Mapping the Floral

Victoria Lobregat, BVA (Hons), Dip. Ed

Masters in Design in Natural History Illustration

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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.
1. Mapping the Floral

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 I commenced reading for my Research paper, on the subject of Wallpaper, and its history, and I 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. I am not concerned with making an argument of form versus function, but little did I realise then that many disparate ideas and investigations over twenty years of art practice would slowly weave together into a more coherent awareness of the concerns that inform my imagery.

We must arrive at the theory of art by means of a detour. For theory is concerned with understanding, insight, not without exclamations of admiration and stimulation of that emotional outburst often called appreciation. It is quite possible to enjoy flowers in their coloured form and delicate fragrance without knowing anything about plants theoretically. But if one sets out to understand the flowering of plants, he is committed to finding out something about the interactions of soil, air, water and sunlight that condition the growth of plants.

Dewey 1964, Philosophies of Art and Beauty (as cited by Hofstadter & Kuhns, p. 625)

In writing this exegesis I came to recognize that at Sydney College of the Arts, where I studied Painting in the early nineties, Art making was considered part of a philosophical discourse. Reading, debating, deconstructing texts and creating art in context with literary philosophies of art and culture was part of our training then. In the same way creating Art in context with careful, detailed observation of Nature is part of the training now in Natural History Illustration. For this reason, the wallpapers I have designed are connected to a series of texts and readings which are entwined with the work, and while there is a range of subjects covered, the work comes back to a few central
concerns. It also became apparent during this investigation that my earlier life in the Philippines also had a significant influence on the way these ideas were to come together.

I have a history of using floral wallpaper motifs in my paintings, by using a collage technique with actual wallpaper samples, and also painting using sections of the magnified details of botanical prints. This also directed me to the possibility of wallpaper as an art form despite its being more familiar as a design item from popular culture. Figure 1 is a section from my multi-panelled installation for Primavera at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (1997). Besides possessing a collection of vintage floral bed sheets and wallpapers, I have painted numerous pictures of Waterlilies, Orchids and Magnolias, but it was not until I began to research the particulars of Natural History Illustration that I began to recognise the breadth of that subject and its strong relationship to my own practice.

Figure1. Detail from A Cloud of Flowers, Victoria Lobregat, mixed media on canvas board, 1998.

Because of the fluctuations in wallpaper's status and popularity, it seemed logical to start reading the history of wallpaper, and even further, to inquire into who or what actually may have influenced our tastes, as that would reveal something of the prevailing culture. I began this by searching philosophical excerpts from selected
readings of Western philosophy by the editors Albert Hofstadter, Richard Kuhns from
the University of Chicago, and Stephen David Ross from the State University of New
York. I also searched the library and news-stands for current design publications to get
an overview of recent trends in the design and use of wallpapers, which I discuss in
more detail in Chapter 4.

The Wallpapers that I have developed for this Master’s project share similar visual
conventions with murals, scientific illustrations and mythological scenes. They have
some flexibility as a storytelling format, so that one can incorporate diverse symbols
into a basic overall pattern, something which I have done before in my work (as shown
in figure 1). My papers are designed to run along a wall surface horizontally rather than
in vertical rows as is usual with domestic wallpapers, and therefore reference classical
friezes, which also work in a story-telling capacity. They contain drawings of specific
flora and fauna in the way that scientific illustrations do. Some of my papers also
contain symbols of a more personal history and ideology, and I see this as a way of
placing information in the context of a visual narrative which is both descriptive to an
audience and has meaning to me as an art practitioner.

Figure 2. *Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao*, preliminary drawing, pencil, ink and gouache on watercolour
paper 2010.
For this exegesis, I have set out different chapters outlining what I have discovered in my research and their influence to the overall process of making the wallpapers. Figure 2 shows the first draft, where I have begun to incorporate diverse symbols into the design.

Chapter 2, Floras and Florilegium delineates the development of botanical Illustration from classical times, moving on toward contemporary cultural uses and developments. Having undertaken study in the Natural History Illustration program at the University of Newcastle, the history of botanical illustration has influenced my recent methodology. The chapter traces the origins of traditional botanical documentation as part of my research toward adapting them into contemporary fashionable wallpapers. These are not dissimilar to some developed in the nineteenth century by the French design company Zuber.

Figure 3. Magnolia Tree, Panoramic wallpaper by Zuber, multiple hand-cut woodblock print, 1820.
Figure 3 depicts a sumptuous, graphic treatment of the Magnolia subject around the time it was first imported to Europe. In researching floral history, I observed an underlying thread describing the colonialist assumption of authority (and accordingly power) in the classification of plants, animals, and ultimately cultures. This is something I reflect on in later chapters, as it has a relationship to my own personal experience and some of the critical ecological issues we are currently experiencing.

In Chapter 3, Beauty and Utility, I briefly look at ideas of beauty, tracing various philosophers and their theories of beauty including the Greek Philosopher Aristotle to the German Philosopher Emmanuel Kant. This chapter is about the art-making process and also the notion of beauty in the depiction of nature. I look at the classical ideal of beauty in an attempt to trace how it affects contemporary ideas. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy was extremely persuasive in its influence in the West, from ideas of statesmanship and religion, through to the classification of plants and animals.

There has long been an accepted wisdom that decoration is an unnecessary embellishment - this stems back to the Neo-Classical tradition ‘which saw in any surfeit of ornament a symptom of vulgarity’ (Gombrich 1979, p 60). In exploring the tension between beauty and utility in my own work I use art and design to achieve a measure of artistic expression which has a functional value. I argue that one does not exclude the possibility of the other.
I also mention more recent philosophical concepts, such as Baudrillard’s *Simulacra*, and Glen Albrecht’s *Solastalgia*, helpful in defining current thinking about new moral and ecological paradigms which inform my work. In later chapters, I quote Scientist/Writer David Suzuki on sustainability and ethics. As I came to realise while reading for Mapping the Floral, my interests reside in plants, ecology, and nature. Figure 4 shows part of a series of Magnolia paintings I exhibited in 2002. There are also important themes in this paper which describe my experience of the overlapping of cultures, and will be treated with more depth in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4, *The Papered Wall*, I discuss the History of Wallpaper, and its production, the influence of the Industrial revolution and further technological innovations of the uses of wallpaper, the development of ‘good taste’ (which relates to ideas of beauty) and I will discuss notable wallpaper designers such as William Morris and the Australian designer Florence Broadhurst (shown in figure 5).
Because they are used in the public domain and can potentially be seen by a wide audience, I envisaged that wallpapers might be an interesting format to display information about such things as the medicinal properties of plants, or to portray various indigenous species of animals (some of which are on the verge of extinction) a function which would be an enriched version of their traditionally perceived use, that of being solely decorative. Particularly in London, experimentation with the potential of wallpaper has evolved into cutting edge design, subverting wallpaper's traditional context (Cutting Edge of Wallpaper essays, 2006). I find Kenneth Stephenson’s designs (figure 6) particularly appealing for their re-contextualization of wallpaper, and pattern.
Figure 6. Clockwise from top left, Deer, Swallows, and 3 kids outdoors, Kenneth Stephenson, Absolute Zero Design 2006, London.

My great interest in wallpapers certainly started with their decorative appeal, colour, pattern, and emotive content.

Chapter 5, Pattern, concerns pattern in nature, in design, and in culture, as patterning consistently reappears in my work, both the present and past. I describe the evolution of pattern in design and I will note the geometrical patterns of plant growth, as in my third wallpaper piece, one of the wallpaper motifs, Interlace, is based on the flowering cycle of a Magnolia plant. I have underlaid the flower with an Arabic geometrical motif similar to the one below in figure 7, which is based on mathematical principles.
For the majority of contemporary commercial wallpapers which are advertised in contemporary Interior design magazines such as Elle Decoration, Vogue Living or House and Garden, it can be said that their main purpose is to decorate a room, and so perhaps to make some sort of statement about the owner.

The wallpaper structure is also one where I can pictorially weave information about the fauna and flora that I have observed (such as the Philippine Spotted Deer, and typically Filipino plants such as Sampaguita), into a larger, stylised foliage. The main plant I have used is *Magnolia Grandiflora*, an imported flowering tree found in great quantities
in Sydney’s North Shore. Figure 8 shows a mid-century weatherboard house with Kangaroos lounging in the front yard (this image is based on my own experiences on a remote southern coast of Australia).

Figure 8. *Holiday house with Kangaroos*, detail from preliminary drawings for *Magpies, Magnolia and Mindanao*, Lobregat, 2010.

In *Chapter 6, Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao*, I reflect on my own experience of coming to live in Australia from the Philippines at the age of six. The uneasy juxtaposition of western developed values with a traditional rural culture is central to my childhood experience. The idea of cultural merging is important in my work - as an artist I am conscious of operating comfortably within two different cultural modalities and this inevitably informs my imagery. In this wallpaper I also document some animal species such as the Visayan Spotted deer (figure 9) which are endemic to the Philippines.
Chapter 7, Animal Matters - describes influences that inform this particular wallpaper and my own concerns for animal rights. One major personal discovery in researching for this paper was returning to the Philippines and discovering the incredible richness of endemic species (Wildlife Conservation Foundation of the Philippines as cited by Galang, 2004) and at the same time the circumstance of their impending extinction (Heaney, L.R. as cited by Galang 2004). The exploitation of animals and lack of respect for life shown in their treatment can be traced back to Classical theory which positions man as morally entitled to consider all resources are to be used and can be destroyed at will (Aristotle as cited by Ross, 1996 p. 259). I am interested in Glenn Albrechts’ views when he writes about the rights of species and ecosystems in his article entitled Ethics, Anarchy and Sustainable Development (1994, p.105), and a social ecology which is ‘in harmony of its locality, district and region and continent’ (1994, p.112).
Chapter 8, Rx for a Sick Planet also features cultural and ecological themes. It accompanies the last wallpaper piece Purple Swamphens at Warners Bay. In this I have referred to some of Scientist David Suzuki’s ideas about indigenous knowledge and to Glenn Albrecht’s concept of Solastalgia (2005), which is a feeling of environmental desolation that has influenced this particular artwork, and also describe how creating work alleviates these feelings and prompts one to search for alternative solutions. *Purple Swamphens at Warner’s Bay* (figure 10) was part of this process.

![Image of Purple Swamphens at Warner’s Bay](image)

Figure 10. Preliminary drawing for *Swamphens at Warner’s Bay*, Lobregat, gouache and ink on watercolour paper 2010.

Chapter 9, Methodology documents my studio practice. I discuss each of the four designs in some detail, what techniques I used and what experiments or other ideas and processes I discarded. Initially I was possessed with the idea that I should use 3D animation for this project (the graphics program for which I have not at this point mastered) and I go on to describe how I came to revert back to drawing and painting. The manner of arriving at images by using storyboards and compiling ideas is shown in figure 11.
Chapter 10, Context and Conclusion contextualizes my research and practice and discusses how I might display my work, exploring the possibility of approaching illustration agents, commercial wallpaper designers and producing my designs through the use of technology. The methodology will describe the techniques I have used, and the progression of my ideas, how they have varied from piece to piece. I write about how researching for this exegesis has resulted in refining my focus on new areas of interest and influences on my work. The Conclusion is a critical reflection on what I have achieved, artistically and personally.
2. Floras and Florilegium

The plants themselves provide riches, almost without limit, spanning an astonishing physical, social and cultural spectrum. From utility to ornament, their almost inexhaustible patrimony has clothed, fed, warmed, protected and inspired humans since the dawn of time.


Floras and Florilegium were and are collections of Botanical drawings of species of plants, usually a compilation of excerpts from other writings. Floras show roots, corms, bulbs, fruits and sections of a plant and Florilegiums often compile and describe the collective plant organisms of a given locality. My readings on the history of plant classification for this paper fascinated me, as I began to read about centuries of knowledge, translated and re-translated across the continents, a vast deal of which has now been lost. It is also to me startling how easily knowledge can be lost to the next generation in this day and age of instantaneous technology. Many young people in the city rarely come into contact with the cycles of nature in farms or the bush. In relation to my own work, I have been considering how to re-present botanical and cultural information.

Classification is another passion of mine, collections of fabric prints, collections of vintage toys, as if by filing information and sorting objects one can attempt to have a greater understanding and control. Botanical writer Anna Pavord, in her book *The naming of Names*, writes fascinatingly about the process of understanding “the rules of nature’s game.” But the act of classification can become also one of power, ownership, and domination. In their book *Ornament -A Social History Since 1450*, Maurice Snodin and Michael Howard (1996) describe how the west borrowed and adapted ‘exotic’
design motifs, as well as numerous plants and spices (see Chinoiserie designs, chapter 4). Colonizing countries often named and classified ‘the other’ as Other, as if by claiming naming rights, one could ‘own’ the subject.

Though plants were mentioned and drawn in very early civilizations such as that of the Egyptians, there are no records of them being systematically documented in the same way as the classifications of the Greeks. Aristotle of Stagira brought new concepts of reasoning and analysis to bear on many disciplines at his Lyceum by using observation, collection, experimentation and analysis (Pavord, 2005). He was taught by Plato, who in turn had been a disciple of Socrates. Greek civilization was one of supreme intellectual achievement, and its scholarship was dominant. The systemic study of plants was a key aspect in the emergence of Greek science.

Figure 12. Illustration of the Mandrake plant from the Naples Discorides c.625.
The Naples Discorides was an early seventh-century herbal based on the First Century Greek military physician Discorides’ manual containing descriptions of plants and their uses, in figure 12 showing the mysterious human-like Mandrake plant.

One becomes aware of the long history and of humankind’s strong desire to make sense of the natural world. Aristotle’s pupil, Theophrastus, described and classified plants according to their characteristics and differences (Pavord, 2005). He wrote two seminal treatises describing his research, Historia Plantarium (Enquiry on Plants) and De Causis Plantarium, both written c. 320-287 BCE. These included Egyptian, Libyan and Mediterranean plants, identifying those particular to their localities. Asian plants were included in Historia Plantarum through the exploits of Alexander the Great (also a pupil of Aristotle), who reached the plains of India via Persia. Roman scholarship was well demonstrated (Pavord, 2005) by the massive compilation Historia naturalis (c.77 CE) by Pliny the Elder, providing a mass of information about botany and horticulture of the Roman Empire.

Figure 13. Portrait of Avicenna c.1600.
Around 750 AD, science, (including pharmacology) reached a high level of sophistication in the Arab world (Aitken, 2006), exemplified by the teachings of Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna (figure 13). A leading Islamic scholar in philosophy, science and medicine, Avicenna prepared an encyclopaedic work whose title roughly translates as *The Cure of Ignorance*. In this he classified the sciences into eight principal groups, of which plants formed an important division. He drew extensively on the writings of the Greeks and Romans which had been translated into Arabic. Aitken (2006) notes that the writings of Avicenna included some of the first descriptions of Bananas and Coconuts.

The Renaissance of Mid-fifteenth century Europe signaled a time where discoveries in science and a flowering of humanist thought challenged the conventional and repressive theological teachings of the Catholic Church. The writings of earlier scholars were re-read, and modern knowledge was a consolidation with independent thought. Though linked to medicine, during the Renaissance botany became increasingly its own discipline (Aitken 2006) and moved through Europe by means of printed books coupled with illustrations printed from woodblocks. Pavord (2005) says that Renaissance scholars looked back to the works of Greek, Roman and Arabic manuscripts housed in Monastic libraries – though thousands had been destroyed or remained unknown.

The artificial system of classification developed by Swedish Naturalist Carl Linnaeus, first expressed in his book *System Naturae* (1735) revolutionized the natural sciences. Plants were grouped according to their reproductive organs in order to identify affinities or differences between plants. Subsequently, binomial, or two part names, generic and
specific, then further distinguished individual plants, replacing earlier and often confusing nomenclature (Pavord, 2005).

Gradually, over a long period in Europe, plants gathered formal identities. There was a practical need to recognize and differentiate between plants—medicinal properties of plants fuelled the earliest scientific interest in botany, such as Belladonna or foxglove. The properties of plants included in Renaissance herbals were not exclusively confined to medicine. Many of the plants selected were for their ornamental qualities (Aitken 2006) such as the Rose, Lily or Carnation which had long been cultivated in European gardens. However garden books as a distinct publishing genre were not common.
before the mid-sixteenth century. Figure 14, Monardes’ book, concentrates mainly on
the medicinal properties of plants.

Figure 15. South East-Asian flora - Bamboo, Banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*) and Durian (*Durio zibenthus*) by Jan Huygen van Linschoten.

Richard Aitken describes botanical scholarship as being galvanized (2006 p. 57) by the
first volume of *Herbarium vivae econes*, compiled by Otto Brunfels, and brilliantly
illustrated by Hans Weiditz. Florilegiums had often been improperly copied and
recopied over the centuries, with no real regard for the accuracy of the plants’
appearance (Pavord 2005). In English, the title *Living Portraits of Plants* suggests the
importance of the work, as the woodcuts were evolutionary in their portrayal of plants.
Weiditzs’ portraits were drawn directly onto the wooden printing blocks, not stylized but
closely observed and botanically accurate, as drawn in figure 15.
Advances in boat building in the late fifteenth century led to a rapid increase in maritime exploration. Countries such as Portugal, Spain, England and Holland were able to undertake ambitious and strategic ocean-going exploration. Arab trading monopolies were challenged by this new maritime capacity (Aitken, 2006). The creation of colonial empires opened the way to the importation of plants from foreign lands and differing climates. It revealed a widespread commerce in plants and seeds, between a community of inquiring minds and learned men of the day, drawing and recording and collecting, growing plants and devising ways of classifying an ever-increasing flow of specimens which were coming in to Europe as new parts of the globe were being discovered from far-off continents such as South America, and eventually Australia (Gribbin, J & M, 2008). Figures 16 and 17 are examples of the exotic plants which were imported into Europe – the carnation a particularly popular flower for its colour and flamboyant markings.

From the Douglas Fir and the Monkey Puzzle tree to Orchids and Azaleas, they were found in distant regions of the globe by intrepid botanist explorers who travelled on foot or horseback through wild and often unexplored country, up previously unclimbed mountains and through almost impenetrable jungle, often encountering hostility from the locals, overcoming hunger and disease to send back the fruits of their labours.

Gribbin J & M, 2008 The Flower Hunters p.1

Figure 16. Detail of Franklin’s Tartar carnation (Dianthus caryophyllus) by William Curtis.
Much European colonization was undertaken of tropical and semi tropical lands. The transfer and introduction of economically useful plants is a major theme in the history of many nations (Gribbin, J & M, 2008). The Dutch and British East India companies developed a profitable trade in food plants, spices, dyes, medicinal plants, narcotics and others. As the New World became a focus for exploration and exploitation,
indigenous plant knowledge remained a poignant and relevant means of empowering local communities.

Greenhouses developed in Northern Europe so as enable the cultivation of tropical fruit and flowers. Botanic gardens outgrew their role as horti medici, and became increasingly influential in publishing, as institutions in Leiden, Amsterdam, Paris, Vienna and London complemented their living and dried herbarium collections with publications. The move from woodblock printing to metal engraving in the late 16th Century revolutionized the art of the illustrated book (Aitken, 2006).

“The herbal was produced as an instruction manual, whereas the flower piece was purely a commercially ornamental piece of decoration. Both have their place in the history of art.”

de Bray L, 1989 The Art of Botanical Illustration p. 34.

Figure 18. Frontpiece of Caspar Stoll’s book on the world’s insects (Wantzen in Dutch, Punaises in French) published in Amsterdam in 1788.
The emergence of botanical illustration as a genre of art dates back to the 15th century, when herbals (books describing the culinary and medicinal uses of plants) were printed containing illustrations of flowers (or insects, as is the case in figure 18). As printing techniques advanced, and new plants came to Europe from Ottoman Turkey in the 16th century, wealthy individuals and botanic gardens commissioned artists to record the beauty of these exotics in ‘Florilegia’. Florilegia flourished in the 17th century when they were created to portray rare and exotic plants from far afield. One extremely notable book was New Illustration of the Sexual System of Carolus Von Linnaeus…and the Temple of Flora, or Garden of Nature… Bensley, London 1799-1807 (Aitken 2008), published by John Thornton (figure 19).

Figure 19. The Queen of the Night cactus (Selenicereus grandiflorus) from John Thornton’s Temple of Flora.
As I wrote at the start of this chapter, the history of plant classification and its connection to colonialism indeed fascinated me, as it seemed to echo some parts of my family’s experience, but as an artist wonderful illustrations of exotic plants and locations are even more compelling. Images from botanical illustration of all sorts, from tomes such as *Temple of Flora* to popular vintage bedsheets depicting pretty spring flowers, these images never fail to inspire my imagination with endless possible configurations of leaves, petals and colours that I might myself draw or paint.
3. Beauty, Utility and Nature

A life fit for human beings must be complex, with the temptations of complexity; a life filled with art.

Plato, Republic 373 (as cited in Hofstadter and Kuhns, 1964 p.22)

What might be my motivation for exploring the tension between beauty and utility? Within this paper it is to investigate the origins of wallpaper, which is historically a decorative product, and to look at the history of botanical drawings (see Chapter 2, Floras and Florilegium), with a view to adapting aspects of scientific botanical documentation into forms of wallpaper.

I have also considered notions of beauty, particularly in the depiction of nature. One question that seems to recur in other chapters I have written is the tension between the relative value of one view over another. We consider beauty and its purpose and whether it is more important than utility. This polarity plays out in different ways, in art versus science/design, or nature versus the man-made environment, or the colonizer versus the colonized.

‘Decoration is part of evolution, a gradual process of mimesis, repetition, fusion and adaptation.’


Traditionally wallpaper is seen as a decorative embellishment in a home or building, so it can be said to exist solely for ornamentation. Modernist precept dictates that form follows function and decoration for its own sake is frivolous, (Snodin & Howard, 1996)
yet to decorate is a natural instinct. The desire to embellish ourselves and the world around us is intrinsic to the human experience, and one that is denied when the decorative tradition is discarded. Print can be considered a distraction, and yet invites recognition. It is an affirmation that there is time in the world to play, and that decoration in itself is a purpose. The patterns of Mehandi for example (figure 20) are typically intricate and developed as they were applied to brides before wedding ceremonies. The origin and development of decoration of any nation is inseparably bound up with its history, its migrations, and its commerce (Snodin & Howard, 1996).

As I generally work instinctively, collecting and using images I find beautiful or pleasing, I began to investigate where ideas of beauty spring from, starting with the theories of the classical Greeks, which influenced the ideals of Western Aesthetics. After the Renaissance, the average educated European person was convinced that the one undeniable standard of excellence was the idealised naturalism of the Greeks –
although my own work has been influenced just as much by Buddhist imagery (figure 21) and tribal decoration, as were notable European artists such as Matisse, Gaugin and Picasso, who were influenced last century by Japanese woodcuts, Polynesian themes and African masks respectively.

Figure 21. Korean Shaman, Lobregat, gouache and ink on watercolour paper, 2011.
There is also a realisation of my own feelings of ambiguity, or maybe it is futility, in trying to capture nature. At times I have looked at a tree in full flower, like a magnolia, and I’ve thought how beautiful and perfect and alive it is, and at the very same time “how could I draw or paint or build it?” But I could never do it better than how nature has made it. There is pleasure and gratification, delight in beauty. For the ancient Greeks, the beauty in nature seems to be connected with the form of the object. Figure 22, a statue of the sun god Apollo shows the classical version of the ideal man. The Greek philosopher Plotinus is quoted as saying,

“This then, is how the material thing becomes beautiful -by communicating in the thought that flows from the Divine.”

Plotinus as cited by Hofstatder and Kuhns (1964 p. 143)

Figure 22. The Belvedere Apollo, Leochares, (Roman copy of Greek original), Vatican Museum collection.
In other words, it was considered that beauty lies in having a connection to godliness or the divine mind. Thus beauty was seen as the symbol of the good, and also a symbol of the cosmic harmony to which all beautiful things are related. Dewey, the American psychologist and educational reformer (as cited in Hofstadter & Kuhns, 1964p. 637) wrote “when the Greeks identified the good and beautiful in actions, they revealed, in their feeling of grace and proportion in right conduct, a perception of the fusion of means and ends.” It is tempting to think of beauty in nature as beautiful form, and to think of the sublime as formless - nature is seen as sublime where it conveys the idea of infinity, of boundlessness as in vistas of the Grand Canyon, or the peaks of Tibet (Hofstadter & Kuhns, 1964).

Perception can be a prelude or a pathway to the analytical. But, when one walks into a forest, picks up a seashell, or gasps with wonder at a rainbow, it is unlikely that the immediate action will be to take a calculator and compute something from what is seen. Instead, that first encounter with a pattern in Nature is accompanied by the emotion of a happening, a connection. Whatever may happen later, that first response is aesthetic, and that response can result in a spiritual experience (Ross, 1996).

I see the exotic as beautiful, and identification with other cultures may not be limited to a fascination with their use of form, colour and pattern. Taking inspiration from these decorative traditions allows for the possibility of transporting not only the imagery but also the values of other cultures. It will be noted that different forms of beauty circulate in art (Hofstatder & Kuhns,1996). Beauty renders the familiar strange, and the strange familiar.
New forms develop in art without necessarily having a purpose except for the effect they produce in the imagination. The German 18th Century philosopher Kant talks of beauty, of art as having nothing to do with ethics, though it illustrates the good (as cited by Hofstatder & Kuhns, 1964 p.583). For he equates ethics with interest, and emphasizes the disinterestedness of art. Yet obviously art is not free from restrictions, from social codes and expectations, from market exchanges and political dominations.

Every capital must have its own museum of painting, sculpture etc., devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its artistic past, and in other part, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations; for instance the spoils of Napoleon that are in the Louvre.”

Dewey, (as cited by Hofstatder and Kuhns, 1964 p.583)

Artists’ products are valuable as symbols, in that they can reflect the emotions and ideas that are associated with the institutions of social life. John Dewey has written that the arts which have the most vitality today for the average person are things which they do not take to be art, such as movies, music, comics, or dramatic newspaper accounts. He talks of factors which have “removed religion as well as fine art from the scope of the common or community life,” (as cited by Hofstatder & Kuhns, 1964) and the rise of the compartmental concept of fine art instead of finding it paired with temple, forum and other forms of associated life. Figure 23 shows a column from a forum area - a venue for public speeches and a nucleus of commercial affairs.
I agree with Dewey in observing that the most memorable art clarifies and concentrates meanings contained in scattered and diluted ways in the material of other experiences (as cited in Hofstatder & Kuhns, 1964). Culture provides signs, images, stories, characters, metaphors and scenarios among other similar materials with which we make sense of our lives and the world around us.

Figure 23. Corinthian column with Acanthus leaves, Greek c330 BC.
Simulacra

More recent generations are extremely visually literate and progressively attuned to a proliferation of images. Consumers appear to be gradually more satisfied with simulacra, or simulations of nature, in the present time. I suspect that many are uncomfortable with dealing with the messiness of real animals and plants. Western society grooms its young to deal with living beings as consumables, as illustrated by the caption that goes with the following advertisement (figure 24), where stuffed animal toys exist to provide temporary entertainment for children, with no real relationship or connection to an animals’ needs or its environment.

There are ever-increasing representations of nature, in wallpaper, art, computer games, interior design, media (and ironically, almost always created at a cost to the actual natural world). In no other time in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of messages. One may remember or forget these messages but briefly one takes them in, and for a moment they stimulate the imagination by way of either memory or expectation.
“If you would like to give your child more variety, the Jungle Stuffed Animal Collection by Hansa comes with 4 jungle animals: a junior chimp, panda bear, cheetah cub, and Japanese monkey. It’s a great way to bring the jungle to your home and expand your child’s horizon of stuffed animals, as opposed to the traditional brown bear animal. Whether you have a newborn or a child growing rapidly before your eyes, stuffed animals have always been a prime choice for parents to provide their children with entertainment.”

The Postmodern phenomenon described by French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard as ‘the debauchery of signs ‘(*Simulacra and Simulation*, University of Michigan Press, 1994) is the unprecedented convergence of cultural, social and economic forces. Communication (or gratification-enhancing) technology services the markets’ endless demands for reproducible goods. A complete understanding of all the detail of human life is impossible, and when people are seduced into thinking otherwise they become drawn toward a “simulated” version of reality, or, to use one of Baudrillard’s terms, a state of "hyperreality." This is not to say that the world becomes unreal, but rather that the faster and more comprehensively societies begin to bring reality together into one
supposedly coherent picture, the more insecure and unstable it looks and the more fearful societies become. Reality, in this sense, "dies out." Senses numbed, we become technologically indifferent (Baudrillard 1994). This could be one of the dangers of exposure to too much technology in the lives of young people.

Figure 25. Advertisement for artificial plants.

Our products are a step above the rest, and are testimony to our meticulous attention to detail. Our custom made trees have been the foundation of our incredible reputation.

Our quality artificial and lifelike trees and palms have always been our premium offering, made with only the highest quality components, and are custom constructed in our factory.

We select from a variety of woods to create unique and natural looking specimen trees and palms. Our attention to detail and nature's style give our custom trees and palms their very real appearance.

CREATE A ...romantic grape vine trellis for your Mediterranean themed restaurant, a warm, inviting elevator lobby space with custom made gardens or add a beautiful artificial plant or flower arrangement, for the perfect finishing accent piece to any place in your home or office.

THE REPUTABLE PIONEERS OF THE ARTIFICIAL PLANT INDUSTRY

Figure 25, above, seems to demonstrate that such is the desire to appear to maintain links with nature, at this time where the ‘natural world’ is rapidly disappearing, that manufacturers market ‘custom made trees.’ These are ostensibly more convenient than actual plants in that they do not require light or watering and seem merely to serve a symbolic function.

What is significant to me is the abundance of living creatures in the work of this movement of ‘new naturalist’ designers such as Tord Boontje, Hannah Waring, and Clare Coles (figs 26-30). Butterflies, bees, birds, deer, insects and fish- all feature in illustration and 3d work- suggestive of a romantic escapism and an appreciation of individuality over mass production. Floral motifs have long been a staple of the decorative arts. We are used to wallpaper and fabrics adorned with flowers and foliage, but recently a greater diversity of natural signs and symbols have been making their way into the work of artists and designers, inspired by woodland settings, folk and fairy tales, and the archives of natural history museums.

Figure 26. Left, Djurtatradgard and right, Krokodillov, from the Animal Flowers wallpaper-posters collection, Hannah Waring 2001-2004, litho on blue-black paper.
Figure 27. *Wednesday Light*, Tord Boontje 2002, etched metal.

Figure 28. *Oriental Garden*, Clare Coles 2006, leather and felt machine-stitched onto vintage wallpaper.
The monumental fig-leaf encrusted doors open to reveal a bronze tree arching up and outward against the background of a peaceful landscape in silk.

Each wardrobe requires 616 hand-painted enamel leaves, the largest project of its kind in history. The leaves are painted on both sides, based on an artist’s original watercolour for each of the ten basic shapes. A special method of supporting them, so that no clamp marks were present, had to be developed. The overall size of the larger leaves as well as the enormous surface area to be painted, was originally thought to be impossible to enamel. The enamel is hand painted by a few of the finest enamel painters still working in England. Each leaf is signed on the underside, numbered and recorded in the archives of the production of the Fig Leaf wardrobe.

The glass leaves are uniquely hung on a complicated tangle of hand-formed supporting vines. The tracery structure was created by Atelier de Forge, a traditional iron foundry in rural France. Inside grows a life-like bronze tree which was cast using the lost-wax process and created by Patrick Blanchard, head of sculpture at the École Boulle, Paris. The wardrobe has eight designed and matching bronze hangers. The patination of the bronze was overseen by Chevillard, a specialist in metals founded in 1850, who gave a deep patina reminiscent of a Rodin sculpture. The interior back is lined with bespoke silk made by the Gainsborough Silk Weaving Company, the pre-eminent silk dyers of England, to complement the enamels on the leaves. Like the very best design, The Fig Leaf’s beauty grows; it is a contemporary masterpiece.

H 236 × W 164 × D 85 cm • Advertisement for Meta 2008
The designers of the items from figures 26 through to 30 deal with the idea of nature, such as Tord Boontje’s highly elaborate bronze *Fig Leaf* wardrobe. I wonder if some of the re-creation of nature which pervades current design is reflective of our period of rapid change and uncertain futures. There is consolation to be found in recognizing the familiar. Nostalgia is rooted in sentiment, and this wistful affection for the past animates the yearning for its trappings; houses, interiors and clothes might all be recognized as evoking a particular era. One recognizes humankind’s innate desire to return to a place of imagined serenity and safety.

Figure 30. *Dondola Chair*, Tord Boontje, foam, leather, wood, 2004.
Glenn Albrecht, a philosopher and Professor of Sustainability at Murdoch University in Perth, coined the neologism “solastalgia.” It has appeared in media outlets as disparate as Wired, and The Daily News in Sri Lanka. I reference this term again in Chapter 6.

“In a 2004 essay, he coined a term to describe it: “solastalgia,” a combination of the Latin word *solacium* (comfort) and the Greek root –*algia* (pain), which he defined as “the pain experienced when there is recognition that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault . . . a form of homesickness one gets when one is still at ‘home’.”

Daniel B. Smith holds the Critchlow Chair in English at the College of New Rochelle.

With regard to my own wallpapers, I see they may be used as a discussion point, and that their message can be read on a number of levels, cultural, narrative and decorative. The skull motif is recurrent in three out of the four designs, and this is probably because it conveys a sense of fragility of life, and also fears of destruction. It is an instantly recognizable symbol, both current and ancient.

In *Magnolias Magpies in Mindanao*, I name, collect and present different animals from the Philippines, for example, rather than state the facts that such-and -such a number of species have disappeared at such a rate etc. The layout of that wallpaper also works as a narrative of my own childhood experiences, but the juxtaposition of colourful birds, flowers and animals in it gives it a mythical feeling, which is heightened by the image of a flaming human skull, symbolic of traditional shamanic practices by Filipino tribal groups.
Swamphens at Warner’s Bay is set out in a narrative structure showing a pair of swamphens stepping over a human skull, among the remains of industrial building rubble. In this landscape, mankind is not the inevitable victor, nature outlasts all. Depicting a rope-bridge into the rainforest investigates the idea of non-toxic, really natural materials for man-made structures. Here too, the colourful drawing style lends it a feel of a childrens fable.

Animal Matters has a surreal, dreamlike appearance with a human skull set in a baroque frame, circled by various animals. The meaning here is ambiguous, a message of unease and possible danger is at first hidden in decorative, repetitive patterning. The only wallpaper without a skull, Arabic Magnolia Interlace, contains a traditional two- dimensional Arabic pattern as its base, and three- dimensional constructions of the blooming of a magnolia flower. This design is both an observation of the physical aspect of a flower and an expression of the energy that cause growth cycles in nature.

The predictions of doom and destruction described by environmental messages about global warming, habitat destruction, pollution can be counter- effective. Messages meant to prod the indifferent can actually overwhelm those who are concerned, breeding greater insensitivity. Politicians and leaders would do more to sell the positive, post-transformation vision of what conservation, higher efficiency, and simpler lifestyles could do for us in a positive sense — the cleaner, less stressful, simpler life as an inducement, rather than horror stories to frighten people into action.
Communities need to find ways to promote the positive side of more sustainable living and the restorative powers of nature. Perhaps it will be the imagery of artists that will contribute clarity to a largely political argument and misinformed debates on contentious topics such as the environment, and animal rights.
4. The Papered Wall

The challenge of a bare wall seems to have stimulated man’s creativity from earliest times.

Gore & Gore, 1991 *English Interiors*, p.9

Indeed Archeology and History point to a considerable amount of decoration whether it is in cave paintings, Roman Mosaics or Gothic residences. To cover a wall with wallpaper is to open up a window to an ideal world. To choose a paper for a room is to make a statement of how you see yourself and want to see the world. Patterns can play along with the architecture of a room or disguise it. My own affection for wallpaper stems from finding books of wallpaper samples, and from personal images of the interiors of a certain era. My memories of these papered walls evoke strong childhood emotions.

Ever since wallpaper first became widely available its status as an art form has been questioned: is it background or foreground, art or decoration, a substitute or the real thing? Certain commercially successful types of wallpaper were derided by the design establishment when they were current, and have largely been ignored in the histories of design. Now, as ‘Popular Culture’ they are seen as legitimate and interesting a subject as beautifully crafted panels from the late 18th Century, or artist–designed prints of the 1950’s.

Wallpaper in the 20th century had become very much associated with the 'country house' look, with chintzy florals, Morris revivals and historic patterns predominating. There was a brief flowering of new and original design directions in the 1950s and 1960s, when architects and artists revitalized the industry; designers such as Lucienne Day initiated a trend for adventurous patterns inspired by contemporary painting and sculpture, while John Line's Palladio and Modus ranges were characterized by bold large-scale contemporary designs,
many by artists new to wallpaper. However, this confident phase was soon
overwhelmed by a taste for nostalgic patterns, reproductions and pastiches. And
as one journalist put it, wallpaper in the 1990s had been a 'no-no', out of fashion
for so long 'we're almost scared to say its name.'

http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/new-directions/
The Victoria and Albert Museum

The low ranking of wallpaper compared with other decorative arts has affected the
study of its history, which did not develop as a serious subject until the 20th Century.
The field of interest has widened in recent years as the attitudes and approaches of
design history and cultural studies have had an increasing influence on the study of
wallpapers, extending the more traditional emphasis on stylistic development and
technological determination.

Museum collections and their curators, particularly those in Germany, France, the United States
and Great Britain, have been active in promoting a serious reassessment of the importance of
wallpaper- not only in period rooms but as an element in the history of manufacture and
consumption generally.

Schoeser 2005, The Papered Wall, p.233

The early wallpapers made in Europe were offshoots of the emerging papermaking and
printing crafts. The earliest surviving papers were generally printed in black on white;
the Victoria and Albert Museum have one dating from about 1680 (Brittain Catlin, 2002
p.9). These papers were individual sheets decorated with geometrical wood cut
patterns, printed by a hand-operated press in the same way as leaves of a book. They
were used for lining boxes as well as decorating the walls of a room. Late seventeenth
century papers had repeating, often floral patterns but were known as ‘paper hangings’
(Brittain Catlin, 2002 p.8) and were seen as a direct substitute for fabrics that could be
pinned, rather than glued to walls. The block printing process required every printed sheet to have a selvage on both sides.

By the middle of the eighteenth century England had become a centre of technical innovation in wallpaper manufacture (Brittain Catlin, 2005 p.8) Sheets were pasted together before printing which allowed a larger repeat pattern. Another design innovation was flock wallpaper; Flock (figure 31) was made from dyed woolen waste which was glued in stylized floral patterns onto backing paper already printed with a similar colour, creating an effect similar to damask silk.
As long as hand production and expense confined its use, the nature of the product was less of a problem. It was possible to unashamedly enjoy 18th Century hand-painted Chinese panels, or English flocks which echoed damasks in style and grandeur. Though printing had been known in China for centuries, Chinese wallpapers were almost always painted by hand, in gouache or tempera on a white mulberry fibre paper called *mien lien*. Wallpapers were produced in workshops, the individual artists remained anonymous. Upon arrival in Europe, these papers were considered so valuable that they were very rarely pasted directly onto a wall. Usually they were mounted on canvas or a thicker paper support and stretched on wooden supports which were then fixed to the wall, and this would account for many well-preserved papers which are intact today.

The Chinese provided extra sheets with each set of papers so that birds or branches could be cut out and pasted over damaged or discoloured areas, or to fill in awkward corners. Figure 32 shows the original hand-painted Chinese paper, with the larger two birds on the bottom left being cut out from John James Audubon’s (the famous American ornithologist and bird painter) plates and pasted on to mend a tear.
Gill Saunders, a Senior Curator at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, in her chapter *The China Trade: Oriental Painted Panels*, writes that, with very few exceptions, Chinese papers can be divided into three classes according to their design (2005 p.47). The first has figure scenes of daily life in China. The second is bird and flower pattern, based on the motif of a flowering tree. The third category is a mixture of figures and trees. In the Song dynasty, 12-13th Century, painters established a technique of working with ink outlines filled with colour. Saunders (2005) talks of a clear continuity in style between the Song Dynasty artists and the wallpaper workshops of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, evident in rich colours, fine details and a predominant naturalism (see figure 33). Indeed the botanist Sir Joseph Banks noted in his journal in 1771 that:
Some of the plants which are common to China and Java (such) as Bamboo, are better figured there than by the best botanical authors that I have seen.

(as cited by Saunders, 2002 p. 49)

In the late seventeenth century, the popularity of Chinese wallpapers, combined with their expense and lengthy delivery times- up of to eighteen months- prompted English and French manufacturers to produce imitations which were often beautiful, but can rarely be mistaken for the authentic Chinese product. Mid 18th Century panels with etched outlines and hand colouring are not convincing imitations largely because of their awkward mix of Chinese and European styles, nor did Western papers retain their brilliance of colour. Saunders suggests that they might be better judged as early examples of the recurrent fashion for using adaptations of Oriental motifs in essentially Western papers (2005 p.55).
Similarly, when French manufacturers of the late 18th century and early 19th century produced extraordinary panoramas, trompe-loeil draperies and complex panel decorations they far exceeded what we expect of wallpapers today. The essential characteristic of scenic papers is the absence of repeats. They are defined as being a continuous landscape without any repetition of scenes or motifs, printed on a series of paper pieces that join together. The best French manufacturers specialized in creating individual panels for large rooms based on Classical or Napoleonic epic narratives. These were characteristically highly realistic illustrations using newly available pigments and luxury finishes such as gold dust (Brittain -Catlin, 2005 p.9).

Like other wallpapers, panoramic scenes were printed using woodblocks, each block for a specific colour, ranging from several hundred to as many as four thousand for the most complex scenes. In 1819 Zuber developed a method of brushing in the ground (known as irise, see figure 34), giving a distinctively pure transparent, satiny quality to the blue skies. As the century progressed, scenic wallpaper came to be ranked among the major arts, fine enough to be regarded as a major work while at the same time selling to quite a wide clientele, and keeping current with changes in fashion and taste.
The poor quality of the applied or decorative arts in England was seen to be related to the mechanical processes developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Arts and Crafts Movement was a term coined in London in 1887 and its practitioners theorized that by the return to traditional methods of production, good quality objects would thereby be produced, looking back at the role of the artist/craftsman in the Middle Ages. The Arts and Crafts movement affected all areas of the visual arts, furniture, ceramics, and fabrics (Brittain -Catlin, 2005).

William Morris became the major figure in the decorative arts in Britain during the second half of the 19th Century. He was interested in all aspects of design and learned techniques himself in order to master the design and execution process. Morris’s skill as a designer was his ability to create often complex repeating patterns as shown in his
woven and printed fabrics, as well as the wallpapers. In his work as well as those of his other designers, natural forms, flowers and animals are always recognizable. As design influences he cited Ancient Egyptian, Byzantine, Persian, Indian, Northern European and English cultures.

Figure 35. *Iris*, block-print by William Morris c 1872.

Flowers are never randomly scattered across the surfaces of his patterns, they are held in structured, repeating frameworks (figure 35). By the 1870's, Morris had become notable for the design of patterns where a background of dense foliage characteristically merges with the flowers in the foreground, and with a restrained colour palette (Brittain-Catlin, 2005 p.14). His papers have enjoyed popularity almost continuously to this day.
The wallpapers available in the first years of the twentieth century spanned the range from Art Nouveau, through floral designs influenced by Art Nouveau to historicist styles, and accurate historical imitations. By the second decade of the century, naturalistic flower wallpapers had returned to fashion. At first, more restrained colours were preferred but these became stronger and more intense over time.

Papers for the top end of the market in England and France were block-printed, however in Germany, there were efforts to create good design appropriate for machine production (Thummler and Turner 2005 p.186). The Deutscher Werkbund was formed in Munich in 1907, this was an association of artist, craftsmen and industrial companies who aimed to modernize the aesthetic appearance of industrial products. Manufacture by machine and the products’ practical and tasteful design became the most important aesthetic.

The tendency toward refined, ornamental forms for luxury objects reached its high point in Art Deco, which grew out of floral Art Nouveau in France between 1905 and 1908. There was a vogue for unconventional colour combinations, and elements borrowed from Cubism and African art. From the mid 1920’s, a new type of wallpaper began to develop. It was strictly two dimensional and influenced by abstract geometric shapes similar to those seen in Constructivist paintings.

But as mechanization increased availability, it also increased anxieties about taste- as to whether it should be noticeable, should imitate other materials or use three-dimensional effects. Wallpaper was viewed as always wanting to represent something other than what it was (Thummler & Turner 2005 p.190) because it imitated fabrics and
used representational means to create spatial illusion. There was a definite reaction against the ornamental and decorative among certain architects and artists.

The German Bauhaus movement, founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius as a school with workshops for design crafts, architecture and figurative arts, had a decisive influence internationally on architecture, living space and design objects of practical use. A fundamental principle was that objects should be practical, durable, cheap and elegant. The Bauhaus papers were three dimensional, machine embossed patterns based on grain, or fibre and no other ornament, except perhaps some gold dust or patches of pale, graduating colour. They were intended to simply enliven the wall surface.

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the ensuing period of shortages meant that not much new in wallpaper would be developed on the Continent. It was the wallpaper industries in Scandinavia (Thummler & Turner, 2005 p.193) that took the lead in design in the 1940’s. Of these there were two strands. One type was of small, restful patterns printed in monochrome, or embossed, devised to provide a restrained background for furniture and pictures. The other was representational: characterized by delicate linear forms in light springtime colours on a pale ground.

Textured and special effect wallpapers, which produced restful walls without ornament, were the most characteristic innovation of the first half of the twentieth century (Thummler & Turner 2005) and that this led to the decline of wallpaper in favour of smooth walls painted white or in a plain colour.
The two technical innovations of the 50’s were vinyl and pre-pasted wall coverings. Vinyl wallpaper consisted of a printed layer of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) bonded to a paper backing. It could be smeared with grease, lipstick and ink, and then scrubbed clean with soap and water. A shortage of paperhangers after the Second World War, and increased labour costs, led to pre-pasted wallpaper one could hang oneself, pre-trimmed (figure 36). Joan Warner Kasuda notes, however, that there was competition from the paint industry, which introduced pre-mixed colours and latex paint. Wood paneling was also popular (2005 p.208).

Figure 36. House and Garden’s magazine advertisement for United Wallpaper Inc. 1949.

Hand screen-printing came into its own after the war, with some companies commissioning established artists to design wallpaper. Many of these were never
intended to cover all four walls of a room, but rather to be used on one wall or a single decorative panel. The emphasis was on ‘modern’ designs (figure 37) such as a traditional design that had been restyled or re-coloured. Also desirable were patterns based on precedents in the fine arts. Kasuda (2005) describes there being a genuinely popular excitement about modern design in the 1950’s.

“The papers considered most modern by the magazines were those covered in doodles, squiggles, loops, sound waves, prisms, vertical graphs, Miro-like forms, amoeba shapes and even flying saucers.”

Joan Warner Kasuda (2002 p. 212)

Figure 37. Surface printed ‘modern’ pattern, by United Wallpaper c 1955.
By the ‘60’s, a huge market had opened up for vinyl wall coverings in hospitals, offices and hotels. For flock papers, acrylic fibres replaced the traditional wool. These were deposited on the adhesive by means of an electrostatic charge which caused the flock to stand up, and also made the surface washable. A silvery mirror-like surface for walls was supplied by polyester film, as well as metallic foil grounds printed by rotogravure or screen-printing. Semi-automation speeded up the process of screen-printing too.

During the 1960’s designers were still looking to the fine arts for inspiration, which had at that time evolved into Pop Art. Pop Artist Andy Warhol silk-screened his own wallpaper ‘Cow,” in 1966. Leslie Hoskins (2005) notes that generally inspiration for wallpaper designs were found in the worlds of film, fashion, music and popular culture. Retail outlets sold from sample books displaying patterns from various manufacturers, and merchants could choose designs which would suit their clientele.

Around this time, a favourite designer of mine, Florence Broadhurst found her niche in Australia’s blossoming design industry. What differentiated Broadhurst from her contemporaries was that her hand printed wallpaper was global in sources of inspiration and its marketing focus. Much of the inspiration for her designs came from her travels through Asia and Europe. By 1963, there were eighty designs in the Florence Broadhurst collection; including psychedelic swirls, geometric patterns, Aztec symbols, exploding stars, peacock feathers, bamboo, English florals, and quirky nursery prints. Siobhan O’Brien in her book on Broadhurst writes that Florence believed that “Australians were afraid of colour…many Australians think of wallpaper as something drab grandmother had on the wall” (O’Brien, 2007 p.47).
I myself had an aunt who had bold, Broadhurst-influenced chocolate paisley flock-print in the hallway, and the lounge room was done in an orange and silver foil floral wallpaper that I remember fondly to this day.

Figure 38. *Oriental Peacock*, Florence Broadhurst, hand-screen print on metallic foil paper 2009.

Her bold, bright wallpaper designs were a one-off, part of her marketing approach which meant her customers felt they were purchasing a unique product. They were expensive, varying from $8 to $30 a roll. All the designs were indeed done by hand, the
designers used pen and paintbrush (there were no printers or scanners in those days) and the screen-printing process was complicated and time consuming, matching up each layer of colour to join up to the next roll of paper (figures 38 and 39).

Figure 39. *Peacock Feathers*, Florence Broadhurst, hand-screen print 2009.

Broadhurst was mysteriously murdered in her studio in 1977, a crime that was never solved. Since 2000, there has been a Broadhurst revival, on the walls of exclusive nightclubs, bars and cafes in Sydney, and designer retail outlets such as Oroton,
Leona Edminster and Mimco. She has had tributes in the International Herald Tribune, Casa Vogue, Italy and Wallpaper* magazine.

By the end of the decade, the machine printers, screen printers, vinyl foil and flock manufacturers had joined forces to promote wall coverings to the consumer. After struggling through the decreasing sales of the 1950’s and the vinyl revolution of the 1960’s, the industry realized that there was a future for the papered wall in American homes.

Kosuda Warner & Hoskins (2005 p.214)

The early 1970’s patterns were characterized by bright, large- scale patterns, foils and metallic pigments and vinyl on paper (figure 40). The Art Deco revival of the mid-sixties was related to the Pop Art movement, as was photo-realism, bold outlines and massive scale patterns. Schoeser notes, however, that by the mid-1970’s the big bold style was moving toward tiny florals and a liking for texture and a more ‘natural’ look (2005 p.229).

Figure 40. Peony paper-backed vinyl by Vymura, c 1970.
Many makers of textile wallcoverings and laid papers were weaving companies. These textile wall coverings involved a loose-weave cloth such as hessian, or parallel yarns, which are laminated onto a backing. In their pursuit of surface qualities, ‘architectural’ papers offered an alternative to design, which concentrated on pattern. These were intended to integrate wall coverings into the interior rather than create a statement wall. Exactly matching fabric and wallpaper became a dominant feature of interiors in France, the Netherlands and North America, reaching its peak in the late 70’s. This laid the ground for more complex forms of coordination, in which elements of a collection were related through colour and theme rather than an exact match. This enabled manufacturers and retailers such as Laura Ashley to sell their more complex collections, which might include lamps, table covers as well as curtains, bed and duvet covers, wallpaper and borders (Schoeser, 2005).

After around 1985 trompe-l’oeil drapery designs distinguished the exclusive ranges from the mass market designs. These were closely identified with the aforementioned French company Zuber, who increased their provision of old patterns through hand screen prints. In architectural style papers, vinlys and papers with stippled, dragged and marbled effects retained their popularity into the 1990’s.

In ‘The New Wallpaper,’ (2006 p.19) Jane Audas writes that wallpaper today defies any attempt at categorization. Designers seem to have entered a new phase of creativity, experimenting with varied styles, applications and materials, and there is consumer demand, and an audience for these papers. Audas links this to a boom in home ownership and a consequent interest in ‘Do it yourself’ home decoration, supported by television taking interior design to a mass audience, a proliferation of interior design
magazines and the spread of global superstores such as IKEA (figure 41, Hulahoop design).

From 1995 to the current day wallpaper design reflects quicker change, and relative ease to respond to changing trends. There is also ‘haute couture’, so to speak. Innovations include Instant Stencils, peel and stick, ready-coated vinyl appliqués such as Rachel Kelly’s *Interactive* series, (figure 42). By 2000, faster digital presses allowed ‘on demand’ wallpaper printing, resulting in the creation of unique murals that could be created by printing services using an individual’s chosen imagery. At one time a wall may have been papered and left for decades, but alongside these industrial and social developments, constant redecoration has become the norm.
Figure 42. Wall stickers from Rachel Kelly’s *Interactive* series, hand-screen print with stickers 2002.
Figure 43. *Bedazzled*, flexible glass-beaded surface by the Maya Romanoff Corporation, 2003.

Marburg, still first in technological advances, has recently introduced SuproNova, a new texture-only wall covering on a recycled paper base that meets stringent environmental standards. SuproNova brochures stress that it contains no PVC, chlorine, softeners, solvents, heavy metals, formaldehyde or CFC’s, and subtitle the product, ‘For a beautiful home and safe environment’.

As cited by Warner Kasuda (2005 p. 237)

Schoeser indicates that consumer testing shows environmental issues are a major concern. She says ironically, the most ‘friendly’ wall covering is the humble woodchip paper, which has always been made from recycled paper and wood fragments, entirely without colourants. The ecological concerns of customers promoted the use of biodegradable wall coverings constructed with leather, natural fibres and grasses, bamboo, wood veneer, cork or rice paper (figure 43) shows a glass beaded paper (Schoeser, 2005 p.237).
Other environmentally friendly processes are using water-based inks, and dry processes such as transfer printing. The former are free of cadmium, lead and chromium (traditional constituents in yellow, red and orange pigments).

Until the 1990’s many German authorities had anti PVC resolutions (Schoeser 2005p.245). A non-woven paper combines polyester fibres with cellulose pulp, making it stronger and more opaque than traditional papers. With the right adhesive, the paste can be put on the wall, and stripped off dry when it needs to be changed. Germany has been the most receptive to non-wovens (*vlies*). Vlies is free from vinyl and glass fibres and does not give off gases from volatile organic compounds. It also breathes, so mould and mildew are discouraged.

Audas (2006) writes that young designers, unfettered by commercial constraints are using new technologies for a new generation of interactive wallpapers. Dutch designer Simon Heijdens from the Design Academy at Eindhoven produced a moving wallpaper for his graduation project in 2002. This was produced with temperature reaction Thermochrome Inks, and the patterns of the wallpaper alter, disappear and reappear. Christopher Pearson produced digitally animated wallpapers for his Royal College of Art graduation project, which are solely intended for viewing onscreen (figure 44).
Figure 44. Animated frames from Willow Boughs digital wallpaper installation, Christopher Pearson, 2005.
Ella Doran has also broken with the tradition of repeating pattern and conventional mural decoration in wallpapers such as Gloriosa, with its bold single image of a lily blown up to wall-size. She also produces more conventional repeating designs of photographed objects - shoals of fish, asparagus, artichokes and pebbles - but the images are manipulated on computer and can be printed so that every piece is different. This is expensive, about £700 ($1000) for one average living room wall, but the appeal lies in the fact that the decoration would be unique; as she says ‘nobody else would have exactly what you’ve got.’ And though these limited edition designs and one-off commissions are relatively dear, using the paper on only one wall, in a corner or an alcove, offsets the cost. Indeed, Doran (2006) sees her papers as being too assertive to be used for a whole room and says the result ‘would be a nightmare.’ In fact, the new generation of designs are generally limited to use on one wall - a ‘feature’ wall such as Orange Lillies by Jane Gordon Clark, (figure 45).

Figure 45. Orange Lillies, Jane Gordon Clark from the Hot House Flowers collection, 2000.
Art wallpaper often incorporates a subversive commentary conveyed by the use of wallpaper clichés as topical references such as Takashi Murakami’s eyeball print, or wallpaper gnawed by a rat, by Swedish design group Front 2003. There has been recognition of wallpaper as a topic in its own right. Art paper confronts the boundaries between art and design, and the limitations of mass marketing techniques.

One of the attractions of wallpaper for me is that it explores the potentials of paper itself. Paper has tactile and ephemeral qualities that continue to be valued and give value to interiors; Wallpaper has an intimate connection with a home and its inhabitants. It reveals taste and makes one vulnerable to the opinions of others. Yet at the same time, wallpaper cocoons and covers an interior, repaying the investment required through personal expression (Audas, 2006 p.25). 'Good taste’ is no longer the issue - the kitsch, eccentric or ironic are all valid characteristics of personal taste, and are 'read' and appreciated as such by others. Figure 46 depicts a magnetic, interactive wallpaper design by Peppermint.

Figure 46. Metroscape from the Mag-Scapes range by Peppermint for Cole & Son, 2006.
There is also a shift towards living in larger open-plan spaces which create an opportunity to use wallpaper in a new way. There is space for an interesting paper to be displayed without it dominating. This is a quality of wallpaper’s new place in the decorative hierarchy; it is not simply a background, but a feature that complements other furnishings and fittings, or serves as a talking point in its own right, much as a painting or poster might do. It can also be designed for public spaces where people are simply passing through - hotel lobbies, waiting rooms, and corporate foyers - rather than domestic settings. I visualize my papers being used in a public space, as well as an art gallery setting (see figure 47).

Figure 47. Digital mock-up of *Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao* in public setting, Lobregat 2011.
5. Pattern and Nature

“So deeply ingrained is our tendency to regard order as the mark of an ordering mind that we instinctively react with wonder whenever we perceive order in the natural world.”

Gombrich, 1979 The Sense of Order– A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, p.5

The quote above describes walking through the woods and coming across a circle of mushrooms in a fairy ring – “What arrests our attention is precisely the unexpected presence of order in what appears to be an environment of countless interacting forces: the random medley of the natural earth with its trickles of water through moss, its twisted roots and fallen leaves. Only a magic agency, so we conclude, could impose order on such wild confusion.”

Sir Ernst Josef Gombrich was an Austrian-born art historian who spent most of his working life in the United Kingdom. He is the author of many works of art history, including ‘The Story of Art’, a book originally written for adolescents as an accessible introduction to the visual arts. Gombrich observes that order in nature comes about where the laws of physics can operate in isolated systems without mutual disturbance, pointing to the uniform circular ripples that come about after casting a stone into a pond without interference from a current or a breeze (see figure 48).

“But why are we startled, in any case? Does not the natural world exhibit many examples of regularity and simplicity- from the stars in their courses to the waves of the sea, the marvel of crystals and up the ladder of creation to the rich orders of flowers, shells and plumage?”

Gombrich, 1979 The Sense of Order– A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art, p.5
I have written in some detail about pattern in nature because I am very visually sensitive to this, and have observed that various things that are very different from each other contain the same underlying order. Throughout the history of ideas we find constant reference to mathematics as an aesthetic (Albarn, Smith, Steel & Walker, 1974) to the recognition of fundamental orders, sequences and patterns.

My first wallpaper design, *Magnolia Arabic Interlace*, is an investigation of the causal patterns and geometry underlying nature. In this wallpaper, I have drawn a Magnolia blossom in the process of blooming. The flowers were drawn from photographing my own magnolia tree every day as it budded and continued to unfurl. I have fused naturalistic observations of the opening of flower petals with an Arabic geometric pattern (figure 49), and in doing this, tried to describe something of that sense of underlying order that I have perceived. ‘The Language of Pattern’ (Albarn et al, 1974)
is written focusing on the mathematics underlying Islamic pattern. In it they refer to ‘Transformation,’ which is a process by which a pattern is transposed creatively from one context to another, making use of changes of scale, dimension and viewpoint to trigger off fresh perceptions (Albarn et al, 1974 p.5).

Analyses of parts, their character and position in relation to the whole, can provide us with new patterns. One of the most fundamental kinds of order is seen in symmetry. Symmetry, at first apparently over –ordered, (Albarn et al, 1974 p.20) i.e. stable, is nonetheless a useful element in the vocabulary of transformation, as we play with reflection, echo, rotation, repetition, concentricity. Concerned as it is with balance, it is perhaps the first conceptual device we employ to order experience. And so we apply considerably more attention to an asymmetrical problem in an unconscious search for symmetry and balance.
Symmetry underlies almost every aspect of nature and our experience of the world. In its simplest form, symmetry is expressed as a regularly repeating figure along a line, a series that may be extended into an array. Simple arrangements of this kind could in theory, be infinitely extended, but symmetry will be maintained just so long as both the repeating element and the spacing remain consistent (Figure 50). We can recognize array symmetries in many natural formations, from rows of kernels in sweet corn, to the patterns of scales in fish and reptiles.

Another example is that of a sunflower, which is an ordered collection of natural objects called florets. There is a definite structural order in the placement of the florets as they describe spirals proceeding both left and right from the center of the flower. This is called the Fibonacci Spiral which is based upon a sequence of numbers called the Fibonacci numbers. The ratio of any two consecutive numbers in the Fibonacci sequence is constant and is called the Golden Ratio - often referred to as 'Phi'. Phi defines the constant angle that a floret defines with its preceding neighbor. Phi is ubiquitous in nature. In addition to sunflowers, we see Phi and its resulting spiral arrangement in a myriad of nature’s patterns including DNA, snail shells, and the solar system. Generally, the connecting forces are both physical and chemical in nature.

http://www.patternsinnature.org/Book/PattersAreOrdered.html

Figure 50. Sunflower head displaying double spiral pattern.
The gnomon demonstrates one of the simplest examples of geometrical growth. When it is added to a figure, the figure is enlarged but retains its general shape- and this can be carried on indefinitely. This is the process that happens in shells and horns, where new growth is added to dead tissue, as in figure 51.

![Rams horns and Nautilus pompilius shell demonstrating spiral growth patterns.](image)

Dilation symmetries also produce figures which are geometrically similar to an original. They are an enlargement or reduction of a form by way of lines radiating from a centre. Dilation may be also linked to rotation, producing continuous symmetries that can give rise to equiangular spirals or discontinuous symmetries. Dilation symmetries can also occur in three-dimensional space. Spiral symmetries are connected with the movements of rotation and dilation, and tend to emerge when these are combined. Radial symmetries are probably the most familiar of all the regular arrangements. Being finite, they belong to the broad category of point group symmetries, and come in three distinct forms (Wade, D. 2006).
In two dimensions, they are centered on a point in the plane, showing rotational symmetry, with any number of regular divisions of the circle; reflection is often incorporated, creating dihedral symmetries. Many flowers show this arrangement (figure 52), and centered, radial motifs appear in the decorative art of almost all cultures (figure 53). Generally flowers have radial symmetry, as do many inflorescences.
In three dimensions, radial symmetries are either centered on a point in space, where each path fans out from the core to every outlying point (as in an explosion) or they have a polar axis of rotation, typically cylindrical or conical. These last are the characteristic symmetries of plants. The great majority of flowers have petal arrangements using a number taken from the Fibonacci series. The famous symmetry of snow crystals, by contrast, is always six pointed (figure 54).

Figure 54. Snowflake crystal displaying six-pointed symmetry.

A fractal is "a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be split into parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-size copy of the whole, a property called self-similarity. One of the key characteristics of all fractal objects is 'self similarity'. In general, when changing the scaling of a fractal, the image looks approximately the
same. Fractal order is very common in nature (figure 55). Examples include plants, mountain ranges, lungs, lightning strikes, and clouds.

Figure 55. Plant growth demonstrating fractal growth patterns.

Most plants show radial symmetry of some kind. The biggest distinction between plants and animals is said to be reflected in their dominant symmetries. Because plants are generally fixed and non-mobile, they tend to be radial, whereas the vast majority of animals have the ability to move themselves and thus are bi-lateral, or dorsiventral. The trunks and branches of trees usually indicate a radial arrangement in transverse cross section, and this is also shown in roots and vertical stems (Wade 2006).
Order and Purpose in Nature

In the introduction to the book ‘The Sense of Order’, in the chapter ‘Order and Purpose in Nature’ (p2-8), Gombrich proposes to distinguish between the perception of meaning and the perception of order, and speculates on how our innate sense of order might serve in the business of survival. In other words, it is a contrast between order and disorder that alerts our perception.

He suggests that in the case of the distinctive designs in flora and fauna, there must be some advantage in the emergence of certain visible patterns, and that there are two opposing tendencies, camouflage pattern and conspicuous markings. The camouflage pattern imitates a random distribution of elements in the habitat of the species, where as long as the relative frequency and distribution of features is not changed, we do not register novelty. The principle of conspicuous marking in species (figures 56 and 57)
demonstrates a design standing out clearly and visibly from a background, as its members depends on recognizing each other for feeding, mating and group formation, and that these markings are unlikely to have come about by chance.

"The luminous colours and regular patterns of blossoms which must signal their presence to pollinating insects, the rich plumage used by birds in such displays as the peacock’s fan, the distinctive markings of beaks recognized by the young, all these have been described as configurations of high improbability, that is, of high information value."

Gombrich, 1979, p.6

Figure 57. Buckeye butterfly (*Junonia coenia*) with ‘eye’ markings to discourage predators.
Pattern and Taste


From the Latin pater (via patron) the word pattern originally meant ‘parent form.’ A defining characteristic of pattern is repetition using a mechanical aid such as a stencil or block (figure 58).

![Indian hand-carved wooden pattern stamps, author’s personal collection.](image)

For forty years, American designer William Justema designed wallpapers and fabrics for the home furnishing industry, based in Los Angeles California. A modernist painter and prolific author on the subject of design, he was an acknowledged authority in the
field of wallpaper and pattern in mid-century America. Justema said, “Structure, the first property of pattern, is so much a part of any repeated design as to almost describe it. Good patterns gain, rather than lose, by being repeated. If a pattern has any claim to excellence, it lies in the relation between its size and its contents, its scale and its coverage” (Justema, 1976 p.7).

Most patterns are made up of decorative units which can be identified (figures 59 and 60). Repetition and variation are the principles that control its basic operations. Structure, scale and coverage are the properties which pattern exhibits most obviously and require taste in using.

Figure 59. Examples of different pattern tiling, left to right, block, scales and ogee.
'What gives pattern such fascination is that its most ordinary examples - a printed house dress, a figured necktie - become for everyone, an exercise in taste."

Justema 1976, *The Pleasures of Pattern*, p. 34

My own tastes in pattern are widely varied in that I have collected samples of Greek Borders, French silk designs, Chinese and Tibetan motifs to use in my work. Snodin and Howard (1996) suggest that Western fashion has always appropriated and reassembled elements of other cultures, borrowing decorative details and handcrafted techniques as design inspiration (figure 61). This can be seen as a safe way of experiencing a different kind of life, one that is free-spirited and somehow both exotic, and yet more authentically rooted in the myths of folklore.
Figure 61. Coloured paisley design on cloth.

Paisley or Paisley pattern is a droplet-shaped vegetable motif of Indian, Pakistani and Persian origin. The pattern is sometimes called "Persian pickles" by American traditionalists, especially quilt makers, or "Welsh pears" appearing in Welsh textiles as far back as 1888.

Snodin & Howard (1996) write about the Exotic, in the sense of a non-European ‘Other’. In examining exoticism since the Renaissance, it is clearly a complex phenomenon deriving from many different impulses, including trade and imperial conquest. The ornamental aspect of the exotic (figure 62) was strongly linked to the use of ‘magical’ Eastern materials such as silk, muslin, porcelain and lacquer, imported into a wealthy Europe. With the advent of industrialized production methods in Europe in the nineteenth century ‘Eastern exoticism’ (Snodin & Howard 1996 p.181) could be accurately reproduced mechanically. This meant that the actual products of distant lands were valued for their materials, but now because they were made by pre-
industrial and supposedly unchanging societies – Snodin and Howard describe it as “a new twist on the concept of otherness” (1996 p.180).

![Western-style Chinoiserie Paper c 1700, artist unknown.](image)

Unlike the days of colonialism, when art and artefacts were plundered from distant countries in a desire to return with trophies for western museums, the post-modern designer more often endeavored to create a narrative that can be borrowed and removed at will (Snodin & Howard, 1996). In an era of Postmodernism, there is no simple hierarchy of taste. Many, if not all, apparent tastes are seen as social constructs, and they are subject to change. Indeed, my tastes are plural and relative. The choice of this particular Islamic pattern for adaptation to my Magnolia design was based on its decorative appearance, with the further layering of meanings describing a
combination of the rational (geometric) and organic revealed as I researched for this paper.

The Koran abounds with visions of Paradise as a garden. An Islamic garden is an artificial paradise, a combination of rational and organic, and expression of the ordered instability referred to earlier as a blend of floral and crystalline patterns.

Albarn, Smith, Steel and Walker, 1974, *The Language of Pattern* p.50

The surface of Islamic architecture appears as a continual recession of planes. It is theatrical, not in any pejorative sense, but in its use of plane and illusion. These planes are precisely contrived vistas, but in its use of plane and illusion. These planes and precisely contrived vistas contain subtle volumes. It is as if the surface of the building had many depths.

Albarn, Smith, Steel and Walker, 1974, *The Language of Pattern* p.50
In Islamic pattern I saw a way of interrelating two dimensional layers (figure 63) which did not rely on superimposition, but engaged the layers as interwoven lattices (Albarn et al, 1974, p.66) with multiple levels. There is a distinction between naturalistic and geometric subjects. The pattern is necessary, but must be seen as open ended or capable of transformation to keep the concepts developing (figures 64 a & b).

Figure 64a. Lobregat, preliminary drawings for *Magnolia Arabic Interface* wallpaper, 2010.
In the case of my own design (fig 64b), there are two layers described simultaneously. The sculptural paper flowers explore the organic movements of a flower blooming, observed from a slim bud to the distinctive six-petalled Magnolia flower head. That arrangement repeats horizontally, and underlying that, geometric lines and circles configure a plane of ‘crystalline’ pattern which alludes to the unseen, cyclical energy in nature.

A profound disagreement over the content of ethics is created when there is a clash between Western values, appearing as universal and progressive, and other value orientations, appearing as relative and regressive. This is particularly the case when the issues are poverty and environmental destruction.

Albrecht, 1994 Ethics, Anarchy and Sustainable Development, p.107

This composition is perhaps the most personal of the series of four papers, as it describes some aspects of my childhood. As I wrote in the opening chapter, my experiences as an artist are mediated by being a Philippine-born Australian. Living with Western and non-Western value orientations is easier for me to accept as my background straddles two cultures. There are certain things that were implicit in my early upbringing, such as speaking Spanish at home and English at school, and also using the local dialect, Tagalog. I had two years of primary school in Manila, and spoke English, Spanish and Tagalog fluently when we migrated to Australia (figure 65).

Australia has been a very safe, free place in which to grow. The suburbs I came from in Manila had walled perimeters, with security guards at all the entry points. Filipinos are accustomed to living with a certain amount of social unrest as a backdrop to their daily lives. At the time we left the Philippines in the early seventies, there were communist factions hiding in the hills of my mother’s home island Negros. Martial Law was enforced by then President Ferdinand Marcos, who stated that the Philippines ‘was a nation divided against itself – divided between urban and rural, rich and poor, majorities and minorities, privileged and underprivileged’ (as cited by Steinberg 1982).
The Filipino use of language is different to English; it embraces more concepts in fewer words and has absorbed Spanish and English words into its fabric with ease. Family, the clan, is super-important. A Filipino’s loyalty (Steinberg, 1982 p.4) is to his immediate family, and his sense of place in the world is governed by his fundamental belief in the plural identity of his family. “Blood is thicker than water”, my father always used to say, and this is demonstrated by the way that my many relatives are still connected, thirty-odd years after our emigration to Australia, still sharing familial memories and connections, and becoming acquainted with the younger generations of cousins at large family gatherings.
In Sydney, at the rear of our house was a big bush reserve, and there were many varied birdcalls. Even hearing them now has the effect of bringing me back to those afternoons at home. In the suburb where I grew up, there were many flowering trees in the springtime (many are introduced species such as the Jacaranda) but my favorite still is the Magnolia. I have since learned that this is an extremely ancient form of flowering tree. Magnolias were a recurring painting subject even before I commenced studies in Natural History Illustration, so they seemed a perfect motif to base my design around.

In this design, Magnolias, Magpies and Mindanao, I allude to the fact that my childhood in Australia was spent reasonably close to nature, albeit in a leafy suburb, and it seems only now that I am really consciously aware of the lingering presence of those soundscapes and the changing of the seasons as I remember it. My memory is of strong sunlight, long sunny days and open spaces. The design incorporates interwoven Magnolia blossoms and their woody stems, with spaces in between the branches for small figures depicting such things as myself as a young schoolgirl (figure 64), a statuette of the sorrowful Virgin Mary (figure 66), and a T'boli tribal maiden in her intricately-beaded traditional finery.
On the left side of the landscape I have incorporated Australian imagery, a weatherboard holiday house on the South coast of Sydney, drawn in graphite to describe the distance of the memory, with two Kangaroos lounging about on the front lawn. Within the magnolia foliage there is also a Magpie lurking under a bush (figure 67), as hearing their call gives me a feeling of wellbeing and protection, as does the call of the Kookaburras. Our family never failed to listen in wonder to them, as if the Kookaburra was truly laughing out over the gully.
The Filipino side of the scroll is set in the evening to convey some of the mystery that surrounds pre-Christina Philippine religion and beliefs. A drawing of a burning skull recalls a conversation I had with a young Filipino man from the Bontoc region in the mountains of Luzon, whose ancestors more than likely were headhunters, the prevailing practice in the region only one or two generations ago. We were on an overnight bus trip coming down from the northern highlands and discussing New Zealand, where he had studied nursing. I quizzed him about local beliefs and I was quite surprised to learn that even to this day, when a member of the family is really ill, they might pull out the skull and bones of one of their ancestors for consultation.
The Philippines, despite its superficially strong Western overlay, is a Southeast Asian nation, and the Filipinos are a Southeast Asian people. This fact has been forgotten all too often, because it is easy to see the Western aspects in Philippine life.


The Filipinos are a blend of ethnic groups and different races. Among the earliest settlers were the Negritos, a group of Aboriginal people. They were followed by the Malays, who developed what is now called the lowland peasant culture (Steinberg 1982). Lowland Filipinos are usually sedentary rice farmers, sharecroppers, and fisherman. There are seventy languages spoken, although nine of them are used by about ninety percent of the people – Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, Pangasinan and Maranao. Later significant impact on the culture was made by the Chinese, the Spaniards and the Americans.

In his chapter on *Religion and Filipinos* (1998), historian Renato Perdon states that most of the indigenous tribes in Northern and Central Philippines were animists, Animism is a type of ancestor worship, where bad spirits can cause illness and misfortune and must be placated (Perdon pp. 56-57). There were a system of beliefs in signs and omens, and a hierarchy of deities with specific and independent functions.

Catholicism was introduced to the Philippines by the Spaniards, who colonized in the 1500’s, and Perdon writes that it became a powerful vehicle of social and economic change that affected the everyday lives of the Filipinos (1998). Three centuries of Catholic tradition and ecclesiastic teaching have had a profound influence and “its strong hold continues to dominate their contemporary consciousness,” (1998 p. 55). He further writes that as the Church to this day has a strong presence in the
administrations of schools, hospitals, orphanages and controls the Bank of the Philippine Islands, it is not surprising that the population has remained “staunchly Roman Catholic and continues to believe and to expect that the church would defend people’s rights and protect them,” (1998 p.63).

The figure of the Virgin Mary is ubiquitous in the Philippines, in street shrines, parades and little grottos outside restaurants (figure 68) but there are hints of pagan beliefs in their decoration and the offerings to her. Perdon writes that to this day an atmosphere “of the miraculous and the supernatural permeates Filipino’s Roman Catholicism” (pp. 63-640. In the provinces, this image of the goddess seems to reflect a more matriarchal culture. Raul Pertierra in Philippine Localities and Global Perspectives notes;
It is well known that Filipino women often occupy positions of authority and status within the family and beyond it (Infante 1969; Pertierra 1979). However, despite the autonomy women exercise in certain domains, such as religious worship and economic practices, Filipinos generally assume that the ultimate orientation of women is toward family and domestic matters.

Pertierra, 1995 *Philippine Localities and Global Perspectives* p.88

My drawing of a bamboo house (bahay kubo or nipa hut) in this wallpaper alludes to a typical traditional house found in most lowlands all over the Philippines. Originally built as a one-room dwelling, the Nipa hut changed as family needs became more diverse. Construction of rural native huts has changed little in the centuries. Designs vary by region, but common features include a steep roof over a one-or-two room living area which is raised on stilts one or two metres above the ground, or over shallow water. Floors may be of split bamboo to allow dirt and food scraps to fall through to pigs and poultry. The space beneath the hut may be used for storage or as a workshop; it also allows air to circulate and safeguards against flooding, snakes, and insects.

Figure 69. Traditional Nipa Hut dwelling.
As rural families become more affluent, they frequently replace the thatched roof (figure 69) with galvanized iron, which lasts longer but makes the house hotter and aesthetically more mundane. During the 19th century, wealthy Filipinos built some fine houses, usually with solid stone foundations or brick lower walls, and overhanging, wooden upper story with balustrades and kapis shell sliding windows, and a tiled roof. Inside there would be beautiful, elaborate Victorian Gothic style wooden carving on handrails and balustrades. During the sixties, our own home in Manila was urban and westernized, not very different to the home I would come to live in on the North Shore of Sydney.

Many types of traditional craft are valued in the Philippines. Our home and those of our contemporaries would typically display heirloom woodcarvings, shell -inlaid dowry chests from the South, Kapiz shell hangings, antique religious icons from churches on home altars, Chinese trade pottery, intricately woven mats and so on. All these from a rich heritage of nature, manual skill, and tribal tradition, objects which are part of our heritage as shown in figure 70. These objects together with my father's stories of island exploration in the 1960's, stimulated my imagination.
The drawing of the T'boli maiden in my work is comparatively small, but the background to that character needs some elaboration. I have an inherent interest in indigenous matters which comes via my early exposure to the tribal artefacts that were collected by my father. My first-hand knowledge of the T'boli tribal group is of their intricate jewellery and embroidery, and that they inhabit the island of Mindanao, the eastern-most island of the Philippines. It is very extremely rich in natural resources and has a long and troubled history.
On the island of Mindanao live eighteen tribal Filipino groups. The best known are the T’boli and the B’laan. The collective name for the eighteen indigenous groups on Mindanao (figure 71, highlighted in yellow) is “Lumad” which is another word for “indigenous”. There is a wide variety of tribal groups ‘whose oral traditions, dress and art are a delight to linguists and anthropologists’ (Steinberg, 1982). The T’boli are known by their colorful clothes, bracelets and earrings - this tribe is famous for their complicated beadwork, wonderful woven fabrics and beautiful brass ornaments.
The T’boli (figure 72) and members of other indigenous tribes like the Higaunon, still believe in spirits that inhabit the natural environment. T’boli culture is richly connected with and inspired by nature, their dances mimic the action of animals such as monkeys and birds. They have a rich musical culture, with a variety of musical instruments, but the music and songs are not only for entertainment. Steinberg (1982) notes that anthropological research has demonstrated that the T’boli maintain a sophisticated oral tradition. Tribal songs are a living contact with their ancestors and a source of ancient wisdom (Steinberg, 1982).

It is interesting to note that according to their folklore, the T’boli are descendants of the survivors of a great flood, who were saved by their deity Dwata. Two couples, warned by Dwata to take precautions, took refuge in a huge bamboo pole and rode out the flood (this has parallels to biblical stories of Noah’s Ark). From the first couple descended the T’boli and the other highland ethnic groups, or Lumads, of Mindanao,
as well as the Muslim tribes. The second couple were the ancestors of the other Filipino ethnic groups who became Christianized.

Perdon, in ‘Brown Americans of Asia,’ notes that Muslim Filipinos were once the majority inhabitants of the Mindanao Region (Perdon, 1998 p. 61). Muslim oral accounts, or tarsila, state that the T'boli and other highland groups originally occupied part of the lowlands and the Cotabato Valley area, in the environment around Lake Sebu. However, with the advent of Islam in the 14th century, the T'boli resisted the attempts of the Muslims to convert them and retreated to the safety of the mountains. Subsequently, the Muslim tribes raided the upland tribes and enslaved those they conquered, resulting in conflict between the two groups. As a result, T'boli folk literature often portrayed the Muslims as villains. Muslim resistance to Spanish invaders prevented the Spaniards from penetrating the T'boli lands, so that Spanish influence did not reach the highland tribes (Perdon, 1998 p.62). It was only in the American era that Christian elements entered the area.

In 1913, the Cotabato Valley was opened up for settlement and members of the Christian ethnic groups arrived. After World War II, in 1948, the Philippine government also opened up the Alah Valley and Koronadal Valley to settlers, in the hope of alleviating agrarian conflicts in Luzon and the Visayas. These migrations also subsequently introduced commercial ranching, mining, and logging interests in the area (Steinberg 1982). Persons and entities holding land grants and licenses began to encroach on the T'boli ancestral lands. Having no knowledge or access to the instruments of ownership recognized by the government, the T'boli began to be disenfranchised from the lands of their ancestors (a familiar colonizing practice).
The T'boli use "slash and burn" agriculture to grow rice, cassava and yams. They clear a part of the forest by cutting down the larger trees and burning the smaller trees and bushes, after which they use the cleared plots as arable land for some years, without fertilization. They may also go hunting or fishing for additional food. ‘Slash and burn’ is no longer possible. The forests are gone due to intensive economic activities as such foresting. Steinberg (1982) writes that ‘slash and burn’, or ‘swidden’, can only be utilized where this is very thin population pressure. Rainfall and the risk of erosion are limiting factors.

I have never visited Mindanao, it is not encouraged for Westerners to do so— one side of the island supposedly harbours al Qaeda -linked group Abu Sayaf, (http://www.gmanews.tv/story/226234/regions/abu-sayyaf-frees-student-in-basilan-military, 2009). Foreign missionaries have been kidnapped and held for ransom, and even local citizens are wary. The traditional peoples I have come into contact with are from the highlands of the Island of Luzon, above Manila. In my most recent trip back to the Philippines, I made the upland trek to Bontoc and Banaue, which is fairly arduous by public bus – eight hour stints on narrow mountain roads. I was disappointed that I saw no one wearing traditional dress (loincloth, sarong, beads); this is apparently nowadays reserved for ceremonial occasions.

There is an implicit assumption that the Western economic system and its ‘universal’ values are to be adopted by all cultures in the developing world.

The non-western perspective, rather than seeing Western economic growth as progress, sees only the same arrogance and hubris that created environmental problems on a global scale being repackaged as the saviour of the underdeveloped world.

Although lip-service is given to concepts of biological and cultural diversity, the overwhelming emphasis is on the Western model of economic growth and a Western standard of living. Such
a model would inevitably mean the replacement of indigenous communitarian based ethics by a commercial society based on the ethic of the autonomous moral agent.

Albrecht, 1994, Ethics, Anarchy and Sustainable Development, p.105

In Glen Albrecht’s writings, I found a more concisely expressed examination of the economic dynamics which I have observed. Anecdotally speaking, my cousins were thrilled to have a large mall come into their relatively small city, Dumaguete, feeling it was a sign of sophistication. Theirs is a University town (Silliman University), which is lively and cosmopolitan for its tiny size. I prefer the high street shops, restaurants and bustle, whereas Mega Mall shops tend to be homogenous around the world. The opening hours are longer than in Australia, they are generally open til about 9pm. Shop workers spend all day indoors, their average wage is around twenty Australian dollars a day. Added to this, there is a trend for the general populace to spend a significant amount of leisure time in the mall, as the mall is air-conditioned and more often their homes are not.

The order that arises out of the totality of nature is self-generated in that it is the result of the combined action of species and ecosystem evolution. It is within the Natural order that humans find themselves located in various parts of the planet. Thus as evolution produces diversity, there is unity in diversity, and this is a feature of major ethical importance.

Albrecht, 1994 Ethics, Anarchy and Sustainable Development, p.112

In my most recent (January 2010) return I became aware that I have next to no knowledge of indigenous plants and animals of the Philippines. Renee Galang, in her paper “A Critical Review on Wildlife Conservation in the Philippines” (for the Melbourne-based Philippine spotted Deer Conservation Foundation) writes that at
present, most Filipinos are familiar with the biodiversity of other countries, mostly western countries and hence suffer from “scientific imperialism” (Galang 2004). The prevailing culture is concerned with the cultivation of domesticated animals used mainly for eating (except for the fighting cock, which is highly prized and treasured). I know that when I went into the highland country – Bontoc, Banaue, which are green and comparatively undeveloped areas, I did notice an eerie absence of birdcalls in the forest and I wondered if local birds had been hunted out of existence. I was amazed to learn the results of Galang’s research;

The Philippines is considered one of the 17 megadiversity countries which together contain 70% to 80% of global biodiversity (Mittermeier et. al. 1997; DENR-PAWB et. al. 2002). The Philippine biodiversity therefore has global significance. … the number of endemic species and when compared to Spain (which is the most biologically diverse in Europe) and Brazil (which contain most of the Amazon River basin), these two countries vertebrate terrestrial endemic species added together is barely more than half of the Philippine endemics.

Galang, 2004 A Critical Review on Wildlife Conservation in the Philippines p.4

For the purposes of greater recognition of diverse Filipino wildlife, I have included in this design a pair of hornbills that I observed at the Bacolod Zoo. A large species, the Rufous Hornbill (Buceros hydrocorax) is also known as Philippine Hornbill and, locally, as Kalaw (figure 75). The Visayan Spotted Deer (Cervus alfredi, figure 73), also known as the Philippine Spotted Deer, is a nocturnal and endangered species of deer located primarily in the rainforests of the Visayan islands of Panay and Negros though it once roamed other islands such as Cebu, Guimaras, Leyte, Masbate, and Samar. It is one of three endemic deer species in the Philippines, although it was not recognized as a separate species until 1983 (Galang 2004).
The native pig, the Philippine Warty Pig, (*Sus philippensis*), is one of four known pig species endemic to the Philippines. The other three endemic species are the Visayan Warty Pig (*S. cebifrons*), Mindoro Warty Pig (*S. oliveri*) and the Palawan Bearded Pig (*S. ahoenobarbus*), also being rare members of the Suidae family. Philippine Warty Pigs have two pairs of warts, with a tuft of hair extending outwards from the warts closest to the jaw (figure 74). These charming little animals are all native to the Philippines, though I have absolutely no recollection of being taught any information on this at school. Galang (2004) in her review suggests the most effective way to mass educate Filipinos is by dramatically increasing the publication of Philippine biodiversity textbooks and further by including biodiversity in school curricula.
The Philippines’ national flower Sampaguita (Jasminum Sambac) is a white, sweet smelling flower widely used in leis and as an oil. I thought I should include this in my design. Also known as Arabian Jasmine, it is used in folk medicine. The roots are used to treat wounds and snake bites. Its leaves and flowers have antipyretic and decongestant properties. Filipinos string the flowers into leis, corsages, and crowns. They are then used as garlands to welcome important guests or as religious offerings, commonly sold by vendors outside churches and near stoplights.
The challenge facing Philippine conservationists to stabilize and/or reverse the current grave ecological crisis is colossal. This is due to the recent acknowledgment that the country is the top of the list of “megadiverse countries.”….it is tragic that the biodiversity of the Philippines and the threat of its impending loss have been discovered simultaneously.”


Galang (2004) cites burgeoning human population growth as the greatest present threat to Philippine biodiversity. She goes on to write however, that political debate has not resolved this, in large part due to the very large and strong Christian population that perceives any form of population reduction as anti-Christian. Overpopulation has certainly led to exploitation of the natural environment. If there was a means of curbing the unsustainable growth in human population, I believe there would be the opportunity for animals and humans to co-exist.
7. Animal Matters

‘Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals…the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them, as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.’

Aristotle, Politics 1254b (as cited by Ross, 1996 p. 257)

There is a recurrent theme within my concerns, and I distinguish this more clearly than ever before as the research develops. I begin to identify it as the question of mankind privileging itself over nature at every opportunity, from historical times till well into the present. In this particular Chapter I have written about the ethics (or lack of) concerning animal rights, as one of my wallpapers originates from this topic Animal Matters. There appears to be an implicit assumption that man may use animals to profit, in any way whatsoever. During the readings for theories of Beauty and Ethics, I was most interested to locate some of the philosophical roots of this type of world-view.

I had been introduced to Philosophy while studying Painting theory at Sydney College of the Arts in the nineties, and as a background to our studio practice we were required to read excerpts from Derrida and Descartes, and other, mostly male, European intellectual theorists. While I did not find this type of Eurocentric, often misogynistic discourse at all inspiring to my art practice at the time, I have found it useful to reinvestigate it now, twenty years later.

Stephen David Ross, in the introduction to his book ‘The Gift of Beauty’, describes the history of Western philosophy as a history of categories and distinctions (Ross 1996
p.4). He notes that some of the traditional theoretical discourse that separates human from animals is similar to such distinctions between men and women. These are distinctions, which "name and reveal and control: to dominate and subordinate," (1996 p.4). Steven David Ross was Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Literature at State University of New York in the late nineties and in this book he traces the development in Western thought from Plato and Aristotle through to Kant and Hegel – "when art was separated from science and philosophy" (Ross 1996). I have quoted from his book several times in this chapter.

Together with Plato and Socrates, (Plato's teacher), Aristotle is one of the most important founding figures in Western philosophy. Aristotle's writings were the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. His views on the physical sciences profoundly shaped medieval scholarship, and their influence extended well into the Renaissance. Aristotle's thought had a profound influence also on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the middle Ages as well as Christian theology. Below is a continuation of the opening quote (see above), regarding the proper place of animals, and slaves.

In the like manner we may infer that, after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all, at least the greater part of them, for food, and the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man.

Aristotle, Politics, 12564b (as cited by Ross, 1996, pg. 4)
Ross places on the same page a quote from Benedict de Spinoza, who was among the most important of the post-Cartesian philosophers that flourished in the second half of the 17th century. Spinoza made significant contributions in virtually every area of philosophy, and his writings reveal the influence of such divergent sources as Machiavelli, Descartes, and a variety of heterodox religious thinkers of his day. He is usually counted, along with Descartes and Leibniz, as one of the three major Rationalists. So taking the Aristotelian line to the extreme, Spinoza stated:

‘Our own profit does not demand that we preserve anything in nature except men, but teaches us to preserve or destroy it in accordance with its varied uses, or adapt it to our own service in any way whatever.’

Spinoza, Part IV, Appendix, XXVI, (as cited by Ross, 1996, pg. 9)

It seems thus that eminent philosophers laid the foundation for the hegemony of oppression. What they actually describe are hierarchies of importance which endorse the (mis)treatment and domination of those less powerful. This type of logic reads to me, in practice, as being rapacious and medieval. By asserting that man is not an animal, he therefore has the right to exploit them. Georges Bataille wrote the following:

(on the more or less human scale, nothing is more animal than Auschwitz). It is humiliating for the species to find in contempt for the other’s animality an opportunity to slide toward a lower-and the least pardonable brutality…

Bataille, AS II, 334-35 (as cited by Ross, 1996, pg. 7)

Ross observes that the category of animality and nature (1996 p. 260) has served the most heinous practices, still spoken of by Bataille, in terms of animals. Bataille was a
French writer who influenced a number of major continental philosophers (though he tended not to refer to himself as a philosopher).

The human world is finally but a hybrid of transgression and prohibition, so that the word human always denotes a system of contradictory impulses, some depending on those that they neutralize but never entirely eliminate, and others delivering a violence mixed with the certainty of peacefulness that will follow. Hence the word human never denotes, as simpleminded people imagine, a stabilized position, but rather an apparently precarious equilibrium that distinguishes the human quality.

Bataille, AS II, 342 (as cited by Ross, 1996, pg. 7)

Of the above range of world-views, I am most inclined toward Bataille's observations. Humankind's (for want of a better description) general lack of respect for all other species cohabiting our earth has the worst qualities of 'animality'. Chimpanzees, along with the Gorilla, share ninety-nine percent of our genes, and that biological proximity makes them extremely useful for research. Scientist David Suzuki in his piece entitled “The Pain of animals” transcribes part of a BBC documentary where the narrator Ian Redmond talks about the laboratory conditions that these social, emotional and highly intelligent animals are kept in.

"Imagine locking a two or three-year-old child in a metal box the size of an isolette—solid walls, floor and ceiling, and a glass door that clamps shut, blotting out most external sounds— and then leaving him or her for months, the only contact, apart from feeding, being when the door swings open and masked figures reach in and take samples of blood or tissue before shoving him back and clamping the door shut again. Over the past 10 years, 94 young chimps at SEMA have endured this procedure."

(As cited by Suzuki, 1990 p.16)
Suzuki goes on to write;

Our capacity to rationalize our behaviour and needs is remarkable. Chimpanzees have occupied over tens of millennia of biological evolution. We are newcomers who have encroached on their territory, yet by defining them as pests we render them expendable. As Redmond says, “The fact that the chimpanzee is our nearest zoological relative makes it perhaps the unluckiest animal on earth, because what that kinship has come to mean is that we feel free to do most of the things to a chimp that we mercifully refrain from doing to each other”.

Suzuki, 1990, Inventing the Future p.17

Figure 76a. Safety, Kate MacDowell, hand-built porcelain, 2008.

Figure 76a, Kate McDowell’s rabbit wears goggles that allude to protection for its eyes instead of having its eyes used for toxic-chemical testing. Figure 76b, another Kate McDowell piece seems to allude to the fact that our association to nature is deeply embedded in our psyche. As an antidote to the animal-exploitative mindset, I have quoted a passage from another scientist, Glenn Albrecht below. I would argue for a
more inclusive and rounded sense of interconnectedness of species, and he does this eloquently;

The freedom to evolve

The order that arises out of the totality of nature is self-generated in that it is the result of the combined action of species and ecosystem evolution. It is within the Natural order that humans find themselves located in various parts of the planet. Thus as evolution produces diversity, there is unity in diversity, and this is a feature of major ethical importance.

The order which is the outcome of nature freely unfolding toward greater diversity and complexity is ethically preferable to any other sort of order because it exhibits the highest degree of organic unity. The more opportunities for freedom to be exhibited within the conditions that permit life to flourish, the greater the opportunity for organic order to phase into conceptual and ethical order of the highest quality.

Albrecht, 1994, *Ethics, Anarchy and Sustainable Development*, p. 112

Figure 76b. *Solastalgia*, Kate Macdowell, hand-built porcelain, 2010.
How this has an influence on my current work

The reader will have noted my pro animal stance. Add to this the fact that I am now vegetarian and that I am having some difficulty in coming to terms with travelling in certain countries these days because of animal rights issues (I travelled extensively through Asia and America in my twenties but this was not an issue for me at the time). Nowadays I experience a great deal of personal frustration when hearing or reading about disappearing species, and sometimes I cannot open the activist emails I receive regularly about various topics ranging from Dolphins in captivity to toxic mining in Indonesia. Inwardly, I flinch, because I know that I will be saddened, angered, and at the same time feel helpless. I imagine there are many others who feel the same way. It can be said that anger is a preferable emotion than helplessness, paralysis or indifference, in that at least one is motivated to act, and to move toward some sort of resolution. My art practice is an area where I have some control, and where I can hone what it is that drives me to create.

I have for a long time been considering what type of artwork to make that would include these realisations, and how I could approach it in my own fashion. It is not my desire to be didactic, or apocalyptic. I admire the cartoons of Gary Larson (figure 77); they are laugh-out loud funny as they transpose animals into human situations, so perhaps I could try to infuse an element of humour in my designs. There are also the classic illustrations of Beatrix Potter (figure 78) and children’s books such as The Wind in the Willows to consider, anthropomorphising characters and fusing them into the childhood psyche.
“Oh, hey! I just love these things! ... Crunchy on the outside and a chewy center!”

Figure 77. Gary Larson cartoon.

Figure 78. Beatrix Potter Illustration listing the Peter Rabbit series.
Figure 79. *Animal Matters*, Lobregat, gouache and ink on watercolour paper, 2011.
I have traced to a small extent the reasoning of those who see mankind as naturally, inevitably and rightly at the top of the food chain, and who apparently cannot see their relationship to animals and to nature in any other way. For my third wallpaper pattern design I have developed a Baroque-style motif depicting various animals with a human skull (figure 79), conceivably questioning the 'natural' order of things.
8. ‘Rx for a sick planet.’

As a child I was a direct victim of the effects of the braggadocio of geneticists early in this century. Of course I only realized this long after I myself had become a geneticist. After Pearl Harbour, my family was stripped of all rights of Canadian citizenship for sharing genes that had come from the country of the enemy near the turn of the century.

Later as a university faculty member, I discovered through reading that the leading geneticists early in this century had made exuberant extrapolations from studies on guinea pigs and fruit flies to behaviour of races and social groups. And those grand claims had ultimately led to restrictive immigration laws and proscriptions on interracial marriage in the U.S., incarceration of Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans and to the horrors of Nazi Holocaust in Germany. The recognition that scientific pronouncements have profound social consequences eventually led me to look at science from a perspective that few of my colleagues share.


The views of scientist and well known environmentalist David Suzuki have always resonated with me. I remember once years ago reading that he claimed to be able to reduce his weekly household garbage to one bag!!! (Suzuki, 2008). I still have a mental image of this to this day when I am recycling and looking at my own household waste. I also relate to him describing himself as a second generation Japanese living and working in Canada. This describes a hybrid quality, which seems to me to mean bringing (perhaps) an Asian/Other perspective to life in a Western country, and being able to draw on both those aspects on his work.

This concept of hybridity is significant in my own work. In this wallpaper series, two of the papers reflect on this theme. The narrative content of *Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao* depicts images of myself as a child recently emigrated from the Philippines and transplanted into Australian life, contrasted with memories and fragments of new perspectives regarding the country of my birth, the Philippines. *Swamp Hens at
Warner’s Bay illustrates another polarized image, which highlights the encroachment of man-made development on native wildlife. The rope bridge hints at the possibility of developing organic structures which are not destructive or toxic, but instead working alongside nature. This is a theme of interest, which has developed clarity for me since I embarked on writing this exegesis.

Suzuki also beautifully and poetically articulated a concept for me, which I was only dimly aware of, being that indigenous peoples could be viewed as custodians of the planet. (Suzuki,1992). In the early nineties when I was first reading Suzuki, the mainstream representation of ‘primitive’ cultures was of being technologically backward, and therefore justifiably left behind in a soulless, aggressive race for self gain through free enterprise. From his writings came confirmation of a worldview where cultures that live very close to the land have a sensitivity and respect for the earth and its seasons, as well as the concept of not owning and parceling up land, but actually belonging to it, feeling it physically and spiritually.

We were not the savages that the early settlers and many other non-Aboriginal people since would have you believe. We were intelligent, observing people, who had a complex system of protecting knowledge from being lost. ...

With this study, information was gathered from many people about the seasons and climatic cycles, and a pattern of information protection appeared. Each family has knowledge about a particular season or cycle, but each family member has different knowledge about that season or cycle. That knowledge was then passed on to the person of choice, not necessarily of direct descent, but a person interested in receiving that knowledge, and a person who was a member of the extended family. Tracing the knowledge was the task, because many of the knowledge holders had ‘disappeared’ after children had been taken from them or from friends and relatives.

In 2011 at the University of Newcastle, one of my fellow RHD candidates in her research came across evidence that within Australian Aboriginal culture there was an awareness of recurring cycles of weather patterns in their oral histories, spanning thousands of years. My colleague Lorraine Robertson has illustrated Dharawal Seasons and Climatic cycles for the Natural Heritage Trust (figure 80). Frances Bodkin gathered the information for this beautiful book from her people, the Dharawal Aboriginal people who are the caretakers of the land on the south coast of Sydney, from Port Jackson to the Shoalhaven River, extending west to Camden NSW.

Figure 80. *Lyrebird* “Wise grandmothers and lyrebirds know ways to survive the danger of bushfires,” illustration by Lorraine Robertson, 2009.

My own observation of the loss of indigenous knowledge is alluded to in the ‘Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao’ artwork. I have very small knowledge of the (once-abundant) wildlife or flora of the Philippine Islands. I became very conscious of this
only recently and began to rectify this on my recent trip back there, so there are
indigenous animals included on that wallpaper. Due to the omnipresent influence of
Spanish Catholicism I had very little contact with pre-Hispanic spiritual practices or
sacred sites but am very curious about them. For this reason, I was keen to travel to
areas where the hill tribes still live in a fairly traditional style, but they are concentrated
on a dangerous, not easily accessible island in the southernmost part of the
Philippines, Mindanao.

In 'Inventing the Future', David Suzuki also writes about the debate over the
disappearing wilderness areas. He describes parliamentary question time as a
situation where red herrings are continually thrown out in response to points made by
environmentalists and native people, thereby deflecting attention from the fundamental
issues being raised (Suzuki, 1989 p.154).

‘In the debate over disappearing wilderness areas and what should be done,
politicians often reflect the preoccupation with profit and development. Even
environment ministers seem more concerned with how to justify development than
with protecting unique areas.’

Suzuki 1989, Inventing the Future, p.154

What he has written pre-1990 about wilderness areas in Canada sadly still describes
the experience of our own Environment Ministers here in Australia, though on the
surface I would consider Australia to be advanced compared to other countries in our
region in terms of environmental policy and implementation. This may be due to the
extended range of urban development here, and far less population pressure than
other comparable countries.
How this relates to my work

A good part of my research here in Natural History Illustration has been in reading theories about ethics and sustainable development. This is because I recognise a certain core rage within myself about the destruction of habitat, loss of species, the lack of connection with nature inherent in modern society and even the beer bottles on my lawn left by my neighbours’ thoughtless teenage kids, seem like yet more compelling evidence of the general moral decay of civilisation...I was introduced to current theory on precisely this subject by one of my supervisors.

Glenn Albrecht is Professor of Sustainability at Murdoch University in South Australia. In 2008 Albrecht completed tenure as the Associate Professor in Environmental Studies at the University of Newcastle. He has become known for coining the neologism ‘Solastalgia’ (in his paper Solastalgia, A New Concept in Health and Identity, 2005) as “the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one’s home and territory”. This describes a form of psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change, such as mining or climate change.

A paper published by Albrecht and collaborators focused on two contexts where collaborative research teams found Solastalgia to be evident: the experiences of persistent drought in rural (NSW) and the impact of large-scale open-cut coal mining on individuals in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW. In both cases, people exposed to environmental change experienced negative effects exacerbated by a sense of powerlessness or lack of control over the unfolding change process.
You can’t get away from it. Not in the Upper Hunter, not in Newcastle, not anywhere. And that’s exactly the point of solastalgia.” Just as the loss of “heart’s ease” is not limited to displaced native populations, solastalgia is not limited to those living beside quarries — or oil spills or power plants or Superfund sites. Solastalgia, in Albrecht’s estimation, is a global condition, felt to a greater or lesser degree by different people in different locations but felt increasingly, given the ongoing degradation of the environment. As our environment continues to change around us, the question Albrecht would like answered is, how deeply are our minds suffering in return?

Daniel B. Smith holds the Critchlow Chair in English at the College of New Rochelle.

The chief trigger for the Swamphens at Warner’s Bay wallpaper piece was on one occasion witnessing several cars in succession running over a purple swamp hen (Porphyrio porphyria) on a narrow road, while it was attempting to cross. I pulled my car over, and made the traffic stop so I could pick it up, but it was essentially dead in my arms. Two other women saw what I was doing and pulled up their cars and came to help me, which was comforting. This scene was a climax to my daily observations whilst travelling along that road to work for some four years. Observations of how quickly the bush was receding, watching cement foundations being laid for mega-monstrosities (such as Officeworks, Lighting specialists and so on). I imagine this is to be happening seemingly unchecked, all over Australia as we speak.

The full transdisciplinary area of health involves the healing of solastalgia via cultural responses to degradation of the environment in the form of drama, art, dance and song at all scales of living from the bioregional to the global.

Albrecht 2005 ‘Solastalgia’ A New Concept in Health and Identity, p. 55)
Though the discipline of Natural History Illustration is attached to the Science of Natural history, it is probably not possible for me to be strictly scientific. There is a sense of detachment in my written inquiries that I do not necessarily approach in my artwork…I personally will never understand the lack of vision of those who claim that cutting down old growth forest is somehow good for the economy, for jobs, for families. In my perception, human beings breed worse than rabbits and can all too easily be replaced, diversity of species and ancient trees cannot. Better that I should be an artist, and have some outlet for my observations, sadness, anger and visions of beauty. And always I find that when I am immersed in creating visions of other possible realities, my spirits are lifted which helps me to connect to a better frame of mind.

In this wallpaper piece, there are two swamp hens peering disinterestedly at a human skull, set in a desolate rubble of cement blocks and twisted steel girders, and flanked by the gaudy remains of KFC logos. They are surrounded by bush, which will regenerate (figure 81). These guardian animals ornament a new sort of landscape beyond our current conception, reminiscent of the French mural landscapes produced by Zuber in the 1800’s depicting new worlds. Another part of the wallpaper sequence describes a rainforest. The section which depicts a rope bridge constructed out of entwined vines comes from my musings about workable man-made structures that are truly organic, that will naturally decay without a toxic afterlife, structures that can be added to, and lived with by humans and animals alike.
Albrecht speculates that the shape, size and character of a social ecology inspired by an organicist ethic will be influenced by technologies that are on a human scale and in harmony with the environment (Albrecht, 1994, p.114). He quotes Bookchin on the topic of a relatively self-sufficient community that “visibly dependent on its environment for the means of life, would gain new respect for the organic interrelationships that sustain it” (as cited by Albrecht, 1994). Encouragingly, Albrecht wrote about a new term in his BlogSpot called ‘Soliphilia’, and his words seem to define a possible antidote to the destructive cycle of development.

the love of and responsibility for a place, bioregion, planet and the unity of interrelated interests within it.” Soliphilia is associated with positivity, interconnectedness and personal empowerment. If we can make our psychological defense against solastalgia into the positive manifestation of soliphilia, then we can definitely improve the interplay between human beings and their environment for generations to come.

(http://healthearth.blogspot.com/2009/02/soliphilia.html)
I have found some images which foreshadow building and living with an organicist ethic, designs for a resort in Senegal, Africa, urban housing in France (figure 83) and an island-zoo in Korea (figures 84a-e). The new club resort is comprised of suites formed in the shape of peanuts and made from straw and wood (figure 82).

Figure 82. Project to create resort dwellings in Senegal, Architect Edouard Francois, 2009.

Figures 84a-e are designs for a sustainable zoo by JD Architects, which they are proposing to be built on the South Korean island of Dochodo. The architecture would serve as a tourist region where nature and structures function in equilibrium. The landscape is ideal for such a development, as it features natural peaks and valleys that could house animals and be treated as nature reserves. The proposed development would have a low ecological impact. The development will be based on zero-emission transport systems and harvest renewable energy for other power needs. Rainwater will be collected and all waste would either be reused or composted for use as biofuel and fertilizer.
Figure 84a. Designs for Sustainable Zoo.

Figure 84b. Designs for Sustainable Zoo.
Figure 84c. Designs for Sustainable Zoo.

Figure 84d. Designs for Sustainable Zoo.

Figure 84e. Designs for Sustainable Zoo.
9. Methodology and Context

The artist has his problems and thinks as he works. But his thought is more immediately embodied in the object. Because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media that he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it.

Dewey, 1964 Art as Experience (as cited in Hofstadter & Kuhns, p. 642)

An art methodology differs from a science methodology, perhaps mainly insofar as the artist is not always after the same goal as the scientist. I mention this as Natural History Illustration is strongly linked to Science and observation. In Art it is not necessarily paramount to establish the exact truth so much as to select the most effective form through which ideas, feelings, perceptions might be communicated to an audience.

Conceptualization

Initially I had a variety of mediums which I envisaged using for this project. I went into some detail in investigating the initial components for making digital wallpaper. I attended a semester's tutorial in 3D animation, with limited progress in my ability to quickly learn the skills necessary to realize the sequence I had in mind. I still think there would be a value in developing this type of model as there are some outstanding examples of this type of technology developed by design students and artists in the UK, with a diversity of applications in an evolving genre, such as Simon Heidjens projection, Tree, figure 85.
Figure 85. Tree, Simon Heijdens, projectors, computers, wind, motion, sound sensors, installed in various locations, Netherlands 2004.
For my own work, I began with some very rough sketches in my diary, and collaged a pin-board with various images that I liked, such as wallpaper prints, color ways, labels, photographs of flowers. This type of inspiration board is usual to my way of working, and I have several different process boards displayed in my studio at home at any time.

An artist may choose to draw from what he or she observes in front of them, or from what they imagine, or from what they already know about the subject - I did all three. I collated photographs of all the subjects I wished to incorporate into my overall sequence - along with many reference books, I had dozens of photographs of Magnolia plants, and went on to photograph the animals at the Bacolod zoo. This process has been influenced by working in close proximity to other Natural History Illustration students and their methods of observing and recording subject matter.

![Image of Magnolia flowers](image)

*Figure 86. Blooming sequence of Magnolia flower.*

I took a daily sequence of photographs of a magnolia flower blooming (figure 86), a shrub that lives on my verandah. Slowly the idea took shape, and I began to plan the composition, which was in the form of a long wallpaper piece that scrolls out horizontally – this was inspired by the beauty of Arabic and Chinese scrolls. I could see
that by expanding the scale in this format, I would literally be able to unfold and incorporate a variety of visual elements, to the idea more dynamic and compelling.

The artist is compelled to become an experimenter because he has to express an intensely individualized experience through means and materials that belong to the common and public world. This problem cannot be solved once and for all. It is met with every new work undertaken...Only because the artist operates experimentally does he open new fields of experience and disclose new aspects and qualities in familiar scenes and objects.

Dewey, 1964 *Art as Experience* (as cited in Hofstadter and Kuhns, p. 647)

After trying a few different methods, I elected to work with gouache and watercolour on paper on the first two pieces, *Swamp Hens at Warner’s Bay*, and *Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao*. This mode works well as it is comparatively non-toxic, being water based (my practice has largely been in oil-based paints in recent years). It also requires minimal drying time and is a very instantaneous and responsive medium with regard to inserting new images into the overall design context. Paper also leaves open
the possibility of collaging and sewing extra sections onto the finished pieces to add a sculptural dimension, as I have done with the *Magnolia Arabic Interlace* piece.

Using paper leaves room for intuitive change, as one can have a plan in mind and quickly modify its direction. This is an essential part of my process. I also started to think of ways I could use the laser cutting tool, which is part of the School of Design Communication and IT printery, to display different sections of my work as enlarged cut-outs. Those considerations led me to consider perhaps constructing the magnolia blossoms for the *Interlace* piece out of paper to achieve a strongly sculptural effect (figures 87-88). These were done by hand, but could be modified to be done by laser in larger quantities if needed.

Figure 87b. Detail, *Magnolia Arabic Interlace*, Lobregat, paper and pencil, 2011.
I was considering painting and drawing the whole surface of the Animal Matters wallpaper by hand, however as it involves the repetition of the central motif, and because I was trying out different colourways on Photoshop, I realized that it would be a better solution to have this piece printed, thereby using the technology available. The use of a large format colour printer allowed me to experiment with different types of papers and printing. This would be important if I were to move into a more commercial type of manufacture in the future. I used a Canson Infinity Rag Photographique paper in 310gm, as it has a good weight and wonderfully matt surface.
Figure 89. Test print for *Animal Matters*, Lobregat, colour jet ink on paper, 2011.

Figure 90. Colourway for *Animal Matters*, Lobregat, colour jet ink on Canson Rag Photographique paper, 2011.
The drawing of skull, animals and baroque frame were drawn in pencil, hand-coloured with gouache and ink, and later scanned into digital format to test different colourways and create a repeat print. In printing out the different Animal Matters colourways, (figures 89-91) I thought it might be interesting to do a sample book of wallpapers, as is often displayed this way at furnishing and Interior Design retailers. I also made a small run of removeable vinyl wall stickers of this motif at a local printer’s (see fig. 79, p. 113).
The scale models for *Swamp Hens at Warner’s Bay* and *Magnolias and Magpies*, *Magnolias and Mindanao* were done on a smooth Satine Arches Hot pressed watercolour paper, but I realized that the bigger pieces would have to be made of coarser, stronger paper to withstand being rolled and unrolled repeatedly without creasing. The finished pieces are painted on a rough, Arches Cold pressed watercolour paper.

This process required detailed planning, mainly in making a smaller model before moving on to the original, to use as a reference map (figure 92). Later I did a rough line drawing on butcher’s paper to establish the design, then traced that and transferred it to the water colour paper and then applied ink and gouache by brush. I began on one part of the paper first, starting by unrolling the paper gradually from the left, and lightly spraying it with water to counteract the tight curl in the paper before transferring the tracing onto it. I ended by working over the whole surface equally. Figure 93 shows the entire piece and I used the same technique and steps for Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao, see figures 94 and 95, on the following pages.
Figure 93a. Swamp Hens at Warner’s Bay, left hand detail.

Figure 93b. Swamp Hens at Warner’s Bay, right hand detail

Figure 93c. Swamp Hens at Warner’s Bay, 60 x 420 cm, Lobregat, 2011.
Figure 94a. *Magpies, Magnolia and Mindanao* wallpaper, left hand detail.

Figure 94b. *Magpies, Magnolia and Mindanao* wallpaper, right hand detail.

Figure 94c. *Magpies, Magnolia and Mindanao* wallpaper, 60 x 405 cm, Lobregat, 2011.
Critique, Evaluation and Revision

For the first time, writing has been enmeshed with and parallel to my creative process. The most challenging area for me, I think, was in writing an exegesis. This written component has caused me to articulate experience and memories that were not at the forefront of my consciousness, and to link ideas more logically than I would in a non-verbal, completely image-based approach. Often it seemed that some ideas and connections I was making were completely self-explanatory until it was gently pointed out by my supervisors this was not the case.

Reading and researching are processes which I find delightful, and inspiring. To have the leisure to pursue a tangent, or several tangents, is one of the great freedoms of a Research Higher Degree. It is my habit to randomly graze information and images, and this Master’s period has taught me to construct an argument, examine and unfold a line of thought. What has startled me at times are the underlying depths of my interests, in that when I have been attracted to something purely on a visual level, for example in the case of florilegiums and botanical illustrations, their context led back to colonial and cultural histories. Or wallpaper, which I love because it is pretty, in recent times appears to have shifted in status from being a design hangover from a dated era, to a cultural signifier with broad applications, (which I have discussed in Chapter 4 and in the Conclusion pp145-146).

During this Master’s project, I was constantly reflecting on the process, with the awareness that I needed to document all stages. There are hundreds of photographs of both the work in progress and the subjects of my drawings, some of which were
taken in the Philippines. I appreciate digital technology as it limits the actual amount of paper needed to keep an archive of reference, and found having a laptop handy to draw from at times.

At every point I evaluated whether there was an opportunity to revise or refine my work and to address or incorporate such evaluation. As I mentioned in Conceptualization (p 124) there was initially a question as to whether I would make digital wallpaper, but after trying it out I didn’t feel it would be as effective for me as drawing it’ This process of ‘revise and refine’ can continue on endlessly - reassessing its effectiveness, in size, colour, and medium allows the work to move on and change. I never consider an artwork completely finished until it is hung, but the Swamp Hens paper and the Magnolias paper were completed quite early, with only minor adjustments.
Constructing Meaning

My work has always been process led. Being required to write a parallel commentary such as this exegesis, I began to identify re-occurring themes. This has come at a salutary point in time in my practice. As a younger artist, my concerns were more concentrated on defining personal history/narrative, and construction of identity. With the passing of time, my field of experience is much broader, and I can incorporate previously utilized images in a new way, in a larger context.

When I look back over my body of work, I see that I have been a collector and classifier, in an attempt to order an increasing number of subjects of interest. Generally, I start by collecting images or objects that have resonance, and that is usually my point of origin for work. This is often coupled with a desire to experiment in a format which I haven’t used much before, such as wallpaper.

The smaller scale drawings of Swamp Hens and Magpies, Magnolias and Mindanao were exhibited at Maitland Regional Gallery mid-2011 (figure 95), as was the preliminary drawing for Animal Matters. They were generally well received, which was encouraging, and I was able to engage in some discourse about their subject matter at the exhibition with some of the audience. The artist can have an intention for how a work should be read, but at the same time, the viewer comes to an artwork with their own set of experiences and questions. I have not intended for my images to be didactic, but to pose questions, to kindle awareness and connection. I also realize that where a work is presented has an effect on how it is interpreted. Wallpaper displayed in a gallery setting, which is temporary, might have a more ironic reading than if set in a
classroom, for example, where young students over the years might absorb visual information about local flora and fauna.

Figure 95. The artist in front of preliminary wallpaper drawings, Maitland Regional Gallery, June 2011.
10. Conclusion

A great deal of personal development has occurred between the start of my Master’s degree and this conclusion. As I look back, I was somewhat unsure of my goals when I entered the program, but I knew it would be highly beneficial to my practice and was more than delighted at the opportunity to be around other artists and in an academic environment again.

The last twenty years of art-making has been put into perspective, and some sort of coherent narrative has emerged. The first ten-fifteen years of my art practice were spent, probably predictably, in a search for identity. I would have to say that my return to the Philippines in 2010 was a psychological turning point. This helped me put into perspective what I desired to say, to formulate work concerning this subject, and to point to a cultural direction which motivates me, and will continue to do so.

I have been an avid reader throughout my life, and was somewhat surprised that my scattered approach to subjects of interest (in reading, collecting objects and art-making) revealed at their root a few core subjects – I mentioned this in the introduction. My research skills improved, as intensive readings were required towards concentrated topics. Flowers, pattern, indigenous, or pre-colonial knowledge, the subjects of these chapters have an ongoing relationship to my work and even to my day-to-day surroundings.
My writing skills improved (out of necessity). In my twenties, I had never imagined myself writing in excess of twenty thousand words, as I have been more accustomed to painting pictures and to communicating with images. The intricacy of writing an exegesis is a skill that has been acquired with persistence, but this definitely has been rewarding. There is satisfaction in making a leap in functioning, mainly from the intuitive to the verbal. The chief thing that happened on my personal journey was a gradual but really quite intense clarification of my past work practices, and an examination of my personal ideology which formed into a cohesive wholeness that it did not have before. This came about by being required to write and remember in such detail.

The correlation between art and applied design has been a meaningful convergence of disciplines for me, as I studied Graphic Design before I studied Painting. At the time I was studying Fine Arts in the early 1990’s, the prevailing attitude was that the two were inherently contradictory in their aims, where I would now argue that the boundary between the two is increasingly blurred.

From when I first studied Graphic Design in the eighties to now, media and technology have advanced incalculably. Typesetting, during my TAFE days, was done by hand. I was never inspired by the job prospect of laying out print-ads at the Yellow Pages Telephone directory, or working as a designer for an advertising agency. Nowadays graphic design is a ubiquitous art form which has massively influenced contemporary society (Baudrillard, 1994) but at that time its scope was too limited to be interesting to me.
Subsequently, the study of Fine Arts gave me a philosophical framework to relate my art practice to, as I mentioned in Chapter 2. During that time, I read current discourse, I discussed ideas, I exhibited my work in Australia and overseas, and for many years after completing my degree, art making was a passionate involvement. I kept up my exhibition practice, though eventually having reached University of Newcastle in 2009, I now appreciate that my approach needed some re-evaluation. I wanted to try other mediums after painting in oil for many years, and I wanted to go back to drawing.

Researching in the area of Natural History Illustration has further extended my philosophical foundation, and grounded it in a site where I would like to use my skills. I have plans to display the wallpaper pieces that depict Philippine wild life and customs (figure 96). I feel it would be of value to display them as part of a cultural discourse, so I will be continuing discussions with Ateneo University Art Gallery in Manila (who hold some of my earlier work in their collection) about showing this series of wallpapers at their gallery in future.
One of the by-products of the RHD studio being set in the Design building is the cross-over of ideas and techniques which I was exposed to in that building. Having had access to the cutting-edge software and printing techniques, I feel that I am current enough with the latest technology so that I can confidently select an area which suits me. Digital reproduction has created another avenue for my work, and the range of audience it is possible to reach.

For the future, I have been researching illustration agents, such as the Melbourne-based Jacky Winter Group, whose principal has very recently spoken at the Look-Hear series of lectures which were organized by the Design staff of the University of
Newcastle. These type of agencies act as liaisons between commercial advertising agencies and illustrators, and there are some innovative and exciting projects have resulted from this. Beci Orpin (figure 97) is one illustrator/designer whose work I admire, and she is represented by the Jacky Winter Illustration Agency, Melbourne.

Figure 97. Beci Orpin, end paper illustration for 2010 Jacky Winter field guide.

There seems to be a real interest in illustration work commercially, as shown in magazines like the Australian publication 'Frankie', and numerous web blogs such as ‘the Design Files’. I would like to combine this with my fine art experience by being able to exhibit in cultural venues, and working on projects that are raising awareness of plant and animal species in a pop-cultural style.
The impact of my research on my work will be a more deliberate, measured approach
to making and showing my work, plus a broadening of the context where I would
consider exhibiting. I would expect to be able to show my work outside of a Gallery,
which can be read as a rarified, philosophical/cultural space, not accessible to the
wider public. Designing something like wallpaper has definite commercial applications
and would have different audience expectations than fine art, such as greater public
accessibility.

Original 1960’s and 1970’s wallpapers got a new lease of life as collectibles, used on feature walls
or framed as pictures and murals. At the same time, the very unfashionability of wallpaper, which
had become associated with a certain kind of restrained middle class ‘good taste’ prompted
designers to reinvent it. One of the most striking aspects of the best contemporary wallpaper design
is its rejection of traditional imagery and motifs, or the radical reworking of conventions.

New directions in Wallpaper design and art 2011, Victoria & Albert Museum online

In Chapter 3, I delineated different stages in the development of wallpaper design, and
their connection to events that were unfolding simultaneously in Western culture to the
concerns of the population who were using wallpapers in their homes (Hoskins 2005).
As a muted background to suburban experiences, it was unexciting and ignored, part
of the collective imprint of a certain place and time, perhaps eliciting fond memories for
some. This was part of its attraction for me initially, geometric patterns and garlands of
flowers (figure 98) as silent witnesses to the events of daily life in the sixties, seventies
and eighties. That idea of a tranquil, stable home, and what was used to decorate that
home contrasts with the uncertainty of our current environment and the rapid pace of
the information era (Baudrillard, 1981).
I have come to see Wallpaper functioning as a cultural symbol of the zeitgeist. Its use is not solely confined to four walls in a home, with a different print for the hallway to the print used for the ‘good’ lounge room. All those ideas have fallen away. There are sculptural possibilities to wallpaper now, it can create a set; it can be hand sewn, digital, magnetic, or a backdrop for a futuristic experience. It can even be nibbled by rats! (see figure 99).
“Wallpaper, hooks, lamps and other everyday objects designed by rats, dogs, snakes and beetles.
We asked animals to help us.
Sure, we’ll help you out! they answered.
Make something nice, we told them.
And so they did.”

Rats have gnawed on rolls of wallpaper. The holes compose a repetitive pattern that shows pieces of the old wallpaper. FRONT PROJECTS, Sweden.

http://www.designfront.org
Wallpaper design has developed into a dynamic, innovative field. Now a vehicle for contemporary exploration, Wallpaper recontextualises our current age, which characterised by high technology, catering to niche markets, (Victoria & Albert Museum 2011) and immediate and easy digital reproduction (Audas, 2005).

Alongside concerns with sustainable practices (Schoeser, 2006), consumers are growing in awareness that their purchasing choices have power and reflect their ethics, and they can choose papers and images that reflect their personal philosophy. I find this exciting and these concerns have become an intrinsic part of my own practice. Initial interest in the work suggests that there are real commercial and domestic applications to my research. There seems to be at last, an opportunity to combine beauty and utility to create projects which are in line with my core philosophies, and really enjoy the process of doing so!!
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