Mapping the Floral

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My parents Virgilio Lobregat and Lourdes Victoria Bustamante, who are not able to see me complete this project, were nevertheless critical influences through teaching me an appreciation of my cultural heritage, fostering my curiosity about the world and bringing my sister and I to this remarkable new country.

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**Abstract**

The fresh challenge for me in entering an RHD in Natural History was to find a significant area of research, as my background is in the Visual Arts, and I do not have an undergraduate degree in Natural History or Science. Fifteen years ago, my art practice was linked to issues of cultural identity, and as such I exhibited in institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, and the Australian Embassy in Tokyo. As a Visual Artist, I received a grant from the Australia Council to research my cultural heritage at their Barcelona studio, where I collected signs and symbols to incorporate into my work and led to the generation of new artistic content.

Wallpaper seemed a natural subject to work with, as I collect wallpaper samples, and have often used wallpaper, and especially floral motifs in my work. The title ‘Mapping the Floral’ alludes primarily to the decorative use of floral motifs in wallpaper, and the mapping the history of its development. As a sub-heading, I had proposed to investigate ‘The Tension between Beauty and Utility.’ My original assumption was that they may be separate functions, with the idea of ‘tension’ describing how they coexist in art and design. An art-paper tests the boundaries between art and design.

The next stage of development was personally evaluative as well as directing my research in the Natural History Illustration field, where I was influenced by my fellow RHD student projects. Australia is an advantageous location to unravel different strands of the past, examine and represent them. Research-focused travel during the RHD led me to include Philippine culture and wildlife, and related issues. As an artist one hopes to contribute clarity to debates on contentious topics such as the environment and animal rights, and I found that wallpaper is a effective medium for me to do it.