1) currently accessible. The mats used by S. Holzknecht's in-laws (missionaries) were plain household ones. On the coast they were softer. S. Holzknecht's mother-in-law called them *mû* (Yabim), a term which included all mats. Yabim was/is the missionary *lingua franca* as well as the Finschhafen end of the dialect chain which goes from north of Finschhafen down to south of Salamaua. Yabim is now church spread. Susanne Holzknecht says schoolgirls at Kaiapit in the Markham Valley, the river of the same name being a large river that debouches into the Huon Gulf, had adopted coastal people. The schoolgirls carried presents and other goods in mats when going to and from school. These mats were mostly plain ones although some had zigzag stitching. In an email, S. Holzknecht (pers. comm., 2003) states that "some stitching on the edges…could be identified as a particular woman's *ngagebom* or trademark". Mats were sewn down the middle but were also frequently patched.

Susanne Holzknecht saw mats being made at Busong between Lae and Finschhafen about 1977/8 while staying with H. Holzknecht's old nurse Tamaris and her husband Lini. The women making the mats used a kind of *Pandanus* that they cultivated for that purpose. These were apparently not the ordinary spiny and prickly kind. The women said they had always used these plants[5] and they always had plants at various stages of growth. All the work of growing, harvesting and processing was done by the women who prized uniformity of leaf. Leaves would be rolled, boiled in big billy cans and then hung to dry. *Pandanus* would be soaked, in seawater S. Holzknecht thinks. The women who made the sewn mats also knew how to make plaited mats. In Busong, there were piles of mats…mats to walk on and extra to sleep on. Three to five mats were used as a sleeping base. Mata and her older sister (the daughters of Tamaris and Lini) showed S. Holzknecht mats which they said was the way they used to make them. They showed her zigzag cutwork which, they claimed, was representative of the mountains that ran behind their village. These were mats, not rain capes. No mention was made of these as trade items. The cutwork was sewn with red fibres (possibly

[5] See information earlier, in this section, provided by Boettger in 1924 which talks about spiny *Pandanus;* also see the results of village research in 4.3.2.

wool) and looked newish but no reference was made to previous practice. Comment was also made about patterns being passed on from mother to daughter with the involvement of trademark (S. Holzknecht, pers. comm., 2003).

In this interview, S. Holzknecht postulated about the dearth of literature with regard to highly decorated mats saying that the best mats, the decorated ones, would probably not have been traded out and thus would not have been documented in anthropological writing. This reflects what Thomas (1991) says about what was and was not traded (i.e., the value put on an object by the one giving and the one getting the object) but also reflects some of what is being said (O'Hanlon and Welsch, 2000) about the difficulties of collecting in time and space. Information about handmarked mats (see 4.3.3) sheds more light on trade in these particular objects.

4.2.2 Mat Research in the Museum

Because of the paucity of written material referencing mat culture in Papua New Guinea, both historical and contemporary, a form of inquiry other than research in the extant literature was necessary in order to canvas the questions posed about contemporary makers. An important source of the historical documentation came from western museum collections although the number of stitched *Pandanus* mats of Morobean provenance in formal recorded collections is minimal (Welsch, personal communication, 2003) and widely scattered. Where institutions had mats, these were difficult to locate, either because I had enquired in terms of political rather than geographic locations or because the data banks simply did not have an entry for sleeping mats. Gillow and Sentance (1999) provided an entry point for finding Oceanic textiles; other personal recommendations given afterwards were also investigated. After canvassing eighteen museums, the only museum with a Morobean mat collection of any size was the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography. Table 4.2.2 summarizes the results of the historical mat research in relevant museums.

Table 4.2.2: Historical Mat Research

INSTRUMENTALITY	SOURCE OF CONTACT	NAME OF CONTACT	MATERIAL SOUGHT	RESPONSE	ACTION TAKEN
Auckland Museum	Gillow and Sentance (1999)	Fuli Pereira	Morobean mats	No mats from Morobe. Have not established provenance of other PNG mats.	No visit
Cambridge University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology	Haddon collection exhibited in Cairns Regional Gallery, 2002.	Anita Herle PhD and Tabitha Cadbury	Morobean mats but also the Haddon collection.	None from Morobe but some from other areas of PNG and the Haddon collection from the Torres Straits.	Examined part of the Haddon collection in June 2003 in England (during Clothing the Pacific conference visit) then finished it in December 2003.

Table 4.2.2 (continued): Historical Mat Research

INSTRUMENTALITY	SOURCE OF CONTACT	NAME OF CONTACT	MATERIAL SOUGHT	RESPONSE	ACTION TAKEN
(The) Field Museum, Chicago	Internet website	John Edward Terrell, PhD. New Guinea Research Program	Morobean mats	Only two mats from Morobe but both apparently plain, lacking the ornamentation of the Hungarian examples (Welsch, 2004)	No visit but see Welsch entry.
Hungary Museum of Ethnography	Internet	Gyamati Janos PhD	Morobean mats	Large Oceanic holding (15 000) objects including Huon Gulf objects!	Visited December 2003. Documented two mats & seven rain capes, from Tami Island and Huon Gulf.
Linden Museum Stuttgart Staatliche Museum fur volkerkunde	Gillow and Sentance (1999)	Ingrid Heerman PhD	Morobean mats	No weavings (or other collections from Morobe)	No visit
Louise Flierl Museum, Hahndorf, South Australia	Erich Holzknecht	Mr. Flierl (descendant of Louise)	Morobean mats	Rain cape.	Visited in April 2004. Morobean rain cape collected by Sr. Dolling documented.
Macleay Museum, University of Sydney	Internet	Susie Davies	Morobean mats (after seeing mat with vague NE New Guinea provenance on their website)	Susanne Holzknecht examined mat while it was at the University of Canberra for conservation.	Documented by Dr. S. Holzknecht. Provenance northeast New Guinea.
Monash University	Internet	Catherine Thorpe	Morobean mats (after seeing generic PNG mats on their website)	No reliable provenance for mats in their collection.	No visit.
Museum fur Volkerkunde unde Schwesizeerisches Museum fur Volkerkund Basel; Museum der Kulturen Basel		Andreas Bucher (student assistant)	Morobean mats	A number of Morobe objects including *tapa* cloths but no mats	No visit.
Museum of New Zealand	Gillow and Sentance (1999)	Mrs. Tarisi Sorovoi-Vunidilo	Morobean mats	No Morobe mats but mats from other areas of the Pacific	No visit.
National Museum of Denmark	Gillow and Sentance (1999)	Bente Wolff, PhD	Morobean mats	None from Morobe but some plaited mats from elsewhere; according to Wolff, no designs on plaited mats.	No visit.
Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery	Self	Dr. Andrew Moutu	Morobean mats	Two from Morobe.	Two mats (one Siassi, other not provenanced) seen and documented.
Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology	Internet	Leslie M. Freund/Joan Knudsen	Morobean mats	No response from Joan Knudsen	No visit.
Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford	Initial contact Michael O'Hanlon (at Clothing the Pacific conference) then Pitt River website	Kate Gardner/ Jeremy Coote	Morobean mats (after finding only one Buka and one Papuan Gulf mat in website)	No Morobean mats but other *Pandanus* mats.	Made personal visit to document other mats in 2005.

Table 4.2.2 (continued): Historical Mat Research

INSTRUMENTALITY	SOURCE OF CONTACT	NAME OF CONTACT	MATERIAL SOUGHT	RESPONSE	ACTION TAKEN
Robert L Welsch (With regard to Chicago Field Museum)	Michael O'Hanlon (at Clothing the Pacific conference); Herle provided email address	Robert L Welsch	Morobean mats, especially those associated with A.B Lewis collections.	Only one mat from Laukanu (Lewis collection), and one from Tami (Welsch collection 1997). Both plain (see Field Museum entry).	No visit.
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	Initial contact via R. Johns	Economic Botany database	Morobean mats	No reply	No visit.
South Australian Museum	Gillow and Sentance (1999)	Barry Craig, PhD	Morobean mats	Only model sails from Morobe and mats from other areas of Papua New Guinea.	No visit.
Ubersee Museum	Ohnemus (1997)	Dr. Sylvia Ohnemus	Morobean mats/Manus plaited objects thesis	No knowledge of Morobean mats but recommends contacting Lissant Bolton and Maria Wronska-Friend	Following up on her publication but no visit.

In December of 2003 my husband and I spent a week in the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography documenting the Biro collection of mats and rain capes, collected in the area of my field research.

Because the initial query specified mats, and because museum catalogues do not necessarily link objects by material and construction method, the total number of mats/rain capes could be higher. For example, the Field Museum also holds some 22 items in their category of hats/caps/hoods. These were collected by A.B. Lewis in his 1909-13 South Pacific expedition. Two of these come from the three villages of the current study. However, even taking into account the possibility of more rain capes from the study area, the total number of mats/rain capes identified contrasts starkly with the 450 Arnhem Land baskets, housed in 21 museums around the world, identified and examined by Louise Hamby (2001).

The research revealed less than twenty (specifically Tami, Huon Gulf or other parts of Morobe Province) stitched *Pandanus* mats or rain capes in accessible museum holdings. All mats that I examined were documented with photographs and notes. Two mats from the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography (augmented by seven rain capes,); two mats from the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery and one rain cape in the Louise Flierl Museum in South Australia were examined. While conducting archival research in Neuendettelsau I was able to photograph another mat provenanced to Malesiga and presented to the Reverend Bamler in 1975. There are also two mats in the Chicago Field Museum. Because I was unable to visit the Chicago Field Museum, mats (and rain capes) were not photographed there; requests for

photographs of their mats have not been granted. Table 4.2.3 presents the known location of Morobean stitched *Pandanus* mats in museums and private collections in Australia, Germany, Hungary and Papua New Guinea.

Table 4.2.3: Stitched *Pandanus* Mats/Rain Capes* in Museums

Instrumentality	Provenance	No.	Collector and Date Collected	Function	Main Distinguishing Feature
Hungarian Museum of Ethnography	Huon Gulf, including Tami Island	9	Lajos Biro, 1898-1900	Mats and Rain Capes	Patterned stitching, cutwork and applied colour. Some simplified incising.
Louise Flierl Museum, Hahndorf, South Australia	Siassi Islands	1	Barbara Dolling (1950s to 1980s, probably 70s/80s)	Rain Cape	Attached bands of sawtooth edging.
Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery	Siassi Islands; unprovenanced Morobe	2	P. Roleas, 1984; no data	Mats	Siassi Islands mat very similar to Dolling rain cape, Louise Flierl Museum.
(The) Field Museum, Chicago	Huon Gulf	2	Lewis (1,1909-1913), Welsch (1, 1997)	Mats	Very plain (Welsch, pers. comm., 2004)
Bamler (Private Collection), Neuendettelsau Germany	Huon Gulf (Malesiga)	1	Bamler (1975)	Mat	Plain, with the stitching of contemporary mats.

*Only mats/rain capes with known or possible Huon Gulf/Siassi provenance.

Digital images of the Biro mats were sent to Welsch for comparison with the Lewis collections. These mats from the Chicago Field Museum are said to be plain, lacking any of the ornamentation seen in the Hungarian examples (Welsch, pers. comm., 2004) examined. Although the A.B. Lewis collection, housed in the Field Museum of Chicago, includes eight hundred and thirty-seven objects from Morobe and numbers greater than 12,000 objects overall, there are only about seventy mats in the collection, of which only one came from Morobe (Welsch, 1998). Welsch (pers. comm., 2003) has collected one contemporary mat from Tami Island (Huon Gulf) and implies that the reason for the lack of a larger collection is twofold: Lewis judged, correctly according to Welsch (pers. comm., 2003), that all the mats were the same and, secondly, Welsch felt that the functional nature of mats would preclude larger collections.

The Hungarian explorers/collectors Festitics, Fenichel and Lajos Biro amassed some 14,000 objects from (mainly) Melanesia, among them a handful of mats and rain capes from the Huon Gulf. In the Huon Gulf Biro visited the district of Bukaua district as well as two Tami villages in 1898-99 (Bodrogi, 1961) where he collected 1500 objects (Vargyas, 1992). At the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography in Budapest I examined these Huon Gulf mats and rain capes collected by Biro. These are discussed briefly by Bodrogi (1961) although Molnar-Bagley (1993) reveals that apparently a great many of Biro's original field notes on the subject of the Huon Gulf (Hungarian Museum of Ethnography accession number 4715) were never utilised. This includes manuscript material about the artefacts themselves as well as the customs and languages of the Huon Gulf. Although Biro documented his collections thoroughly with regard to maker, function of object, materials used and meaning of motifs, this level of detail was not evident in the data base or the labels which were examined at the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography. At the time of examining the collection, and prior to access to the Molnar-Bagley thesis, the existence of Biro's extensive field notes was not acknowledged by the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography. Consequently, I have not seen or been able to use the information contained therein.

I was also able to document two more stitched *Pandanus* mats from the collection of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery during my initial visit to that country in October 2004. One of these mats held in the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery (PNGNM&AG 84.109.1) (Plate 4.2.3) is very similar to the unprovenanced rain cape collected by Sr. Dolling and held in the Louise Flierl Museum (Louise Flierl Museum Ref. 1103) (Plate 4.2.1). The well documented provenance of the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery mat is Umboi/Siassi, between Finschhafen and New Britain. Women in Siassi (Yaga) confirmed that the Dolling rain cape was from Siassi and that they remembered Sr. Dolling. The Dolling rain cape was said to come from Maile Island, one of the small islands off Umboi, although I was unable to confirm this.

Plate 4.2.3: Umboi/Siassi mat (PNGNM&AG 84.109.1, Courtesy of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery)

Although a special focus of this documentation was the identification of the maker's hand; that is, the potential grouping of pieces as being made by an individual maker, this was not possible. Some mats in the Hungarian collection did look as though they might come from the same maker but, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, no identification of maker was available on the accessible data base.

Among the Biro rain capes were four which had cutwork corners, a number of which employed the decorative device of applied colour on both the cutwork and some of the stitching as seen in Plate 4.2.4.

Plate 4.2.4: Cutwork on Huon rain cape collected by Biro (HME 63919, Courtesy of Hungarian Museum of Ethnography)

Another distinctive element of decoration was the stitching, including the kind of stitch, the arrangement of stitches into patterns, the fineness or coarseness of the stitches and the stitching associated with the cutwork. There were also other visual elements, including sawtooth edges, mending/joining patches, some simple incising (Plate 4.2.5) and the shaping of the mat by stepping the strips of *Pandanus* used in the construction (Plate 4.3.10).

Plate 4.2.5: Detail of incised *Pandanus* mat collected by Biro (HME 63918, Courtesy of Hungarian Museum of Ethnography

Table 4.2.4 outlines the structural and surface decoration characteristics of all mats examined in this research.

Table 4.2.4: Structural and Surface Decoration Characteristics of Stitched *Pandanus* Mats

Mat Identification	Structure (Shape, Edges, Body)	Surface (Stitches, Colour, Incising)
HME 63.919	Rain cape with cutwork at centre top. Stepped 1/1/2/4 on bottom edge and 1/4/? on other edge (too frail to open)	Top is stitched with diagonal and double running stitch repeat. Red colour on double running stitch as well as on cutwork. Simple incised pattern along each strip.
HME no number but similar to above in design	Rain cape with cutwork at centre top. Straight edges.	Top is stitched with diagonal and double running stitch repeat. Red colour on double stitch as well as on cutwork. Running stitch at sides very neat. Incised wave across leaves.
HME 63.921 HME 63.922 HME 63.924 HME 63.925 HME 63.926	Rain cape with straight sides. Vertical strip folded and stitched over top to close rain cape. HME 63.925 and 63.926 have inserted and stitched mending patches.	Top is stitched with diamond pattern. Sides are stitched with wavy zigzag. No added colour. All by same maker? HME 63.926 diamonds poorly done.
HME 93.927	Sleeping mat (edge damaged). Ends stepped in 1/3/4.	Incised with wavy pattern. No notes on stitching.
HME 63.928	Sleeping mat with straight edges and sawtooth edging along some, but not all, leaf joins as well as one end and one external edge (but other edge damaged).	Chain stitch and running stitch used.
PNGNM&AG 84.109.1	Sleeping mat, said to be a betrothal mat. Straight sides but ends have added finishing strips, sawtooth edging, added vertical elements and another strip with sawtooth edging on both sides. The two ends differ slightly.	Very neat stitching consisting of running stitch plus chevrons on the end finishing strips and overcasting on sides. Tassels attached facing into and out of the mat, on the ends.

Mat Identification	Structure (Shape, Edges, Body)	Surface (Stitches, Colour, Incising)
LFM 1103/45.24	Rain cape (child's) with straight edges but with attached sawtooth edging on sides and ends but separated by vertical elements.	Top has two sizes of zigzag stitching; chevron stitches are on attached bands. Vertical strip at top has sawtooth edging at lower edge but as part of leaf not addition. Very neat stitching. No added colour but *Pandanus* is darker brown than other *Pandanus* mats and rain capes studied.
Bamler	Sleeping mat with straight sides.	Couched stitch alternates with zigzag stitch on ends. Sides are overcast.

HME: Hungarian Museum of Ethnography
LFM: Louise Flierl Museum, Hahndorf, South Australia
PNGNM&AG: Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery
Bamler: Private Collection, Neuendettelsau, Germany

4.3 On the *Pandanus* Leaf

While my planned research destinations were Tami Island, Siassi and Bukaua certain modifications in the plan were necessitated by the logistics of travel to Huon Gulf villages and Siassi. The principal change involved Tami Island which is not serviced regularly by the dinghies which transport Huon coast villagers to and from Lae. Malesiga was chosen in lieu of Tami Island because it is a Tami community but it is located on the Huon coast and thus more easily accessible. The village research thus took place in Malesiga (a Tami Island community now settled on the mainland of Papua New Guinea), Yaga Settlement (a Tuam Island community now settled on Rook/Umboi Island in the Siassi Islands) and Bukaua. The point of departure for all villages was Lae; while preparing for the field work I became aware that Malesiga was the home village of a colleague, botanist R. Banka. Using his name as an introduction, I was able to obtain accommodation from Banka's cousin Malum and Malum's wife Siwon. The introduction to Bukaua resulted through meeting Titi Solomon, a retired teacher who had held senior positions within the Lutheran church circuit, in February 2005 while inbound to Malesiga. Mr. Solomon and I agreed to my visiting Bukaua in October 2005. In preparation for this visit, he contacted mat makers in the village. He also provided accommodation, contacts and insights into the economy and general life of Bukaua. The visit to Siassi, which involved travel on the once weekly ferry which serviced this island, was not informed by prior contact but on my arrival at the government station of LabLab, villagers from Yaga Settlement offered me hospitality and agreed to discuss their stitched mats with me. Summer Institute of Linguistic missionaries, Bob and Salme Bugenhagen, also lived in Yaga Settlement. They provided insights, translated words and offered logistical support when the weekly boat

went into dry dock thus potentially stranding me. I made two visits to Siassi, the second being necessitated by the theft of untranscribed field notes during the October 2005 visit to Malesiga and Bukaua (see section 4.1 and Table 4.1.1).

Although all informants were required to sign forms indicating their consent to this research, many of the informants had limited education or were illiterate. Signing the informed consent forms was often premised on lengthy discussions about the study aims, not just with the informant but with other family members. Because it was also critical to this study that I be seen not merely as an observer but as a maker in my own right, I took, as planned, rug making materials and engaged in a sharing process rather than a one-way interrogative process.

Although I met many women and men who offered casual information about mat making (e.g., indicating that they made mats, or that they approved me being there to study these mats), 14 women from these three communities constituted the main body of informants; key details are provided in Table 4.3.1. However, while I was in the villages, various villagers dropped into my host families, sometimes during the day and more often in early evening to discuss a range of issues including my work.

Table 4.3.1: Main Informants and their Knowledge of Handmarks

Village/No. of Women	Name	Age	Knowledge of Handmark	Total : 14
Bukaua (1)	Mondo Tisang	~ 58	No information obtained.	1
Malesiga (6 informants)	Siwon Jandamdangeo	40s	Mother knows a *pageg** trademark, Siwon does not.	
	Kobec Dabuynganoo (mother-in-law of Sipura)	73	Knows trademark but has not passed it on.	
	Sipura Yabim	~ 23	No information obtained.	
	Galiki Peter	60s/70s	Knows double *zoambac** trademark and has passed it on.	
	Galiki Jonas	60s/70s	No information obtained.	
	Miream	70s	Knows trademark but has not taught her daughters.	6
Yaga (7 informants)	Gida Dive	70s	Knows a *zizon** trademark but has not taught her daughters.	
	Sagwale Sukey	60s/70s	No information obtained.	
	Malel	30s/40s	No information obtained.	
	Malua Vogana	~ 75	Knows a *zizon** trademark and has taught daughter Tamaris.	
	Pitum Taiwalua	~ 75	Knows *pageg** trademark (and did one on a mat for the PNGNMAG) but has not taught her daughters.	
	Shirley Abila	40s	Daughter of Pitum; does not know handmark.	
	Helen Ligiman	~75	Knows a handmark (described like log cabin design) which I did not see.	7

* Handmarks are described in 4.3.3.

These women tended to be older although four were in their 40s or younger. The six informants from Malesiga included my main informants Siwon Jandamdangeo and her aunt Kobec Dabuynganoo, as well as Kobec's daughter-in-law Sipura Yabim, Galiki Peters, Galiki Jonas and Miream. In Bukaua, the only woman making mats at the time, and my primary informant, was Mondo Tisang. In Yaga Settlement, seven women contributed insights over two visits. These women included three women who had been friends since childhood, Malua Vogana, Pitum Taiwalua and Helen Ligiman. Additionally Malua and Pitum were the widows of brothers. Pitum's daughter Shirley's mat was a subject for discussion although Shirley herself did not participate extensively in the discussions. In the first visit to Yaga Settlement, Gida Dive made a significant contribution with information about her rain cape and its associated decoration. In that visit, Malel and Sagwale Sukey also added insights and provided vital knowledge in relation to stitches.

Data from the contemporary village research consisted of three cassette tapes, which were copied (for storage and later retrieval) as well as transcribed, plus hand written notes compiled on site. These recordings and tapes were supplemented by photographs of women mat makers, primarily in relation to the mat making process but also to record the principal informants. Photographs provided a real data base but also served as a visual prompt, concentrating attention on particular activities and formal aesthetic criteria. These data provided a basis for further questioning. Photographs of historical mats were used in fieldwork to stimulate memory, comparison with, and information about contemporary mats, techniques, materials and creative limitations. The photographs of the historical mats were repeatedly studied but photographs of contemporary mats from other villages were also examined to illustrate particular points or lines of questioning. In villages that I visited more than once, discussions of historic mats yielded more information on the second occasion than during the initial discussion. These discussions were closely linked to genealogical enquiries.

One man, Donald Kobak of Yaga Settlement, also contributed stories and information relating to (Yaga) community understanding of mats and motifs. Donald Kobak insisted that the making of stitched *Pandanus* mats had originated on his ancestral Tuam Island home. He further claimed that the *Pandanus* palm itself had existed forever ("*karuka em i stap long bipo iet God i putim ol graun*", which translates as "the *Pandanus* was here even before God made the earth").

Although Siwon of Malesiga did not contribute any stories about the beginnings of mat making or the origins of the *Pandanus,* she did offer unsolicited comments on the centrality of *Pandanus* mat making to the lives of the Tamis. She was also adamant

that this skill is being transmitted to the next generation and that they too are mindful of its economic and cultural significance. In Bukaua I was not told any stories relating to the origin of the plant or mat making. However I spoke with fewer people there and only one person was actively making mats while I was there. There did not appear to be the same degree of focus on mat making as there was in both Malesiga and Yaga Settlement.

4.3.1 Research in the Village Habitat

In addition to making mats, women are gardeners as well as hunters of small food items such as fish and insects. They look after livestock such as fowl and pigs. These women are very familiar with many aspects of their natural environment, the bush and/or the seas. Their gardens are made at some distance from their houses and employ fallow systems demanding an understanding of soil fertility. In Malesiga, there is a demonstration of understanding of the effects of water table – the cemetery is situated well above the coast to avoid flooding on low lying ground with its potential problems.

An aspect of ecological understanding that underpins all village life is the weather. Specifically, the year is divided into two main seasons; the wet (*taim blong ren*) and dry (*taim blong sun*) seasons. Mat making, with the need to dry leaves in the sun[6] proceeds in the dry season with concomitant responsibilities and rhythms. During the dry season, the men work in the gardens preparing the land for a new crop.

The women's garden responsibilities, aside from harvesting, are greatly curtailed during this time, with their need to gather and prepare *Pandanus* leaves for mat making. Because rain during the drying of the leaves can cause the leaves to rot, particularly the thicker leaves used in Malesiga, either end of the dry season is marginal for the making of mats. In Bukaua this is not as critical as the thinner leaves do not seem as prone to rot. The heat of the house (and fire) keep the leaves sound even if rain continues for some time. Some families in Malesiga, who depend on mat making as an economic activity, had upwards of one hundred and fifty leaves drying in the village squares at any one time. It is therefore the middle of the dry season which is particularly busy for the women in mat making preparations. The actual sewing of the mats can and does occur throughout the year.

As in all communities, responsibilities do vary with the marital status and age of the woman. Older women, married or otherwise, seemed to have fewer garden

[6] Contrast this with higher altitude communities such as Wola in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea which do not dry the leaves before working them (Sillitoe, 1988).

responsibilities and could devote more time to making mats. From the accounts of Siwon and Kobec, it seemed as if making mats for the family, including or maybe particularly for grandchildren, was a special, happy responsibility of the older women. Siwon's mother had made trademarked mats for all her grandchildren; Kobec avidly described a twin mat which she was looking forward to making for her son's children.

Everyone in Malesiga is a maker. In Malesiga women's mats and baskets, as well as men's carving, are the main sources of income. According to Siwon, this economic activity underpins the continuation of Tami communities. The teaching of these activities to the next generation is perceived as critical to the survival of the village. In mat making, girls as young as six (for example, Malum's niece Albina) are very capable with regard to collecting, carrying, drying and scraping the leaves in preparation for sewing the mats. These young girls, although they are learning some tasks, spend most of their time in playing. Sewing of the leaves to make mats seems to be restricted to girls in their late teens and married women. Older informants said that they learned to make mats around the time of onset of menses. Mondo of Bukaua, who was born in approximately 1948, said that once the girls in her village had had their first menses they then had to settle down to learning women's work. Research from the 1960s through the 1980s has shown that menarche in rural Papua New Guinean women occurs between the ages of 15 to 20. This late onset of menarche is attributed to low intakes of protein (Gillett, 1990). It can be assumed that most of the respondents over 65 in the study had their menarche at approximately this age, especially when the additional effects of war deprivation are taken into account.

In Yaga Settlement, although the importance of mats to the economy was recognised, none of my female informants gave the same emphasis to teaching the next generation as did Siwon (Malesiga). I did see evidence of mat activity with leaves drying in back yards of Yaga Settlement but, unlike Malesiga, I did not witness younger women walking into the village with fresh leaves. However, the positioning of Siwon's house in her village may have facilitated my observations about leaf collection; conversely, in Yaga Settlement, I was domiciled at the furthest point from sources of leaf material and consequently had fewer opportunities of seeing them arrive at the village.

In Bukaua, Mondo's interest in mat making was considerable as was her interest in other forms of women's material culture, gardening, and performance art. In Busong (at the eastern end of the Bukaua larger community), more interest in mats was evident. There I was shown, in a two hour visit, two new mats, one made locally and the other traded from a Tami maker. This was the community where S. Holzknecht

saw cutwork and red stitching when she visited in the 1970s (Holzknecht, pers. comm., 2003). There was no memory of those mats when I visited in 2005 but a locally made mat I saw had been stitched with deconstructed rice bag plastic (Plate 4.3.1).

Plate 4.3.1: Mat stitched with rice bag plastic (detail), Busong (Bukaua)

4.3.2 The Pandanus Leaf

Makers of stitched *Pandanus* mats in the communities of Malesiga, Yaga and Bukaua had a compendium of information about the plant itself. The women of Yaga Settlement, for example, identified three different species of *Pandanus* which they knew by the local names of *malumlum, paanrau,* and *paa.* Only *paa* has been identified at the PNG Forest Research Institute, as *Pandanus dubius.* In terms of characteristics, *paa* is very thick leaved; *malumlum* has leaves of about the same (or marginally narrower) width and thinner than *paa*; and *paanrau* has very narrow, much thinner leaves.

The location of the *Pandanus* plants was interesting. In Malesiga, *Pandanus* was grown in designated gardens, often under overstorey trees (Plate 4.3.2). In Bukaua, the most westerly community, virtually all trees were wildlings (Plate 4.3.3).

Plate 4.3.2: Siwon in her *Pandanus* garden

Plate 4.3.3: Japuc harvesting wild *Pandanus,* Bukaua

Food gardens may be made around a fortuitously occurring tree but otherwise leaves were harvested from naturally occurring trees. In Yaga Settlement, Malua had planted some *Pandanus* near her house but few other women had *Pandanus* gardens. Apparently no attempt was made to plant under overstorey trees. Most women of Yaga Settlement harvested their leaves where they found the plants in the bush. The three identified species of *Pandanus* occurred within easy walking distance of the village.

In Malesiga, *Pandanus* plantations were found just outside the village living area. Wild plants occurred in the village and nearby gardens and their seedlings were taken to be planted in dedicated *Pandanus* gardens. Each garden was carefully demarcated. Siwon had two gardens but others had only one while some also had a third. Most that I saw had overstorey trees within the garden plot. Siwon told me that the retention of overstorey trees provide protection for the *Pandanus* leaves against the depredations of insects. Apparently *Pandanus* that grow in the open suffer greater insect damage to the leaves. As this makes the leaves harder to work for mats and rain capes, necessitating mends and making the mat inherently weaker, reduction in insect damage is desirable.

The collection of leaves, and making of mats, varied from maker to maker. In Malesiga some women collected small quantities of leaves on a regular basis interspersed with making one or two mats while other women concentrated all their efforts into collecting vast quantities of leaves at one time and then processing them.

Once *Pandanus* leaves were cut from the palm, the thorns along the edge of the leaf were removed. The thorns on the central vein could be partially removed (or not) at the proximal end before the leaves were taken back to the village for further processing,

usually involving the removal of the remainder of the dorsal spines and the positioning of leaves for drying. The mid rib, which is removed in Malesiga although not in communities which use thinner-leaved species, must be left intact until the women reach the village otherwise the leaf is prone to breakage while being carried. To transport bundles of leaves, Siwon collected the fallen dry *Pandanus* leaves and used these to tie twenty or more leaves together (Figure 4.3.1).

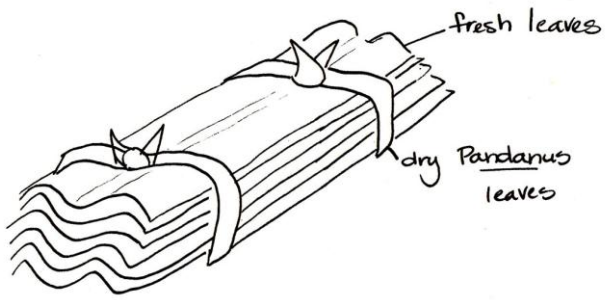


Figure 4.3.1: Cut leaves stacked and tied together

The most commonly used species in Yaga Settlement is apparently *malumlum,* a species which has wide leaves but does not need scraping to dry it. The sun is sufficient to dry the leaves. The narrow thin leaves of *paanrau,* identified only in Yaga Settlement, are heated on the fire to soften them and remove the thorns. They are then put in the sun to dry and bleach them. Because of the resultant pale colour, a mat made from this species is highly valued and sells for double the price of the *malumlum* mats. It also seems less susceptible to rot than the other species of *Pandanus.* In Bukaua, two plants, which appeared identical, were specified as having different uses; one was used for mat making and the other for rain capes. Unfortunately as no specimens were obtained for scientific identification, and insufficient verbal evidence is available, it is not possible even to make a tentative identification of the Bukaua species. *Paa* is not used very often in Yaga Settlement as the leaves are quite thick and require scaping in order to dry properly. As all this makes extra work, this species is apparently avoided. In addition, the leaves are physically harder to work, especially, I would presume, in folding back each successive pair. Furthermore, they appear more susceptible to rot than the drier thin leaves. In Malesiga, however, this is the only species used for mat making although I was not able to ascertain its local name.

In terms of leaf preparation, there were a variety of approaches. In Malesiga, as stated above, leaves must be scraped in order to dry thoroughly. After an initial period of drying with the ventral side facing up (one half to a full day), the leaves are scraped (on the ventral side, that is, the side which had the spines). The scraping is done with

a tool now made from sheet metal although previously the serrated edge of a mollusc shell was used. The leaves are dried from both the dorsal and ventral sides to ensure even drying, laid out neatly on the coral of each household yard. This coral was laid down over the original soil expressly to facilitate drying of the leaves. As the leaves dried they tended to blow around. Saplings were laid across them to hold them down (Plate 4.3.4).

Plate 4.3.4: Drying leaves in Malesiga being held in place by saplings

Siwon tended to prepare large numbers of leaves at once, working over one or two days until the whole square in front of her house (for an indication of the extent of the square see Plate 4.3.5) was full of her leaves.

Plate 4.3.5: Leaves in the square between Siwon's house and her brother's house

In Yaga Settlement, the *malumlum* leaves were thrown randomly about the yard to dry. However, I was not able to witness the entire drying sequence as it extended beyond

my time in the community. In Bukaua the fresh leaves that Mondo collected were rolled, then the rolls pulled into a spiral. These were laid out to dry (Plate 4.3.6).

Plate 4.3.6: Leaves drying in Bukaua

Although no one commented on this, I believe the irregular drying of these leaves causes the patterning on the dried leaves and hence on the mats (Plate 4.3.7). Whether this was done deliberately and/or was a Mondo innovation could not be ascertained.

Plate 4.3.7: Bukaua mat with diagonal patterning believed to be caused by drying technique

Each day the dried or partially dried leaves must be rolled up and stored in a dry place, usually under the house. In Malesiga, the leaves were first rolled from the proximal end toward the distal end, rolling the leaf under and towards oneself. Once it was completely rolled, the roll was held in the right hand and then rolled, from the distal end, onto the left hand. This resulted in a roll with the distal end at the centre. If the

leaves were dry and were being put away for storage, many of them were rolled one after another on a very large roll. The last leaf of such a roll was rolled proximal end first onto the roll. Each night someone like Siwon, who collected very large quantities of leaves at once, would have several hours of work to do in rolling the leaves for overnight storage (Figure 4.3.2).

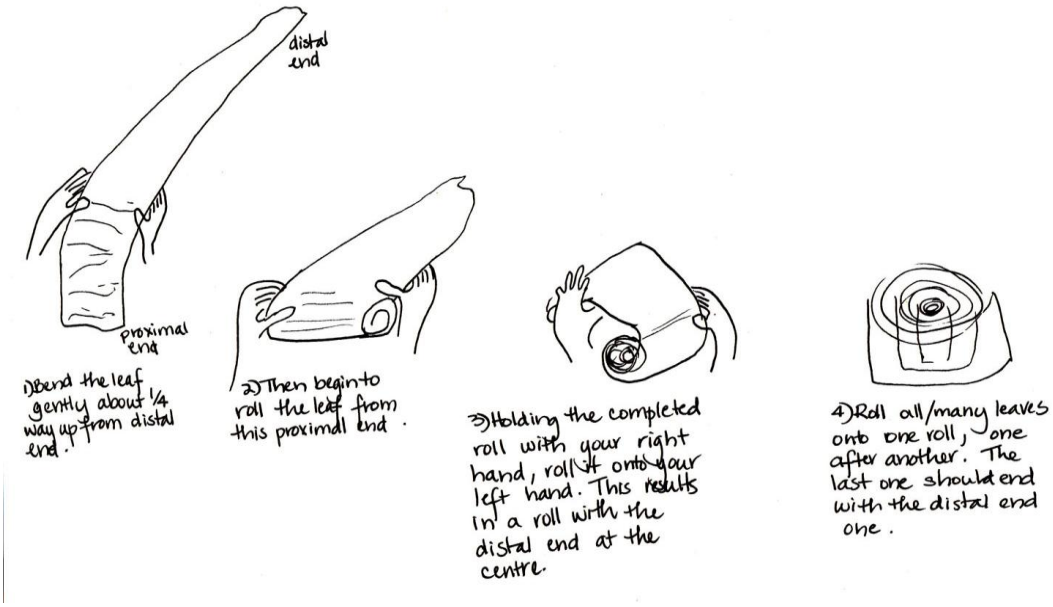


Figure 4.3.2: Sequence of rolling leaves, Malesiga village

In these coastal communities, all leaves were dried before being sewn into sleeping mats or rain capes. The only exception occurred when dry leaves, that is, leaves already shed naturally by the *Pandanus,* were collected. Helen, of Yaga Settlement, made some of these into a mat during my 2006 visit. It apparently takes less time to make a mat as the lengthy step of drying the leaves is eliminated. In Malesiga, these dry leaves were purportedly used for rain capes although the rain capes I saw during my five visits had been made of leaves collected green then dried. The theory underpinning the making of rain capes with already dry leaves is that they have apparently greater water proof characteristics.

The thread for stitching the leaves together also showed regional variation. Both the Tamis and Tuams used the bast fibre of the aerial roots of the *Pandanus.* Siwon, of Malesiga, stated that only some roots produced fibres of the correct type to make thread, depending on the elasticity of the fibres. The fibres are gathered by first stripping the outer bark from the aerial root. The collected inner fibres are then broken down into a suitable size and left to dry (Plates 4.3.8 and 4.3.9).

Plate 4.3.8: Preparing bast fibre *Pandanus* threads, Yaga Settlement. Malua and Jopec are preparing threads while Malua's daughter Tamaris stacks fresh leaves

Plate 4.3.9: Bast fibre *Pandanus* threads at various stages of preparation

In Bukaua the bast fibre of a shrub (identified at the PNG Forest Research Institute from my sketches and notes as *Trichospermum tripyxis*) was used. S. Holzknecht had reported (Holzknecht, pers. comm., 2003) that women in Busong, a Bukaua community, had used the bast fibres of the *Pandanus* aerial root in the (presumably distant) past then stitched their mats with red yarn in the 1970s. Currently in use is white deconstructed rice bag plastic thread (see Plate 4.3.1). For all thread types, joining one piece of thread to the next involved tying a knot close to where the thread emerged from the leaf surface. The excess thread material was then cut off.

4.3.3 On the Pandanus Leaf

A stitched *Pandanus* mat is composed of opposing pairs of leaves with all the edges sewn but no visible stitches between the leaves. Both sides present a similar appearance, making it initially difficult to ascertain how the mat is constructed. All stitching is functional, serving to secure edges and patches, but some is also decorative. Stitch size varies according to the maker although Kobec, who is nominally Siwon's aunt (actually Siwon's mother's cousin) told me that women previously made much smaller stitches (the diagonal stitch holding the first two leaves together) than they now do. Apparently they had more time, or took more time, in the past, to sew more neatly and in complicated patterns. Stitches were found at the sides of a mat (the first and last row of stitching), buried inside the mat, on the cut ends of the leaves (which form the top and bottom of the mat), and attached mending patches (called *katir* in Yaga Settlement). On the rain cape/ umbrella there is ornate stitching at the top on the folded piece that closes the piece but also attached ornamentation as described below.

Although it might appear that both sides of the mat are made separately and then joined, that is not the case. In fact, the leaves are stitched together, in pairs, with the ventral surface of the leaves facing together. The first pair is stitched along one long edge with an overcasting stitch. Another two leaves are placed over the first pair, this time with the ventral surfaces outward. The woman stitches through all four leaves, along the long edge, using the same overcasting stitch as for sewing the first two leaves together. After she has stitched the four leaves together she gently folds the two outer leaves away from the first pair (in a similar way to attaching strips of fabric on a log cabin quilt). In this way she adds new pairs of leaves until she has sufficient for the width of a mattress. The final pair of leaves is stitched in much the same manner as the first pair. Pairs of leaves were joined alternating distal and proximal ends. At the distal end, the (thinner) leaf was folded back on itself before being stitched in what was essentially a hem. Although finished mats are folded at right angles to the leaves, one actually sleeps along the length of the leaves, apparently to prevent big toes from catching in the seams. In Malesiga a single mattress takes approximately seven leaves and a double mattress ten or twelve. A double mattress that I saw in Bukaua had fourteen pairs of leaves, perhaps because the leaves were marginally narrower than those of the species found in Malesiga. Kobec of Malesiga described the construction of mattresses for twins – two singles with joining pieces which she called house posts (Figure 4.3.3). These mats were made by grandmothers but are seen infrequently now.

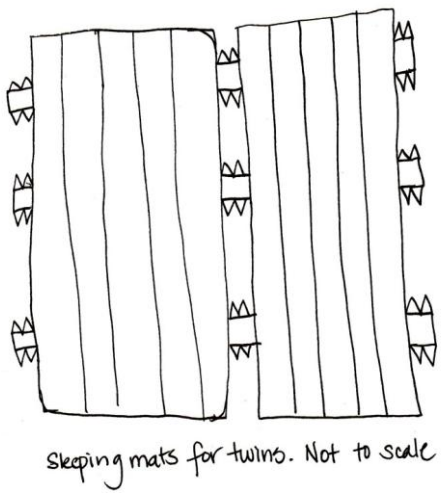


Figure 4.3.3: Mattress for twins, two singles separated by house posts

The length of the leaves collected thus has to accommodate the length of an adult. Smaller leaves suffice for children or for rain capes. Normally women choose leaves that are long enough for their purpose without having to join them to enhance length. Siwon joins leaves to make a required length but said that she was unusual in this

regard. Siwon also told me how a woman might start making a mat and then decide that it was too short. She might then add pairs that were gradually longer until she reached the desired length. That first short pair of leaves were called after a fish which reversed away from you when you tried to spear it (*bwonangui*). At least one mat in the HME collection (Plate 4.3.10) exhibited this characteristic.

Plate 4.3.10: Mat collected by Lajos Biro, Huon Gulf, 1899 (HME 63927, courtesy of the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography)

Where there were breaks or holes in the leaves, repairs were effected. In Malesiga a repairing piece is inserted where there is insect damage by cutting small slits along the leaf veins on either side of the damage and then inserting an appropriately sized off-cut. In Yaga Community, the repair piece spanned the entire leaf thus obviating the need to make further splits in the leaf. The repair piece is usually secured with a stitch known as frigate bird (*zoambac)* in Malesiga. Centipede stitch (*araraang*) or bird's feet was used in Yaga Community. Where the leaf has split along the mid-rib (most common in the thinner *malumlum*), this split was pulled together and stitched (Plate 4.3.11). Plate 4.3.12 shows Helen of Yaga Settlement placing two repair patches on her mat made from *Pandanus* collected as dried leaves. She has used the bird's feet motif to make her first repair.

Plate 4.3.11: Mid-rib split repaired with bird's feet stitch, Yaga Settlement

Plate 4.3.12: Repair on mat, Yaga Settlement

To make a rain cape, approximately eight pairs of stitched leaves (of *malumlum*) were folded in half at right angles to the length of the leaves. Starting from the fold and going towards the two ends of the leaves, a closure was made. The band of leaves forming this closure was the site for more complex stitches and applied decorations, some of them handmarks. I saw only functional rain capes in use in Yaga Community; in Malesiga I was told that Western umbrellas were supplanting the traditional rain cape although Kobec of Malesiga made a sampler rain cape for me (Plate 4.3.13). Gida is shown modelling her functional rain cape (Plate 4.3.14).

Plate 4.3.13: Sampler rain cape made by Kobec, Malesiga, 2005

Plate 4.3.14: Gida and her rain cape, Yaga Settlement, 2005

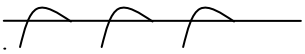
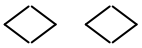
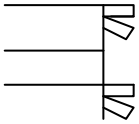
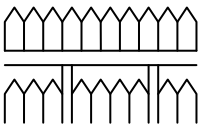
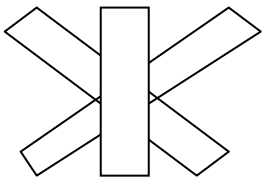
There were a limited number of stitches recorded from the three villages I visited. Most of the stitches represent some elements of the surrounding environment. In my study areas, all the named stitches represented animals. Of these, some stitches were in communal use, available for use by anyone in the clan and understood by everyone as well. There were other stitches, as well as other embellishments, which were the property of a particular matriline.

The motifs which are common property within the village as well as the handmarked motifs constituted the visual vocabulary of the group. Not only were these images and motifs used on mats but some could also be found on carvings as well as in tattoo motifs. While women's patterns all seemed to be abstract, men seemed to portray the same subject matter in a more realistic fashion. Walking sticks, for example, often have snakes twined around them (Plate 4.3.15).

Plate 4.3.15: Sem Reuben with two walking sticks, the one in his left hand bearing the twined snakes, Malesiga

All the members of the group recognised the images and could talk, to some degree, about the real things they represented. The stitched motifs variously identified were centipedes, birds' feet (Yaga Settlement), frigate birds, snakes/vines around trees (Malesiga) and birds' feet and snakes/vines around trees (Bukaua) while crayfish claws, criss-crosses and bottle stoppers were added decorations. Mat designs, their method of construction and handmarked status for the three village sites are presented in Table 4.3.2.

Table 4.3.2: Mat Designs from three Huon Gulf/Siassi Villages

Designs *	Yaga (Tuam Islanders) (Siassi)	Malesiga (Tami Islanders)	Bukaua
	Stitched: depending on number and orientation of peaks, either bird's feet or footprints, centipede, mountains. Shark's teeth were cut, not stitched.	Stitched: frigate birds, irrespective of number of peaks or orientation.	Stitched: bird's feet irrespective of number of peaks or orientation.
	Stitched: no information although the stitches are used.	Stitched: snake, or vine, going round a tree. One woman had been told by her mother that this pattern was called line of ants.	Stitched: snake, or vine, going round a tree.
	Stitched: used but no name given.	Stitched: handmarked design but only identified as such by one woman. This is known as two frigate birds facing each other (see first design).	Not known.
	Applied decoration: referring to the extensions at the head of alternating leaves, the design is crayfish claws.	Applied decoration: generally just called decoration although one woman called it by the name of a flower used to decorate hair or armband during dances.	Applied decoration: no name, just called decoration.
	Applied decoration: handmarked design bottle stopper, usually associated with house post design and joining patch.	Applied decoration: handmarked design bottle stopper, usually associated with house post design and joining patch.	Not known.
	Applied handmarked decoration called *pageg.*	Applied handmarked decoration known but not made in Malesiga although some women have rights to it.	Not known.

*****Not to scale.

In Malesiga I was told that the stitching that looked like couching (but actually was not because the long thread on the top came back on itself on the underside of the mat before then crossing diagonally over the original long arm) was initially taught to young women as snake pattern because the line which they first stitch is short. More practised older women make a longer stitch which is then identified as the vine around

a tree. By virtue of its construction, the pattern of snake/vine around the tree is identical on both sides of the mat. The whip stitch which holds the sides of the mats together (the same stitch that attaches new pairs of leaves) is also called vine around the tree, easy to understand if we picture the edge of the leaf in the same way as the long stitch. If we compare this to the older mats and rain capes, collected by Biro (Plate 4.3.16), we see that diagonal stitches were also used at the edges.

Plate 4.3.16: Diagonal stitching on older Huon Gulf rain cape (HME 63924, courtesy of Hungarian Museum of Ethnography)

Only one new stitch, as yet unnamed, was seen during the research period. Made by Mondo of Bukaua, it was similar to the commonly used snake or vine around the tree but differed in that it has two opposing lines of stitching around the long (tree) stitch (Plate 4.3.17). One could postulate entwined snakes, a motif that does occur in men's carved works (see Plate 4.3.15).

Plate 4.3.17: New motif (stitching at edge of mat) devised by Mondo, Bukaua

The abstracted motifs are not easy to identify (and I had not initially done so in Malesiga) but, once the names of the patterns are provided, representation becomes clear. Zigzag patterns exist in all three communities surveyed. In Yaga Settlement at least three zigzag patterns exist. These include the patterns for centipede, bird's feet and shark's teeth. The centipede motif consists of only three arms, generally starting at bottom left and ending at top right. The bird's feet motif consists of one or more chevrons in any direction. The shark's teeth is not a stitched pattern but made by tearing the edge of the *Pandanus.* In Malesiga individual or group chevrons all reference frigate birds, though not specifically their feet; while, in Bukaua, the chevron, singly or multiply, refers to birds' feet.

Bodrogi (1961) shows a centipede pattern in use in the late nineteenth century on the north coast of the Huon Gulf (Plate 4.3.18).

Plate 4.3.18: The motif that the Yabim identified to Biro as centipede in 1899 (Bodrogi, 1961, p. 171)

This pattern has many similarities to the pattern currently identified by Tuam women of Yaga Settlement as centipede. Pitum sewed strips of *Pandanus* to the top and bottom of her *pageg* mat with repeated centipede stitches (Plate 4.3.19).

Plate 4.3.19: Centipede motif as stitched by Pitum, Yaga Settlement, 2006

Although S. Holzknecht (pers. comm., 2003) also recalled cutwork, and the historical mats from the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography showed mats with cutwork, initially Tamaris, of Busong, the original informant of S. Holzknecht, did not remember any cutwork. Eventually she vaguely recalled doing cutwork on rain capes but could not remember any patterns. No other informant could provide information on cutwork.

As well as stitched motifs there were decorative elements attached to the mats and rain capes. When the leaves of a mat are stitched together, alternating proximal and distal ends, the proximal end sometimes had a small tail left when the leaf was cut flush with the rest of the leaves. Although this tail did not have any name in Malesiga (aside from decoration), in Yaga Settlement it was known as crayfish claws (see leading edge of Gida's rain cape, Plate 4.3.14). No one knew this pattern or made this addition to the mat in Bukaua. Another applied decoration, the handmark *pageg* consisted of three short leaves two of which form a criss-cross and the third becomes the upright arm of the criss-cross. These criss-crosses were added to both sides of pairs of leaves. Pitum of Yaga Settlement added four criss-crosses to each side of the leaves of her *pageg* mat made in January 2006 (Plate 4.3.20).

Plate 4.3.20: Pitum sewing criss-cross appliqué to *pageg* mat, Yaga Settlement, 2006

A bottle stopper handmarked design was applied mainly to rain capes. This particular design appears to have several complex variations and is claimed by several of the informants; it is discussed in greater detail below.

Handmarks are designs that belong to and are supposedly passed down through a matriline, that is, from mother to daughter or from a woman to her sister's daughters. However, numerous instances showed this not to be a rigid practice. Kobec, for example, learned her handmark from her father's sisters so she can be said to have inherited her handmark patrilineally. These women also taught their own daughters to make the handmark. Kobec was also proposing to teach her daughter-in-law the handmark.

What constitutes a handmark/trademark is also difficult to grasp visually. They are abstracted motifs in the same way as are other designs. Some of the handmarks are stitched but others (most of the ones which I observed) were applied decorations. I was not able to ascertain why certain motifs belong to a matriline rather than being in general circulation. The implication was that, in the distant past, someone in that matriline had invented the stitch although this was never articulated by anyone.

One of the stitched trademarks, which was identified only in Malesiga, consisted of opposing individual frigate bird motifs. They formed a diamond shape which, although it was not complex or distinguished, was claimed as a trademark by one woman, Galiki Peter (Plates 4.3.21 and 4.3.22).

Plate 4.3.21: Galiki Peter stitching her double frigate bird handmark, Malesiga

Plate 4.3.22: Detail showing double frigate bird handmark, Malesiga

One of her five daughters knew how to make this design. The diamond shape made by the opposing frigate bird motifs was also seen in Yaga Settlement but was neither given a name nor claimed as a handmark.

A widespread decorative handmarked element was the bottle stopper. A bottle stopper was an actual object, previously fashioned from a piece of *Pandanus* or other leaf and used to stop water spilling from the coconut shell container used to transport drinking

water. Made from a scrap of *Pandanus* leaf, the bottle stopper was also a needle case, although I never actually saw one used for this purpose. In Malesiga the bottle stoppers were called *zozong;* in Yaga Settlement they are called *zizon*; and in Bukaua they are called *soŋ.* They were made in exactly the same way in each community.

Finally, a represented image of the bottle stopper, a triangle made from a folded strip of *Pandanus,* was used, often in conjunction with other decorative elements at the top or other edges of mats and rain capes. They formed points, rather like sawtooth edging or the western quilter's prairie points. One identified bottle stopper handmark consisted of the motifs, interspersed with rectangular vertical elements (in Malesiga identified as house posts and in Yaga Settlement as big bottle stoppers). This was topped with a long horizontal strip which had bottle stoppers on either side of it. The stitching on the upper horizontal strip of the Sr. Dolling rain cape consisted of a series of individual birds' feet (Plate 4.3.23). This particular rain cape also had bottle stopper/house post embellishment along the leading sides.

Plate 4.3.23: Detail, rain cape collected by Sr. Barbara Dolling (Louise Flierl Mus. Ref. 1103, courtesy of the Louise Flierl Museum)

Another use of the bottle stopper was seen only on the historic mats collected by Biro. In this instance the bottle stoppers internally edged the length of the stitched *Pandanus* leaves as well as one side. A few bottle stoppers were in the middle of one end of the mat (Plate 4.3.24).

Plate 4.3.24: Bottle stopper addition to mat collected in 1899 (HME No.63928, courtesy of the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography))

The rights to this bottle stopper pattern, as was the genealogy of the women concerned, were very complex. The complex genealogy precludes making assumptions about relationships as there was considerable intermarriage between Tami and Tuam Islanders and the pattern appears to be one of considerable lineage, dating at least from the late 1800s. One woman (Gida in Yaga Settlement) who was decorating her rain cape with bottle stoppers married into the Tuam community and claimed to be descended from a Sialum mother. In fact, her Siassi grandmother had married a Sialum man, which then made their daughters (including Gida's mother) Sialum. The grandmother was of Siassi descent and had rights to the handmark. Despite the family being ostensibly Sialum, they used the trademark. The design did not originate with Gida or her mother or grandmother but was passed down from earlier family members. If the design is not passed on to Gida's daughters (and so far it has not been) or her nieces through her sisters' intervention (and so far it has not been), then the design could purportedly die with Gida and her sisters. However, since this particular trademark was claimed by several women, including Gida, Kobec, Miream and Galiki Peters among others in the study areas, indicating a complex web of genealogy between the various islands of the ancient trade routes, it is actually unlikely to die out in the near future although fewer and fewer woman are making the pattern.

A handmark/trademark may not be used by other persons outside the matriline without being paid for, and even then the usage is proscribed, being restricted to usage by the actual buyer of the pattern. A rain cape with a bought trademark could only be worn by the buyer but not any of her relatives. Unpaid usage of a handmark/trademark is

regarded very seriously and incurs heavy penalties (and obviously strong societal opprobrium). No one spoke of any such known transgression so one may presume it to be relatively rare. It follows that handmarked/trademarked mats and rain capes are not usually sold but are reserved for the use of the family of the owner of the handmark. For example, Siwon's mother has made mats for all her grandchildren incorporating the criss-cross handmark (*pageg)* she inherited from her Tuam mother. As in the case of Gida's children, neither Siwon nor her sisters have learned how to make this particular handmark. When queried, the response from all women was that handmarks were difficult, laborious and time consuming to execute.

4.4 The Pandanus Leaf Stitched Up

4.4.1 History

Indigenous communities learn their history from their elders; certainly relatively little indigenous history has been written, an exception being the work of John Waiko (1982). However, perhaps as a result of both their oral traditions and the organic nature of the materials they work with, communities appear to lack detailed knowledge of past makers and their mats beyond the immediately preceding generation or two. The influence of missionaries in teaching Western domestic science cannot be discounted as a factor in the loss of traditional knowledge. Although the historical mats and rain capes that I examined were collected by Biro in the last years of the nineteenth century in Tigidu (Bukaua district), Tami-nugudu, the western end of Bukaua district and Tami Island (Bodrogi, 1961), almost precisely the area in which the current research was conducted, the historical mats were not recognised, or only with some hesitancy, by my contemporary informants. Some of the information volunteered (by Siwon, for example, with respect to *bwongangui*, Plate 4.3.9) may have been stimulated by seeing images of the historic mats.

In fact, some of the mats, or elements of them, were identified as coming from Siassi, and we know that Biro did not visit or collect from Siassi. Biro collected within the Lutheran ambit of influence and we know that the Lutherans had not established a permanent station on Siassi until 1911, more than a decade after Biro collected from the Huon Gulf (Wagner, 1986). This does not, however, discount the possibility of supposedly Siassi mats or mats made by Siassi women being in the Tami area. The genealogical links of my Malesiga informants to Siassi and *vice versa,* as well as the complex story of Gida's lineage, must impel interrogation of the effect of intermarriage on mat types within any particular area.

Because these mats and rain capes were collected a century ago, and despite their provenance of the Huon Gulf area, it seems that collective memory of them has been lost. No one in the villages mentioned Biro as having come to their area. Memory has been lost not only with regard to makers but also with regard to certain patterns of stitching and other decoration. In particular, only one person could vaguely identify the cutwork seen on several mats. Nor did I see evidence of, or knowledge of, double rows of stitching, angled stitching (although the overcast/whip stitching joining leaves might have a relationship) or red colour applied to stitching or cutwork. This was particularly disturbing in light of the information obtained from S. Holzknecht concerning relatively recent mat making (pers. comm., 2003).

The Huon Gulf area, despite years of Lutheran and associated administrative presence, is very poorly documented with regard to its material culture. Campbell (2002) draws detailed conclusions about meaning in Trobriand art but builds this meaning on the many studies that have been carried out in that area using information about social organisation, economic systems and religious belief systems that previously had been considered as unrelated to art work. Obviously this would not be possible in the Huon Gulf, at least not in relation to women's material culture, where information rests primarily on three major publications (Hogbin, 1947; Bodrogi, 1961; Harding, 1967).

Rossito (1995) comments that, despite recorded recent changes in design, Fijian potters demonstrated a similar lack of historical depth in their understanding of innovation within their craft. She attributes the Fijian potter's narrow concept of tradition partly to a limited knowledge of the distant past, particularly the four major phases of Fijian pottery. Furthermore, although changes have been made to vessel types, glazes used and the type and style of designs, potters apparently acknowledge only some of these changes (Rossito, 1995).

This also appeared to be the case with regard to the stitched *Pandanus* mats, especially those from the Bukaua district. In Busong no one commented specifically about the white plastic thread deconstructed from rice or stock feed bags and used to stitch a contemporary (2006) mat. Similarly no one commented on the mats from Bukaua itself which have a variegated pattern on them, most probably as a result of being dried in a spiral even though it was a very obvious feature and quite different to mats from other villages. It was also only in Bukaua that I found any evidence of a new stitching design.

4.4.2 Materiality

Morobean mat makers demonstrated unquestionable understanding in the fields of materiality and technical processes. Women in the villages I visited were exposed, from an early age, to learning about *Pandanus* including the available species, how they are grown, how they must be treated prior to stitching into mats, how mats are stitched together. Where several species of *Pandanus* are present in one area, women made choices as to their preferred species, either for a particular mat or in general. While I was in Yaga (2006) four different kinds of mats were being made: three were made from the *Pandanus* known as *malumlum,* while one was made from the species known as *paanrau.* Of the three made from *malumlum,* one was made from leaves collected dry and two were made from leaves collected fresh and then dried in the yard of the maker. Of these, one was plain while the other incorporated the *pageg* handmark. This particular mat, however, is infrequently made and, on this occasion, because I had shown such an interest in historic mats of this type, was made expressly to demonstrate continued knowledge of the pattern. The mat made from *paanrau* had been made before I arrived and was valued at twice the level of other mats. The makers of these mats also made the decision to donate these mats to me for the purposes of research. Because there were no arrangements in place to import such artefacts to Australia, and because I felt strongly that they belonged in the Papua New Guinea National Gallery and Art Museum, I proposed to donate the mats to that institution. All four women agreed to this condition; documentation of the mats for the donation included photographs of each maker with her mat (Plates 4.4.1 through 4.4.4).

Plate 4.4.1: Mat made by Pitum (*pageg malumlum*), Yaga Settlement, 2006

Plate 4.4.2: Mat made by Shirley *(paanrau*), Yaga Settlement, 2006

Plate 4.4.3: Mat made by Malua (*malumlum* collected fresh), Yaga Settlement, 2006

Plate 4.4.4: Mat made by Helen (*malumlum* collected dry) Yaga Settlement, 2006

When women make mats you see them running their hands over the leaves smoothing these down carefully before stitching on another pair of leaves. The women I met took pride and pleasure in their work. Dark (2002) comments on the physical pleasure Samoan bark cloth artists experienced as they handle their materials. This pleasure is one that many textile artists identify with and talk about. The materiality of textiles is a point made repeatedly by Western textile artists as one reason that they are drawn to the medium (Cochrane, 1992; Ioannou, 1997; Milner, 2000). It is also a pleasure for audiences, as evidenced by women wanting to handle quilts at public exhibitions.

4.4.3 Visual Vocabulary

Although we refer to traditional patterns it cannot be assumed that tradition is unchanging. It is bound by rules and based on decision making with distinct parameters, not unlike western formal aesthetic criteria. For example, Rossito (1995) shows that, with regard to Fijian pottery (largely a woman's medium), the decoration of pots follows rules delineated both by a particular style inherent to an area but also, and more importantly, by a need to achieve harmony between a pot's form and its decoration. Pritchard (1984) demonstrates how bark cloth from American Samoa adds to the old repertoire of patterns to continue and, at the same time build upon, the existing traditions.

The motifs used by women in the current study area vary little from village to village. There are an enormous number of interconnections between the various people of these islands, mainland and West New Britain. People from Tami, for example, marry back and forth to Siassi. Siassis regularly marry back and forth to West New Britain. There is also intermarriage between the Tamis and Bukauas. Sialum and Siassi intermarry. There are therefore many avenues for designs to be diffused over a large

area. The same or similar designs seem to have different names in different communities (Table 4.3.2). Boas (1955) notes a similar phenomenon in his wide ranging studies of primitive art. Ewins (1982) asserts that the motifs found on Gau (Fiji) mats function as *aide-memoires* rather than as signifiers of importance. In support of this premise he cites the similar designs found on *tapa* which have different and unrelated names to the mat names. However, he also goes on to say that "motifs [on mats] and their names appear to be remarkably consistent throughout Fiji" (Ewins, 1982, p. 16).

Because this research was premised on the use of entomological motifs, it is the use of the centipede motif that was initially of greatest interest to this study. Centipedes are not, of course, insects but belong to the Unimara, a group that contains the insects, centipedes and millipedes (Roberts, 1995). This group is part of the larger group Athropoda (see 2.4.2). Centipede patterns crop up throughout Papua New Guinea, Torres Straits, Melanesia and the Pacific.

Although no other patterns involved invertebrate motifs, virtually all the stitching involved animals. Only the attachments (and then only some of these) corresponded to man made objects. The shore bird (which makes the birds feet motif mentioned by the Yaga women, for example, as part of their repertoire of patterns) was tentatively identified as a sandpiper. American Samoans also identify sandpiper as one of the patterns on traditional bark cloth (Pritchard, 1984). The chevron motif was identified in Malesiga as a frigate bird. Malum, Siwon's husband, told me of the prowess of this bird for spotting fish, from such distances as Port Moresby to Lae. Throughout the Solomon Islands, frigate birds are held in high respect and feature on tattoos and tapa cloth. Richards and Roga (2005) document many patterns taken from historical tapa cloth and which they interpret as frigate birds. Most have two horizontally connected chevrons but at least one (from the Otago Museum in New Zealand) has only one chevron (Richards and Roga, 2005).

Women in all the communities told me stories relating particularly to the snake motif. For example, the women of Malesiga told me that they would sometimes see snakes around trees, but often see vines around trees, when they went to cut *karuka.* Bodrogi (1961) recounts a local myth about the consequences (usually pregnancy) of young virgins seeing snakes around trees when they went unaccompanied to the bush. When you live in a village, you do not actively see people living in trepidation of meeting a snake; however, from the way snakes are treated and talked about, there is no doubt that they are respected and perhaps even feared.

Despite these stories, I was unable to ascertain the exact reasons why particular stitches represented specific animals. For example, there is little to indicate why the centipede is such a ubiquitous motif in Yaga Settlement. Donald Kobak (of Yaga community) talks about the good colour of the centipede but insists there are no myths or ancestor stories associated with centipedes. Certainly the villagers all seemed to know the habits of the centipede and its potential to cause harm. They identified its habitat as rotting vegetation, especially rotting trees although Bodrogi (1961) records that the centipede is often found in houses, away from moist places. Bodrogi (1961) may provide a clue to its use in the Huon Gulf when he writes that the centipede calls

> …attention to itself by the fact that when touched, it emits a strong light, noticeable even at day time. (Bodrogi, 1961, p. 171).

Bioluminescence does occur in centipedes (Lloyd, 1983) but overall is a rare phenomenon. The placement of the centipede design on sleeping mats may have an apotropaic power (see Andrews, 1994) to ward off possible bites.

The portrayed animals represent only a fraction of the animals with which the communities would come into contact on a regular basis so their use as motifs must have some meaning, however difficult that is to unravel. Boas (1955) also comes to a similar conclusion when he says that different tribes “endow it [the motif] with new meaning according to the chief cultural interests of the people (Boas, 1955, p. 353).

Despite the inability of the local informants to provide the rationale for the use of certain motifs, one can postulate that all the named stitches, and their animal antecedents, represent important elements to the survival of the community, either directly or indirectly. The frigate bird is an obvious fishing bird; to fishing communities its ability to spot fish would be very important. The centipede motif may represent an abstract concept of danger, thus an apotropaic amulet (Andrews, 1994) placed on the mat to ward off the potential of bites or stings. Although sandpipers are not obvious hunters of food which people might eat, their industriousness in finding food on the foreshores would be well noted, especially by fishing communities.

The stitches and applied decorations of the three villages make reference primarily to the natural world. An examination of Western embroidery stitches reveals a number of stitches showing similar allusions and, in some cases, identical antecedents. Fly stitch is a well known embroidery stitch, illustrated in most books of stitching (for example, Anchor, 1981; Gardner, 2003; Howard, 1979); there are more esoteric stitches such as spider and centipede stitches and variations on all of these. The provenance of these stitches is not known but the stitches might be assumed to have arisen when flies,

spiders and centipedes had more relevance for the stitchers than they now do for urban women.

The mats made by the Morobean women are functional items and, while they have stitching, are minimally decorated. Informants report that the special mats, with handmarks, are not made often. Siwon's *liklik mama* made handmarked mats for a number of her grandchildren, of whom Rhoda (Siwon's niece/adopted daughter) was one. Galiki Peter was making a handmarked mat but her pattern was reasonably simple and could be incorporated as a mending stitch on a repair patch. Pitum of Yaga Settlement made a handmarked mat while I was there in 2006. Gida made her rain cape with the handmarked design. In contradiction to the contention that handmarked mats and rain capes are not made often, the number I observed argued that they still have a significant presence in the overall body of mats kept in these villages.

It is the rain cape which is the site of the more elaborate stitching and additional motifs although this may also be left plain as is the case in a sampler rain cape made for me by Kobec of Malesiga (see Plate 4.3.13). The rain capes which were viewed in Yaga Settlement (see Plate 4.3.14) all had elaborate decoration on them as did the historical ones documented in Hungary (see Plate 4.2.4).

The devices used by Morobean mat makers to decorate/mark their mats are not isolated to their practice or even to Melanesian culture. Seiler-Baldinger (1994) discusses ornamentation techniques and separates them into those using solid materials (stitching, cutwork) and those using liquid materials (applied colour). According to her, openwork methods differ from other embroidery methods

> …in that the decorative effects are obtained primarily by removing part of the fabric. The opening of the base fabric can be effected either by pulling out individual threads or groups of threads (drawn work) or by cutting out parts of the fabric (cutwork). In the open spaces thus created the threads are now "embroidered" in groups by techniques such as binding, interlacing or looping to form patterns (Seiler-Baldinger, 1994, p. 141).

Gillow and Sentance (1999) also discuss various techniques that are practised by makers throughout the world. These include sawtooth edging (said to be a common border pattern), pulled work and openwork with their associated stitches. Whitework, such as found in *Broderie Anglaise*, includes a number of techniques where white threads are used on white fabric. Although the Morobean mats are made of *Pandanus*, their decoration shares aspects of whitework:

> Openwork …create holes that will appear dark in contrast to the …ground.
> Classic whitework employs white stitchery to create heavy or padded shapes which cast grey shadows (Gillow and Sentance, 1999, p. 197).

The cutwork mats illustrated in the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography photographs, (see Plate 4.2.4 for an example) have the characteristics defined by Seiler-Baldinger (1994) and Gillow and Sentance (1999).

In the western sphere, visual vocabulary is regarded as personal although, for the audience or public to understand art works, the vocabulary must also reflect commonly understood symbols and meanings. Visual vocabulary is, in some respects, the end product of the artist's lived experience. In non-western cultures, on the other hand, visual vocabulary comes before technical competence. Artists grow up with visual vocabulary, surrounding them and understood on a community level. Individual expressions of visual vocabulary are rarer, although every artist has an individual mark which differs subtly from that of other makers.

Despite the similarities highlighted between these two cultural approaches we can appreciate that

> Each woman's work is different, determined by the specific factors of sex, class and place in historical periods. Women have made their own interventions in the forms and languages of art because they are necessarily part of their society and culture. But because of the economic, social and ideological affects of sexual difference in a western, patriarchal culture, women have spoken and acted from a different place within that society and culture. **(**Parker& Pollock, 1981, p.49)

Over time, and with other imperatives at work, designs change. In the current case, it seems that the change is in the direction of simplification, although the innovation of a new stitch by Bukaua mat maker Mondo (Plate 4.3.15) might indicate otherwise. The imperatives behind this change probably include increased difficulties of gardening and caring for families coupled with land pressures which would reduce the hours available for mat making. As well, foam mattresses are now readily available and appear to be seen as a signifier of status. A further impetus for the diminution in mat making skills and motifs may relate to the lack of esteem accorded these items by society in general, but also including western society.

Non-western artists are known to absorb western techniques and imagery (sometimes to the consternation of purist anthropologists and other observers) but there are also many western artists who use and, in some cases, appropriate non-western imagery

and motifs. In many cases, there is not sufficient understanding of other parts of the domain. For example, learning technique without some understanding of the history that informs that technique can leave it hollow. Similarly, the use of symbolism, of whatever sort, without a true understanding of the permeation of those symbols throughout the daily lives of the culture from which they come, robs the symbolism of its essential strength. My feeling is that, in the first instance, one needs to be thoroughly grounded in one's own culture, irrespective of whether that is Western or non-Western, before attempting to access the global pickings. Only then can one select elements which genuinely add depth to one's art; even then, if it is part of the fabric of another culture, it needs to be a quotation not an appropriation.

4.4.4 Economic Imperatives

After working in Bukaua, a village to the west of Malesiga along the north coast of the Huon Gulf, I began to sense that economic imperatives were driving mat making in both Malesiga and Tuam communities. Both these communities derive from islands which could not support their populations in terms of foodstuffs. Accordingly, the islanders developed a system of trade whereby they traded such goods as mats and carvings for food, first noted by Biro in the late 1800s (Vargyas, 1992), from Tami west and southward but also as far northeast as the Siassi Islands (of which Tuam is one) (Harding, 1967; Hogbin, 1947). Tuam Island on-traded some goods (carving is particularly noted in the literature) further east into New Britain. Tuam Islanders also traded other goods, including mats, on the New Guinea mainland to the northwest. The traditional trade activities are still alive in the Siassi Islands and the women of Yaga Settlement continue to make mats both for trade/sale and for home use. I saw, during my 2006 visit to Yaga Settlement, villagers returning from New Britain with baskets of *taro* in payment for unspecified traded goods.

Although the Tamis still make carvings and mats for sale, apparently the old trading cycles are considered to have finished for Tami Island during the 1920s (Gosden & Pavlides, 1994). However mats were still being made and sold/traded in Malesiga during the time of my research. When I visited in October 2005, Siwon was very pleased to have sold approximately thirty mats at a recent Lutheran conference held southwest of Malesiga along the Huon Gulf. Other makers sold their mats singly or in small numbers, often locally or at Finschhafen markets. Mats made for sale do not have handmarks on them and women who marry into a community can make them. One Markham woman, married into and then widowed in Malesiga, remained in Malesiga because her mat making gave her an economic base to look after her family.

The Tuam community, on the other hand, apparently still trades mats and other items for traditional wealth items such as pigs, pottery and food items. Gosden and Pavlides (1994) attribute the continued strength of trading cycles in the Tuam community to the lack of mission, specifically Lutheran, influences because “Fortunately for both the Siassis and the Arawe Islanders missionisation was late” (Gosden and Pavlides, 1994, p. 167). Although Tami and Tuam communities exhibit apparently different kinds of trading, one more attuned to money and the other more attuned to traditional wealth items, for both it has meant the continued production of mats.

In Bukaua, on the other hand, this does not seem to be the case. They apparently have substantial lands for gardens and have never relied on trade for food items. Although I cannot establish that they were importers rather than exporters of mats in the old Huon Gulf trade cycles, of the three contemporary villages I visited, Bukaua was the only one where very few women were actively making mats at the time of my visit.

Siwon (Malesiga) and I discussed the lack of new designs on mats even though new designs were constantly being created for small baskets, dance skirts and *bilums.* We concluded that the main difference between mats and the other objects was that the objects in the public sphere seemed to present an acceptable site for innovations. Baskets and *bilums,* made for sale, used design as a selling point. The design on dance skirts was also thought to add to the prestige of the dancers, especially in dance competitions. In economic terms, the market apparently depresses, rather than encourages, innovations in mat making design. It seems that the qualities that make mats desirable do not include design; this is consistent with the fact that the only new design which I saw, as pointed out earlier (Plate 4.3.16) was made by Bukaua woman Mondo for her own use. However, two factors that did apparently influence mat value were the fineness and whiteness of the leaves making up the mat, as well as the thickness of the leaves. Shirley, daughter of Pitum, of Yaga Settlement, made a mat of *paanrau* which was worth twice that of an equivalent mat made of *malumlum*, the commonly used *Pandanus* species in this community. The thickness of the leaves, being most evident in the species known as *paa,* made them less desirable than the other leaves. Although I found mats made of this material easier to sleep on, the thickness of the leaves predisposes them to rotting.

It may be that, in the Huon Gulf, as opposed to Fijian pottery, market forces are tending to maintain the *status quo* with regard to mat design, albeit passively. Certainly Leclerc and Gosselin’s (2004) economic space is a major imperative in the lives of mat makers; Siwon repeatedly stressed the economic dependence of Tami Islanders, both

on the island and in Malesiga, on the production of stitched mats (women) and carved artefacts (men). There are, however, other imperatives within Morobean/Melanesian culture which may also militate against change and new designs. For example, if objects are ritually imbued, then change is less likely to occur.

Do the handmarked stitched *Pandanus* mats fall within Weiner's (1994) definition of culturally dense objects? There is trade of other mats to kin and also to non-related neighbours but handmarked items remain within the family. Weiner (1994) points out that

> …density accrues through an object's association with its owner's fame, ancestral histories, secrecy, sacredness, and aesthetic and economic values (Weiner, 1994, p. 394).

Some objects, Weiner (1994) reports, are inalienable and are kept within certain kin units, as are the trademarked stitched *Pandanus* mats of the Huon Gulf, while other objects within a trade cycle may be traded and sold only for their commodity value. This cultural density may well contribute to a reluctance to explore new designs in stitched mats.

Finally there may not be any contextual issues impelling community members to create new designs. In the Markham Valley, for example, potters incorporated into their pot designs a moth which had become a serious pest to bananas; in the Eastern Highlands Province, *bilums* were made with abstracted images of Yonki power lines (a site of hydroelectricity generation). These were appropriate to their time and place; perhaps the villages along the Huon Gulf have neither experienced nor desired to recognise events such as these.

4.5 The Species Described

It can be seen from the preceding that the mat makers of Malesiga, Yaga Settlement and Bukaua demonstrate their command of the creative process domains of materiality, technical process, history, visual vocabulary and market forces. In documenting their knowledge I prepared for the documentation of a Western textile artist's creative process as well as the visual interpretation of these dual processes of mat making.

Chapter 5: Establishing the Weevil's Niche

5.1 What was the Weevil?

In earlier chapters the word niche (1.3) is used to refer to women's role in the art environment of Papua New Guinea. Niche is defined in scientific terms in 2.4.2 (Ecology), specifically in examining the niche that insects fill in the physical environment. The weevil was introduced earlier in this study, beginning of course with the title (*Weevils, Mats, and New Guinea*) of the doctoral study. The place of weevils, (particularly weevils of the genus *Eupholus,* in my art practice and in the exhibition *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea*) was discussed in 2.2.3 (Australia 1991-present). Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 (Taxonomy and Ecology respectively) present further explorations of the taxonomy and ecology of weevils in New Guinea, again with specific reference to the genus *Eupholus.*

In this chapter the weevil is conflated with self as artist using the weevil motif. This metaphor is used to illuminate the behaviour and position of the artist in the creative process. The niche remains as the role, defined quite closely by the subdivisions of the chapter, which this conflated weevil occupies.

The formal aesthetic research part of the study was conducted in tandem with early literature review and museum research. It preceded the field work with contemporary Morobean mat makers, although one piece in this formal aesthetic research was taken to and worked on in Malesiga. The making of the final exhibition pieces occurred after field work had taken place. Table 5.1.1 sets out the timelines for the artist's personal practice, including places of residence attendant on a peripatetic lifestyle and the resultant constraints on aspects of the research.

Table 5.1.1: Personal Practice Timelines

Dates	Stage of Practice	Place of Residence	Constraints	Impacts
2002	• Pre-confirmation	• Kathmandu, Nepal (until April), then Australia.	• Travel to and from Australia.	• Setting up a second studio with necessary equipment for thesis and practice.
2003-2004	• Historical research, including museum and archival visits. • Formal aesthetic research. • Presenting *bona fides* in Huon Gulf villages.	• Kathmandu, Nepal.	• Travel to and from Australia. • Difficulties of communication via email and snail mail to institutions throughout world. • Difficulties in obtaining second hand wool hooking materials.	• Frequent trips back to Australia, with shopping for materials top priority. • Trip to Europe to access museum and archival collections.
2005 to mid 2007	• Contemporary field research. • Design and execution of final exhibition pieces.	• Honiara, Solomon Islands.	• Travel to and from Australia. • Difficulties in obtaining second hand hooking materials. • Questions of personal and public security, experienced in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. • Difficulties in exhibition planning logistics. • In 2006, family illness became an issue, necessitating three trips to Canada.	• Setting up a studio with necessary equipment for thesis and practice. • Frequent trips to Australia, with shopping for materials top priority. • Shopping in Canada, including for new hooking materials. • Degree of security consciousness that affected all actions, including the safe deposition of works of art. • Frequent trips and security issues resulting in subsequent overwork/personal health issues.
2007-2008	• Final preparations for exhibition. • Thesis finalisation.	• Lake Eacham, Queensland.		

5.2 Where Was the Weevil?

The decision making that underpinned the making of the formal aesthetic research pieces is detailed in the following sections about the weevil's location (essentially the size and shape of the pieces) and its appearance, including colour, tone, texture and motif. These decisions are summarised in Table 5.2.1 and discussed subsequently.

Table 5.2.1: Formal Aesthetic Research: Decisions, Rationales and Outcomes

Formal Aesthetic Quality	Decision	Rationale	Outcome
Size/Shape	• 60 x 20 cm/ 50 x 30 cm (approx.)	• Referencing Torres Straits baby mat. • Small enough to be made within the research time frame.	• All mats in one of these two sizes.
Colour	• Beige colours.	• Referencing dried plant colours.	• Beige preferred and brighter colours reserved for accent and to reference weevils.
Tone	• Low tonal contrast.	• References previous practice.	• Low tonal contrast decided especially for symbolism of hidden, hard-to-find information but high tonal contrast reserved for use as necessary.
Texture	• Different directions of hooking. • Hooking from both sides.	• Resulting from combination of geometric PNG way of working and more organic personal style. • Serendipitous discovery based on examining back of one early piece.	• The former useful for concealing information and the latter useful for revealing information – important *leit motif* of thesis. • Extensive experimentation with double-sided hooking and its effects.
Motif	• Realistic weevil with dimples added as black circular marks.	• Referenced previous practice. • Accentuated the dimples.	• Early pieces were weevils; later pieces were dimples only.

For personal fertility reasons I adopted the Torres Straits baby mat format (see section 3.5.3) for its reference to babies but also for its size, a size which would allow more explorations than larger pieces. Thus a major, if somewhat pragmatic, decision was made with respect to my weevil's initial habitat of small, rectangular, hooked mats.

As mentioned in section 3.5.3, wool is used in the hooking of the art works in reference to my Canadian heritage. For the same reason, as much as possible of the wool was sourced second hand, including wool from my own collection. In most circumstances I tend to avoid dyeing, preferring to use the wools as I buy them: while this poses constraints with regard to the colours that are available, when you work with recycled materials, history becomes integral to the work (see 3.5.3).

5.3 What did the Weevil look like? Formal Aesthetic Research

Identifying the key features of the Papua New Guinea female art work (Tables 2.1.1 and 2.1.2) provided a platform from which to launch investigations into the weevil's appearance. In conjunction with features of historical PNG female material culture and my own design elements (Table 2.2.1) I incorporated my earliest weevil drawings made in early 1992 (Plate 5.3.1). These constituted personal historical and primitive drawings, representing my earliest attempts at drawing from life. A return to early works by both myself and Papua New Guinean women combined both artistic histories and represented a starting point for the forthcoming visual voyage.

Plate 5.3.1: Weevil drawings, 1992, Lamothe sketchbook

At the time of making the formal aesthetic research pieces, all based on the same drawing, my idea was that they would form a starting point from which other experimentations would derive. The design elements which were included in those first pieces were motif, colour, tone and texture. The motif consisted primarily of a large

weevil image, with or without dimple reference, with the background intersected by horizontal line.

By manipulating each of the design elements in turn, and keeping essentially to the same design, conclusions could be drawn about the effect of each technique. All of these pieces were intended, from the very beginning, to be explorations or, in more artistic terms, formal aesthetic research for the final body of visual work. In effect, the final body of work would depend on both the visual explorations of technical effects as well as the information discovered in the archival and contemporary Papua New Guinean mat research.

Although each piece in the formal aesthetic research series is numbered in the order that it was made, in the following discussions the pieces are presented out of numerical sequence to further the discussion of each quality and the decisions taken as a result of the research.

5.3.1 Colour of the Weevil

Based on the colour of the stitched *Pandanus,* I determined to start the formal research pieces in the same neutral shades. In October 2002 I collected some dried banana leaves from our Lake Eacham property (Plate 5.3.2).

Plate 5.3.2: Banana leaf samples in my sketch book, October 2002

Besides referencing the materials of the Torres Straits baby mats seen at the Cairns Regional Gallery, these dried banana leaves also represented, in a sense, a universal

dried plant colour (…recognising, of course, that different plants, like different woods, have different properties and therefore dry to different colours) that could be used as a colour benchmark for the imagined pieces. The drawings of the first research pieces were made full size on drafting paper.

The purchase of the materials necessary to my hooking (second hand wools) had to be done in Australia, there not being second hand stores of this nature in Kathmandu, which was where I then resided. Annual trips to Canada supplemented these second hand wool purchases.

A series of line drawings based on the baby mat size and incorporating one of my early weevils (of which two were selected, see Plate 5.3.1) was made. From four beige and slightly darker brown wools I made small sampler squares (Plate 5.3.3).

Plate 5.3.3: Hooked samples

Because one of the fabrics was too stark in its whiteness it was tea-dyed. The first design, **Uncommon Weevil Mat I** (Plate 5.3.4), was hooked with the tea-dyed material combined with camel-coloured as well as scarlet wool. The scarlet wool formed two of the horizontal lines that traversed the piece from top to bottom, symmetrically as would be the case in Papua New Guinean design. All the pieces in this series, consisting of two different but related weevil designs, were given the title **Uncommon Weevil Mat**.

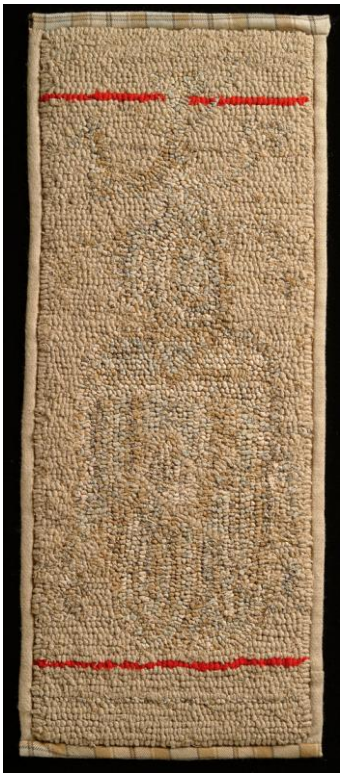


Plate 5.3.4: Uncommon Weevil Mat I, 58 by 23.5 cm.

From the beginning red was used as an allusion to or metaphor for women. Symmetrical red lines were used in **Uncommon Weevil Mat I**, but from **Uncommon Weevil Mat II** onwards, the lines were set asymmetrically in the pieces, reflecting my own design aesthetic. In my own work, the colour red had featured strongly in my infertility series. The colour red reverberates with the power of menstruation and reproduction. In Nepal, I found similar symbolism:

> Red symbolises love, passion, eroticism, creation, fertility, the renewal of life, and the energy of life. In Nepal, as the male active principle in the form of *saubagya*, red is bestowed to the bride by the groom as a token of the life-giving force. *Saubagya* consists of a number of red items that become the emblems of a married woman whose husband is alive: red glass beads, called *pote;* red glass bangles, *chura;* red powder *sindur,* for the part of the hair; and a red braided tassel, *dhago.* (Gabriel, 1999, pg. 47)

When I returned to Australia for the opening of *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* at the Cairns Regional Gallery in January 2003, I was able to purchase three blankets, one of which was almost an exact colour match for the dried banana leaf. With this expanded material, **Uncommon Weevil Mats II** and **III** were hooked.

Having hooked the beige, dried-plant, referencing pieces as planned, my first impression was not favourable. Colour had been the cornerstone of my previous

practice. The lack of colour coupled with the extreme subtlety of the motif on the ground shook my aesthetic sensibilities. Notes from my diary reflect this:

> In terms of hooking, I continue to find hooking in beige wool extremely boring. It cannot be the simplicity of the image because all the weevil rugs have had simple images. As well, the fabrics with which I have hooked in the past have been plain primarily so have not presented much variation in pattern. I am not sure if it is the wool and its coarseness, or the wool and its absorptive nature (the colour sinks in rather than jumping out at you) or just the colour…that fails to stimulate me (Lamothe diary, December 20, 2002).

Later in this series I began to explore the use of colour. Taking the basic weevil shape and an approximation of the baby mat shape and size, several blue (referencing the weevil colours) mats were constructed. **Uncommon Weevil Mat VII** used similar formats to the first pieces with two different fabrics, one only outlining the weevil and the second for both the ground and the interior of the weevil body. The device of directional hooking was employed to differentiate the weevil interior from the surrounding ground. The ground was hooked horizontally, alluding to the geometry of the stitched *Pandanus* mats while the insect, as in all pieces, was hooked in an organic circular fashion. In **Uncommon Weevil Mat VIII** this was taken even further when the insect was not even outlined with a second fabric and only the direction of hooking provided the definition. These mats are presented in Plates 5.3.5 and 5.3.6.

Plate 5.3.5: Uncommon Weevil Mat VII, 51.5 by 32.5 cm.

Plate 5.3.6: Uncommon Weevil Mat VIII, 59.5 by 25 cm.

5.3.2 To Camouflage or not?

At the beginning of the studio research in 2003, I began with the assumption that the work would have low tonal contrast and I was comfortable with this way of working. Therefore when the wool fabrics were being paired for the first series of uncommon weevil rugs, the aim was for low tonal contrast in the neutral beige shades which formed this new palette. The first piece fulfilled this expectation and was quite subtle, the motif nearly blending with the ground in the manner of a camouflaged insect.

Both the next piece, **Uncommon Weevil Mat II**, using the identical design with as **Uncommon Weevil Mat I** but with two different wool fabrics, and the first piece (**Uncommon Weevil Mat VI)** of the series investigating colour also showed high tonal contrast. The patterned fabric used for the motif in **Uncommon Weevil Mat VI** proved to be lighter in tone than the ground, although this had not been apparent in the sample. In these pieces the high tonal contrast makes the weevil emerge from the ground and suggested a further exploration on which to base the final series (Plates 5.3.7 and 5.3.8).

Plate 5.3.7: Uncommon Weevil Mat II, 58 by 23.5 cm.

Plate 5.3.8: Uncommon Weevil Mat VI, 51 by 32 cm.

By the time of construction of the third piece, **Uncommon Weevil Mat III**, using two different beige fabrics with very subtle and minimal tonal contrast, I decided that the low tonal contrast and subtlety were not only very attractive but they also referenced the Morobean mats more closely. Another piece, **Uncommon Weevil Mat IX**, closely related to these earliest pieces, uses only directional hooking to differentiate between ground and motif. Made in Malesiga, the antennae and horizontal lines were coloured red at the instigation of Siwon. These tonally close pieces are shown in Plates 5.3.9 and 5.3.10.

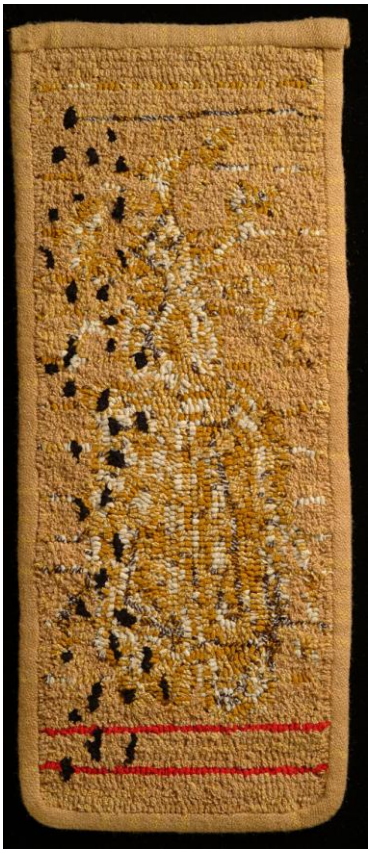


Plate 5.3.9: Uncommon Weevil Mat III, 58 by 23.5 cm.

Plate 5.3.10: Uncommon Weevil Mat IX, 58 by 24 cm.

The low tonal contrast was proving aesthetically pleasing. Given the difficulty in obtaining both primary source archival materials from the Lutheran Church as well as finding historical mats in museum collections, the low tonal contrast was a good vehicle to convey that difficulty visually …and even the obscurity in which women had laboured in New Guinea and elsewhere.

Another consideration in the choice of close tonal contrasts reflected insects themselves. Camouflage confers a degree of protection against predation by other insects as well as other entomophagous animals. This method of obscuring conjures

up visions of camouflage *viz.* moths whose pattern provides camouflage against a background of tree trunk or mauve grasshoppers that cannot be seen against the *Dendrobium* orchids which they are eating. In the weevil this concealing mechanism is provided by the elytra which not only protects the more delicate flying wing but also provides camouflage (Lawrence & Britton, 1994).

5.3.3 Texture

In early 2003 a moment of enlightenment occurred. In discussions of the formal aesthetics of the pieces, the pieces were accidentally presented to my supervisor and a fellow student on what would be considered the back side. The backs of the pieces were duly admired before it was realised that these were the backs. This raised questions regarding considerations of front versus back. The sides had substantially different textures; they read differently in terms of colour and tone. Moreover the backs were as aesthetically appealing as the fronts.

The idea of a front and a back, both of which could be shown, lead to questions relating to what could be shown on either side; could a technique be found to conceal some information and reveal other information? One method considered was the printing of relevant information on plain wools which would then be cut and hooked into the piece; could this methodology work effectively and be employed to add another message, another layer to the information being presented?

While pondering methods of showing both front and back of each piece, another inspirational moment occurred…this one of even greater significance. What if each side contained a front and a back? What if I hooked part of the design from one side then flipped the piece over and hooked the rest of the design from the other side? Again I quote from notes made at the time:-

> It was not until today, Tuesday, in Canberra that I wondered if I could somehow make the back of the pieces look like the underneath of the insects. And I think I have may have found a solution or at least a possibility to do just that. But that came later. At the time, my mind all of a sudden made a jump, one of those jumps that are so startling in their simplicity. I wondered about hooking the motif, the weevil, on one side of the fabric and then hooking the background on the other side. You would end with a combination of loops and flat stitches on both sides of the piece. On one side the flat stitches would be the motif and on the other side *vice versa*. I also think the flat stitches would tend to recede, particularly if combined with the darker colour (Lamothe diary, February 4, 2003).

These ideas lead to experimentation during the next phase of the studio practice. Three pieces were made using this double-sided hooking technique. In effect they resemble the Waldoboro hooked rugs from Waldoboro, Maine in the United States that are distinguished by clipped loops that created a sculpted finish (Kopp & Kopp, 1995). However, my pieces were definitely intended to be viewed from both sides, unlike any other type of hooking that has hitherto been exhibited or otherwise published.

The fantastic revealing and concealing possible with this method is staggering. Comparing the first two double-sided pieces (**Uncommon Weevil Mats IV and V**) (Plates 5.3.11 and 5.3.12 below) which used exactly the same fabrics as the last piece in the first series (**Uncommon Weevil Mat III**) (Plate 5.3.9), the difference in the ability to distinguish the motif from the ground was almost unbelievable. What had been obscure in the third mat was suddenly extremely clear.

Plate 5.3.11: Uncommon Weevil Mats IV, *recto* on left and *verso* on right, 51 by 30.5 cm.

Plate 5.3.12: Uncommon Weevil Mat V, *recto* on left and *verso* on right, 51 by 30.5 cm.

As well as the potential for the obscured/unobscured dichotomy, double-sided hooking can also be related to other dichotomies operating within this study …the opposing of Canadian and Papua New Guinean, of traditional and contemporary, of male and female, of science and art…endless combinations and permutations.

The other solution that I allude to in the diary quote above is the use of patterned fabric for hooking, especially printed fabric. Printed fabric is characterised by appearing on only one side of the fabric, printing ink not normally penetrating the fabric (this is not the case if the printing is done with dyes). Again diary notes made at the time present the growing sense of the possibilities of this technique:

> With regard to having a different pattern on the flat stitches compared to the loops, if is important to understand that two different sides of the cloth [that is being hooked with] are visible. If we call the loops the upper side of the cloth (think in terms of printed cloth) then the flat sides would be, if executed neatly, the underneath or non-printed side of the fabric. There is thus the possibility of having two different prints, on either side of the fabric and thus two different patterns appearing on the loops and flat stitches of the hooking (Lamothe diary, February 4, 2003).

Experiments with this technique were carried out, albeit only with finely printed cotton. The pattern was placed on the flat stitch side of the hooking. Although it had a great potential for conveying added information not visible on the other (looped) side, this line of experimentation was not pursued primarily because of the difficulty of finding already printed woollen goods, especially with the text or imagery that would reflect the weevil work. While it would have had been possible to print the wool myself and thus

incorporate information pertaining directly to the thesis research, like dyeing it was not a technique that was in my normal repertoire and, indeed, presented challenges beyond the timeframe and scope of this particular research. However it does have one major connection to the creative processes of Morobean mat makers, *viz.* the use of applied colour in that the applied colour would be the printing on wool prior to its deconstruction and subsequent hooking.

As mentioned in section 5.3.1, a final experiment on the concept of concealing and revealing was conceived through the use of texture. A small sample hooked piece, not created for exhibition purposes, presented a very simplified beige weevil motif against a beige ground of the very same fabric. It worked brilliantly with the motif being just vaguely discernable until you realised that hooking direction provided the clue. On the verso of this piece I added a layer of information by painting on the names of women who were informing my research. This technique, of course, made a direct allusion to the applied colour on the historical stitched *Pandanus* mats. Instead of this small hooked piece I made a piece (**Uncommon Weevil Mat VIII**) with a teal (twill weave) wool (Plate 5.3.6). While it exemplified the possibilities of directional hooking, the twill weave diffuses the light differently causing the image to present difficulties of interpretation.

Another experiment with texture, mentioned below with respect to the dimple motif, was not as successful.

5.3.4 The Dimple as Motif

Subsequent to exploring the use of tone within the neutral banana leaf colour, and then following with texture by using the double-sided hooking technique, I also began to investigate colour (alluding to the weevil itself but also my own previous practice) and motif (focussing intimately on the dimples of the elytra). From my earliest examinations of weevils, especially the brightly coloured genera such as *Eupholus*, the dimples of the elytra have commanded my attention (Lamothe sketch book, 1991). I am not alone in this fascination. The elytra and its indentations are beautifully exemplified by Durin (Scherer, 1998) (Plate 5.3.13) in his depiction of *Eupholus magnificus*.

Plate 5.3.13: Durin's depiction of *Eupholus magnificus* (Scherer, 1998, p.9)

The dimples in the elytra of many other beetles are also evident in Durin's paintings (Scherer, 1998). The dimples and other concavities, pits and grooves of the weevil genus *Gymnopholus,* which lives in the cool, moist upper rainforests of Papua New Guinea, are especially striking in that they provide a favourable environment for several families of plants who are themselves the hosts for nematodes, mites and bark lice (Evans and Bellamy, 2000). Beckman (2003) extols the beauty of the beetles in general:

> Light wrapping the contours of the beetle's body produces colour shifts; a green surface graduates to a pink or magenta edge, deep greens and blues flash bronze or gold reflections. With the added dimensions of textures such as ridges, ribbing, granulation or **dimpling** [my emphasis], the play of light over the surface accentuates these nuances and variations in colour (Beckmann, 2003, pgs 4-5).

From the beginning, the dimples have represented weevil for me.

Four pieces were made exploring dimples, all using colour but with varying tonal contrasts and textures. For example, **Uncommon Weevil Mat X** continued the colour exploration but focussed on the dimple. The next piece, **Uncommon Weevil Mat XI** used a totally different textile, a solid coloured polyester fabric, for the motif against a patterned wool ground. Although many people found it attractive, it was hard to work and did not advance or add substantially to the conceal/reveal dichotomy. Hence I decided not to pursue this design method further. In the first double-sided piece featuring the elytra dimples (**Uncommon Weevil Mat XII**), where the dimples were concave they disappeared into the background. On the other side they virtually popped out of the fabric. It was almost magical. The potential with this technique seems limitless. **Uncommon Weevil Mat XII** was hooked with two different fabrics. The final

piece was then hooked using the same fabric for ground and motif in a series of samples where the motif size varied (**Uncommon Weevil Mat XIII**). The four mats are shown below in Plates 5.3.14 through 5.3.17).

Plate 5.3.14: Uncommon Weevil Mat X, 49.5 by 15 cm.

Plate 5.3.15: Uncommon Weevil Mat XI, 49.5 by 15 cm.

Plate 5.3.16: Uncommon Weevil Mat XII, 51 by 15 cm.

Plate 5.3.17: Uncommon Weevil Mat XIII, 68 by 15 cm.

Only plain weave wools were used in the final pieces of the exhibition.

5.4 The Weevil Finds its Niche

To extend the metaphor of woven cloth alluded to in Chapter 2.2.1, the earliest images – my weevil drawings as well as my own and Papua New Guinean design elements – would effectively form the warp through which the present research would be woven. Whether the final cloth is warp-faced (that is, with warp more prominent than weft) or weft-faced reflects the resolution of the design process and problems. In other words, how much of myself or the Papua New Guinean influence would dominate the final designs. A balanced cloth would reflect equal measures of input.

As a result of the investigation, the use of double-sided hooking and the control of tonal contrast became potential tools in the dissemination of information gleaned during other parts of the research process. Both these techniques could also be used for concealment. The neutral beige colour of the Papua New Guinean mats was chosen as the preferred colour although brighter colours, reminiscent of my previous practice, were reserved for accent. Explorations with colour brought back the sense that I could incorporate colour and still retain allusions to Morobean mat making

processes and design elements. Within a coloured framework I could also maintain the tonal contrasts that either obscured the motif or threw it into strong relief. Colour also made a strong connection with my own previous practice. As well, referencing my own practice, the dimple provided an abstract, shorthand motif for the weevil. These decisions, however, depended on the results of other investigations, *viz.* historical and contemporary studies, and therefore flexibility in expression was necessary.

Having gone from disliking the subtle, hard-to-read first piece to being less at ease with the very revealing high tonal contrast, I came to see that there was a place for both ways of working. It could be possible to utilise the technique best suited to either revealing or concealing information. Additionally, the technique need not be limited to tonal contrast, double-sided hooking or the use of printed hooking material. Another technique that could also be used in this obscuring/flaunting dichotomy includes one found on stitched *Pandanus* mats, namely, the use of applied colour as mentioned above.

During this same time frame (see Table 5.1.1), I was searching the literature for information about female material culture in Papua New Guinea, particularly relating to stitched *Pandanus* mats (see sections 2.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.4 and 2.4.4), albeit with rather limited success. The idea of information being concealed or even obscured was overwhelmingly enticing. Although at times it felt as though my isolation in Nepal was causing difficulties in tracking down any information (published and primary source as well as museum collections), in fact the difficulties related more to the actual physical lack of documentation of women's activities in colonial New Guinea.

As a result of the problems experienced in obtaining information on the stitched *Pandanus* mats, I reached the conclusion that pieces in the final body of works would maintain low tonal contrast, rendering them more difficult to read and thus reflecting the associated research difficulties. Extensive use of neutral beige shades would be employed to reflect those of the stitched *Pandanus* mats; colour, however, might be more appropriately deployed to reference fresh leaves, weevils or other environmental attributes that were characterised by bright or intense colour. The colour red would feature as border or other accent, symbolic of the women and their work. High tonal contrast and, more importantly, double-sided hooking would be used to highlight specific information. The motif of the dimple would serve as symbol of the weevil and my practice, in similar fashion to the Morobean women's use of abstracted motifs. Finally, some applied colour would be used.

5.5 Weevils on the Pandanus Leaf

As acknowledged in relation to my creative practice (see 1.5) it was necessary to identify developments in characteristics common to mat makers who use entomological motifs; to utilize the filter of a Western mat maker's experience to create a visual documentation of Morobean mat design with specific emphasis on decorative entomology; and to document the processes of parallel mat making that emerge from the research. The essence of abstracting a motif had to be distilled and the research presented in a style which also represented the core of my own practice. In an early (circa 2004) conversation with my supervisor I used the throwaway line of distilling the weevilness of weevil. The name was so appropriate and encapsulated symbolically what is meant by the niche – all those activities which help to define an animal. In *Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil* I had a name which looked to the essence, the very definition of weevil. It also gave an added focus to the study; that is, documenting the search for and portrayal of this essence would also document the creative process of a mat maker and her insect motif. The title nominated for this exhibition, some months earlier than the pieces for it had even been conceptualised, encapsulates my search for finding core meaning within specific aspects of my environment.

Although I had anticipated that five pieces (or series thereof) would constitute the visual component of this research (see 3.5.3), at this stage, after the completion of the formal aesthetic research series, I realised that I had seriously underestimated both the number of pieces required and the amount of time that needed to be allocated for this portion of the study. Because preparations for past solo exhibitions had taken from 18 to 24 months, this became the benchmark. In May 2005, with the exhibition scheduled for March 2007, and although field research was still continuing, the process of collating the historical and contemporary mat research with the studio experimentation was begun. The making of these pieces commenced in August/September 2005 and finished in June 2007.

Referencing the set of domains governing creative artistic processes, including technical processes, materiality, history, personal vocabulary, market forces and patronage/publicity (see section 1.5), I looked for visual concepts which could demonstrate a command of these domains within the parameters of the current research outcomes as a basis for the work. In this stage of idea generation, the parameters related only to the ideas and not to the technical aspects of visualising those ideas. In fact, the field work with contemporary Morobean mat makers, coupled with the research into formal aesthetics, meant that a number of technical decisions with respect to approximate shape of the pieces, their colour and desired information

had been concluded by the time I began designing the final exhibition (see sections 4.3 and 5.1 through 5.4 respectively). Nevertheless, some notations of colour and other visual aspects were also generated at this stage of designing the final exhibition pieces.

Decision making is not easily quantifiable. It is difficult to pinpoint when the germ of a thought morphs into a fully fledged position. The rationale for decisions is always more easily accessed with hindsight. This is not to say that the rationales did not always exist but one is not necessarily consciously aware of them. The germs of thought are always circulating in the brain, with ideas from one area of expertise and knowledge bumping up against another. How one makes connections between areas of expertise is a critical factor.

Decisions were made in two different ways during the creation process. On the one hand, plans were made well in advance of any work being carried out. The plans were based on formal aesthetic criteria but also took into account logistics and physical capabilities. On the other hand, there were decisions taken as the making was occurring. These decisions were pragmatic and more spontaneous but, I argue, nevertheless grounded in the domains which lead to the more considered possibilities. One difference was that the pragmatic decisions taken along the making pathway tended to be related to issues of materiality and technique. Table 5.5.1 tabulates the decisions taken in respect of the final exhibition pieces.

Table 5.5.1: Final Exhibition Pieces: Decisions, Rationales and Outcomes

Formal Quality	Aesthetic Decision	Rationale	Outcomes
Literature Review Series			
Shape of Piece	• Rectangular shape, slightly larger in area than formal aesthetic research pieces.	• Referencing *Pandanus* leaf shape. • Appropriate size to enable making of sufficient pieces.	• Influenced shape of results series. • Despite interruptions, three pieces for each series were made in the set time.
Colour	• Green for Morobean series. • Variety of colours for personal series, including reds augmented with other vibrant colours.	• Referencing leaf colour. • Referencing previous personal practice.	• Variety of greens used in reference to colour of fresh/dried leaves but also to hidden information. • Difficulties in obtaining some colours, particularly in the personal series, necessitating trips to Australia and Canada (see Table 5.1.1).
Tone	• Primarily low tonal contrast.	• Reflecting difficulty of accessing information.	• Information on first piece deliberately difficult to read.
Motif	• Text only.	• Motif inherent in leaf shape. • Text for additional information.	• Critical aspects of literature and historical research highlighted with key words.
Results Series			
Shape of Piece	• Rectangular shape, longer than literature series pieces. • Embedded in one piece of hessian, rather than made separately.	• Referencing *Pandanus* leaf shape. • Appropriate size to enable making of sufficient pieces. • Made as one piece with several panels embedded in hessian to overcome mounting difficulties.	• Long rectangular pieces embedded within hessian. • Mountable with battens of wood at top and bottom.

Table 5.5.1 (continued): Final Exhibition Pieces: Decisions, Rationales and Outcomes

Formal Quality	Aesthetic Decision	Rationale	Outcomes
Colour	• One green panel in Morobean piece, one blue panel in personal series. • Rest of panels neutral beige colours. • Red lines surrounding all panels, as well as other colours as appropriate to each series.	• Green to reference fresh *Pandanus* leaf, blue to reference *Eupholus* weevil (the focus of my past practice). • Beige colours to reference dried plant colour of stitched mats. • Red lines to reference women's work.	• One green and four beige panels within hessian background for Morobean piece. • One blue and four beige panels within hessian background for personal piece. • Red lines border the panels; green and blue lines also used in several panels.
Tone	• Close tonal contrast with exception of text on *recto* left hand panels.	• Close tonal contrast for subtlety. • Higher tonal contrast to accentuate text.	• Subtle ground enlivened by text, texture, motifs and coloured lines.
Texture	• Double-sided hooking.	• Referencing informants' names in Morobean series and weevil dimples in personal series. • Referencing environmental knowledge of both sets of makers.	• Powerful concealing/revealing of informant's names. • Accentuation of weevil dimples as abstract motif representative of weevil. • Local name opposed to scientific name of one *Pandanus* species.
Motif	• Several Morobean motifs quoted. • Western quilting motif (flying geese) in personal series.	• Referencing stitched motifs on Morobean mats. • Flying geese to reference previous personal practice but also in response to Morobean motifs.	• Added layers of information with respect to both histories.

As previewed in section 3.5.3, I was unable to predict the exact nature of the final exhibition, with the exception of the formal aesthetic research pieces, until after field research had been completed. As well as the formal aesthetic research pieces a further body of work was required for the doctoral exhibition. Early in the period of preparing these final works, I made the decision to divide them into two major entities, which I refer to as the literature review and the results series. As a scientist, I felt that the literature review and the results were the critical aspects of the research to which I could bring a visual focus. Obviously, the shape each of these series was to take was

very dependent on the outcomes of the various research strands and their ultimate artistic synthesis in the work. The series were conceived as pieces focussing on the Morobean women and on self. The literature review pieces would present an overview of the information gleaned prior to commencing field research. This would include published information in the case of the Morobean women and remembered experience as well as documented life history personally. Because the literature review pieces were made after initial field work had commenced, some elements of that field work were incorporated into these pieces. These elements were isolated for their potential to convey critical aspects of the research.

Conversely the results pieces would discuss visually the creative processes uncovered through my research. Thus all pieces would reflect aspects of Morobean practice and history, particularly in terms of the *Pandanus* leaf and the neutral colours of the finished mat. The Morobean pieces in the series would focus on mastery of the creative practice domains of colours, motifs and visual vocabulary appropriate to their practice while the personal works would reflect the same for my practice. Because the pieces were to be hooked, they would reference not only my personal practice but also my history. By referencing both histories I acknowledge the role that history plays in all artistic endeavours, including textile arts.

At the stage of beginning the final exhibition pieces (by this I mean the literature review and results series, the formal aesthetic research preceding and informing these final works), the broad shape of each series needed to be in place, although details of individual pieces could be fine tuned throughout the making process. This broad shape included the format of the art works, the number of art works that would comprise the exhibition as well as issues of mounting the pieces. Doing so reduced the difficulties which could arise as a result of not having resolved issues prior to making the pieces. Because my personal working style involves plans and decisions that are made early, sufficient time allowed for work to proceed at a comfortable but steady pace, with time for unexpected interruptions, which lessens the burden of anxiety that can then impede the making process.

Although there was flexibility at this stage, I now knew that a total of twenty or more pieces were needed for the exhibition including the pieces from the (thirteen) formal aesthetic research. A sufficient number of pieces were needed to provide evidence of both my skills and the research I had completed; on the other hand, time and energy constraints meant that sense had to be exercised when determining the eventual size of the exhibition. Because each of the formal research pieces had taken more than two weeks to make, I was able to calculate the number of pieces which could conceivably

be made within a given time frame. I envisaged three to five pieces for each section of the literature review and up to six pieces each for the results. The earlier experimental pieces would also form part of the exhibition. Didactic material, including an overall artist statement, explanations of the different series of art pieces and an overview of the Morobean mat makers supplemented by photographs from the field studies, would be exhibited with the artwork.

5.5.1 The Literature Review Series

In this present study of Morobean mat makers, the very little history in the published record as well as the oral history accessed during field research became part of the visual discourse especially for the literature review pieces. My own history was also distilled into the visual mix. Using second hand fabrics to relate these histories made a satisfying circle especially as many of the fabrics that I used were originally blankets and were now being constructed into textiles with a similar function, that is, mats.

Naming of the art works is an important component of my work, often preceding the actual making. Often evoking puns, visually or otherwise, names add an important layer of information about my pieces. The names of the literature review pieces reflected written work as well as the *Pandanus* leaf of the stitched mats and the weevils of my own obsession. They also reflected early Nepali books, similarly to the Indian books shown in the National Treasures exhibition at the National Library of Australia in 2003, which were written on palm leaves. When it came to naming the literature review series for the Morobean women the step from palm leaves books to *Pandanus* leaves literature review was a natural one. From there to the back of the weevil involved but a small conceptual leap. Accordingly, the Morobean literature review series became **(Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf** and the personal literature review series became **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil**. The decision to make three pieces for each of the two literature review series was a pragmatic one. How many pieces could I realistically make in the given time frame? As signalled earlier in section 5.5, I had to be practical, taking into account that the physicality of the work could put me at risk of repetitive strain injury if I was not sensible. I decided on three pieces for each of the literature review series, sufficient to place me well within the exhibition size parameters which I had set myself but not more than I could handle within time constraints.

When actual designing of the literature review series was begun (May 2005), it was easier to concentrate on the Morobean women's pieces. There could be objectivity

about the information I had in relation to the Morobean women. In fact, because not much information was available, it was relatively simple to decide what was important.

The first image I made was a map of Papua New Guinea, with a focus on Morobe and the Huon Gulf. It was too realistic and contained too much detail both in terms of the wool hooking technique and as a way of conveying information about the Morobean women's much simpler and abstracted way of working. My sketchbook notes also concluded that the map idea is "too simplistic and too crude". I did not even produce a colour version of this sketch. However some of the ideas generated were valid and were incorporated into later imagery. These included a horizontal rectangular shape approximating a trimmed *Pandanus* leaf, the greens of the fresh *Pandanus*, the degree of difficulty of reading the information on the pieces, and the use of textual references. By the end of the month I had made the first sketches of the three pieces which would comprise the Morobean women's literature review (Plate 5.5.1).

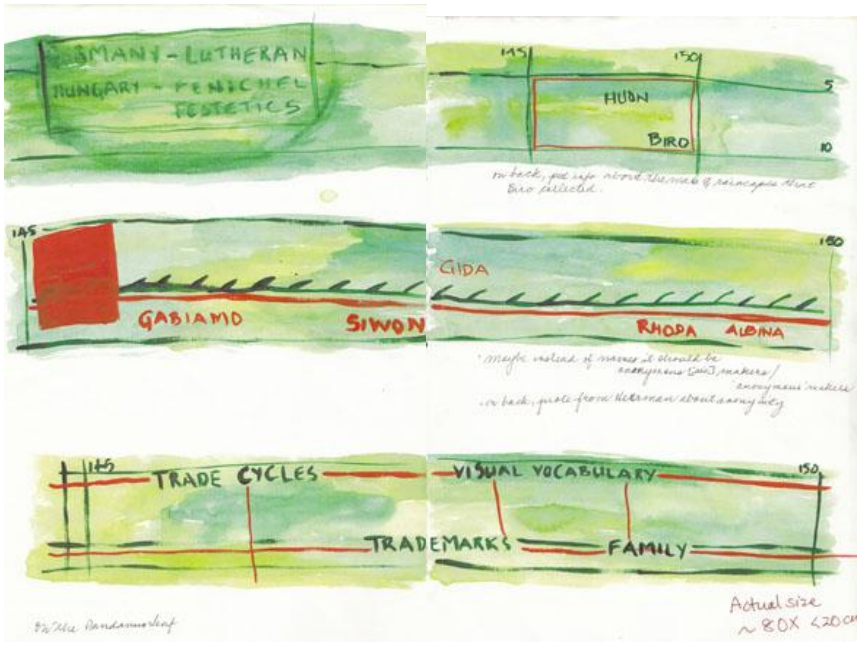


Plate 5.5.1: Early sketches for the Morobean women's literature review pieces

The incorporation and re-acceptance of colour into my work meant that I was able to record aspects of Papua New Guinean creative process relating to the collecting and making of the stitched mats visually. In particular, the use of the fresh *Pandanus* leaves and their colour and shape provided a strong image on which to superimpose information relating to historical mats and mat makers in the literature review series. The use of the green colour for the Morobean literature series liberated more extensive use of colour in the personal series.

The final sketches were made shortly thereafter, a fine tuning of the earlier sketches and ideas (Plate 5.5.1). The drawings for **(Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf I** comprised a visual reading of the earliest historical information about the stitched mats. Since this information was difficult to obtain I decided that the ground and motif of this mat would be made of tonally similar coloured fabric. The piece was coloured dark green with the contained information also dark green/black. In the sketch, it was deliberately difficult, though not impossible, to read. I knew that hooking would increase this difficulty. The *recto* of the piece had the names of the countries (Germany and Hungary) of the earliest expatriates in the region. From Germany came Lutheran missionaries; from Hungary came three scientist/collectors. Two of the Hungarian scientists were of only peripheral interest to this study so they are placed, with the Germany and the Lutheran Church, on the dark green section at the left hand side of the piece. On the piece, the area of the studies was indicated on the right, lighter coloured side with latitude and longitude marked as well as the names Biro and Huon. The geographical area was delineated in green and the Huon area in red for the women who are the focus of the study.

The second piece in the series, **(Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf II** (lower sketch, Plate 5.5.1) continued essentially the same format and colour, although tonally related to the more easily read right hand side of the first piece. The lighter tones, with contrasting text, were an indication that this particular information was more readily obtained than the previous facts about historical mats. I included the fact that trademarks existed, that mats were important in the trade cycles operating in the area, that visual vocabulary was understood within communities and that family was critical for mat makers. This information was indicated by the words trademark, trade cycles, family and visual vocabulary sketched at the top and bottom of the piece. The geographical markers indicated the entire area of the mat with red lines connecting the words on the piece.

Similarly, for the final piece, (**Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf III,** I used the green rectangular shape of the first pieces, again alluding to the *Pandanus* leaf shape, with a dark green line again outlining the geographical area. This piece was derived from the middle sketch of Plate 5.5.1. Through the centre horizontally I sketched two lines of thorns connecting an open red box, with the word Anonymous beneath it, to a solid red box on the right hand side of the mat. The boxes allude to the women who made the mats. Our historical knowledge of these women is scant to non-existent (thus the solid, opaque box) while the current study could, and does, reveal makers' identities and record these for posterity.

Although the earlier, formal aesthetic research pieces (section 5.3) were sketched using watercolours which therefore varied in intensity throughout the sketch, units of the sketch were in discrete colours and I subsequently hooked these units in discrete colours. For example, I hooked the ground of **Uncommon Weevil Mat VI** (Plate 5.3.8) using one piece of dark blue fabric while hooking the motif in another blue. The Morobean literature review pieces were also painted in watercolour but with definite variation in colour. When they were hooked, I employed various shades and tints of greens for the ground on the three pieces. Rather than using one colour for the ground and one for the motif, a selection of five to seven wool fabrics was used for each of the different colour elements in the pieces. They were hooked in organic patterns that closely reproduced the original drawing.

The use of multiples of each colour derived from the second hand source of the fabrics. It is impossible to acquire sufficient material of one particular colour to weave, or hook, an entire area. A blanket, for example, could be used for a small piece but would not provide sufficient material to completely hook a larger piece. This provides a constraint, or a limitation of parameters as I prefer to consider it, within which to operate. In order to avoid sudden, small inclusions of a different shade or tint of the same colour, especially at what might be seen visually as the finishing of the pieces, I employed, within each monochromatic area of my woven tapestries, multiple related shades and tints. In weaving I had used a number of closely related colours, initially as single wefts but later as loosely laid-in bundles of three. In hooking, although it is theoretically possible, I have not used multiple strands. Patterned fabric had provided subtle variations in my tapestry weaving and was also used extensively in this current body of work. By judicious choice of patterned fabric, dots of complementary colours were scattered throughout monochromatic areas. An advantage of multiple shades and tints in the current works was that these varied colours of my drawing and hooked pieces echoed the subtle variations that occur naturally in fresh and dried *Pandanus* leaves.

These pieces were hooked in an organic way of working which referenced my tapestry weaving preference of Coptic (also known as eccentric) weave. In this style of weaving, rather than weave straight across the warps, weavers built up areas of colour and shape. The weft moves at many angles across the warp. In the Morobean literature review pieces the hooking curves around motifs and takes paths of its own devising across the hessian. This organic hooking style also makes reference to contemporary Canadian rug hooking where skies and other large areas of ground are

hooked in swirls of colours picked out with accents of another colour (Fitzpatrick, 2005).

Finally, it seemed appropriate that these pieces, which essentially synthesize accumulated knowledge prior to the field work, should return to earlier styles referencing that the history of my previous practice was an important force in decision making. As alluded to earlier, I strove for some sense of a balance in my work, looking for inputs that reflected Morobean mat makers' ways of working but also retaining my own design considerations. This was especially pertinent in reference to the personal literature review series.

Starting in August 2005, I completed **(Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf I** (Plate 5.5.2). Although this series is essentially one-sided, the pieces were to be mounted to allow viewing of both sides. On the *verso* of this piece, I revealed information about the elusive historical mats, indicating the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography's collection numbers in red text. This printed red text also alludes to the red paint applied to century old mats, a discontinued practice that is no longer even recognised.

Plate 5.5.2: (Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf I, 30 by 106 cm.

To complete this series it was necessary to recover some memory of my lost art work and sketches (see 4.1). I was able to access photocopies of my artwork for the Morobean pieces from the Cairns Regional Gallery. Being behind in a self imposed schedule by more than three months, I applied myself to finishing the second of the Morobean literature review series (Plate 5.5.3) and on March 21st 2006 was able to commence the last of the three pieces. In three weeks this piece had been finished also (Plate 5.5.4) and a start was made on the personal series **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil**.

Plate 5.5.3: (Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf II, 30 by 106 cm.

Plate 5.5.4: (Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf III, 30 by 106 cm.

I had made some preliminary sketches for the Canadian piece of the personal literature review series. I felt that they were clumsy efforts but was not sure how to proceed. In order to provide continuity with the Morobean women's literature review series, I had used the same shape and size format. I sketched an outline of the patterns used in the body of works titled *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea*. This weevil patterning formed the background of each piece. On this imagery was superimposed information relevant to the Canadian period of my life. Although the use of the size and format were acceptable, the resultant images were sterile.

Discussions with Dr. Brown helped to clarify my thinking. Changing the background, re-organising the foreground elements and returning to an organic form resulted in free flowing images that reflected my heritage but maintained the style of the Morobean literature review. Working from the unsuccessful preliminary sketches and notes made at the beginning of the design process a year earlier, I resolved the Canadian piece for the personal literature review

(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil provides an overview of personal experiences which background the current study. The three pieces are allocated to three locations influencing my life and work – Canada (my place of birth and young womanhood), Papua New Guinea (my home for more than a decade in the first part of independent adult life) and Australia (my current home). Beyond the consistency of shape and

mounting method employed, similar visual and verbal devices occur throughout the pieces. One of the devices used in the experimental pieces, the Morobean literature review pieces and also in the personal literature review pieces was the colour red (see 2.1, 2.2 and 3.5.3). In the personal literature review pieces substantial areas of the ground are red, given that I, a woman, am the central focus of these pieces. Each piece also includes a red flower, or leaf, appropriate to the time of my life. Once I had resolved the Canadian piece (Plate 5.5.5), the Papua New Guinean piece followed quickly.

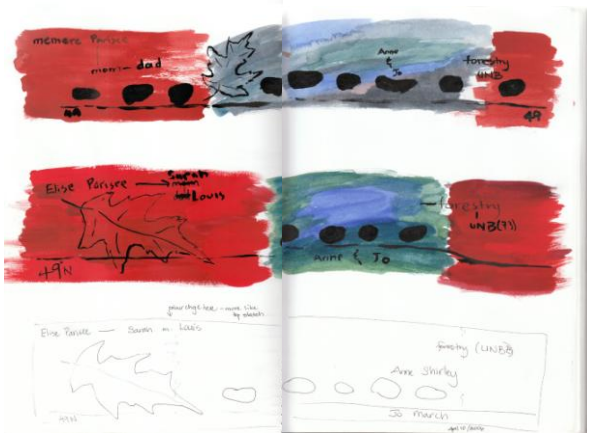


Plate 5.5.5: Resolved sketches for (Notes on) The Back of a Weevil I

Designing the Australian piece was also a struggle. Many sketches were needed before I was satisfied both aesthetically and contextually. I can only postulate that the difficulties related to the subjectivity underlying the piece. Perhaps I had not attained enough psychological distance, most of my pieces being composed after an interval of some months, even a few years, from the actual lived experience. The resolution, however, was extremely satisfying from a formal aesthetic perspective as well as from the viewpoint of the visual allusions I was able to make. Having completed the designing, I began making the pieces.

(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil I dealt with my Canadian upbringing, with my grandmother's name leading to my mother's, and my mother's marriage to my father, indicating the importance of lineage to the Western textile artist. These names were placed at the left side of the horizontal piece along with the red maple leaf. This red is echoed on the right hand side framing the central blue-green weevil colours and attendant dimples. My career in forestry is also indicated by the maple leaf along with my degree in forestry. The names Anne and Jo at the bottom of the piece, below the

49 degrees latitude marker, reference the world of books that were so important to me, and the two protagonists who, as much as my family, form part of my character.

At this time I was living in Honiara, Solomon Islands (see also Table 5.1.1). The day after I started the final designs of **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil II** and **III** Honiara erupted[7]. In mid May 2006 I put in the final few loops on this first piece of the personal literature review series (Plate 5.5.6).

Plate 5.5.6: (Notes on) The Back of a Weevil I, 30 by 106 cm.

With a consciousness that I was behind in my planned schedule, I started the second piece on Papua New Guinea. This piece featured more of my forestry career, highlighted on the left side to indicate chronology. The background of this piece was divided horizontally into red (women) and purple (weevil) with the flame of the forest flower done partially in realistic reds segueing into the purple. A geographic marker is given at the top of the piece with a line and latitude indicator reflecting my location in Papua New Guinea in close proximity to the current research sites. Marriage to Frans is indicated as well as my continued training in the natural resources field. A less obvious allusion is the flying geese quilt block outlined on the right hand side, making a connection with a Western quilt heritage but also with the connections between early quilters and the natural world. My introduction to art is indicated by the words (scientific illustrations) hooked into the lower half of the piece and flanked by weevil's dimples.

When I went to my store of wools, however, I discovered that there were not enough colours, specifically the purples, needed for the piece. This threw me off balance. Honiara is not noted for the quantity and variety of wools in its second hand shops. It was possible to purchase some wool articles there but no purples. Within a week and a half (that is late May 2006) I was en route to Australia and Canada again (see Table 5.1.1), with the sketch for **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil II**. I hooked throughout

[7] Rioters looted and burnt businesses, particularly in Chinatown. Local Members of Parliament were arrested. Australia sent in extra troops, which arrived two days later. Helicopters swooped and tear gas was deployed. Many people were traumatised, especially given the civil unrest which had gripped the country some six years earlier.

this Canadian visit, albeit at a slower pace than would have been possible in the studio. One major achievement while in Canada was the purchase of more hooking wool in the purples of the second piece and the blues of the final piece. Although normally sourced second hand, I had been having extreme difficulty in sourcing some colours of wool. Without the luxury of unlimited time it was either shop at dedicated hooking stores or overdye already purchased wools. Shopping for new fabric was the preferred solution.

While visiting artist friend Susan Lindsay we took in a group exhibition of Canadian rug hookers. It was the work of Canadian artist Emily Carr, a noted west coast painter, which excited me the most. Although Carr's work was hooked mainly in browns it had a very free feel to it, not unlike her brush strokes. On my return I had a week in Australia before going on to the Solomon Islands during which time I was able to finish and safely leave **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil II** (Plate 5.5.7).

Plate 5.5.7: (Notes on) The Back of a Weevil II, 30 by 106 cm.

This final, Australian, piece, summarising much of my contemporary life, featured a red waratah. Flanking this red were the beiges that allude to the dry continent that is Australia. Bordering the entire piece are vivid blues alluding not only to the weevil, which is also depicted in shadow imagery, but also to the seas surrounding Australia. The change in my life from forestry to the visual arts is indicated on the left side of the piece. In the central beige section I reference the importance of women to my career and life as a textile artist: my close friend Sue (Holzknecht) who shared New Guinea experiences and propelled me on the road to the first *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea* exhibition; Sharon (Peoples) who was a Master's student during my Diploma in Art years and represents not just herself but all the women whose professional support in the arts has been critical; and Sandra (Burchill), of the Atherton Tablelands, who heads a textile group which offered me friendship and support when we moved here in 1997. Their names are hooked in red. Finally, on the right hand blue side of the piece

the latest phases of my education with my art education through ANU and JCU are indicated (Plate 5.5.8).

Plate 5.5.8: (Notes on) The Back of a Weevil III, 30 by 106 cm.

5.5.2 The Results Series

At the outset, in 2005, my notes (sketch book, May 19) indicate that the final series should incorporate images referencing weevils and the dimples on their elytra as well as centipedes, these being the two main insect/arthropods in the research. I also wanted to allude to the contemporary Morobean makers/informants, the idea of matriline and the idea of the generalist (as opposed to specialist).

The subtlety of some of the earlier experimental works, those reflecting the natural plant colours of the Morobean mats, along with the difficulty of discerning the contained patterns, suggested the obscurity of women's work. Although not wanting to maintain women in obscurity, the subtlety provided a vehicle to manipulate the physical effects given by low tonal contrast. This would allow a discourse on the reality of the situation with regard to female material culture, both in New Guinea and elsewhere, then and now. Thus the neutral beige colours in the formal aesthetic research pieces provided an appropriate and beautiful background for several panels in the results series.

However the opposite, several ways of highlighting information, was also desirable and could be achieved through different formal devices. One of those devices involved high tonal contrast, an effect also highlighted in the formal aesthetic research. Presenting both sides of a piece allowed information to be available on one side and hidden on the other. The most powerful device involved the use of double-sided hooking. Double-sided hooking could involve low tonal contrast but, because of the textural relief provided by this technique, could also powerfully spotlight specific areas of each piece.

To provide a link with the literature review series, I wanted to keep the leaf format in the results series. However, in order to create a distinct series, I also had to make that

leaf shape somewhat different. It did not take much time to decide on a longer rectangular format than that used in the literature review series, one that would be oriented vertically rather than horizontally. I decided that these vertical long discrete pieces would be suspended from a horizontal length of wood with another similar length of wood anchoring the bottom. The top and bottom pieces of wood would overlap the area of hooking to simulate the saplings lying across the drying leaves (see Plate 4.3.4).

One of the major aspects which needed to be resolved was the number of vertical sections which would comprise each of the results series (Morobean and personal). Although my initial thoughts had been to have six panels, doubts about my physical ability to complete this number in the time remaining warranted exploring further options. In the first sketches in late July, 2006 I drew four panels. However, even numbers do not resonate with me, so neither six nor four panels felt satisfactory in that regard. Next five panels were drawn. As an odd number, as a number which I felt physically capable of doing, on all levels this felt like the correct solution to this current problem.

The imagery for these panels exercised my ability to synthesise all the information that had been uncovered about Morobean mat makers and their creative processes. It took four attempts before a satisfactory design was completed (Plate 5.5.9).

Plate 5.5.9: Sketch for *Araraang* Allusions

The first, left hand panel was green to represent the fresh leaf while the other four panels were in the dried leaf colour reminiscent of the stitched *Pandanus* mats themselves. On the green panel, in a local language, was the name of one of the species of *Pandanus* identified by the women of Yaga Settlement. The names of the major informants, grouped according to their cultural group, were drawn in reverse image on the sketch of the three middle panels to indicate that the names would be hooked from the *verso* side. At the bottom of each of these panels I placed motifs used by those women and the relevant cultural group. The motifs that were quoted included only those in the communal visual vocabulary; a specific decision was made not include any handmarks that would breach copyrights. On the final, right hand panel was depicted the motif called variously vine or snake around a tree. This motif, which resembles a couched stitch, is used as an edging stitch by the three cultural groups studied. Around all five pieces there were two thin borders, the red one to represent this as women's work and the green one to indicate nature and the forest with which Papua New Guinean life is entwined. At this early stage there were even titles for both

the Morobean and the personal results pieces, *viz.* ***Araraang*** **Allusions** (Plate 5.5.9) and **Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil**.

The name ***Araraang*** **Allusions** derives from the Tuam name for centipede, *viz. araraang.* This piece thus alludes to the centipede as the (approximate) entomological motif revealed during field research. It also makes an encompassing allusion to the making of stitched *Pandanus* mats. **Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil**, on the other hand, examines my visualisation of going to the visual essence of an idea. Portraying the weevil in its abstracted essence synthesized my personal research efforts.

At this stage, with the design finalised and the hessian cut and ready for hooking it became apparent that the mounting had not been adequately resolved. If separate panels were made how could they be finished with a discrete edging that would allow the front and the back of the pieces to be shown? How much time would that take? Even if a discrete finish such as the one used on the formal aesthetic research pieces were to be used, to what extent might that edging interrupt the flow of the design from one panel to the next? In the end, another pragmatic decision was taken: all five panels would be on the same piece of hessian which would then be hung as a single piece.

My sketches (see Plate 5.5.9) also indicate that the top and lower horizontal wooden battens should intersect the five panels approximately one-eighth of way from the top and bottom to reflect the way saplings are laid on the drying leaves in the village square. After beginning the hooking of the green panel it was realised that the colours were not suitable. After pulling out the work I began again with colours I felt were more suitable and had finished the top one-eighth (above the wooden batten area) of the green panel when I realised that the weight of the hooking would cause the panels to flop over at the top. The wooden battens would have to be placed at the very top and bottom of the hooking with a narrow border of hessian all the way around as well as between the panels! This necessitated pulling out the hooking and starting yet again.

My measurements of the overall area of the individual panels indicated that they were marginally smaller in total area than each piece of the literature review series. Knowing that each of the literature review pieces took three weeks to make, I could expect to finish each of the results pieces in just less than three weeks per panel. Having started and nearly finished the first panel, news arrived from Canada that my mother had had a cerebral haemorrhage and was dying[8]. By mid September I was back in Honiara with

[8] I did as much work as I could on the panel and caught a flight out the next day to spend the next two weeks in Canada. Of course I was unable to do any work while there.

four panels to make in two and a half months. There was no time for further interruptions. The first panel was finished on the first working day back and the second one begun.

In computations of time requirements for the three middle panels, it was apparent that the first of these, the second panel from the left, would be the most time consuming. There were four names to be hooked in reverse hooking. Each of the names involved a single line of hooking. The names were hooked and then the other side was worked around the (not very visible) names taking great care not to pull up any loops from them. It was laborious and time consuming but oh the satisfaction when I finished the first name and was able to see it pop out of the other side! The excitement of seeing the names emerge from the background spurred me on to greater effort. And every email I sent to friends and family at that time contained that core of excitement. Every name that was completed was another mini celebration, both of the progress that was being made but also an acknowledgement of the wonderful Morobean women. When I finished both the second panel and a third one I returned more or less to the planned schedule. The fourth section was finished on November 3rd. The fifth panel (Plate 5.5.10) was finished in a scant two weeks, in time to take it home to Australia.

Plate 5.5.10: *Araraang* Allusions, *recto* at left and *verso* at right

The personal results series was designed at the same time as the Morobean series. In order to connect them, the format of five panels was applied to both series. In the Morobean series, the *araraang* (centipede) is the feature whereas in the personal series the weevil was to be the highlight. Because the experimental pieces dealt with the weevil as motif, this strongly informed the imagery used in the personal results series. In the first sketches I had six panels (see notes for Morobean series) and

included both the outline of the actual weevil as well as a section of enlarged elytra dimples. Initially I made the weevil outline extend over several panels but that looked very clumsy in the narrow panels. With the weevil outline fitted into the width of the panel the imagery appeared too fine for the coarseness of the wool hooking technique. I decided not to use an outline of the weevil but used only the dimples to represent the weevil, metaphorically echoing the abstraction used by the Morobean artists. The sketch (Plate 5.5.11) was modified slightly during the hooking process.

Plate 5.5.11: Sketch for Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil

Colour, as well as motif, referenced the weevil. Four of the five panels in each of the results series were to be in the dried plant colour of the Morobean series with the right hand panel of the personal series being sketched as the vivid blue found on a number of the *Eupholus* weevil species. In the execution of the piece, however, the fourth and fifth panel were reversed. Dimples were added to this panel to complement the dimples on the central panel. As a final personal reference, again in conjunction to the birds' feet and frigate bird motifs of the Morobean women, the quilt pattern flying geese was included at the top and bottom of the left hand panel. Red lines outlined the whole piece, again in reference to women, while blue lines were used on the second, third and final panels in reference to *Eupholus*. The latter panel included one green line to

indicate my personal connection to nature. In direct reference and contrast to the Morobean results pieces I placed the scientific name *Pandanus dubius* into the left hand panel of the personal results series (Plate 5.5.12).

Plate 5.5.12: Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil, *recto* at left and *verso* at right

The use of the scientific name hooked into a textile serves to emphasise the western dichotomy between science and art, and even between science and everyday life. As a scientist, the value and need for a system of identification that can be universally understood makes enormous sense but I can also appreciate systems that respond to communal understanding and knowledge.

5.5.3 The Weevil Mounted (with reference to the exhibition space)

When I decided to hook my art works from both sides (see 5.3.3) the questions then became one of finding a method of presenting the formal aesthetic research series so that both sides could be seen. A number of options were canvassed including displaying the pieces within sheets of Perspex, or simple suspension from the ceiling with two strands of monofilament. Telephone calls and visits to technical firms were made to investigate the feasibility of these options. None of these appeared optimal. Perspex removed the textile from the viewer, in my opinion. Without some sort of support, hanging the pieces from the ceiling would leave them flopping unattractively. Having decided to show both sides of the pieces in the formal aesthetic research series, it followed that the literature and results series should also permit viewing both sides. Mounting options had to canvas all possibilities.

The concept for the final hanging parameters came into being around the time the literature review and results series were also being envisaged with final details sorted

out later. I based the hanging on the way the *Pandanus* leaves looked during the mat making process, including the way they hung from the tree. The three ways of exhibiting the pieces included hanging them from a circular device suspended from the ceiling (an idea that was never used), placing the pieces in a confining serviette ring construction and finally, using two horizontal hanging devices at either end of vertically long pieces much in the way that newspapers are/were suspended from wooden battens (Figure 5.5.1).

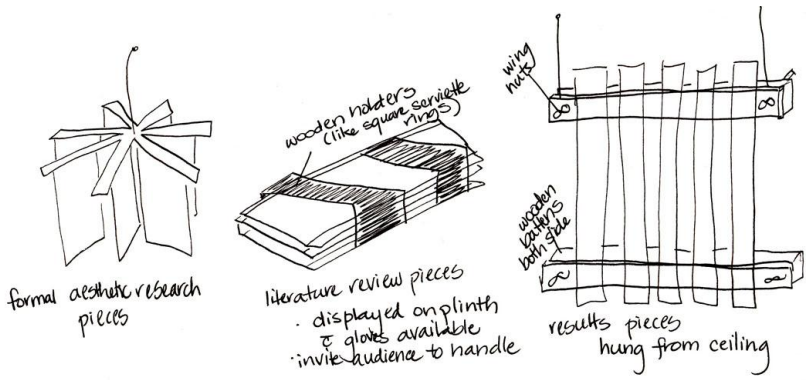


Figure 5.5.1: Potential mounting systems

These hanging devices referenced respectively the leaves hanging from a tree (see Plate 4.3.2), the leaves being bundled up with a dry leaf for carriage from garden to village (Figure 4.3.1), and the use of saplings to secure leaves drying in the village square (Plate 4.3.4). It was envisaged that these hanging devices would be used for the formal aesthetic research, literature and results series respectively.

Having examined the exhibition spaces in Townsville, including Pinnacles, the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery and Umbrella Gallery (see 3.5.3), I decided to return to the gallery and area that I knew best and that was physically most accessible to me…the Cairns Regional Gallery. None of the galleries in Townsville had anything intrinsically negative about them except for their distance from me. My familiarity with and to the Cairns Regional Gallery space and staff made it an easier fit; reducing potential stress was an important driver in this decision.

I made a successful application to the Cairns Regional Gallery and was allocated the month of September, 2006. Due to the several difficulties that delayed the PhD process, the exhibition was postponed was September, 2007. The exhibition proceeded on that date as scheduled as the exhibition work had been completed. I did realise that there would be a time lag between the exhibition and the submission of the

thesis however this was seen as unavoidable. Because this exhibition was part of the Community Exhibition Program from the Cairns Regional Gallery, the designated exhibition space was the Loft Artspace (see Figure 5.5.2).

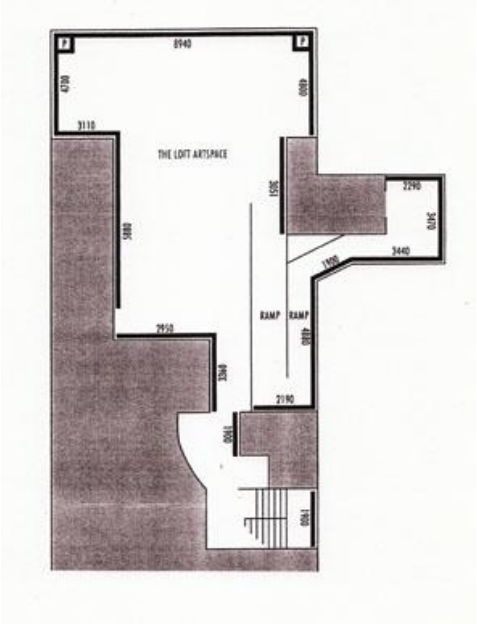


Figure 5.5.2: Floor plan of the Loft Artspace, Cairns Regional Gallery

I approached a local woodworker (Trevor Allwood of Tolga Woodworks) about framing the works for the formal aesthetic research, literature review and results series, using aspects of the models described above (Figure 5.5.1). It was necessary to work through the process for a prototype frame making decisions about what kind of wood, how wide, how the frame should be secured and how much space to leave around the art work. As mentioned in 2.4.2, weevils are phytophagous. The *Eupholus* genus feeds on tropical wood fibres. This coupled with the fact that the field research took place in the tropics inspired me to use tropical wood in framing the pieces. For the literature and results series, Cooktown Ironwood (*Erythrophleum chorostachys*) was chosen while plantation-grown mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) from Fiji was employed for the formal aesthetic research series.

I determined to make two strips of hessian to tie around each series of three works. These hessian strips would, in fact, reference the dried leaves more closely in texture and pliability than would the wooden rings. I envisaged the two series tied with the two straps of hessian and placed on a large plinth. With white gloves provided the bundles of the literature review could be untied and handled (as the leaves were untied upon arrival to the village), enabling viewing of both sides.

Because the formal aesthetic research pieces were made first, their mounting was the first to be considered. Early consideration was being given to metal arms threaded through the top and bottom of each piece and attached to the brackets on the walls of the stairwell ascending at the eastern end of the exhibition space. However, safety and health concerns precluded such a display of art work on a stairwell. In the end, the hanging of the formal aesthetic research pieces was the last to be resolved and involved open boxes (imagined as similar to an abacus frame) in which the pieces could be suspended. The mounting involved having stainless steel rods cut to size and holes drilled at either end. These rods were then inserted into the hems at the top and bottom of the piece and tea-dyed warp seine threaded through the holes and passed through the material of the hem to attach the piece to the frame. Warp seine was chosen both because of its association with my weaving and also because it could be dyed to a colour that matched the hooked works. Because the formal aesthetic research pieces were experimental, different binding techniques had been investigated. This complicated the mounting of the individual pieces. The formal aesthetic research, as a result of its experimental nature, thus comprised a variety of styles.

The results series proved to be much easier to mount. As a result of pragmatic decisions taken while making ***Araraang* Allusions** (see 5.5.2), simple battens of wood were attached to both sides of the top and bottom of each pieces. A wing nut was used to secure the front and back battens.

Chapter 6: Introducing the Weevil to the World

6.1 The Preparations

After commencing the formal aesthetic research pieces but well before the completion of field work, I had decided on the Cairns Regional Gallery as my preferred exhibition space (see section 5.5.3). The exhibition was for the entire month of September 2007.

At the time of the commencement of the results series (August 2006), my exhibition was only one year away. Living overseas created logistic difficulties with regard to the organisation of many of the aspects of the exhibition. This necessitated the compiling of and adherence to a comprehensive checklist, which could then be implemented from abroad where possible and on site as required. The checklist included publicity, photography, gallery requirements, catalogue essay, imagery and printing as well as guest speaker.

I asked Dr. Maria Wronska-Friend, whom I had first met at the *Romantics* exhibition in the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville, to write an essay for the exhibition catalogue. Based on several meetings, including one in my studio at Lake Eacham, as well as appropriate documentation and written material Dr. Wronska-Friend was able to write an essay which positioned my work with that of other women but also considered the impact my previous career in the environmental sciences has had on my practice.

Finished artwork had been documented at regular intervals throughout the making process. Raj Bhai Suwal photographed most of the formal aesthetic research pieces. Michael Marzik photographed the pieces in the literature review and results series. As soon as these had been photographed it was possible to put in place publicity for the exhibition. Media releases were prepared and approved, by Cairns Regional Gallery, for targeted textile magazines including Textile Fibre Forum (an Australian textile magazine), the Textile Society of America's newsletter as well as the Pacific Arts Association website, to be inserted into appropriately timed editions of their publications.

Having all the photography done also meant that invitation and catalogue design was possible. Local printing presses were investigated, comparing not only prices but also the quality of their products. Lotsa Printing was chosen. The design work was taken to their Cairns office for its location close to both the designer and the Cairns Regional

Gallery. It also resulted in a shorter turn-around time for the printers (see 6.1.1 for catalogue and invitation preparation).

The images to be included in the catalogue included overall and detail shots of all the art work but also needed to include a representative spectrum of photographs detailing Morobean mat making. The number of these images had been initially culled to approximately thirty in order that as many as possible of those to be exhibited could also be in the catalogue. The number in the catalogue was partially determined by the need to have a certain number of pages in the catalogue (divisible by four). Culling the photographs was accomplished with several aims in mind: the resultant photos suite had to form a cohesive series and include as many of the makers as possible; duplication of process had to be avoided and, most importantly, the domains of creative process had to be the primary focus of the suite. In the final instance twenty-three photos were used in the catalogue and twenty-eight in the exhibition itself.

For the exhibition, the digital images of the Morobean women were taken to Reef Photographic Supplies for printing on high quality photographic paper at close to A4 size. This professional treatment resulted in images that were of very high quality, again enhancing the field work that informed them.

One final task was to organise catering for the opening. Consistent with a thesis about the work of women, I decided that the catering should be done by a woman or women. Janet Condon (a local woman who sold exquisite brownies and other cakes at the weekly markets) was approached. The opening was thus set to be a luxurious afternoon tea.

Another important task had been choosing a guest speaker who was a textile artist, knew me and this particular body of work and had their own substantial artistic reputations. In the final instance, a friend and colleague, Sharon Peoples, opened the exhibition. Sharon and I had met when during my first year at art school in Canberra and had had adjacent studio spaces at Canberra's ANCA studios.

6.1.1 Catalogue and Invitation Preparation

James Leech designed both the catalogue and the invitation. Starting with the professionally photographed images of the art works, James and I worked closely to produce an invitation which would be lively, reflect my past colour aesthetic, invoke the current (stitched *Pandanus* mat) colour while still meeting the criteria established by the Cairns Regional Gallery. From the two which were satisfactory to the CRG, James and I chose the one which we felt best captured the feel of my work (Appendix E).

The aim of the catalogue was to provide an essay and photographs of the Morobean research to lay the groundwork for the full documentation of the pieces in the exhibition with accompanying explanatory text. An essay prepared by Dr. Maria Wronska-Friend placed me in context with contemporary makers as well as the documenter of Morobean textiles. I prepared text to accompany each series of art work, *viz.,* the formal aesthetic research pieces as well as the literature review and results series. This writing briefly synthesized the rationale, conceptualisation and realisation of each series. A short artist's statement preceded the art works text and established the *raison d'être* of both the thesis and the exhibition for which this catalogue was prepared. An essay about the Morobean women and their mat making complemented their photographs taken during field research.

One feature of the catalogue imagery that was particularly important to me was the close-up detail of many of the pieces. These details were many times enlarged, with respect to the overall shots, and provided intimate views of the fabrics used, the looping technique as well as the concave and convex appearance of the double-sided hooking. It even showed the direction of hooking, allowing the reader into the actual processes of making. This type of detail allows for critical insights into the technical as well as aesthetic qualities of the artwork.

Decisions were also made on the specific aspects of publication. Because the catalogue needed to be both durable and of high quality, a perfect rather than a stapled pamphlet style of binding was decided on. The various weights of paper for both the inside pages (128 gsm, satin) and the covers (310 gsm) were chosen for their ability to withstand handling and retain a good appearance. Everyone who has seen the catalogue, including the printers, has commented on its quality and professional appearance. The catalogue has enhanced the results of both the field research and studio practice. A copy of the catalogue is included as Appendix F.

6.1.2 Hanging the Exhibition

The Cairns Regional Gallery curator scheduled meeting/s with me at a stage when the art works were completed, or nearly so. The curator saw the finished works for the first time at this stage. During the several consultations the artist's preference, the curator's sensibilities and exhibition space constraints were discussed. Although my wishes were given close attention, ultimately the curator decided how to mount the show. This created a dichotomy between the aesthetics and the conceptual nature of the exhibition.

The art works for the exhibition were delivered to the gallery approximately a fortnight before the exhibition. Because of an unavoidable technical delay, one piece in the formal aesthetic series was delivered later than others. What this meant eventually was the isolation of this one piece from the others in the formal aesthetic research series. A further curatorial decision which impacted on the exhibition was the order of grouping of these formal aesthetic pieces. Rather than chronologically, they were placed to enhance their visual impact.

The formal aesthetic pieces hung on the left hand side of the gallery space (see Figure 6.1.1) as entered from the stairwell (Plate 6.1.1). These pieces could be followed sequentially around the wall and lead to photographs (Plate 6.1.2) and didactic statements on the subsequent walls.

Plate 6.1.1: The formal aesthetic research pieces

The photographs were hung in discrete groups around the gallery, not necessarily in close proximity to the art works with which they were associated. Configuration and quantity of floor and wall space necessitated such hanging decisions. Photographs were displayed as singles, in pairs and as groups of four images. Isolation of the photographs from the hooked pieces might have privileged both sets of work but was not an option.

Plate 6.1.2: Photographs of the Morobean mat makers, Cairns Regional Gallery, September 2007

The literature review series was hung from individual brackets on the far wall as one entered the gallery from the stairwell; they could be taken down from the wall for an examination of the other side. A sign encouraged viewers to do so. To the left of the pieces, hooking tools were displayed on one plinth and a sketchbook on the plinth in the corner (Plate 6.1.3).

Plate 6.1.3: Literature review series, (Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf to the left and (Notes on) The Weevil's Back to the right

The hessian straps, alluding to the dry leaves used to tie the fresh *Pandanus* leaves, can be seen hanging from the hanging devices of the lowest pieces of both the Morobean and the personal series.

One of the most important aspects of the hanging of the exhibition was that each piece should be viewable from both sides. The *recto* of the both ***Araraang* Allusions** and **Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil** could be seen as one entered the gallery space from the stairwell (Plate 6.1.4).

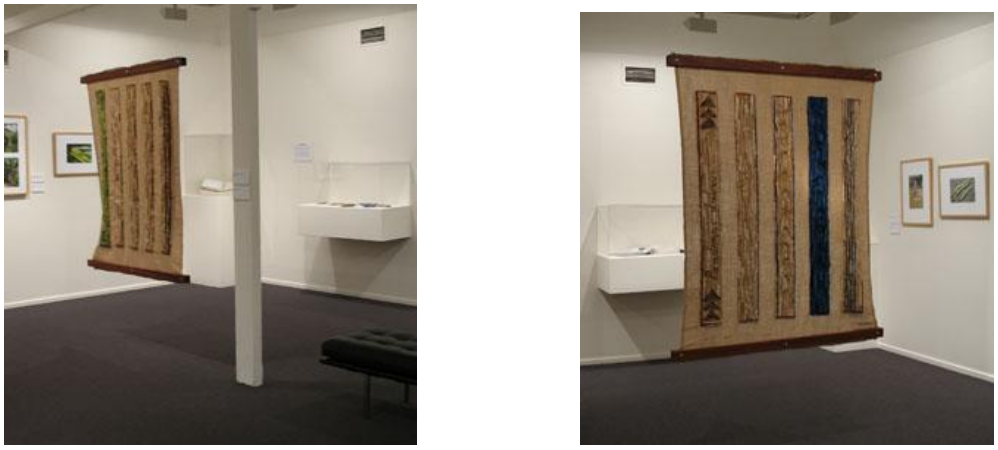


Plate 6.1.4: The *recto* of *Araraang* Allusions and Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil

The *verso* of the results series could be seen from the literature review series (Plate 6.1.5).

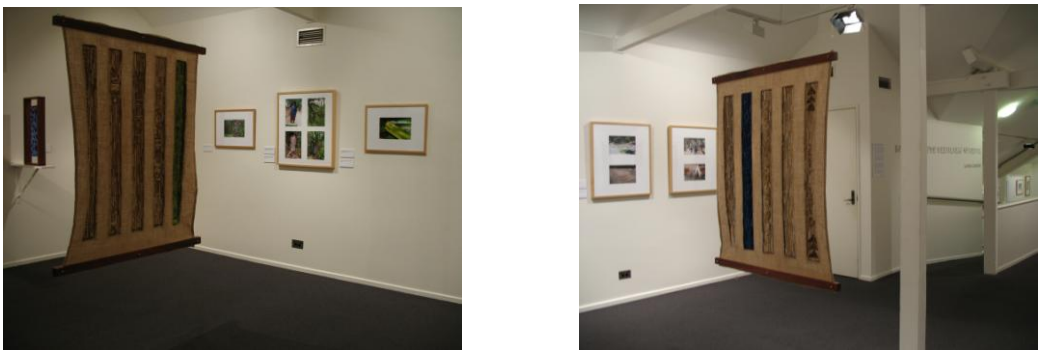


Plate 6.1.5: The *verso* of both results pieces, *Araraang* Allusions and Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil

Looking back from literature review series one could also see the backs of the formal aesthetic research pieces, especially of those hanging along the longest wall (Plate 6.1.6).

Plate 6.1.6: Looking back at the formal aesthetic research pieces

The insect in the foremost piece almost jumps out of its frame, illustrating quite clearly the strength of the double-sided hooking technique. The title of the exhibition was displayed in two places, at the bottom of the stairwell but also at the top of the ramp that enters the Loft gallery space from the elevator (Plate 6.1.7).

Plate 6.1.7: Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil

6.2 Reception of the Weevil

Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil opened on Saturday, September 1st. An artist's floor talk preceded the official opening of the exhibition. After introducing the exhibition as part of the requirements of a Ph.D., the aims of the research were explained as examining the creative process of mat makers who use entomological motifs. Additionally mention was made that this was a cross cultural thesis, the women who were the subject of the research living in three villages in Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea, two on the northern side of the Huon Gulf and one on an island off the Huon Peninsula. By isolating strands of knowledge inherent to the creative process, I was able to demonstrate how both groups of mat makers came to use entomological motifs - as represented by the artworks and photographs on display (see Appendix F).

It was stressed that the photographs (Plate 6.1.2) illuminated the mat making activities of the Morobean women and thus informed the content of the displayed art works.

After the floor talk, Tricia Davey, Marketing Manager of the Cairns Regional formally initiated the opening ceremonies by thanking the traditional owners then introducing me. I thanked CRG and JCU as institutions and went on to individual votes of appreciation. At the conclusion of my expressions of thanks I introduced the guest speaker Sharon Peoples. Sharon's talk summarised my textile career, discussed the individuality of my work and my unique vision. Sharon and I are pictured standing before the literature review series, with **(Notes on) The *Pandanus* Leaf** directly behind us and **(Notes on) The Back of a Weevil** to the right (Plate 6.2.1).

Plate 6.2.1: Sharon Peoples, guest speaker at Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil, and Lorraine Lamothe, September 2, 2007

One of the most frequent, and extremely positive, comments engendered by this exhibition was the ability to see both sides of the works. The photographs were also highly praised. The photographs apparently focussed the audience's attention on the Papua New Guinean women.

Three viewers related their experiences with Pacific and Australian aboriginal women's art to this exhibition in a very positive light.

> I've watched tapa cloth making in Tonga, flax weaving in NZ; this work is yet another eye opener – wonderful (Audrey Anerum).
> As a former resident of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Cook Is appreciate this beautiful work. Thank you (Simone Brown).
> Just back from weaving with older women at Cape Flattery. Inspirational show (Natalie Davey).

Another three very disparate viewers (including an Asian and a Hawaiian viewer) interestingly commented specifically on *Pandanus* reflecting my own focus on *Pandanus.*

> Pandanus has so many uses – lovely (JD Thompson, Hawaii).
> Extremely beautiful and such a dedication to her art form matched with the inspiration of pandanus (Claire, Melbourne).
> It's very interesting. I feel interested to process about making mats with pandanus (Ji Hyun An).

Another aspect of the exhibition which raised comment was the beauty of the works. To quote a few visitors:-

> Such beautiful pieces (Emma Jeffcock, UK).
> Very beautiful (H. Kubota). What a wonderful & beautiful study – exhibition well done (Susan Doherty).
> At first I made the mistake of standing too close, but with distance could clearly see the beauty of the patterns (David Hermanns).
> Congratulations. Beautiful work (Denise, Melbourne).
> We need these bright colours in our lives. Beautiful (Andrew Cochlin, Rome, Italy).

I deliberately make beautiful work (see Chapter 2.2.3). In part, the perception of beauty is attributable to the medium, that is, textiles. There are also contextual and formal aesthetic properties of the works which evoke a spirit of wonderment and enjoyment in the audience. From conversations with visitors to the exhibition it seems that the formal aesthetic research pieces as well as the eponymous **Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil** were received most favourably.

Not all comments, however, were favourable. This is to be expected, and perhaps even hoped for, in an exhibition of depth and research. The negative comments reflected on the disjunction of the photographs around the room. The four didactic statements distributed throughout the space, as close as possible to the works they described, were not read by everyone. One that did elicit comment was the explanation for the Morobean women. The photographs for these women were spread throughout the gallery and thus at some distance from the explanation for most of the photographs. At least one viewer commented on this disjunction of the photographs to its didactic statement (see my comments, section 6.1.2).

There were also several comments which explicitly mentioned the Morobean women's work with the possibility that I was appropriating imagery from the Morobean women. Jennifer Deger (no address given) commented

> This beautiful, textured and joyfully coloured work is so delightful to touch and contemplate. But what disturbs me is the

> way women from PNG – and their own art and weaving practice – just seems [*sic*] to provide background colour and texture for your own work. It seems – at least in the ways this exhibition works – deeply disrespectful and appropriative in a way that I suspect you don't intend. I want to know more about your encounter with these women and how it might have pulled some threads/unravelled your own way or working and seeing and knowing and responding to the world. (Visitor's Comment Book, *Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil,* CRG, 2007*)*

This is a thoughtful and considered comment and it raises a number of questions and issues. Firstly, Ms. Deger obviously is not aware of my previous works. Does an artist have an obligation to him/herself or the viewers to educate them about their *oeuvre*? If so, how is this done? In fact, the artist's statement, which was available in the catalogue (two copies of which were in the exhibition space) as well as on the didactic boards on the walls of the gallery, makes mention that the artist's practice has encompassed insects, specifically weevils, for some years and that this exhibition, as part of a doctoral study, explored how other textile artists, Morobean mat makers, incorporated insects in their repertoire of motifs. Secondly, Ms. Deger rightly assumes that my work reflects that of the Morobean women, although she sees disrespect and appropriation in this. By working with another culture's art world, appropriation issues were a concern from the beginning. This concern was canvassed with my studio practice supervisor at an early stage (during the formal aesthetic research) of these studies. In section 2.2.1 the review of my own previous art practice detailed an encounter with appropriation and in section 3.2.2 research methodology arising from personal experience again brought the topic of appropriation to the fore. Design elements of historical and contemporary Papua New Guinean practitioners, as discovered in the archival and contemporary research, acted as a springboard for the development of the artist's own visual language, from the base of the researcher's existing visual lexicon with its predominant elements. I felt that this had been successfully dealt with in the doctoral research and in this visual presentation of the practices of the Morobean women and highlighting of the individual women personally. This exhibition documented, for the first time, the way of working for Morobean mat makers. Ms. Deger was being, correctly, sensitive to the issue of appropriation but perhaps not seeing the difference between a quotation, with acknowledgements, and plagiarism. Again, how to educate the viewing public? The didactic boards referring to the Morobean women clearly demonstrate their technical skills, motifs and textile knowledge. These skills and processes are referred to within my style of working and incorporating elements of design relating both to the Morobean women and this Western artist. Although not all viewers will read all the material provided (four

separate boards in this case), nevertheless these comments raise the issue of how best to inform the viewer without being overly pedantic or self congratulatory.

> However, Ms. Deger's comments, in fact, also illustrate that the stated aims (to identify characteristics common to mat makers using insect motifs and create a visual documentation of both Morobean mat design and the processes of parallel mat making) of this research have been fulfilled: she sees the creative process of the Morobean women and she sees that reflected in the art work that I produced.

Looking at all the comments quoted, it is apparent that visitors saw the connections with nature and the continuing traditions in mat making (background knowledge informing the creative process) and saw the connections between the work of the Morobean mat makers and my art work. Finally, the variety of comments, both negative and positive, indicates that the exhibition moved the audience sufficiently to write in some details of their reactions. This, above all, must be a prime consideration for any artist and certainly satisfied me.

My own response to the hanging of the exhibition was mixed. I had some apprehension over the order of hanging of the formal aesthetic research series and would have preferred the literature review series to be placed on a plinth but these were apprehensions based on the fact that this was a doctoral study and would be subject to examination. The separation of photographs from works of art was a matter which I felt also caused some disjunction in the presentation. Overall, I felt the exhibition looked good, had sufficient didactic material, including photographs, to inform the viewer, and presented new work in an inviting context. Aesthetically I felt it looked good. I was satisfied that the commentary that the exhibition elicited reflected a thought provoking body of work, an incentive to push myself further in my next exhibition.

Chapter 7: Evolution of the Niche

7.1 The Niche

What has this study demonstrated about the creative processes of mat makers, both Western and Morobean, who cross the art/science boundary in their use of entomological motifs? Drawing on the analysis, as developed in Chapters 4 and 5, of the Morobean stitched mats and the knowledge informing them as well as my own artistic practice, this study has met the stated aims, and answered the underlying question as to how entomological motifs become part of the repertoire of textile artists, by identifying developments in characteristics common to both these sets of mat makers and by documenting the processes of parallel mat making, specifically through insights into the domains that inform creative process, *viz.* technical processes, materiality, history, and visual vocabulary.:-

- the relationship of makers to their materials, not only with respect to their characteristics but also to the pleasure that working with such materials entails for the artist;
- visual vocabulary as understood by the whole community but also as expressed through the stitches and other decorative elements of the stitched *Pandanus* mats;
- the stitches deployed, and their relationship to stitches in the Western repertoire;
- references to historical precedence, which with regard to Morobean women remains oral and potentially of shorter duration than that available to contemporary Western artists;
- the acquisition of appropriate technical expertise displayed by both sets of makers; and
- market knowledge irrespective of the impact this knowledge may have on creative processes.

The culmination of visual documentation of the processes of, *ipso facto,* both the Morobean women's mat design process as well as the creative process a Western textile artist has been the exhibition *Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil,* detailed in the previous two chapters.

This study has also provided insights into:-

- the nature and extent of documentation of stitched *Pandanus* mats of the Huon Gulf;
- handmarked mats and their relationship to matriline;
- the relative importance of the domains informing creative process within culturally divergent practices; and
- the universalities of women's art practices.

Importantly this study has also seen an important technical and conceptual advance in the double-sided hooking developed by this researcher.

On reflection, the study has been limited both by factors intrinsic to the study and by personal factors which impinged on the study. Intrinsic factors included:

- the dearth of historical stitched *Pandanus* mats or publications relating to them; and
- the difficulties of research in a developing country.

The major personal factor involved my peripatetic lifestyle during the time of this study, a lifestyle occasioned by my husband's employment in overseas postings (see Table 5.1.1). Student/supervisor interviews, so critical to the advancement of studies, depended on my visits to Australia at infrequent intervals. An additional problem to living abroad involved the procurement of art supplies as well as the return to Australia of finished pieces as well as sketch books.

Another factor which impinged on the current research involved the starting of doctoral studies when already committed to producing a solo exhibition, *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea*. This introduced a number of complications into a process that is, by itself, demanding. Firstly, the significant and dedicated time needed to put together a professional show resulted in commensurately less time being available for doctoral activities. There was also at least some conflict between professional practices *per se* and the studio research appropriate to doctoral level study. An entirely different approach is required for doctoral studies research. The fact that the studio work was related to the Ph.D. added certain problems which would not have existed had the projects been entirely separate. Defining the research in terms other than those simply of the exhibition was the first difficulty. On the one hand it was necessary to step away from most of the work already done in relation to *Weevil Rugs of New Guinea.* On the other hand, much of the visual exploration had a great deal of merit and could be revisited in a different and later context.

The situation with regard to the dearth of information on Papua New Guinean female material culture continues today when I find myself the only person working on stitched *Pandanus* mats. This has most recently been reinforced during the Pacific Arts Association's Symposium in Salem, Massachusetts (July 2005) at which I presented a paper. None of the anthropologists present could offer substantial or substantive information regarding these mats. Stitched *Pandanus* mats from other areas of Melanesia are also lacking in documentation. Plaited mats from Melanesia, unlike those of Polynesia, are the focus of only slightly more attention although the plaited mats of New Guinea again are accorded scant attention.

Despite these difficulties, this study achieved its aims. The niche occupied by textile artists, both Western and non-Western, is thus now defined in greater detail than previously and includes knowledge of:

- materials used by Morobean women in making stitched *Pandanus* mats as well as the use of wool by the researcher;
- the techniques of stitching these mats in conjunction with the Western technique of rug hooking;
- the motifs used on the Morobean mats contrasted to those employed in the practice of this researcher; and
- the stories and genealogies associated with the both sets of mat makers and the mats.

These insights were distilled and presented in the exhibition to reflect the characteristics in common to both sets of makers as well as the documenting the parallel mat making and creative processes:

- in forms that referenced *Pandanus* leaves, thus the materiality pertaining to Morobean women;
- using the hooked technique and wool material referencing the historical background of the researcher;
- worked mainly in neutral beiges referencing the dried *Pandanus* leaf although sections of the exhibition also referenced fresh leaves as well as the weevil colours;
- worked mainly in straight line hooking to reference the geometric style of Papua New Guinean female material culture with organic hooking used in contrast to speak intimately of the researcher's personal style;

- motifs that spoke of the practices of both the Morobean women and myself; and
- text that revealed additional information about indigenous and Western knowledge systems, the identify of the Morobean makers, and the historical events relevant to both the Morobean mat makers and their mats and this researcher's personal background.

How does this knowledge impact on the artist/researcher? What impacts on the textile community are implied? What lacunae are revealed as a result of this study? What is the potential for further research that builds upon this exhibition and thesis?

7.2 Ecological Implications

This research has demonstrated that the threads of creativity, including the command of technical processes, materiality, history, personal vocabulary, market forces and patronage/publicity, can be found in textile makers whether they are a Western or Papua New Guinean artist. It is the development of these skills with respect to formal and informal teaching which provokes the most interesting future research, providing a lens for learning through examining responses by the making communities to pressures exerted socially and economically both from within and without. The development of skills relating to the creative processes inherent in women's material culture requires examination with respect to the societal values for these skills within a range of skills, especially in terms of devaluation of certain skills in favour of others. Although it would be interesting to document in greater depth the range of technical processes and the command of materiality by artists, particularly in the non-Western artist, the researcher feels that the greatest gains will accrue from the study of the artists' command of history, personal vocabulary, market forces and patronage/publicity. Notwithstanding, female material culture itself, both Western and non-Western, would be well served by a closer scrutiny from anthropologists and art practitioners alike.

This research had, at its heart, an examination of entomological motifs used by a Western and Morobean textile makers. As part of the literature review cultural entomology was canvassed. This research illustrates the potential for inquiries into this understudied field. Entomological motifs have not been widely documented and their meanings teased out; this applies not only at the level of the whole community but also within the ranks of initiated men. The use of this particular set of motifs across all art forms in the village is a critical issue that can be extended to all motifs.

This research has also highlighted anthropological issues, including the need for the study of stitched *Pandanus* mats across a range of communities throughout New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, the study of cultural density imbued in objects such as handmarked mats, the study of the continuation and contemporary manifestation of trade cycles, especially those in which stitched mats feature, and finally, the place of stitched mats within community.

This research has also demonstrated the personal gains inherent in a research higher degree, gains that reflect the incremental development of skills that feed the creative process. For both this researcher, working largely in isolation, and the Morobean women, working very much within community, the interactions between us lead to increased thinking about our own work in relation to previous work, other work in our own communities and other work outside our communities. The results of such interactions remain largely uncharted.

On a broad scale there are thus many theoretical and practical issues which this study has addressed. However, the work which I have carried out is a very preliminary step in unravelling the intricacies of artistic creative process, of western and indigenous artists. Although the competencies stressed for Western artists also apply to Morobean mat makers, several aspects of this study warrant further investigation. Within the field of contemporary Morobean and Papua New Guinea female art forms, it is important that the following areas of knowledge be studied and documented:-

- all the material culture of the women of the Huon Gulf (and elsewhere) in Papua New Guinea;
- the processes understood in this material culture across a range of age groups;
- the movement of ideas and motifs through the medium of marriage and subsequent child-bearing; and
- the initiation of new motifs (probably more applicable in textile arts other than stitched mat making).

The theory that, in the Morobean mat making community, market forces stifle creative processes needs also to be tested by more closely interrogating mat makers marketing techniques in several critical areas.

- Do makers have regular clients or do buyers not discriminate as to maker?
- How much influence, if any, do the clients exert?
- How much economic pressure is exerted on makers?

- Is this pressure uniform throughout the year or do certain events, such as the necessity of paying school fees, regulate the type and complexity of mat decoration? Are all women equally affected by market forces or are some women, by virtue of age, marital status, living arrangements or other factors less tied to these forces?
- How does the making of handmarked mats impact on the making of mats made for selling?

Women's material culture that has already been collected but not studied urgently needs attention. Because some museum objects are very old and have not been examined in some years, it is likely that damage or deterioration is occurring. By studying these objects we focus museum attention on them with attendant conservation measures being taken. Museum objects need to be studied with a view to expanding the limited knowledge we have of them. Because of the disproportionate weight that has historically been placed on men's material culture, a positive focus on women's material culture is needed to begin to redress the balance. Furthermore there is a need to repatriate this knowledge to the original owners. This is especially important where local memory has been lost.

Another aspect of this study that provided only tantalising glimpses was the investigation into primary source material related to early Lutheran women in Morobe Province, particularly the Huon Peninsula and Gulf areas. From the limited survey carried out in this study, we cannot determine with accuracy whether missionary women examined native women's crafts and skills. A more detailed study of the Lutheran women in Morobe Province would no doubt yield fascinating insights; an inhibiting factor being the difficulty of accessing primary source material.

Other issues that warrant scrutiny relate to the way men's and women's artefacts were collected. My reactions to my change, within my own artistic practice, from very vibrant, even blatant, colour to much more neutral shades required major personal adjustments of perception (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4). If I, an artist, had such a prejudice against the subtlety of plant fibres, how much more so might the anthropologist? Moreover, the decoration on mats is less dramatic than that on men's art forms relating to rituals. Those objects within women's material culture which were more intricately decorated were often handmarked or otherwise culturally dense and would not necessarily have been brought to the attention of male collectors, especially if they had not already shown an interest in the ordinary mats. An anthropological

puzzle revolves around the study of culturally dense objects articulated by Weiner (1994).

- Do the handmarked mats belong in this subset of objects?
- What significance, if any, do these mats then carry?

From a social and anthropological context many more questions arise.

Perhaps these factors of minimalist and inaccessible objects accounts for one of the major problems with collections of New Guinea cultural material at the beginning of the twentieth century; *viz.* the nearly total lack of collection of female material culture. Confronted with the unusual, often brightly coloured and highly ornamented ritual art made by men, women's domestic art must have stood completely outside the collectors' aesthetic understanding. Anthropologists have continually re-examined their theoretical premises as new information and paradigms arise; although the gender imbalance is not a new issue, it does deserve study in its own right.

Having studied in the male field of forestry, my appreciation that studies related to women's work required the same degree of rigour and scholarship ascribed to men's work came only when I was entering my middle years. How can these insights be made more widespread in order that scholarship reflects a balance of all the aspects that make up life?

Final questions that address the very heart of this research into creative process include:-

- who are the next generation of makers?
- who teaches them?
- what are they taught?

These questions cut across cultural divides to examine the transference and learning inherent in creativity.

- Are we in the West giving enough recognition and weight to the traditions which preceded current practices?
- Are our practices narrow enough in the sense of a concentration on subjects of which we are intimately aware?
- Do we understand the cultural significances of the motifs we borrow?

- On the other hand, are the non-Western makers reacting to the Western-based education of their young women by curtailing, rather than enhancing, the teaching of traditional skills?
- Are they too neglecting traditional skills in favour of knowledge imparted by schools? Are the horizons of non-Western women too narrow?
- Although we can appreciate their in-depth understanding of a subject, are there impediments to acceptance of new ideas, motifs and innovations within and allied to current cultural parameters?
- How do we find a balance between knowing and valuing the traditional and evaluating and accepting the new?
- How do we find a balance between deep knowledge within narrow parameters and broader horizons with concomitant dilutions to knowledge over these horizons?

An adjunct to the use of imagery and motifs from outside the dominant culture is the loss of imagery and technical expertise within a culture. We see in the Morobean women a loss of history with respect to their own stitched mats. Over a century encompassing enormous changes, and with no written accounts to refer to, a repertoire of motifs, materials, makers and meaning has been lost. We also notice that where young women go to school, their elders appear to accept that the western schooling will inevitably lead to the loss of local skills. There is not a perception or a belief that school and traditional skills can coexist. This perhaps is not surprising considering that similar effects exist in the western world where the learning of our mothers in their creative skills has also been denigrated to a great extent. Where skills are not a matter of survival or of enhancing a marriage prospect, or where access to skills acquisition is not gender based, there seem to be fewer reasons to keep the older ones. From outside it is not possible to prescribe educational or development paths. Development comes from within; one can only hope that by throwing light on a situation that others may take up the challenges of the future. The Western world also faces difficulties in the teaching of textile arts that could be met by a re-evaluation of our perception of women's creative skills and a more systemic approach to the retention of these skills.

7.3 Which Way the Weevil?

Where does the weevil, the conflated artist *cum* motif, go after completing a Ph.D.? What are the personal gains in approach, technique or insight? How will this influence future works?

One of the major aspects of a doctoral study is the depth of study allocated to a subject. In fact, this depth of study also reflected the depth of knowledge acquired by the Morobean mat makers over a lifetime. Although one could not approach every body of work, exhibition or making in the way one does a doctoral study, there are returns to be gained through such intensive and concentrated study, from continuing with one theme or subject throughout the entirety of a career. Thus the use of research as a tool to enhance an art practice becomes integral to that practice and I look forward to doing exactly that, starting with words and continuing in the museum and the field. While my interest in research has never been totally dormant in recent years, it has also not been mined to its full potential.

As well as an exhibition, the research effort has resulted in other publications, including a catalogue for the exhibition (see 6.1.1). Three papers associated with this research have been presented over the course of the study. These include a paper on cultural entomology presented in June 2002 at the University of Queensland's Environment Culture and Community conference. In March 2004 I presented Hooked Weevil Rugs: A Canadian/Papua New Guinean/ Australian Intersection in the Tracking Cloth symposium presented by Wollongong University. Finally in July 2005 I presented Stitched *Pandanus* Mats of New Guinea: an Endemic Art Form? to the Pacific Arts Association symposium in Salem, Massachusetts. Proceedings have been produced for all these conferences. Further papers are planned for anthropological and art journals, for example, The Australian Journal of Anthropology, Pacific Studies or Pacific Arts, on respectively, the process and documentation of contemporary stitched *Pandanus* mats from the Huon Gulf and the deconstruction of creative process domains for textiles artists, with cross cultural examples.

This specific study has whetted my appetite to undertake further research with regard to stitched *Pandanus* of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands with a view to producing a book surveying the subject, particularly one well illustrated and annotated to serve as a resource for future generations of makers. My study has shown, as have studies in other areas of material culture (Wronska-Friend, pers. comm., 2007), that the memory of patterns and makers can be lost over a few generations. I feel an urgent need to make a contribution in this field especially as it does not seem to be the

focus of any other scholar. I am currently working with published authors (on New Guinea material) to prepare submissions to potential publishers.

A side effect of studying and researching for higher degrees that is sometimes commented on by students but perhaps not quantified concerns the amount of extra knowledge that one acquires. Much of this is peripheral to the actual study but, prior to actually examining material, one does not know this. What happens to this material? Is it taken on board to become a further study? Or is it merely discarded and dismissed from the mind of the student? As a direct result of this study, Sharon Peoples approached me in 2005 to put together a series of works derived from this peripheral and, for us, fascinating extra information we had collected. The idea of using information collected serendipitously has enormous appeal. One can visualise the concept rippling away from the thesis, with more study needed to bulk up knowledge in fields barely touched and then, whoosh, another sideline presenting itself. The idea of working this way, without initial set goals but following paths indicated by little spurts of inspiration and researching these thoroughly might prove very rewarding.

In my previous practice I have focussed on insect motifs, specialising in a very few families. I made some effort to investigate these insects in terms of their ecology, distribution, or significance. I returned repeatedly to certain insects, *viz.* weevils and cockroaches. Doctoral research, however, required a more concentrated focus than previously. Although I still can imagine producing works quickly and spontaneously, serious works that take months in the gestation, whose inherent meaning relies on specific researches and aesthetic explorations, are also on my future radar. The degrees of background reading involved in doctoral studies were, for me, seductive. The depth of knowledge, across a broad range of subjects, required for such a study continues to beckon to this book oriented person. This recalls my science background, especially in research and teaching, where continuous research is the norm. To some degree, dependent on the practitioner, it is the norm in all subjects. It is the degree of study and underpinning understanding that is critical.

Insect motifs retain compelling interest for me. There is much that I don't know and that I want to know, particularly those insects that occur in Australia. But now I have centipedes to add to my repertoire…and apparently there are some wonderfully coloured species to be found in north Queensland. Although insects continue to exercise their siren call so does the ecology of my small block of north Queensland rainforest. What I choose is not so important as how I tackle its representation. Recent reading on the artistic life of Georgia O'Keefe (Montgomery, 1992; Drohojowska-Philp, 2004) confirms my conviction that one can tackle the same subject endlessly. Tackling

the same subject without deeper background research cannot, however, work for me now.

Another aspect of a doctoral study concerns technical advances made during such a process. Developments in material applications or technique are perhaps to be anticipated in concentrated study and certainly are intrinsic to personal development. These developments represent gains, both theoretical and practical, not only for the researcher but also for other artists. Although this thesis was primarily a study of creative process in the practices of textile artists who employ entomological motifs, the very nature of creativity involves technical competence. In the case of this exhibition, serendipitous events prompted innovation in this arena. If I had not shown the *verso* of one piece to Professor Davis and fellow student Jude Bohm-Parr, a species variation would have gone undetected. Having shown this side, it was the ensuing discussion, about displaying both sides of a piece and about Janus effects, between Professor Davis and me that catalysed the subsequent developments. Because hooking has two different faces, that is, a looped side and a side which shows the flat stitches (normally considered the back) I was able to develop a technique where the looped and flat stitches could both be seen together on one side…and, by implication, the other side also. The relief engendered by this technique rendered portions of the design more visible while other parts became harder to read. Concealing and revealing became potent symbols made possible by this tool of double-sided hooking.

Although this technical advance is mine and, in the interim, will probably be practised primarily by me, it is also now in the public domain for other hooking artists to add to their repertoire. The exhibition *Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil* constituted publication of this technique, as did slides shown at the (earlier) conference in Wollongong, but it is planned also to publish in one or more recognised textile magazines to document in greater detail this hooking method and its results. In the short term, however, the double-sided hooking may well mark my personal style in much the same way that insect motifs and working with recycled fabrics have done and continue to do so.

Double-sided hooking will undoubtedly continue to be part of my technical repertoire. Another technical outcome related to the double-sided hooking is the hanging of such work so that it can be viewed from both sides. Comments by visitors to the exhibition stressed the importance of being able to see the works from both sides. These comments have prompted a desire to make more work that is designed to be seen from both sides and to be more proactive with regard to the display of these works within the gallery setting.

Another technique that was sampled but not fully exploited involved the use of printed fabric for hooking. The possibility of the printed side of the fabric containing information that could be visible on one side of the hooked work permits the revealing or concealing of that information. The printing could be part of the entire process, rather than relying on finding serendipitously printed fabrics. This of course would alter some of the philosophical aspects of using recycled fabrics.

However, it is unlikely to be the end product of my research as my mind already spins forward not only to other physical ways I can introduce texture into my work but also in what context this texture can add meaning and layers of complexity. I think particularly of the rain forest that I live in, the animals and plants that make up these ecological systems. I think of their endurance through time as well as their fragility at the hands of man. I think of the interaction of previous inhabitants of this rainforest, both indigenous and white settler, and ponder their interpretation of my environment…I think of these things and I want to use my technical competence to produce works that mirror the beauty that I admire but that also reflect these ideas of endurance and fragility.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary

(taken from Murphy, 1966)

Adzera: a language from the Markham Valley

Aibika edible leaf of a small tripartite leafed shrub with red stem; also the shrub itself. Probably *Abelmoschus manihot.*

Bilas: ornaments or decoration

Bilum: net bag

Jabem/Yabim: a language spoken south of Finschhafen and used by the Lutheran Church as a *lingua franca* for Lae and areas west of Lae

Karuka: Pandanus

Kote/Kate: a language spoken in the Finschhafen area and then the *lingua franca* for the Lutheran Church especially in the interior of the Huon Peninsula, still understood but now largely superseded by Pidgin English.

Kundu: a native drum. It is shaped like an hourglass and has an animal or iguana skin taut over one end. It is beaten with the hand.

Lakatoi: an outrigger canoe, initially to Papuan canoes but later referring generally to all sailed canoes with outriggers.

Laplap: *lavalava* or length of cloth worn around the waist like a kilt, cloth material of any sort.

Liklik mama: usually adoptive mother; also a close aunt or other female relative, either maternal or paternal.

Tabu: Very small shell – *Nassavius* spp. – which is used as currency and decoration.

Tapa: bark cloth made by beating the inner bark of one of various shrubs [own definition]

Taro: (*Colocasia esculenta)* similar in appearance to the Calla Lily. Leaves are large and hastate in upright clusters with a grooved fleshy stem. It is a marsh plant and the root acts as storing organs for starch and so form the staple diet if many tribes. Term also includes the root.

Tok pisin: Pidgin English.

Tok ples: mother tongue.

Appendix B: Cairns Regional Gallery Proposal: Weevil Rugs of New Guinea

Exhibition/Project rationale and description

In 1993 I first learned about Tibetan tiger rugs. In 1994 I acquired the book "The Tiger Rugs of Tibet". And in 1995 I was given a reproduction tiger rug, made in Nepal by exiled Tibetans. The number, beauty and sheer idea of these rugs was inspirational. It meant that, if I *wanted to,* I *could do as many weevil designs. And my work was also rugs.*

I started joking about making 108 (the number of tiger rug designs) weevil rungs and calling them Weevil Rugs of New Guinea…which of course do not exist. A linguist friend (an expert in New Guinea languages) encouraged me to go further and construct a mythology on which to base my contemporary rugs.

This forms the premise for my proposed exhibition "Weevil Rugs of New Guinea".

Weevil Rugs of New Guinea

There will be two aspects to the exhibition:

1. "historical documentation"
2. a series of hooked miniature rugs.

The historical documentation will be based on fact and my imagination. The facts will be used obviously out of context…for example: a counting system from one area; a matrilineal society from another region; material culture combined from a variety of sources; the use of insects in decorative arts. The imagination will be largely restricted to the creation of a missionary and, more particularly, his wife. And, of course, the weevil rungs are entirely a figment of my imagination. It is the wife who will document, at the turn of the century, the weevil rugs of New Guinea…which I will re-interpret nearly a century later. For this exhibition I will collage a display case containing the artefacts and documentation pertaining to this "history". To anyone with New Guinea knowledge this will be an obvious fabrication. This fabrication will also be acknowledged by labelling.

The miniature rugs will be hooked (with polyester on linen, definite Western interpretation of the supposed originals) and will vary around postcard size. The designs will be based on the patterning and shapes of New Guinea weevils. I have already sketched many weevils on site in Papua New Guinea (see photocopies of

submitted designs). In fact, New Guinea has a diverse array of stunningly beautiful and long-lived weevils (although other insects are used decoratively in Papua New Guinea, I do not know of any artwork involving weevils). I anticipate that there will be 37 rugs, a tally number (akin to a counting system) used in the Lake Kutubu area of Papua New Guinea. The rugs will be displayed in one of two ways: either mounted and framed and shown on the wall; or laid flat on a Perspex or wooden shelf.

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Included with this application are three pages of photocopies of proposed designs.

Appendix C: James Cook University Ph. D. Proposal 2001

In 1993 I first learned about Tibetan tiger rugs. In 1994 I acquired the book "The Tiger Rugs of Tibet". And in 1995 I was given a reproduction tiger rug, made in Nepal by exiled Tibetans. The number, beauty and sheer idea of these rugs was inspirational. It meant that, if I wanted to, I could do as many weevil designs. And my work was also rugs.

I started joking about making 108 (the number of tiger rug designs) weevil rugs and calling them Weevil Rugs of New Guinea…which, of course, do not exist. A linguist friend (an expert in New Guinea languages) encouraged me to go further and construct a mythology on which to base my contemporary rugs.

This forms the premise for my proposed research topic and exhibition "Weevil Rugs of New Guinea".

The choice of New Guinea as the point of departure for these studies is the result of a high degree of familiarity, scientifically and culturally, and continuing association with Papua New Guinea. Having lived in and conducted scientific research in the Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea from 1975 until 1990, I was also able to see at first hand many cultural artefacts and ceremonies. The friendship of professionals in both the sciences and the humanities also opened the doors to the unexpected. Because of this knowledge and interest in New Guinea, I am using it as the locus for the examination of female material culture and entomological decorative culture.

To avoid appropriation I will subvert the cultural background and create a historical background which will be an obviously constructed mythology based on a composite of lineality, numerical systems and art and decoration forms extant in Papua New Guinea. For New Guinea scholars, it will be patently false; for others, various clues will be given to announce the mythological status of the story. In the Morobe province of Papua New Guinea, there is considerable documentation of the arrival and advance of the Lutheran Church. As a corollary to their religious endeavours, various studies were undertaken in linguistic, anthropological and scientific fields. Unfortunately, female material culture was not well studied. Cultural imperatives operated that caused female material culture to be overlooked, or, from the opposing perspective, concealed.

By hypothesising a set of letters and diaries left by the wife of a turn of the century missionary, I establish a different scenario…a scenario which is manipulated to illuminate aspects of material culture and its documentation. The scenario is set in the Huon Peninsula of the Morobe Province. In this area I postulate a matrilineal society.

Within this matrilineal society I further postulate the making of special sleeping mats for first born infant females, mats made of sewn pandanus leaves and decorated with painted imagery. Thirty-seven of these mats and their decoration of weevil patterns will be documented by the missionary wife. With the advent of western religions, many traditions and cultural objects were destroyed. In the case of the baby mats the only clue to their existence will be a few (mythological) words recorded by a linguist in the late 1900's. The discovery of the letters and diaries of the missionary wife make it possible to reconstruct this missing portion of female material culture and to shed light on the cultural entomology of New Guinea.

From this hypothesis will be developed an exhibition and a thesis. My work has focussed on insects for the past six years. These studies will enable a more detailed and comprehensive examination but with a narrowing of parameters. By working with a restricted colour palette and insects within a single group, I will endeavour to develop a compact and succinct visual code which speaks of "weevil". By working with textiles the question of what constitutes "weevil" constitutes a pivotal point of resolution. However, there is a further aspect of the (first) exhibition; that is, to illuminate the mythological history that forms the basis for the re-created contemporary rugs. The documentation for this mythology will be informed by a need to create an integrated whole yet, again, not appropriate existing physical evidence.

In order to fully develop the fictional history, it will be necessary to examine in some detail the realities. The mats and their documentation will be the central concern of this research topic. Stitched pandanus mats do exist, though not specifically for infant girls. Nor are they found in this particular region of Morobe or decorated with stencilling. The research will focus on the making of these mats and their cultural content and context. Woven mats, which exist in other parts of the country, will also be documented though not in the same detail. Tapa (bark cloth) was also produced in the Huon Peninsula and decorated in a variety of patterns. Collections and published accounts of tapa will be researched with particular relevance to imagery and colours used. The complex numerical systems extant in Papua New Guinea have been well researched. This thesis will only reflect on the basics, and the counting systems mentioned in the mythical history, as an illustration of this complexity.

The use of weevils as image also merits exploration in the context of decorative entomological elements found elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, as well as in the context of the diversity of weevils indigenous or endemic to the geographical entity of New Guinea. The use of insects as cultural focus subverts the notion of icons and mythological creatures as symbols of strength, size and domination. In other non-

western societies, several different groups of insects are used to symbolize and confer the attributes of longevity and rebirth. It will be necessary to explore the cultural symbolism attached to entomological decoration in the Papua New Guinea context.

The second strand of this proposal concerns the practice of a contemporary female textile artist. What occurs in this exhibition is a re-creation of the mythical baby mats. Miniaturised from the originals, yet immeasurably larger than the subjects themselves, they challenge perceptions of insects by focussing on colour rather than other (hard or nasty) qualities. Their execution in textiles, although different from the hypothesized originals, continues to channel the focus in positive and acceptable ways in a subversion of traditional portrayals of these animals.

Thus the depiction and exhibition of these artefacts, visually and contextually relocated to the present, directs and prompts the questions that are integral to an entire practice. Why work in textiles? Why choose to work in a decorative context, employing a “masculine” set of imagery, vis insects. What impels the use of deconstructed cloth in the functional format of mats/rugs? How does the current female material culture impinge on a practitioner’s position within a larger visual arts paradigm?

It is imperative also to examine the cultural signifiers attached to the materials and processes that are used in the practices of the western and non-western makers. How is value assigned for their labour and their products? What is the intellectual content or concept imbued in these objects? How does context affect these questions? These queries may elucidate differences and similarities between two temporally, spatially and culturally distinct practices

If history is a set of events as recorded by an individual, and thus subject to the vagaries of bias and distortion, are not all artists historians in their visual representations and depictions of the world? Does not the constructed mythology have as much currency as the newspaper reports of the day and the assigned history textbooks of a generation of students? Where can the artist not go from here?

Appendix D: Artist's Statement: Weevil Rugs of New Guinea

An exhibition of hooked rugs

What is someone (say a missionary's wife) had documented what women were doing in the early 1900's? What would she have recorded?

Who knows?

I do! … in my imagination!

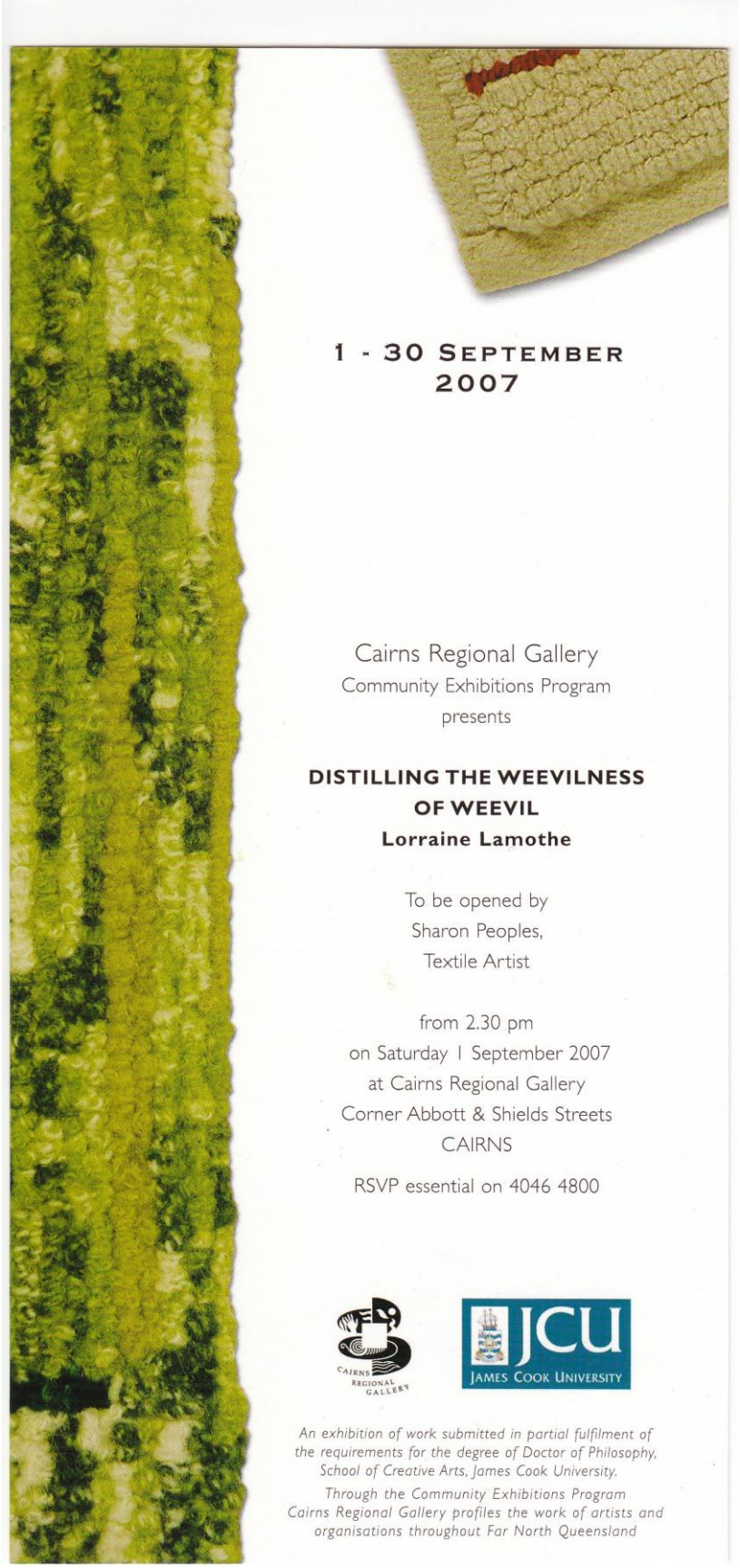
From a richness of experience and a rich imagination I have created this mythical series to honour and showcase what Papua New Guinea women might have, and are, continuing to do.

Using the imagery of an endemic genus of weevil, I invoke New Guinea. The colours, realistic reflections of the weevil, also recall the delight in colours expressed by contemporary PNG women. And the rug, or mat, form alludes to the stitched and women mates of Papua New Guinea.

But this is not an exhibition that isolates Papua New Guinean women's art forms. This exhibition alludes as well to women of other cultures. The rug, or mat, format is a universal one. Women around the world have constructed them in the past and continue to do so. The technique (hooking) used to make these mates references my native country Canada. The fabric comes from Australia, my country of residence, whose influence on these works is subtle but sure.

This exhibition, however, remains one the of the imagination … and begs the question of what was, and is, made by specific (Papua New Guinean) subsets of women and how these works can be placed within a broader inclusive context.

Appendix E: Invitation to Distilling the Weevilness of Weevil



Appendix F: Catalogue

Located in the pocket at the rear of the thesis.