

School of Media Creative Arts and Social Inquiry (MCASI)

**Imaginary Aesthetic Territories: Australian Japonism in Printed Textile Design
and Art**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K. Heidambazi".

Date: 15th July 2018

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Abstract

Imaginary Aesthetic Territories: Australian Japonism in Printed Textile Design and Art

This doctoral project considers how Japanese influence has fused with printed textile design and art by examining its representations, use and significance in the fashion and arts sector in Australia. The research comprises practice-led studio inquiry, theoretical analysis and a personal narrative drawn from my experience of the Australian landscape and appreciation of the traditional arts of Japan.

This exegesis examines the scholarly arguments that attempt to define and characterise Australian identity in fashion/textiles and art in order to contextualise how Japonism has been utilised in relation to it. I examine selected works by contemporary and historical artists including Florence Broadhurst and Akira Isogawa who have deliberately hybridised Australian and Japanese aesthetics, resulting in which I term 'Australian Japonism'.

The spatial arrangements and textile print designs within *ukiyo-e* (Japanese 'pictures of the floating world') have been a prime source of aesthetic inspiration for my theme of 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'. I find correlations between the space indicated in Japanese pictorial principles and the open space of the Australian environment, and combine this with conventions of constructed exoticism inherent in Japonism. The consideration of traditional aesthetic qualities such as *yūgen* (subtly profound, mysterious grace) and *wabi-sabi* (beauty of things imperfect) also plays a crucial role in the development of this research. I investigate how these sensibilities can find a translation into Australian design, in my own work and that of others, teasing out the theoretical implications of working in this field. I draw from the commentary of scholars in the fields of Australian art and dress history, art theory, and Japanese aesthetics; from cultural and fashion theorists; and from the guidance of my own creative-led practice.

My creative production involves the design of illustrative repeating patterns of Australian motifs focusing on flora, fauna and landscapes for contemporary fashion textiles. The patterns are presented as a modern form of *ukiyo-e* art, where an emphasis on the non-verbal communication of dress adds to the narratives introduced in the print designs. My studio practice therefore sits in a field which speaks equally to the disciplines of art, fashion and textile design.

By utilising traditional compositions of Japanese pictorial space, asymmetrical and organic forms and the 'sophisticated minimalism and freshness which is somehow eternally up-to-date' (Snodin and Howard 1996 210), it is intended that the final works clearly represent cultural fusion with Japanese aesthetics whilst maintaining a recognisably Australian position of origin in order to update and replace previous stereotypes of kitsch Australiana.

By considering the diverse interplay between Japonism in Australian fields of art and design as well as my relationship to and interpretation of the Australian landscape, this exegesis contributes to evolving discourses on Australia's cultural identity and investigates how the processes of fusion and hybridity can create new and imaginary aesthetic territories.

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Figure 1. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Cruel Summer*. 2014.

Introduction

Background to the Research

Pattern has entranced me for as long as I can remember. I still recall the design and colour on the tiles in my grandmother's home when I was a small child. I remember tracing the patterns and grids in my mind, seeing how they repeated and merged into each other. Growing up in remote coastal North-West Tasmania in the 1970s and 80s, I was surrounded by pristine bush, beaches and wildlife.¹ It instilled in me a sense of spiritual awe, connection and belonging to the Australian landscape, an impression which has never left me and still remains a strong source of creative inspiration in my design work today, usually providing that rush of impetus to start drawing. Pouring over my parents' travel albums, images of Fijian huts and Japanese pagodas sparked my imagination early on for distant exotic dream-lands; the complete opposite of my rural, Eurocentric world, decorated with reproductions from the Heidelberg School (Figure 22)².

My mother and both grandmothers were artists and craftspeople. My grandfather was a furniture maker. I grew up with the last remnants of a pioneering era of resourcefulness around me, using everyday items and raw materials to craft things that were both useful and beautiful. During the 1970s and 80s the crafts movement in Australia³ grew considerably and my mother was constantly making things such as giant macramé wall hangings, pottery on the wheel, sculptural vessels and drawings. Some of these treasured handmade, irreplaceable items are still with me today. My parents also designed and built three remarkable homes from the natural resources of stone and wood, illuminating for me the idea of thinking of design in practical and aesthetic terms, and considering light, texture, materiality. From an early age I was drawn to the decorative exotic and to the romantic idealisation of the Australian bush and a hand-made/design sensibility.

My undergraduate interests were in creating responses to the landscape in the forms of paintings and repeating patterns. I was drawn to Australian designers working in graphic mediums. Bruce Gould (Mambo) and modernist artists Margaret Preston and Thea Proctor were highly influential. Transitioning from painting into the discipline of fashion and textiles, my postgraduate research focused on the history of the decorative in textile design, an appreciation of centuries of symbols and motifs on cloth and Japanese aesthetics.

In later life my father moved to Japan and became a Japanophile, deeply in love with the land and its people. His domestic life was strewn with *kimono*, *ukiyo-e* and other items of Japanese material culture. My aunty married a Japanese man and had a traditional Japanese wedding. In this way, despite any biological connection, the Japanese arts and culture have had significant influence in my life and certainly became central to my practice as a textile designer.

¹ I grew up at Arthur River in Tasmania, where a tourist signpost reads 'The end of the world'. The Tarkine National Park is an ancient forest containing the largest area of Gondwanan cool temperate rainforest in Australia.

² A reproduction of Frederick McCubbin's painting *The Pioneer* (1904) (Figure 22) hung proudly in the family room. McCubbin was a member of the Heidelberg School, an art movement in Australia in the nineteenth century, sometimes called Australian Impressionism.

³ See Grace Cochrane's (1992) *The Crafts Movement in Australia: A History*.



L to R from top: Figure 2. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *ASHE Papillion Chateau Gown*. 2009. Figure 3. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Deep Forest (Detail)*. 2004. Figure 4. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Lagoon*. 2006. Figure 5. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Central Tasmania Landscape*. 2010, Acrylic and pastel on Board, 95 x 125 cm. Image courtesy of the artist. Figure 6. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *ASHE Kimono*. 2006. Figure 7. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *ASHE Waratah Wrap Dress*. 2008.

After completing a BA (Hons) in Art in 2000, which investigated the use of symbolic motifs in world cultures, I enjoyed a twelve-year career as a textile designer for the fashion and creative industries, working almost exclusively⁴ for my own fashion/textile label Ashe (est. 2002). The central focus of Ashe from 2002-2010⁵ was hand screen printed clothing and a sensibility of bespoke, limited edition garments which drew on the surface decorations of Eastern cultures. My work was engaged in a consideration of art historical decorative movements and grammars of ornament and stimulated by contemporary fashion trends. My hobby was to paint or draw utopian visions of the Australian landscape, of both my home in Tasmania and my new home of Western Australia (see Figures 2-7).

Painting landscapes and screen printing Japanese-inspired textiles for fashion had always remained two separate aspects of my practice. The course of this exegesis maps my objective of merging these two disparate practices together. In my role as a textile designer, my practice focused on designing complex patterned cloth, borrowing directly from the arts of Japan. This exegesis maps how my practice has transitioned into the creation of something much more nuanced and fused via depictions of cloth that narrate stories about identity, cross-culturalism and my relationship to the Australian landscape, through a critically engaged account of practice-led research in the fields of textile design, fashion and art.

Orientalism

In 2010, I completed a self-directed MA (Art), which examined the historical reception of Eastern pattern motifs into Western textiles titled *Orientalism - An Eastern Aesthetic in Western Fashion and Textile Design* (Marshall 2010). This research traced the distribution and fusion of traditional motifs between disparate countries throughout many centuries, finding that motifs for cloth often develop in a reciprocal, circular and sideways motion⁶. Patterns such as paisley, pomegranate, damask, floral chintz and arabesques, for example, have complex genetics that are the result of intense periods of cross-cultural trade and development between Europe and Asia over many centuries (Marshall 2010). The MA study also introduced my practice to a consideration of the multi-faceted expression of orientalism, which is a cord of commentary throughout this exegesis and therefore requires clarification at this point.

The term 'orientalism' is most often used to describe the imitation or depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures by Western designers and artists. As a field of study in the nineteenth century, it represented the subject matter of North Africa, Asia and Middle Eastern cultures in arts and literature (MacKenzie 1996). Orientalism, in this art historical sense, has contributed decorative and stylistic elements which have become enmeshed in Western systems of decorative categorisation such as Chinoiserie, Turquerie and Japonism⁷ that have often informed my art practice.

⁴ Textile designs were also created for Australian labels Empire Rose, Wheels & Dollbaby, and Morrison.

⁵ In 2010, I closed my fashion business to focus on textile design and art practice.

⁶ I have named these hybrid patterns 'travelling motifs', an example of which is Japanese *saraca* cloth, which I examine in Chapter Three.

⁷ *The Grammar of Ornament* by Owen Jones (1856) extolled the virtues of oriental ornament and provided generations of Western designers with an accessible means from which to draw inspiration. Grammars of ornament in the nineteenth century were deliberately aimed at systemising the exotic in a manner that became familiar to Western eyes, giving designers neat categories to draw from. Jones' encyclopedic classification of cultural design principles made it possible to recognise styles as either in synchrony with Western classicism (Greek, Pompeian or Roman) or fundamentally different and belonging to other categories. Of the sixteen cultures of which Jones established laws or general principles, ten were oriental: Egyptian, Assyrian, Byzantine, Arabian, Turkish, Moresque, Persian, Indian, Hindoo and Chinese (MacKenzie 1996). The book encouraged artists to

Orientalism (1978) is also the title of Edward Said's publication which criticises aspects of imperial colonialism. The book was a catalyst for discussion and critique of the way academics of oriental studies had described, defined or examined cultures, and is seen as a critical reference point and foundational text for post-colonial theory (Gandhi 1998). Said used the term pejoratively to critique pervasive Western domination and its tradition of prejudiced outsider interpretation, plundering and romanticisation of Middle Eastern, Asian and North African cultures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Said argued that Western knowledge about the East is based neither in fact nor reality, but in preconceived archetypes which generalise all Eastern societies as similar to one another, statically fixed and unchanging. He proposed the notion that oriental and occidental (the West) are oppositional terms in which the West is deemed the masculine and rational superior, and the East is positioned as the feminine and weak negative inversion of Western culture (Said 1978; MacKenzie 1995; Gandhi 1998).

By Said utilising the word 'orientalism', the term now has additional meaning when used in academic discourse to describe a negative construct of the West; to orientalise a culture or its artifacts can be seen to essentialise, diminish or negate it. The book's 'central truth ... that demeaning images of the East, and imperialist incursions into its terrain, have historically gone hand in hand' (Eagleton 2006, n.p.) has alerted artists, academics and theorists of the dangers of cultural tokenism and presumption. A preoccupation with orientalism such as mine therefore contains both fascination and challenge; the historical cornucopia of diverse material cultures of the East and the critical appraisal of the design ethics surrounding their cultural appropriation or assimilation.

Said has many critics in field of cultural theory⁸, but he has also been praised for taking the bold step of critiquing and exposing, rather than writing safe rhetorical analysis (Nosal 2002). In relation to the arts, John M. MacKenzie (1995) argues that the orient has too easily been seen in the restrictive and limiting terms of a one-dimensional other, stressing that East-West relations have been predominantly affirmative, especially in the area of decorative arts and design. In 1994 the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in New York presented *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress*, which exhibited Western fashions influenced by China, India, the Near East, Middle East, Japan and Southeast Asia. Harold Koda, fashion scholar, curator, and the then curator-in-chief at the Met, argued that the foreignness of the exotic is more easily forgiven in clothing, perhaps because 'we tend to think of clothing as less fixed to place and less calibrated to long life':

It is clothing, so close to and so expressive of the body – that the West has most joyously appropriated from the East. The guilt of body difference, racial intolerance and exploitation that has customarily defined the discussion of colonialism as a political strategy would seem to inhibit any exchanges in clothing if bodies are, in fact, perceived so differently and so hierarchically. Any presumption of body supremacy and racial prerogative would seem to be mitigated by a constant Western history of assimilating global dress. (Martin and Koda 1994, 11)

Koda argues that the impulse to assimilate aspects of Eastern dress and adornment has been a creative one, spurred on since the first interactions between East and West and thus puts aside power and

evaluate the underpinning design principles rather than simply copy examples, guiding designers to develop rather than merely plagiarise Eastern examples of decoration.

⁸ Martin Kramer (2007) discusses the orientalist academics who criticise the content of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), including Albert Hourani in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991), Robert Graham Irwin in *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (2006), and Bernard Lewis in *The Question of Orientalism, Islam and the West* (1993).

knowledge inequities as somehow mollified through its long history of exchange. In *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, Said (2001) maintained that while representations are vital for the function of human society, as fundamental as language itself, those that are despotically oppressive need to be reevaluated.

In 2003 *Fashion Theory* journal devoted its annual special issue to orientalism in fashion, in part to respond to the overt oriental trend seen on international catwalks in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the article titled 'What Happens When Asian Chic Becomes Chic in Asia?' the ubiquitous assortment of recurring Eastern stylistic elements in Western fashion was labelled 'Asian chic' (Leshkowich and Jones 2003, 281) and the authors questioned the representations of Asianness by referring to criticisms from scholars such as Said (1978) and Ingrid Chu (1998):

Scholars have analyzed "Asian chic" fashions as meaningful signs that, interpreted by a non-Asian audience as unproblematic representations of Asianness, breathe life into Orientalist stereotypes. Not only does Asia emerge as a timeless, spiritual and exotic alter to the West, but cultural, historical, ethnic, and regional distinctions disappear into the undifferentiated category of "Asian style." Asia becomes symbolically domesticated, simply a trend to be consumed. (Leshkowich and Jones 2003, 283)

Leshkowich and Jones conclude that it is largely a matter of intentionality and positionality, that the process is multivalent, sometimes resisting, sometimes re-producing orientalist fantasies, and that it largely depends on 'who is doing the looking' (Leshkowich and Jones 2003, 295). More recently, Australian scholar Adam Geczy in *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st Century* (2013) adds significantly to the discourse, beginning with the statement 'that Western fashion and dress is unthinkable without engaging with the role of Eastern influences' (Geczy 2013, 3):

East and West are not contraries, but they require the fallacy that they are, for the sake of their own self-image and illusion of autonomy. Differences abound, but opposites are few. Orientalism in fashion and dress is a series of overlaps, codependencies and shared redefinitions hiding behind a simplistic binary. The degree to which oriental motifs, styles and materials have permeated Western fashion and dress is so immeasurable that to name one dominant dynamic of power is untenable. (Geczy 2013, 2-3)

In reference to Said's orientalism, Geczy remarks,

One of the drawbacks of canonic theory is that it must continue to be used as a dialectical touchstone for its successors. But we have travelled a great deal since then. An important aspect of recent scholarship has been to emphasise the two-sidedness of the cultural encounter and to consider it as one of imbrication and exchange rather than in terms of a dominant party sucking the life and dignity out of the another. (Geczy 2013, 4)

Geczy is not attempting to condone the atrocities of imperial colonialism or dismiss post-colonial scholarship. One of the aims of Geczy's book is to introduce a 'new way of thinking about orientalist fashion and dress' and he 'coin[s] the term transorientalism' as a means to discuss 'the co-ordinates of orientalism in fashion ... that seeks to challenge if not cast a wider net than Said's' (Geczy 2013, 4). In recognising that orientalism in fashion is a permanent feature, rather than a passing trend, Geczy seeks a more subtle understanding of the conscious and unconscious representations in the field. Geczy meticulously argues for a comprehensive understanding of transorientalism by systematically discussing a vast swathe of historical examples of the two-way reciprocation of East to West and West to East exchange and appropriation in design and art. He replaces the paralysis instilled by Said's orientalism by

arguing that ‘a stylistic bent, taste, or look with an accepted retinue of signifiers has become unmoored from any point of origin’ (Geczy 2013, 25).

Echoing Geczy’s findings, Maxwell Hearn’s catalogue essay for the Met’s exhibition *China Through the Looking Glass* (2014) comments that textile and fashion designs that present a clear debt to an Eastern country (such as China or Japan) are rarely, if ever, simply slavishly reproduced versions of originals. Rather, they are ‘points of departure for excitingly creative reinterpretations, demonstrating how easily art crosses boundaries of time, space and cultural language to serve its own purposes’ (Hearn 2014, 15). He adds that the East provides a ‘looking glass through which we are able to reflect on our common heritage and envision new creative possibilities’ (Hearn 2014, 15).

As cultures collide, fashions inevitably exchange and spread, simultaneously uniting us and/or highlighting our differences. What has been recognised by critics as ‘breathing life into orientalist stereotypes’ (Leshkovich and Jones 2003, 283) leaves a difficult gap for designers between their apolitical interest or admiration and utilisation of other cultural styles, and the negatively perceived interpretations by critics when this occurs. Whilst keeping in mind the important points raised by critics, I have approached orientalism throughout this exegesis in a similar way to Geczy, focusing on the complex reciprocation of how cultures disclose themselves to others, for example, how an Australian (Westerner) could be influenced by Japanese (Eastern) culture, without her/him necessarily partaking in the violent system of power and domination proposed by Said.

Field of Inquiry

Drawing from the fields of art and art history, the practice of creating textile designs aimed at an international high fashion aesthetic⁹ has been a fundamental element in my practice. These fields are intricately intertwined, informing and propelling new understandings and connections throughout my project. The design of repeating patterns for print is pivotal to the creative work, as it is the means by which I communicate the project’s theme of Australian Japonism most clearly.

Textile and print

Most major international fashion designers incorporate print into their collections¹⁰, as designers understand that ‘print has a powerful way of conveying importance of the individual in a world of mass production’ (Fogg 2006, 60). International fashion publications and magazines indicate that the relationship between print and contemporary fashion is irrevocably potent as the desire to decorate the body is intrinsic to the human experience (Fogg 2006).

Print and pattern design for fashion has its own semiotic language where its function is to infuse meaningful communication about the brand identity or a garment’s symbolic messages through motif choice, colour and pattern narrative. When viewed as imprinted inscriptions on cloth, print can become metaphors for the permeability of an evolving cultural identity and highlights the fashion/textile designer’s role as a cultural producer (Kawamura 2005). Wearing print allows an individual to embellish

⁹ A high fashion aesthetic refers to the high-quality style aesthetic produced by fashion houses that are globally recognised in the fashion industry. High Fashion is related to Haute Couture (French for high fashion) and is characterised as handmade rather than mass produced and is produced in high quality (English, 2007).

¹⁰ Printed textiles appear in all contemporary fashion sectors, including fast fashion, slow fashion, high street fashion and luxury labels (Fogg 2006).

and express their identity and reflect it to the outside world; 'we wear clothes, cover ourselves in codes and creations, in order for us to be seen how we truly are' (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 10). In *The Language of Clothes*, Alison Lurie (1981) discusses the messages that clothing delivers, and points out that choice of print can be intended as information or misinformation, as a subterfuge or mask, but most often as a means to proclaim our identities.

Patterned textiles designs could be compared to stories that can sharply define a particular designer's collection or overall brand:

Designers have always felt an affinity with telling stories. There is no simpler route to the human imagination than to allow it to explore the myths and mark-making of other cultures, places and times, and fashion is perfectly placed to utilise this. (Fogg 2006, 127)

Designers use pictorial semiotics drawn from a variety of art historical grammars of ornament and symbol systems such as families of patterns – floral, geometric, abstract, conversational, ethnic-oriental¹¹ and period styles¹² – to infuse clothing with non-verbal communication (Meller and Elffers 2002). These patterns for textiles can be seen as a dialectic of the visual imagination, where periods of history can be recorded as a kind of language of the society it was produced for. Susan Meller and Joost Elffers in their comprehensive tome *Textile Designs: Two Hundred Years of European and American Patterns Organized by Motif, Colour, Layout and Period* (2001) speak of the idea of printed cloth belonging to a recycling wheel where motifs are 'on a circular road of eternal return' (Meller and Elffers 2002, 14). Prints are seen to have a temporal dimension. Although always remaining in existence, only a select few will remain at the top of the wheel, which of course continues to turn, throwing old motifs down and reviving the next pattern. Patterns and their symbolic meanings also surface, change, disappear and reappear, reaching back and forth in time. Each new designer brings new meanings and characteristics of place and time to the motif, altering once again the symbolic meaning and value.

As they pass through the ages symbols gather and lose meanings. What was once powerful to one culture becomes decorative to another, and what was once decorative may become powerful again. With the turning of the recycling wheel, symbols move in and out of their ability to affect us deeply. (Meller and Elffers 2002, 14)

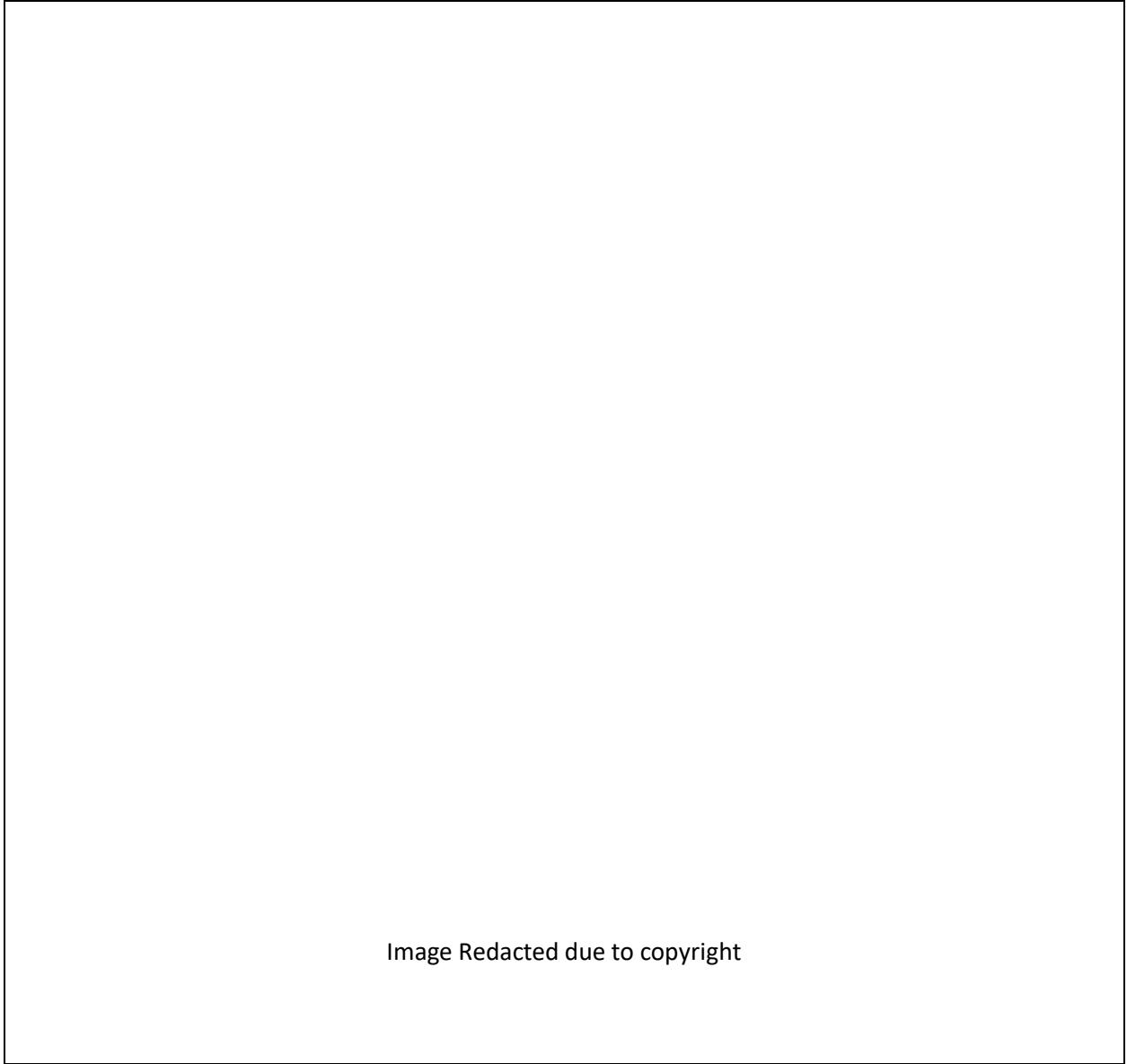
Symbolic representations of Eastern styles appeared frequently during the 2000s and 2010s indicating that the trend for orientalism in fashion has become a staple in designer vocabularies (Figures 8 to 13)¹³. This exegesis goes some way to explaining why exotic motifs of the orient have been so successful in fashion, particularly in relation to the use of Japanese style patterns. Surface print design for fashion

¹¹ The ethnic-oriental is understood as a pattern with a foreign or exotic feeling. (Meller and Elffers, 2002)

¹² Period style patterns refer to art movements or historical periods such as medieval, rococo, baroque, empire, renaissance, art deco, gothic revival, psychedelic, art nouveau, punk and so on.

¹³ Contemporary fashion designers are certainly allured by orientalism (McNeil 2010). Yves Saint Laurent was a consistent exponent of Chinoiserie, launching new waves intermittently throughout the 1970s alongside other exotic modes linked to the hippie idiom. Other designers to incorporate Chinoiserie in the 1980s are Christian Lacroix with his *Frontière Chinoise*, Karl Lagerfeld, and John Galliano who created an entire range for Christian Dior based on the idea of Shanghai in the 1930s. Roberto Cavalli introduced Buddha t-shirts and cheong-sams in his 1993 catwalk collection (Leshkovich and Jones, 2003; Steele and Major, 1999). Dries Van Noten is committed to exoticism to the extent that he continued to design with an oriental aesthetic during the 1990s when minimalism was the preferred look (Marshall 2010). These are just a few examples of the seemingly inexhaustible range of reinterpretations of Eastern dress in the Western fashion of the last few decades. Couture collections exhibited in Europe throughout the 2010s contain strong orientalist themes including Givenchy, Prada, Fendi, Etro, Gucci, Dior, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Dries Van Noten, Kenzo and Anna Sui (see Figures 8 to 13).

provides an ideal platform of experimentation for the designer interested in decorative exoticism, ornamental aesthetics, historical and period symbol systems, all of which are applicable to a study of Australian Japonism.



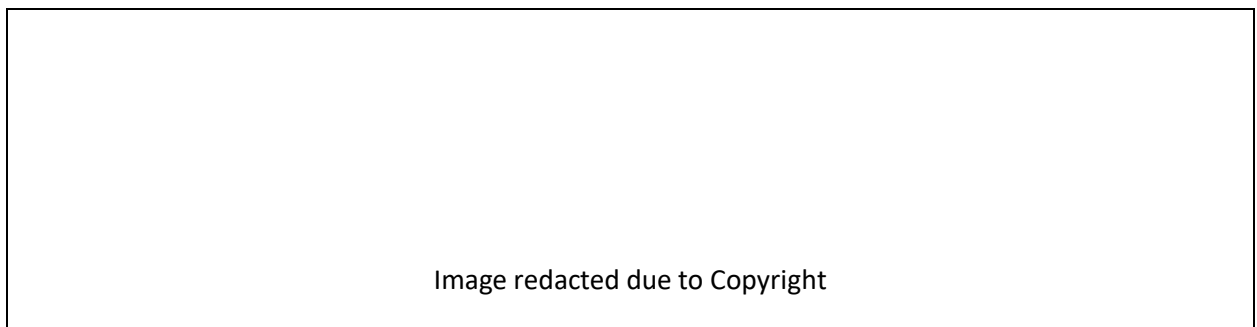
L to R top: Figure 8. Lenny Niemeyer, *Runway Fashion Collection 2016* (Detail). Figure 9. Gucci, *Fashion Collection 2016* (Detail). Figure 10. Kenzo, *Runway Fashion Collection 2011* (Detail). L to R bottom: Figure 11. Gucci, *Runway Fashion Collection 2016* (Detail). Figure 12. Gucci, *Runway Fashion Collection 2017* (Detail). Figure 13. Christian Dior, *Runway Fashion Collection 2007* (Detail).

Fashion and art

Fashion as a term has multiple meanings and its discourses have rapidly multiplied, spreading to various academic branches to become increasingly interdisciplinary (Kawamura 2005; Craik 2009a; Kaiser 2012), drawing on history, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, art history, design and aesthetics, as well as feminist, economic and semiotic studies, and more. It is a subject of complex entanglements, perspectives, sectors and approaches. From mass-produced fast fashion to mass-market clothing, to artisan-made slow fashion, to haute couture luxury fashion, there are a vast range of multifaceted themes and ideologies to consider (Kaiser 2012). To add further convolution, there is the ongoing discussion by critics who question whether fashion is art or can art be fashion (Geczy and Karaminas 2012), which is an important consideration as I seek to position myself as an artist/designer who draws from both fields.

In *Seeing Through Clothes*, Anne Hollander (1993) argues for dress as a form of visual art. Corporeality is central to the way that we produce knowledge and experience the world, and clothes can speak volumes about identity, history and a multitude of human experiences. This notion has become largely accepted in a number of discussions from fine arts, literary theory, cultural studies and psychology (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 3), opening a space (but not a new terminology) for designers/artists who work in this interdisciplinary field. Admitting that little scholarship has been allocated to the links between fashion and art, Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas (2012), editors of *Fashion and Art*, state, 'there is yet to be established a more overarching discourse, let alone a marshalled set of ideas that may then lead to something resembling a field' (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 11).

Fashion and Art contains important debate in identifying this difficult to define subject by attempting to demarcate the area. What this text emphasises is the breakdown in hierarchy between fashion and art, as the two fields have begun to share a similar language. Where in the past, 'fashion has not been treated kindly by historians of modern art, who too often denigrate it as antithetical to the concerns of great artists' (Troy 2012, 29), fashion now finds itself represented in major galleries, alongside art of traditional 'high culture', (Craik 2009, 187) stimulating museum culture around the world.



L to R: Figure 14. George Barbier, *Chez Poiret*. 1912. Figure 15. Léon Bakst, *Dione*. 1910. Figure 16. Raoul Dufy, *Flowers*. Circa 1920s.

Whilst an analysis of the countless links between fashion and art of the last century is outside the scope of this exegesis, what is important to establish is that designers and their collaborators such as textile designers and artisans, fashion illustrators and painters have been firmly entwined in a reciprocal relationship, each inspiring the other in form, content and approach. The breakdown in hierarchy of fashion as art's inferior relation can be partly explained because 'since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has been fashion that has played a central role in popularising art' (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 1). For example, Paul Poiret, one of the earliest French couturiers (est. 1903) chose to work with artists such as Raoul Dufy, Henri Matisse, Léon Bakst, Paul Iribe, George Barbier and Georges Lepape (see Figures 14 to 16¹⁴) to create textile designs and illustrate his collections for promotional materials, drawing strong links to artistic modes of presentation and establishing a dialogue between high fashion and art that has not ceased¹⁵.

Further narrowing of the hierarchy between the two fields is reflected in the numerous national galleries worldwide hosting major fashion retrospectives and fashion events¹⁶, fashion designers displaying their boutiques as galleries¹⁷, and the commonplace collaborations now occurring between significant artists and designers¹⁸. A reciprocal partnership of alignment that benefits both parties with 'equal status' is now firmly in place in the twenty-first century (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 3).

A contemporary example of this alignment is the work of artist Helen Downie, who goes by the name Unskilled Worker. Downie's paintings have been used as textile designs and advertising campaigns for Alexander McQueen and most recently Gucci designer Alessandro Michele devoted an entire capsule collection to her paintings, using them on clothing, handbags, scarves and billboards in an international marketing campaign (Lupica 2017) (see Figures 17 and 18). Downie's paintings depict vividly detailed high fashion clothing, placing them in whimsical family portraits with modern signs and symbols of contemporary material culture. Downie's paintings have been elevated to rarefied commodities to be collected and exhibited, through the association with Gucci and a blurring of hierarchical lines between fashion and art.

¹⁴ Raoul Dufy, a French Fauvist painter, produced thousands of textile designs for fashion during his career and is a early example of an artist who embraced art and fashion textiles as dually dominant modes of expression.

¹⁵ Other noted examples include: Elsa Schiaparelli incorporating elements of Salvador Dali's work into her fashion in the 1930s; Jackson Pollock's paintings being used as background for fashion shoots in the 1950s; fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent incorporating the paintings of Piet Mondrian as textile designs in the 1960s; Vivienne Westwood drawing on contemporary art and Dadaism as she launched punk fashion in the 1970s. Designers such as Alexander McQueen and Jean Paul Gaultier have continually drawn from art and fashion to create forms which elucidate critical crossovers from both fields throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Geczy and Karaminas 2012).

¹⁶ For example, in Australia the National Gallery of Victoria staged a Viktor & Rolf exhibition in 2016, a Christian Dior retrospective in 2017 and a Vivienne Westwood exhibition in 2005 (nga.gov.au, retrieved 03/06/18). Internationally, just a few of the plethora of exhibitions include a Yves Saint Laurent exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1984; a Giorgio Armani retrospective at the Royal Academy in London in 2003, which was also installed at the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin; a Chanel exhibition at the Met museum in 2005; and a Versace retrospective at the V&A in London in 2003. Fashion designers staging catwalk-type events within art galleries are now ubiquitous. Examples include: Christian Dior's runway at the Musée Rodin at Paris Fashion Week 2017; Gucci using Florence's Palazzo Pitti (home to Renaissance masterpieces by Tintoretto and Caravaggio) for a fashion stage in 2017; Louis Vuitton using the Miho Museum in Kyoto, Japan, to present its 2017 collections. See: www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2003/oct/18/art.museums, retrieved 3/6/18.

¹⁷ Comme des Garçons founder Rei Kawakubo forged the concept of creating gallery-type spaces with minimalist, urban retail design since the 1980s. Designers such as Prada, Victoria Beckham and Celine have adopted this curated approach to retail presentation, hiring architects and artists to install spaces that create a unique experience for their customers. As online shopping has increased in the last decade, the fashion boutique has increasingly been interpreted as a gallery space for designers across all levels of the industry.

¹⁸ The last decade has seen a significant rise in high-end collaborations between fashion designers and artists. A few of note include Calvin Klein x Andy Warhol Foundation, Coach x Keith Haring, and Louis Vuitton x Jeff Koons. See: www.vogue.com/article/best-fashion-collaborations-of-2017, retrieved 3/6/18.

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Figure 17. Gucci and Unskilled Worker, *With Love. The Gucci Chronicles*. 2017. Figure 18. Gucci and Unskilled Worker, *With Love. The Gucci Chronicles*. 2017.

Fashion illustration and digital design

The intrinsic mediums of the contemporary textile designer include design albums (either on paper or increasingly in digital format), fabric swatches and fashion illustrations. The latter make possible a means for textile designers to communicate scale and positioning of motif in relation to the body and a sharper relationship to contemporary fashion trends than a swatch of fabric alone may be able to transmit. Fashion illustrations, presented as artworks, have become crucially important as final products of my project as they further bridge the divide between fashion and art, providing a broader visual narrative of the wearer, much like the *ukiyo-e* prints of Edo period Japan that depicted *kimono* print designs, which I discuss in detail in Chapter Two.

The depiction of clothing in art is another significant area of confluence identified by Geczy and Karaminas (2012) in *Fashion and Art*. Many significant artists have been fascinated by dress: Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbein and Jean Ingres are some examples among many (Blackman 2007). Regardless of whether historical, allegorical, mythological or religious examples are under discussion, ‘the history of dress or the study of clothes has no real substance other than in *images* of clothes, in which their visual reality truly lives, naturalised, as it were, by the persuasive eye of art’ (Hollander 1978, 454, original italics); however, these examples are not usually described as fashion illustrations, but as art. When does fashion illustration become art?

Au states in ‘The Future of Fashion Illustration’ that ‘critics believe that fashion illustrations and drawings are superficial products of a throw-away short-lived culture, or something that has no substantiated relevance to our lives, our aestheticism and awareness’ (2004, i). An exception to this, Au argues, is when an artist depicts fashion, such as Henri Matisse, Sonia Delauney, Alphonse Mucha, Gustav Klimt or Lorenzo

Mattotti for example. In these cases, fashion illustration becomes an inadequate term to describe clothing in art. Au describes the field as under-commented upon, as there is little critical appraisal in the differences between fashion illustrators of the twentieth century compared to artists who depicted clothing, other than that the two influenced each other.

Having taught Fashion Illustration at university for over five years, I can see that there is a significant difference between a fashion illustration required for the purposes of documenting a fashion look or sketching an outfit for a collection compared to a deeply considered impression of a fashion outfit and its embodied identity within an artwork. Au offers that artists and their work have 'given us a reliable record of realities, hopes and dreams in different centuries' (2004, 32) whereas a fashion illustration may only depict the details or mode of dress, without emotional characteristics. Illustrations created for high fashion advertorial campaigns can be seen as more significant; artists such as Andy Warhol, George Barbier, René Gruau and Erté (Romain de Tiroff) among them. These artists deliberately aligned themselves between the fields of fashion and art, indicating that it is largely in the positioning of the artist that indicates reception.

Cally Blackman (2007) in *100 Years of Fashion Illustration* asserts that the genre has only recently been reevaluated as a significant field in its own right and concedes that despite many important artists working in the realm of fashion illustration, it 'has often been dismissed as trivial ... falling between fine and commercial art' (Blackman 2007, 7). I believe that when a fashion/textile designer or illustrator engages in critical issues in society, they align themselves more closely with the field of art. By interpreting, narrating or subverting contemporary ideas, the artist/designer can provide visual information within a fashion illustration about the emotional nature of the wearer and the time period it is placed in. Issues of gender, ethnicity, culture, history, religion and any number of other important subjects can be broached within a depiction of the clothed body, so that a critical appraisal of the trivial can be transcended into consideration as a piece of art.

To assist in contextualising this idea, an ideal example is the work of Japanese artist Ikenaga Yasunari. Although often referred to as an illustrator, he labels himself a traditional artist and exhibits regularly, choosing not to work with any particular fashion designer. His portraits of women are dominated by the depiction of tonal floral-patterned clothing and bed linen in closely cropped poses which communicate a gentle, dreamy mindstate (see Figures 19 and 20). The models are distinctly modern, wearing contemporary clothing, hair and makeup, but his stylistic approach is drawn from traditional *nihonga* (Japanese-style painting) using traditional techniques and materials such as *sumi-ink* (soot ink) and mineral pigments on linen cloth (www.ikenaga-yasunari.com). A quiet contemplative quality resonates in Yasunari's work through an interplay of complexity and serenity; areas of detailed textile designs merge into delicate lines and empty space, characteristic of the Japanese aesthetic I study closely throughout this exegesis.

Yasanuri has positioned himself as an artist who uses textile designs to allow a reading of the emotional state of the wearer and depicts clothing to allow a reading of a contemporary time period. An art historical understanding of Japanese style painting is applied in his work, which re-invests the historical practice of *nihonga* with ongoing contemporary significance. In researching artists such as Yasunari and Downie, I am able to imagine an equivalent space for my own practice; one that draws on a contemporary fashion aesthetic and art historical subjects (in my case *ukiyo-e*), but delivers more than simply a depiction of the day's fashion.

Since beginning this thesis in 2012, I have made the transition from screen printing my intricate and graphic pencil drawn designs to using digital design and digital print, which has completely transformed my practice,¹⁹ allowing a merging of my painterly landscape, hand-drawn elements and graphic textile approach.

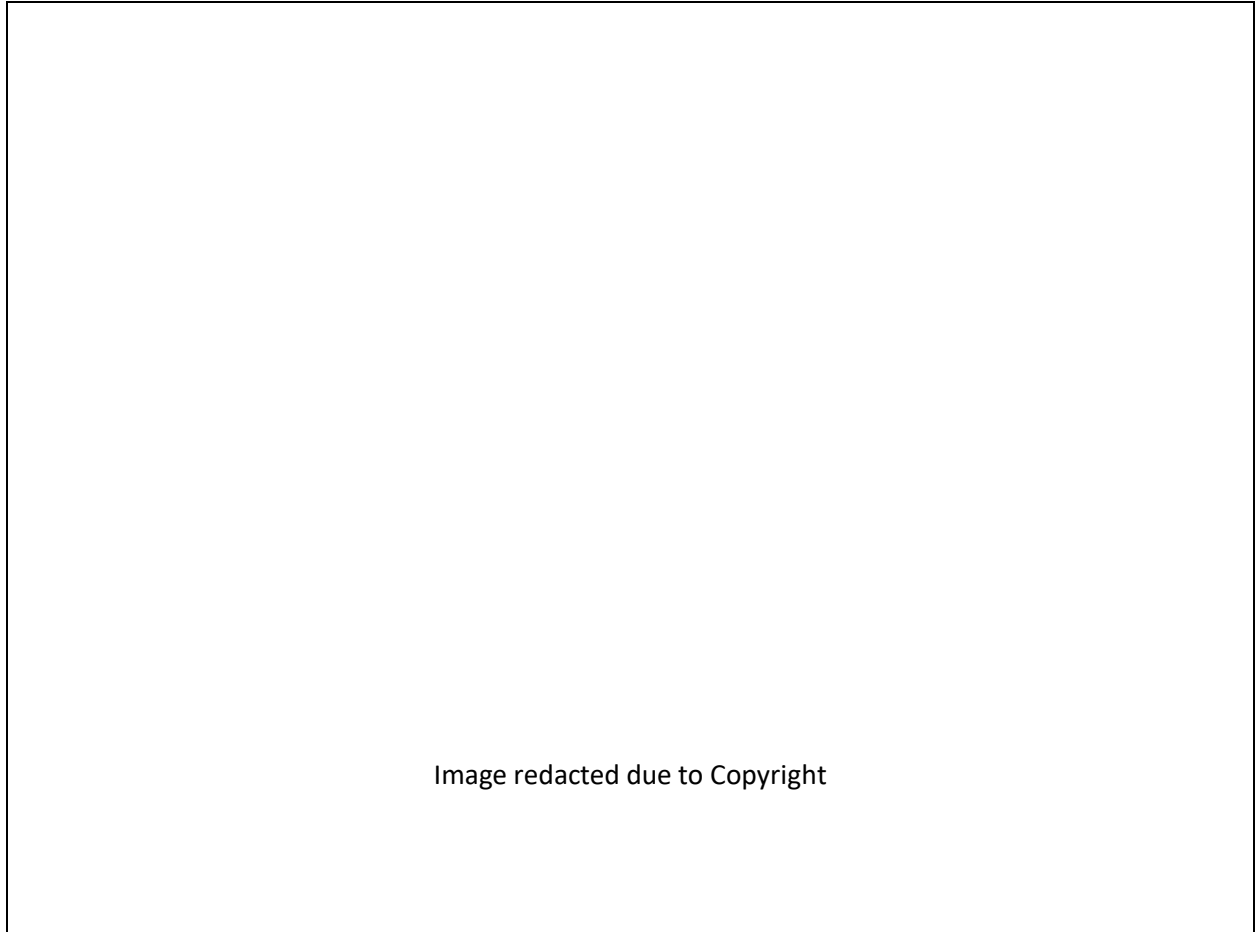


Figure 19. Ikenaga Yasunari, *Natsuko*. 2012. Figure 20. Ikenaga Yasunari, *Makiko*. 2010.

At first ambivalent about the computer-generated appearance of digital design²⁰, I have found this medium able to provide a means to explore a hand-worked quality intrinsic to the project, as I seek for my textiles and final illustrations to contain qualities of *wabi-sabi* (an imperfect, rustic, decaying beauty) and *yūgen* (subtly profound, mysterious grace) – what I once might have called an aura²¹. Set free from long hours of laborious repeat printing, complicated colourways and registration issues, I have been able

¹⁹ Due to technological advances in digital print for cloth, a higher quality product is now available (Tallon 2011). At the time of writing this exegesis, digital printing services for cloth are not available in Western Australia. I have sourced digital cloth printers in Sydney and U.S.A. for printing my textiles. Initially when making the transition to digital, I scanned my old screen printed stencils and used those as the original artwork, however I now create them deliberately for digital design.

²⁰ Digital printing has been linked to a lack of creativity and authenticity due to the ease in which any image can be scanned and applied to cloth in a very short space of time, compared to the handmade characteristics of screen printed cloth (Fogg 2006).

²¹ I discuss the definition of aura in Chapter 5 in relation to the textile designs of Akira Isogawa.

to develop extremely detailed artwork that can be scanned and manipulated, whilst retaining its painted, hand-worked pencil, charcoal, graphic or chalky quality. For the purposes of visual inquiry, I have engaged in linocutting, hand drawing, painting, photography and sketching from within the environment.

In defining the position of my practice in the entangled field of art and fashion, textiles and illustration, I do not see the disciplines as separate, but rather as interdisciplinary routes that inform each other, running parallel but criss-crossing continually. This research sits in a nexus of influences from each field, therefore an examination of printed textiles within contemporary fashion is considered in tandem with scholarly commentary on the history of Australian art and dress and with guidance of my own creative-led practice.

Practice as Research

In this project I have used knowledge gleaned from my studio practice to stimulate further questions arising from my use of traditional Japanese aesthetics in creating textile designs and illustrations. The method, therefore, has been deeply grounded in practice, with regular periods of theoretical consideration to inform and shape the project. With Japonism in Australian textile design as the central cord, I have looked to a variety of texts to tease out the threads of theory which are relevant to my research aims and studio inquiry objectives. This is an approach supported by many researchers – that ‘enquiry through practice is the methodology of practice-based-research’ (Gray and Malins 2004, 30).

I also draw on the methodology of artist/researcher Claire Humphries who observes:

I approached practice as a form of research where the affect and effects of creative process (including but not limited to its artefacts), are privileged as forms of thinking. Concepts are treated out of matter, doing gives rise to lines of thinking and questions emerge that suggest new possibilities for practice. (Humphries 2014, 61)

A variety of theoretical texts, within Japonism and tangential to it, have ruptured, reinforced or spurred new imaginings within my artworks, forging new pathways. As academic Lesley Duxbury suggests, ‘the exegetical text is developed in and through the art project as a working project in itself’ (Duxbury 2001, 32) and I have certainly taken this approach in my exegesis. Within my various cycles of making, exhibiting, reflecting, reading and writing, theory has become another tool, in a sense, within my design kit. Forms of dress adorned with Japanese style motifs are appraised through the language of fashion and dress history, art theory and semiotic readings of textile motifs.

I developed a Venn diagram to clearly visualise the overlaps and areas of influence in my research and practice (Figure 21), which has been useful in outlining the logical relationships between three triangulated areas of examination: Australian fashion and textile design; landscape traditions in Australian art; and Japanese *ukiyo-e* art and aesthetic philosophy. The double overlap (or fusion) between content in each sphere is just as important as the central triple overlap of content, which informs ‘Imaginary Aesthetic Territories’. The diagram has ensured that the entire realm of analysis is seen in a holistic way and most importantly that the idea of fusion of each area is considered equally.

The method I used to create the final body of works emerged slowly, developing with each phase of theoretical consideration and culminating in the final stages of the project. As new theories were grasped, apprehensions or convictions arose, which over time distilled into my thinking and drove my creative

outputs into new areas of experimentation. My aims have not been to provide a comprehensive analysis of theory around fashion, textile and print; the field is so broad that I have had to refer to scholarly literature in a necessarily selective way, keeping my practice and my reflection upon it as the central driving focus of the exegetical account.

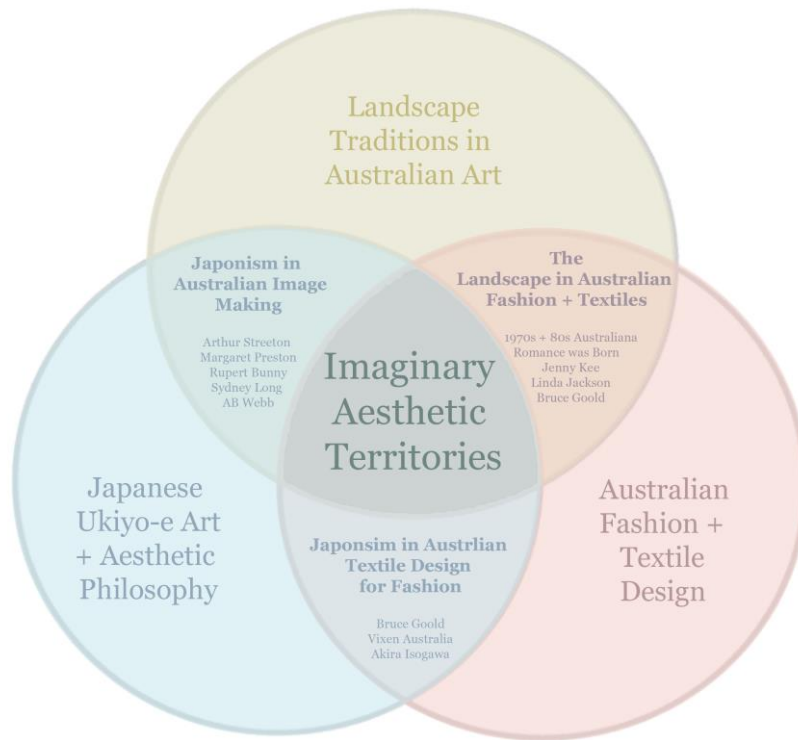


Figure 21. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Venn Diagram of Influences in Imaginary Aesthetic Territories Research*. 2018.

Chapter Overview

In this research I have engaged with the process of making several bodies of work that relate to specific chapters throughout the exegesis. Each chapter has enabled a chance to reflect on both what is revealed in the studio practice and what has been discerned from theoretical considerations. The question this research seeks – how has Japonism influenced contemporary Australian printed textile design and art – suggests that Australian textile design and art is a distinctive field able to be identified as peculiar from other nations. I therefore, begin in Chapter One by contextualising Australian design and why it is important to this project, focusing on literature which develops my engagement and understanding of the role of landscape in relationship to national cultural identity. I also examine the Australian fashion design identity, how it was formed, and the problems of Australiana. I discuss theories of hybridisation from scholars Peter Burke and Nikos Papastergiadis which are tangential but related to the discussion of orientalism. Hybridity theories focus on the ‘effects of multiple cultural attachments on identity or the process of cultural mixture’ (Papastergiadis 2005, 40) which reinforces a central idea of this project that cultural identity is not an inherent or essential attribute we are born with, rather it is imagined, manufactured, assembled and adopted.

Chapter Two considers traditional Japanese aesthetics which form a fundamental influence within and throughout the research. I analyse the aesthetic character of Japanese *ukiyo-e* (pictures of the floating world) of the Edo era (1603-1868) including the textile designs and motifs depicted within *ukiyo-e* such as *saraca* (patterned textiles) and investigate their philosophical and semiotic content. My approach is to illuminate qualities in these mediums which can find a translation into my own creative production, focusing on more than simply formal qualities such as spatial arrangements and flattened perspectives. I seek an understanding of the importance of symbolism in Japanese design and its history of providing a powerful narrative of identity for the textiles wearer.

Chapter Three traces the emergence of the use of Japonism in Australian design by firstly foregrounding Japonism within the broader story of its influence on Western Aesthetics in general. I analyse the reception of Japanese influence in Australia and identify the designers and artists who were most receptive. I also reference other contemporary art practices, from Australian landscape painting in particular, to consider the methods and outcomes of other historical and contemporary artists who have depicted an Australian Japonism, such as early Australian Impressionists Arthur Streeton and John Russell, the first early adoptees of aspects of Japonism. Also included are Australian modernists Margaret Preston and Thea Proctor, and contemporary artist/designers such as Bruce Goold and Georgia Chapman. In doing so, I introduce the modest yet important role that Japonism has played in assisting the formation of an Australian design identity.

Chapters Four and Five are case studies on the work of Australian designers Florence Broadhurst and Akira Isogawa respectively. Both have been engaged with Australian Japonism and each has provided me with inspiration for pivotal periods of creative production. The chapters are both linked to exhibitions/outcomes that occasioned key moments of creative inquiry, conceptual turning points and new ways of seeing based on reflection on creative-led practice and critical investigation into the designer's work. I examine cultural appropriation and orientalism in relation to Broadhurst's and my own work, tracing Australia's changing relationship with Japan post war and examine the introduction of the exotic into Australian design.

Chapter Five examines the work of Akira Isogawa and documents the important lessons and techniques I learned from him during the collaborative project we worked on in 2016 when I created printed textiles and illustrations for his Printemps Été (Spring/Summer) 2016/17 Resort Wear Collection. I examine the use of traditional Japanese aesthetics such as *wabi-sabi* (beauty of things imperfect) within his work and outline the Australian element in his Japanese-inspired designs to analyse the processes and implications of Australian Japonism in contemporary design.

Chapter Six brings together the culmination of research from consecutive cycles of studying, making, reflecting and imagining, and revisits key objectives and aims discussed throughout preceding chapters. I identify the triangulated areas of influence within the exegesis – namely, landscape traditions in Australian art, Australian fashion and textile design, and Japanese *ukiyo-e* art/aesthetic philosophy – and discuss key scholarship that has enabled the realisation of these areas to coalesce into a clear methodological and ideological framework for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'.

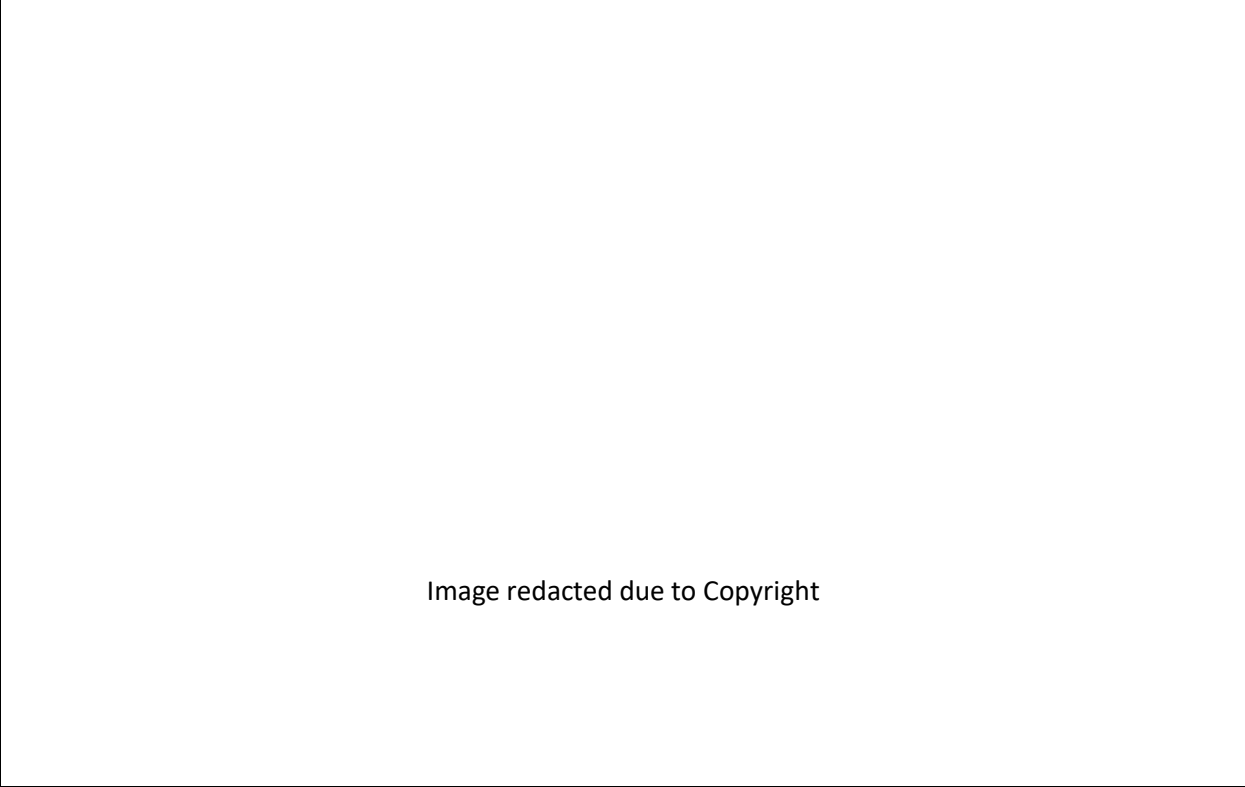
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Figure 22. Frederick McCubbin, *The Pioneer*. 1904.

Chapter One

Australian Fashion and Textile Design Identity – Landscape, Australiana and Hybridity

One of the objectives of this research is to create final works that clearly represent a cultural fusion with Japanese aesthetics whilst maintaining a recognisably Australian position of origin to update and replace previous stereotypes of Australiana. This term refers to the trend of typically Australian motifs that were popular in Australian fashion and material culture in the 1970s and 80s (Gray 2010). The first chapter of this exegesis therefore seeks to clarify the circumstances of the inquiry, contextualising what defines Australian fashion and textiles to set the terms of debate on how Japonism can be used in relation to them. I outline key frameworks of understanding required for commencing this project, building upon the personal background, fields of enquiry and modes of practice stated in the Introduction. I focus on Australian artists' and designers' preoccupation with the landscape, revealing how depictions of landscape, flowers, trees, animals, geographic elements and so on can be seen as symbols of cultural identity in contemporary Australia. I propose the important role of textiles and fashion in positioning or representing national identity in Australia and outline the scholarly demarcations of this subject.

Several challenges are also identified. Firstly the difficulty of making a definition at all, given the fluidity of a national identity that is perpetually being re-imagined (Maynard 2001). Secondly the ambivalence of designers in re-embracing coded national motifs (such as gum leaves, cockatoos, etc.) that can be perceived as kitsch Australiana. The third challenge I identify is an inversion of the second – that a lack of any distinctive identity can be perceived as globalised, plagiarised or lacking innovation. Theories by scholar Nikos Papastergiadis have assisted in proposing a system by which artists can position themselves to renegotiate formations of the culturally hybrid by envisioning a holistic universal approach. Through a discussion on hybridity, diversity and globalisation, I introduce the positive perception of the exotic within design as a means of visual pleasure and preservation of diversity to introduce possible modes of practice for the creation of cross-cultural forms that can transcend some of the difficulties outlined above.

Nation as Landscape

The pursuit of characterising an Australian identity has been the preoccupation, even obsession, of many artists, designers, writers, critics and historians throughout every generation (Willis 1993; Kaiser 2012; Craik 2009b). The conflation of Australian identity and nationalism with landscape art has been discussed at length by many scholars and writers Thomas 2017, Smith 2002; Riopelle et al. 2017; Willis 1993; Radford 2007; Broinowski 1992; Butel 1985); however, it is important to recognise that negotiating what it means to identify the art and design identity of a nation is complex, involving intersections of ethnicity, immigration, reconciliation, gender, class, religion and other subject positions which are outside the scope of this exegesis.

Whether in the arena of mainstream culture or scholarly literature, the depiction of the landscape has been a central theme in Australian high culture, an idea 'which few would dispute its central significance or attempt to counter its centrality' (Willis 1993, 61). That 'nation is a context and a site of ongoing formation' (Kaiser 2012, 54) and a site where an assemblage of identity can occur are also crucial factors to consider.

Defining nation is a highly contested topic within the backdrop of a globalised world where societies have become intensely multi-cultural and are 'persistently mutating' (Papastergiadis 2005, 62). The desire to express a sense of place or belonging in a world divided by the black border lines on a world map is one of the difficulties faced by artists interested in hybridity and identity because in modern society, artists, like all people, are highly mobile international citizens, moving across and between multiple geographies and nations.

The defining of nation in Australia has been predominantly confined to the large roughly asymmetrical geographical landmass of *Terra Australis*²² (Willis 1993, 15). In cultural studies terms, a nation

is not a thing or an essence that necessarily has a culture wholly distinct from other nations. Rather a nation is a context and a site of ongoing formation; one that does not always neatly coincide with one's ethnic or 'other' subject positions. (Kaiser 2012, 52)

This statement acknowledges that a space for new developments or depictions of national identity, particularly in relation to other cultural influences can occur within a defined territory. Subjective positions intersect in complex ways with embedded cultural discourses; individuals 'mix and match different elements to formulate temporary expressions about who they are ... or are becoming' (Kaiser 2012, 5).

The idea that national identity is manufactured and imagined through a combination of our environment and personal subjectivity is outlined by design scholar Anne-Marie Willis (1993) in *Illusions of Identity: The Art of Nation*. Willis takes an interdisciplinary approach to the consideration of visual arts, identity and culture in Australia, and explains in detail how high and low 'pop' culture, literature, and philosophy have shaped an Australian identity in the arts which is profoundly associated with landscape. Whilst exploring the question of how imagery constructs versions of national identity from many angles and viewpoints, Willis identifies 'landscape as nation' as the prime defining medium. 'Nation and otherness', including diversity and assimilation, are also identified as key idiosyncratic aspects of national character depicted through Australian material culture and arts (Willis 1993).

Director of the National Gallery of Australia Ron Radford (2007) refers to 'the great century' where the enduring mythology of landscape in Australian art²³ became firmly established between 1850-1950 (Radford 2007, 11), a period when landscape was the most artistically successful and most painted subject, reflecting both a fixation with nationalism and a search for identity. In this era of Australian art, artists such as Frederick McCubbin and Walter Withers created works that 'remain the most iconic and popular paintings in Australian culture' (Radford 2007, 23).

Whilst Radford's remarks are located from within Australia itself, when viewed from Europe a similar understanding takes place. In 2016 the National Gallery in London²⁴ held its first-ever exhibition of solely Australian painting, which comprised of the works of Tom Roberts, John Russell, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder. Titled *Australia's Impressionists* (2016) the exhibition's catalogue states, 'the story is framed by unmistakably Australian subjects and locations, a pre-occupation with light and colour, and in the context of Australian identity and nationhood' (Riopelle et al. 2016, back cover). These artists and

²² *Terra Australis* was the Latin name used for a hypothetical continent in the Southern Hemisphere since ancient times. See: Online Etymology Dictionary, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=terra%20australia&source=ds_search retrieved 28/10/15.

²³ Radford is referring to the European history of Australian art. Recent discoveries in Western Australia place Australian Aboriginal rock art as the oldest in the world, between 28,000 to 40,000 years old.

²⁴ The exhibition was organised by the National Gallery in London in collaboration with the Art Gallery of New South Wales and curated by Christopher Riopelle of the National Gallery London.

others in their circle such as Walter Withers and Frederick McCubbin adopted the European impressionist style and ethos of painting from nature *en plein air*, applying it to distinctively local subject matter that strove for an imagery of united values and symbols most often drawn from the natural environment (Thomas 2017,43). This recent example of an understanding viewed from outside of Australia reveals the persistent conflation of Australian art with its landscape.

Although new themes have of course developed in Australian art, examples of what represents the Australian nation in art such as those outlined above have resulted in a series of motifs and signifiers mythologised as signs of nation – the beach and the bush, idyllic summers, harsh light of the outback, sweeping gum trees and the determined hard-working larrikin being amongst them (Thomas 2017, 49).

It is helpful to look at two examples of nation as landscape art here, first a postmodern example and then a Heidelberg School landscape which has personal significance for me. The contemporary example can be seen in the work of Chinese-born Australian artist Guan Wei. Wei creates images that comment on many aspects of Australian history, including uncomfortable issues of border security, immigration, refugees, Aboriginal dispossession and other political discourses, however the vantage point to behold these issues is often grounded in depictions of landscape (see Figure 23). Wei has been labelled ‘an identity maker in Australian art’ (McGuire 2018) due to his postmodern visualisation of the Australian continent where symbolic Australian motifs such as parrots, kangaroos and surfers blend with a variety of Chinese Buddhist symbols and stylistic compositions and other universal signs to envisage his new identity as an Australian. He uses iconographical motifs from Australian maps and geographical locations to make what he calls ‘Australian art for an Australian audience’ (Wei, quoted in Guest 2013) albeit through his diasporic eyes. His work reinforces the significant role of Australian landscape motifs as a vantage point for making comment on Australian and Australasian issues regardless of nationality or cultural background. Wei seeks to depict his vision and understanding of his ‘new home’ (Guest 2013), indicating that the location of identity within landscape also has resonances for migrant communities within Australia.

The Heidelberg example is *The Pioneers* by Frederick McCubbin (1904) (Figure 22). I encountered the painting afresh whilst visiting the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne in January 2018. The very same painting, albeit a reproduction on a much smaller scale, but still grandly framed, hung on my family living room wall for my entire childhood. The gravity of its actual scale, mark marking, content and links to my childhood imagination and memories growing up in the Australian bush reinforced the crucial importance of landscape for the creative production for ‘Imaginary Aesthetic Territories’. Here were the key colours (withered fading greens; greys and damp browns), sensations (crackling eucalypt dryness and earthy decaying leaf litter; spiky branches, hostile but beautiful) and feelings (isolation; nostalgia; sense of time passing; peace and wonder) I hold in relation to the Australian landscape.

McCubbin intended the painting to be read across the panels. First, the pioneers begin with nothing but the natural environment, melancholy and hard work. Second, progress is indicated by fallen trees, a bush cottage and a small family. Third, much time has passed, a forgotten grave is found as a city is seen to emerge in the distance.

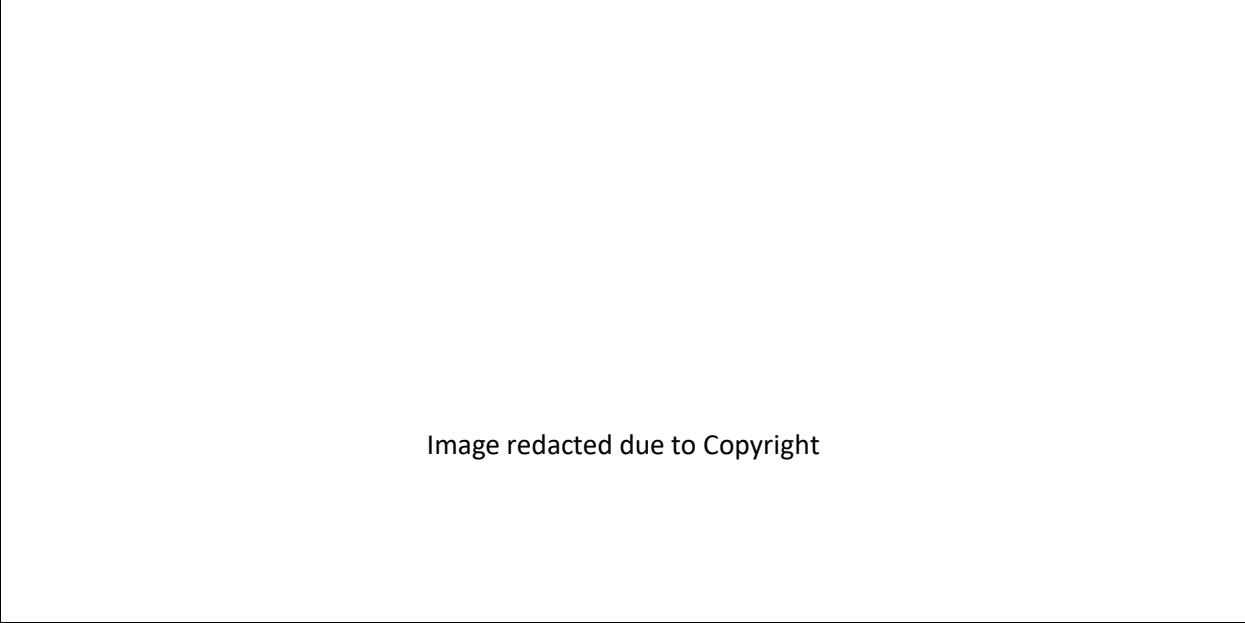


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Figure 23. Guan Wei, *A Mysterious Land No. 6*. 2007.

McCubbin's painting is as much about nationalism and mythologising the Australian pioneer as it is about the passing of time and progress. In a comparable way, when I return to my home in Tasmania, which once sat in dense isolated bushland, land has been cleared, towns have encroached and much time has passed. My home no longer has *The Pioneer* reproduction hanging on the wall, but a series of Japanese calendars has taken its place.

This exegesis commences with the idea that the construction of cultural identity by artists in Australia can be grounded in landscape and effectively depicted in landscape motifs; however, this foundation can be built upon, so that previous conceptions can be inflected, altered, challenged and enriched by an artist's subjectivity.

Textile Identity Through Motif

The way we adorn our bodies with fabrics, ornaments and pigments on clothing has been recognised in anthropological accounts of fashion as a key clue to understanding humanity and culture. The communicative role of fashion and textiles and the symbolic possibilities of motif in fashion inform social display with social status (class position, gender, ethnicity) acting as signifiers of identity (Craik 2009a, 11; Lurie 1981, 210).

On a global scale, Europe's various textile centres are recognised for their rich heritage and contemporary avant-garde approach, while both China and India have recognisable traditional textile patterns teamed with technological innovation, and Japan is recognised for its pursuit of innovative combinations of tradition and technology and the extreme cutting edge of fashion (Gale and Kaur 2002, 91). What is distinctive about Australian textiles and fashion?

My previous studies (MA in Art in 2012) traced the development of patterned motifs across time, nations and cultures, noting that most textile traditions are hybridised, cross-culturally diverse constructions.

Never static or geographically fixed, textiles have been a symbol of cultural exchange and interaction between cultures since the dawn of civilisation, literally circling the globe 'on our backs' in the form of clothing and a plethora of domestic and commercial items. The MA study revealed the intricate complexity of cross-culturalism in any nation's textile tradition to the point that it is almost a contradiction of terms to speak of a national textile style. However, national textile traditions are important to locate and define as they 'provide a perfect vehicle for establishing, expressing and maintaining cultural identity' (Gale and Kaur 2002, 92).

Fashion theorist Jennifer Craik's article 'Is Australian Fashion and Dress Distinctively Australian?' identifies 'the embodiment of national identity through surface markings of iconic representations' (Craik 2009b, 410) as one of the key areas that assist in defining a recognisably Australian fashion. Craik is referring to motifs which specifically belong to Australia only, most often expressed through representations found in the inhabitant landscape. Liz Williamson states:

Overwhelmingly, throughout the century, makers of textiles for fashion have shown a desire to represent Australia, its character and spirit in clothing designs that captured the essence of this country ... through design, colour, pattern, line, texture, image and shape. (Williamson 2010, 104)

From the days of the 'early colonial period the specificity of Australian flora and fauna were regarded as unique markers of place, with artists, colonists, and natural history collectors being fascinated with Australian difference' (Gray 2010, 151). This difference (as opposed to European landscapes or depictions of its flora and fauna) can be perceived as Australian exoticism. An early example is a 1860 sketch by colonial artist Nicholas Chevalier depicting a fancy dress costume featuring embroidered fern and lyrebird motifs. Decorative design courses between 1890 and 1910 stirred with national sentiment driven by Federation, encouraged the development of a national vernacular resulting in Australian motifs appearing with frequency in decorative design for furniture, jewellery, book design, posters and graphics, glass, porcelain, ceramics, carpets and architectural detail (Gray 2010). By the 1920s, motifs such as wattle, kangaroos, boomerangs and emus were used to add regional authenticity to insignias, coats of arms and certificates, adopted as signs of nation (Craik 2009b).

The specific history of Australia's *printed* textiles for fashion²⁵ is remarkably short in comparison with the centuries of European, Middle Eastern and South East Asian traditions of printing on cloth²⁶. The earliest examples are hand stencilled and batik decoration which became popular in the 1920s, encouraged by magazines such as *The Home*, whose 1929 cover shows an illustration of the stage and costume designer Doris Zinkeisen wearing a locally made batik printed with mimosa blossoms and lyrebirds (Maynard 2001); an early example of a textile hybrid of Australian exoticism (Figure 24).

²⁵ Aboriginal textiles made by spinning, looping, weaving and dyeing with plant fibres had been in existence since the Dreaming (Ryan and Healy 1998), however a painted or printed indigenous textile tradition did not emerge until the 1970s.

²⁶ Archaeological evidence and ancient literature have linked block-printed cotton textiles made in India to 2000 years ago. (Krill 2008). Examples of printed textiles from China can be dated to the second century, in Egypt from the fourth century (Meller and Elferris 2002), and the Incas of Peru were printing textiles in the sixteenth century. Resist-dyed cloth using stencils to print motifs was developed in South East Asia and spread to Japan by the fifteenth century (Jackson 1997). The Dutch East India Company bought printed cottons from India to England in the 1630s, and by the 1660s the British had developed their own printing methods (Crill 2008).

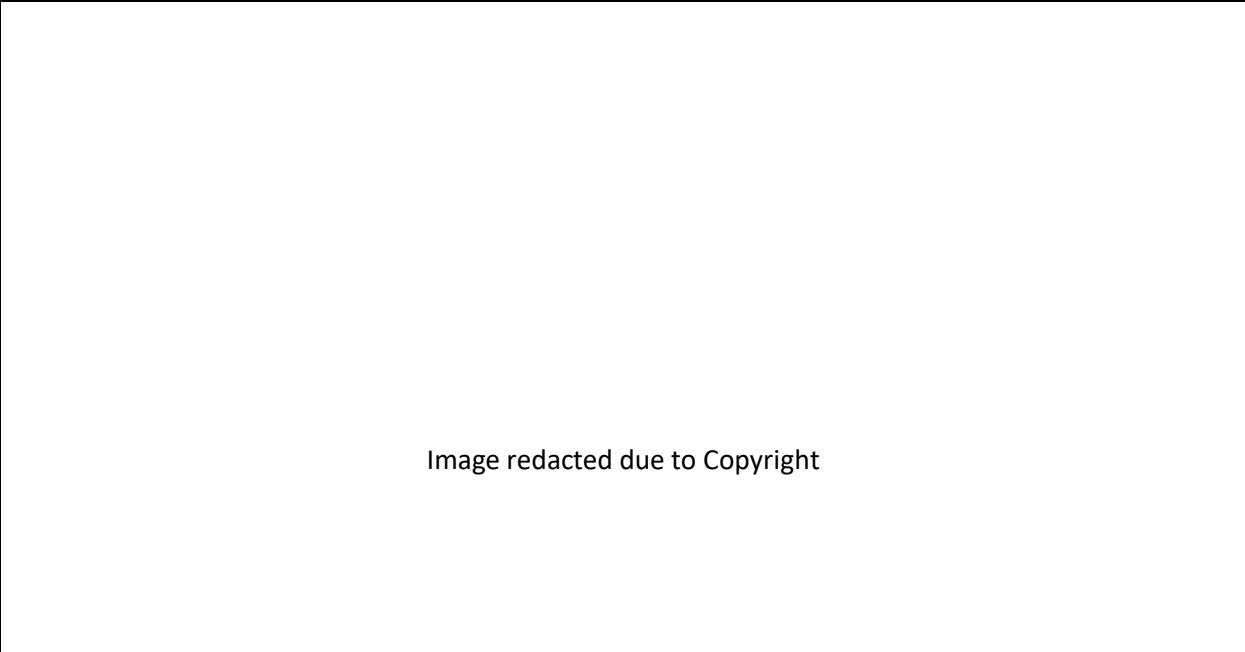


Image redacted due to Copyright

Figure 24. Doris Zinkeisen, *The Home Cover Illustration*. 1929.

Apart from a handful of artisans and small companies, practically all printed and patterned textiles prior to the 1970s were imported (Sanders 1992). Although very little has been written and recorded about Australian printed textiles prior to the 1960s, examples include textile designers Frances Burke, Alexandra Nan McKenzie, Douglas Annand, Mary Shackman, George Herbst, and Michael and Ella O'Connell who all made contributions to early printed fabrics where the use of Australian subject matter was prominent (Gray 2010; Maynard 2001). Motifs explored included gumnuts, koalas, eucalypt leaves, platypuses, emus, florals and blossoms.

In the 1940s the efforts of Claudio Alcorso's Silk and Textile Printers Pty Ltd in Sydney aimed at creating a taste for Australian designs, and commissioned forty-six prints from local artists including Donald Friend, Margaret Preston and Russell Drysdale. Since the 1920s, Margaret Preston had promoted the idea of the adoption of Aboriginal and Australian motifs in design as a means to express national identity, which was influential to generations of artists (Gray 2010).

Other key surface designers who utilised Australian imagery throughout the 1970, '80s and '90s were Tiwi Designs and Desert Designs who used Aboriginal motifs, Ken Done, Florence Broadhurst and Bruce Goold. Along with Preston, Broadhurst and Goold drew deliberately on Japanese stylistic elements throughout their careers and are therefore discussed in detail in coming chapters. From the 1990s onward, a diverse multiculturalism replaced the nationalist focus in surface design. This can be attributed to the increase in immigration since World War II introducing other nations' textile traditions into Australia and a general rise and acceptance of multiculturalism (English 2010). The decrease in Australian motifs can also be attributed to a reaction to the overload of Australiana imagery in fashion in the 1970s and '80s.

Australiana and Australian Fashion Identity

It is important to recognise that what might be termed a nation's dress as opposed to contemporary fashion are two different things. A nation's custom often adopts indigenous dress as national dress, however this has been controversial in Australia (Craik 2009b)²⁷. Due to pressures to define a national style for the purposes of cultural heritage and in marketing Australia to the world, fashion and dress are often conflated in an attempt to underpin the idea of Australian style. Whilst the depiction of Australian emblems have been identified as a means of locating key markers of place in Australian textile design, Robyn Healy (2010) provides commentary on the uncomfortable result of this practice for the state of Australian fashion. Under the sub-heading of 'Image problems' within a chapter in the *Berg Fashion Encyclopaedia*, Healy outlines how Australia's geographic isolation, globalisation and stereotypes of Australiana have negatively impacted on international conceptions of Australian fashion and textile design. She states, 'the stereotypical image of Australian dress ... is not a fashionable one' (Healy 2010, 174).

Healy refers to the retrospective view of the reappropriation of touristic motifs which dominated Australian fashion and textile design in the 1970s and '80s as passé by today's standards. The earlier period saw the rise and fall of the internationally consumed trend for Australianness in the form of motifs of Australian flowers and animals and Aboriginal motifs. This fashionable trend permeated all levels of Australian dress and affected international perceptions of Australian fashion (Gray 2010). Also in the *Berg Fashion Encyclopaedia* (2010), Sally Gray outlines how Australiana objects and design are often considered to be in poor taste, 'challeng[ing] Eurocentric notions of tastefulness' (Gray 2010, 151); however, the sense of cultural sentimentality they possess can be appreciated in an ironic way and seen as a type of urban kitsch, such as the tea towels (Figure 25) which are now collectors' items. Popular culture and fashion commentary have conflated Australiana with kitsch, resulting in a sense of bad taste attaching itself to this period of Australian style.

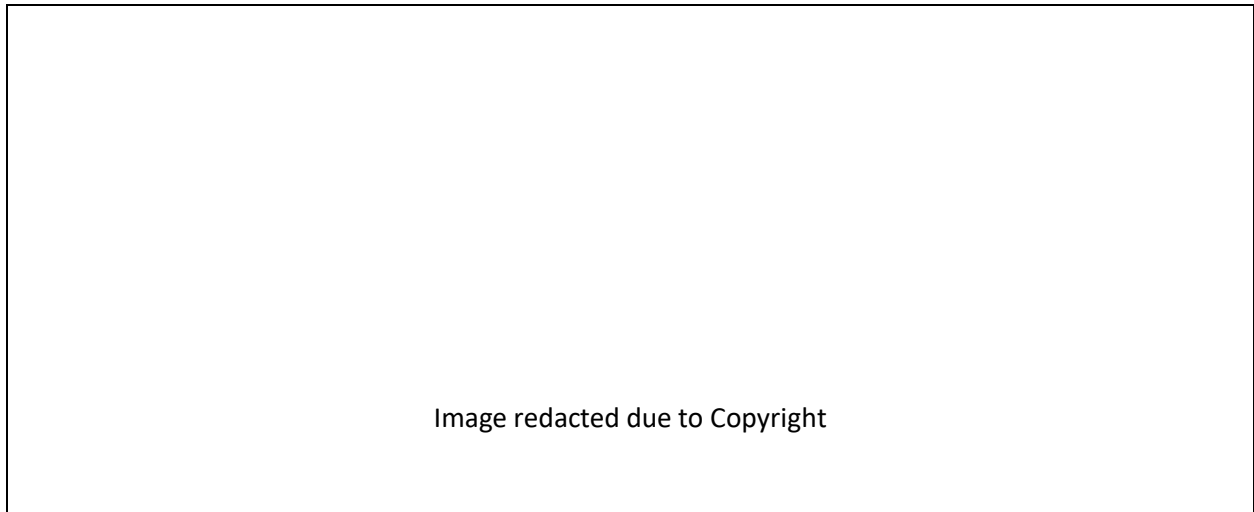
The trend emerged after the close of World War II when the rise of leisure tourism and the souvenir industry of mass production associated with it resulted in an over-supply of items such as tea towels, ash trays and ornaments circulating in Australia in the 1940s and '50s. These items were often produced offshore in China and were characterised as cheap, kitsch, quirky and 'tacky' (Blackwood 2014). That Australians perceived their own culture as subordinate was addressed by A.A. Phillips in the article 'The Cultural Cringe' (1950), where he implored the nation to cease the automatic depreciation of all things Australian and recognise our strength and distinction in arts and literature. Phillips argued for a sense of pride in Australian difference, instead of a notion of inferiority to Europe.²⁸

In the realm of fashion, an increase in chain and department store fashion in the early 1970s spawned a reactionary desire for the 'authentic' and handcrafted garments that communicated a nostalgia for older clothing styles, and links with 'primitive' cultures were desired to counterbalance the supposed 'in-authenticity' of mainstream fashion (Maynard 1999, 179). This quest for authenticity emerged as Gough Whitlam's government injected money and resources into cultural programs designed to promote the branding of Australian cultural identity in the arts, both domestically and internationally, setting in motion

²⁷ Post the 1970s and '80s Australiana trend, the use of Aboriginal motifs by non-indigenous designers to proclaim national identity was criticized as inauthentic and plagiarised (Maynard, 2001).

²⁸ The term 'cultural cringe' is still used to signify the embarrassment or lack of faith of Australians in their own material culture (Blackwood 2014).

a period of intense 'hyper-nationalism' (Willis, quoted in Gray 2010, 151) and innovation in fashion and art.



Figures 25, 26 and 27. Unknown artist, Australiana printed tea towels. Circa 1950s, '60s and '70s.

The two defining designer/artists of the Australiana era of fashion in the 1970s and 80s were Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson (see Figures 28 to 30). Both expressed the desire to produce distinctively Australian clothing and textiles and as creative partners produced inventive clothing which deliberately merged art, fashion and kitsch. Their approach 'like aesthetic dress ... signalled to the marketplace a singular sense of being responsive to multifarious influences, and therefore in a sense [was] beyond fashion' (Maynard 1999, 181). Designs were bold, extravagant and completely unselfconscious, aimed at demonstrating 'a new level of Australian confidence and pride' (Craik 2009b, 439) devoid of notions of Phillips' 1950s cultural cringe, instead 'reveal[ing] a growing sense of patriotic pride in celebrating images that had previously been childish, insipid and tacky' (English 2010, 85). Jackson and Kee drew on Australian motifs predominantly, such as kookaburras, waratah flowers, the Sydney Opera House and Aboriginal motifs, merging them with exotic decorativeness derived from African, Japanese and New Guinean arts, establishing an iconography that embraced popular forms of Australian representation and a multicultural sensibility.

[The] repertoire of the kitsch was re-examined in the 1970s in an era that we call the "postmodern turn": a moment that around the world saw a blurring of the boundaries between high and low art forms, and a re-evaluation in general of populist and commercial art. (Blackwood 2014)

International media, highlighted by a pregnant Diana, Princess of Wales wearing a Jenny Kee koala knitted jumper in 1983 at an English polo match (Gray 2010, 155) and Kee's opal textile designs appearing in Karl Lagerfeld's Chanel 1983 Spring/Summer prêt-à-porter collection promoted the trend to the world (Figures 26 to 28). Kee and Jackson's approach to clothing as an artform resulted in an exhibition at the Australian National Gallery in 1985, placing their work in the realm of the museum collection and firmly established the duo as significant cultural producers of the period.

Curator of fashion and dress at Sydney's Powerhouse Museum Glynis Jones says Kee was

the first to envision a really local fashion and one that wasn't hokey. It was a sophisticated vision of the Australian environment – the cultural and natural environment. Gough was in power and there was that nurturing of creativity and a blooming of the national identity. And she explored that through dress. (Jones, quoted in Traill-Nash 2013, n.p.)

Throughout these two decades, the national fixation of fashion designers to locate visual connections with the land, vernacular icons, a 'bush aesthetic', appropriated Aboriginal motifs and touristic symbols reflected the fascination for difference and illustrates the 'periodic obsession with defining national identity' (Craik 2009b, 411) through surface design. The era is also notable for establishing a counterpoint to European modes in a break away from 'the staid respectability of an approach to Australian fashion which was in awe and imitation of Paris' (Gray 2012, 18-19), marketing Australia within an international fashion system for the first time.

The trend had assisted in imprinting on the world stage the irreverent humour and relaxed approach associated with Australian design, but after almost two decades of intense popularity, the late 1980s saw the Australiana trend reach saturation point. A wide variety of products of varying quality flooded the market to coincide with Australia's bicentenary celebrations of 1988. Negative comments in fashion magazines such as *Mode* (1984) linking Australian fashion to kitsch souvenir tea towels signalled the beginning of the trend's demise. The cultural cringe had returned.

The enthusiastic embrace of Australiana was deemed kitsch by the new fashion generation of the late 1980s and 1990s who wanted to be seen as international and not Australian (Gray 2012). In the period between 1988 and the first Australia Fashion Week (AFW) launched in 1996²⁹ in Sydney, Australian designers presented collections that reacted against the exuberance of Australiana, favouring low-key, neutral fashions derivative of European designers which was, in turn, heavily scrutinised and criticised by international media (Gray 2010; Whitfield 2007 Smith 2010)³⁰.

Well-known British journalist Marion Hume, who was editor of Australian *Vogue* at the time of the first AFW, condemned Australian designers for a lack of ideas and the plagiarised nature of collections which seemed to merely regurgitate international nondescript styles popular at the time (Healy 2010). The period is characterised by a sense of ambivalence for Australian designers, where an urge to be perceived as international and engage in the global fashion marketplace clashed with federal and state programs that urged designers to be 'original' (Whitfield 2007, 172; Maynard 2010).

The pervasive attachment of kitsch to Australian fashion and textiles was very difficult for designers to shake off. When some designers featured elements of Australiana in the 2000 Australia Fashion Week collections in celebration of Sydney hosting the Olympics³¹, critics posited that 'the question was whether or not the Australian public is ready to wear such brazenly national emblems again. Put simply, would you?' (Honour, quoted in Craik 2009b, 430-31). Margaret Maynard, a significant voice in Australian

²⁹ Australian fashion, as an important highly visible contributor to culture, economy, and as a symbol of prestige, was under pressure to join the mechanism for participation in a globally recognised fashion culture by launching its own Fashion Week from 1996 onwards. The part government-financed AFW was a 'renewed effort to promote original Australian design' (Whitfield 2010, 172) and to export Australia's sense of individual fashion on an International scale (Whitfield 2010).

³⁰ The exception being Akira Isogawa who launched his debut collection in 1996 at AFW and was hailed as the only designer doing something different in Australian design in the mid-90s (Healy 2010). Zimmermann and Collette Dinnigan were also given some merit (Whitfield 2010). The work of Akira Isogawa is examined in Chapter Five.

³¹ Mambo, Morrissey, Jenny Kee and Lisa Ho were designers of the outfits for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games opening ceremony (Craik 2009b, 436).

fashion and design, remarked on the fears and misgivings that contemporary designers had about the use of Australiana symbols:

At the start of the millenium we still struggle to find symbols that aptly convey to the rest of the world a sense of our own difference in design. (Maynard 2001, 66)

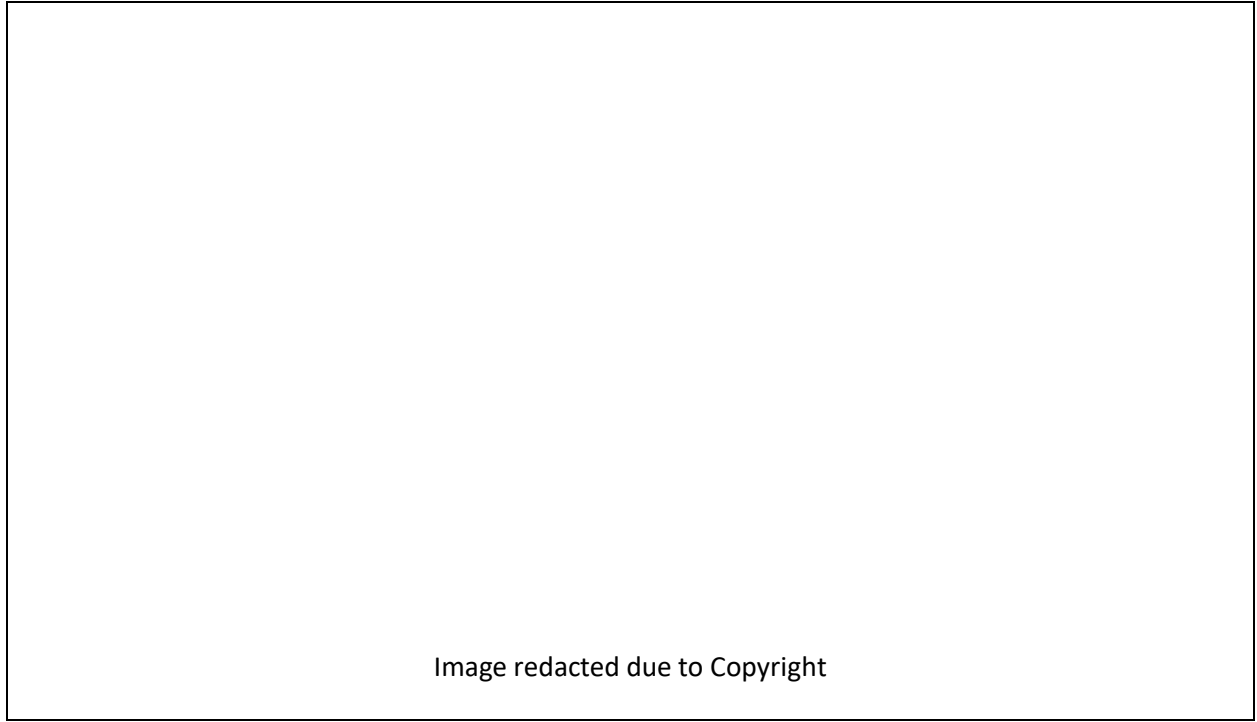


Figure 29. Linda Jackson, *Ochre Hand-Painted Garments*. Circa 1980.

Figure 30. Linda Jackson, *Rainbow Hand-Painted Dresses*. Circa 1980.

Australiana motifs are not the only means by which Australian fashion and dress has been characterised within international markets. Mythologies of the outback bushman's attire of akubra, khakis and R.M. Williams boots has also occupied a central perception, reflecting the practical, rugged and casual legacy of Australia's first settlers encountering the bush. Also the outdoorsy image of freedom, sunshine, and beachlife characterised by boardshorts, speedos and thongs is another dominant stereotype of national Australian dress and fashion (Craik 2009b). It is interesting to note that these examples noted above and the use of flora and fauna motifs are all related to our body-space relationship with the landscape, namely, the way we perceive, interact, enjoy and work within the Australian landscape.

Beginning in the 1990s, a more nuanced approach to the use of Australian symbols developed. For the survey exhibition *Australian Contemporary Textiles* (Powerhouse Museum, 1991), Jennifer Sanders states in the catalogue:

The legacy of the use of Australian flora as a design source is clearly illustrated in many of the works although interpretation and rendering varies greatly. With their graphic shapes, Australian plants and flowers lend themselves to two-dimensional design. However, the evidence of other influences, including South East Asian and Japanese textile traditions, is indicative of the move away from European textile traditions. (Sanders 1991 n.p.)

Sanders recognised what was to become a vital component of Australian fashion and textiles in years to come – the blending of Australian motifs with stylistic influences from other countries which assisted in building a design identity which was intensely multicultural.

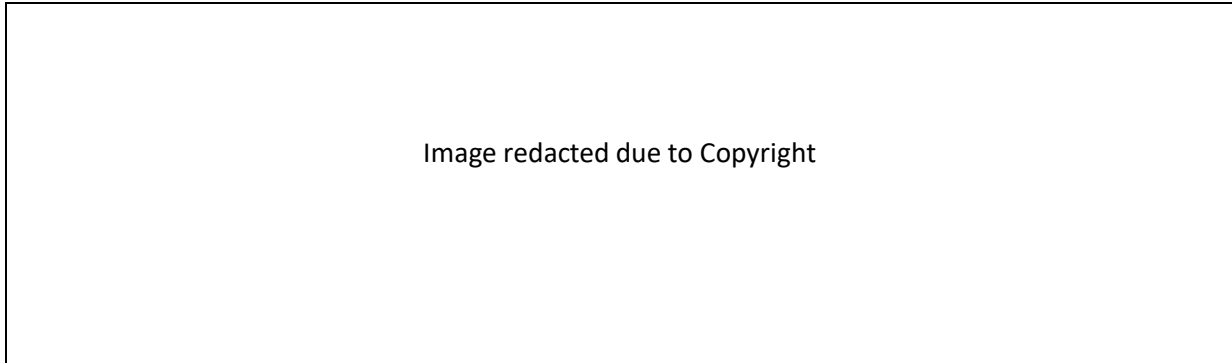


Figure 31. Diana, Princess of Wales wearing a Jenny Kee knit in 1984 at an English polo match. Figure 32. Jenny Kee, *Black opal print*. Featured in Karl Lagerfeld's 1983 Chanel collection.

A retrospective view of the way in which designers such as Kee and Jackson merged local cultural signifiers with foreign elements reveals the way in which the 'antipodean exotic' (Gray 2010, 154) was marketed outside of Australia to promote a sense of uniqueness and difference. Putting aside the perceived 'cultural cringe', Robyn Healy notes that 'Australia's laid back, casual style of living ... mixed with an inherent larrikinism' (Healy 2010, 174) offers exciting design possibilities uninhibited by traditional clothing protocols.

In the 2010s, twenty-five years after *Australiana* had become unfavourable and 'unsophisticated' (Craik 2009b, 431), a new re-packaged version has appeared, again entwined with Jenny Kee. Kee relaunched her brand in 2012 with a re-contextualised version of her '80s prints and themes at AFW in Sydney (Figure 33), which received positive reactions from fashion commentators. The new success can be attributed to the calibre of the print design compositions and avant-garde styling coinciding with the international 'print on print'³² trend present in international fashion at the time and also in recognition of Kee's lifetime commitment to *Australiana*³³.

At Melbourne Fashion Festival in 2015, Romance Was Born presented *Cooee Couture* (Figures 34 and 35), a collection inspired by a plethora of Australian icons, including collaborations and influence from Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson's past collections of print designs. Romance Was Born have fused multifarious cultural and pop culture stylistic elements in each new collection since their inception in 2005; however, specific Australian symbols such as cockatoos, maps, waratah flowers and Aboriginal-style prints have appeared in their 2015, 2016 and 2017 collections. *Cooee Couture* drew entirely from Australian symbols,

³² Print on print has been a popular trend in international high fashion for over a decade. It is characterised by the wearing of clashing and complimentary print designs in one outfit, as seen in collections by Mary Katrantzou, Kenzo, Etro, Gucci and others.

³³ Kee had been described as a design icon for her contribution to Australian design (Gray 2010). Her work has been exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australian National Gallery, London's Victoria & Albert Museum, the Marimura Museum in Tokyo and Sydney's Powerhouse Museum. The Powerhouse Museum has an extensive archive, highlighting decades of Kee's design career. In June 2013 Kee was awarded The Australian Fashion Laureate by the New South Wales government and IMG Fashion, which recognises outstanding creative or intellectual achievement in the Australian fashion industry (jennykee.com, retrieved 6/3/18).

using original 1980s prints by Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson, revaluing and re-packaging them for a new audience.

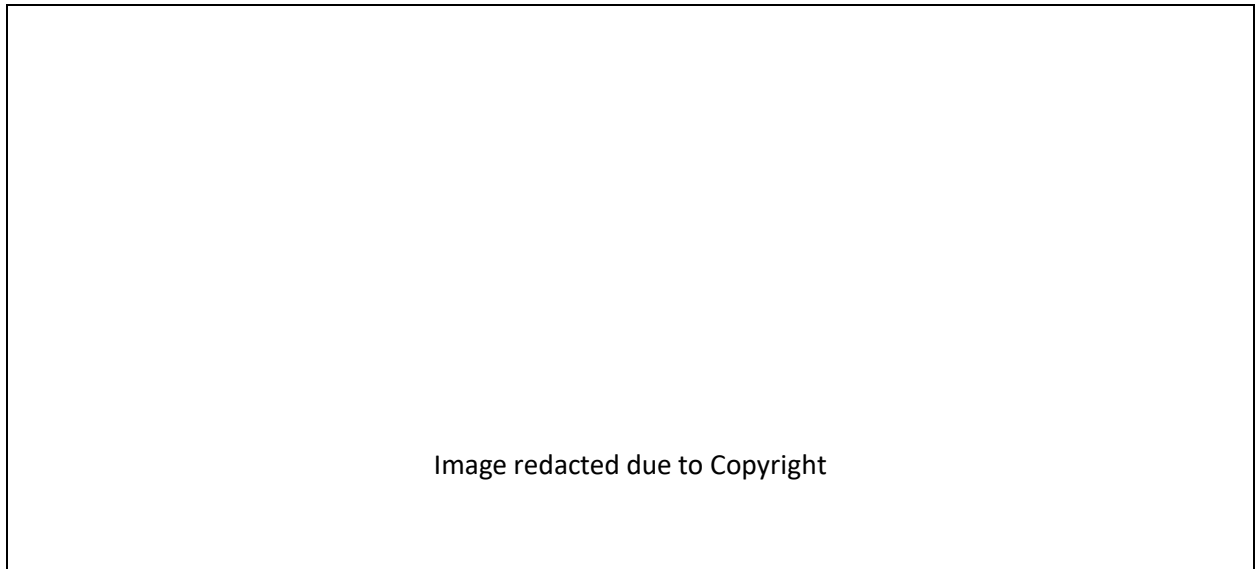
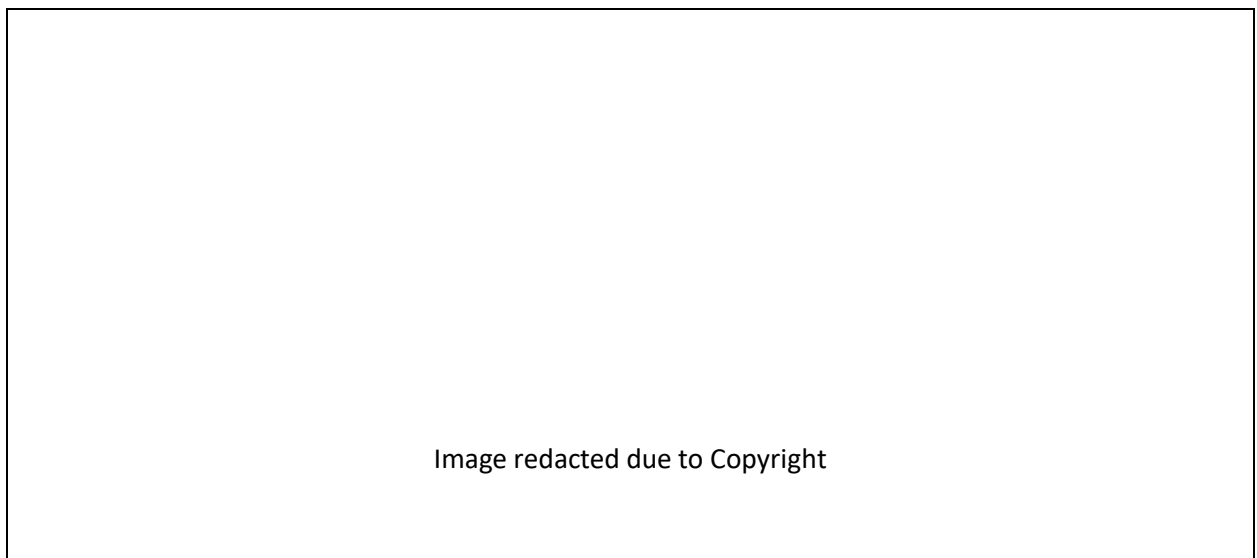


Figure 33. Jenny Kee, *Art of the Scarf Retrospective*. 2012.

Journalists have been quick to announce another wave of Australiana (Byrne 2016). Gemma Blackwood, Lecturer in Communication Studies at Charles Darwin University, has tracked the re-emergence of the trend, finding that the reference points of the new resurrection in the mid 2010s are still drawn from the 1970s and 80s; gum leaves, vegemite jars, iced vovos, cockatoos and kangaroo motifs and others are appearing in a broad range of mediums in high art, fashion, music, television programmes and graphic design (Blackwood 2014). She states:



Figures 34 and 35. *Romance Was Born. Cooe Couture Salon Collection*. 2017. Presented in the Art Gallery NSW.

The questioning of values and norms of Australian identity is ever-present. Like its appearance in the late 1970s and 1980s, its revival seems to be often linked to the desire to re-appraise and make sense of Australian identity and history. The inter-generational context of this new trend is manifest: it is no coincidence that a lot of these new artists are the children of the 1970s and 1980s, raised in the divisive “Celebrate ‘88” moment ... fetishizing the old everyday materiality (Chiko Rolls, surf-boards, old cricket songs, etc) and through this act illustrating key differences from one era to our own. (Blackwood 2014)

A tentative interest in a contemporary Australiana is in evidence, albeit in a celebratory, ironic sense. Although it appears that some designers have formed new, positive and more sophisticated approaches, others are a tongue-in-cheek observation of the use and associations of Australiana items as kitsch and irreverent. This reflects that the questioning of values in depictions of identity that were enmeshed in the psyche of past generations has passed onto this one. I remember the saturation of Australiana in popular culture as a child in the early '80s and the fever pitch nationalism when taking a road trip from Tasmania to Brisbane for *Expo '88*. I clearly recall the plummeting reaction to the trend once it was deemed spent in the early 1990s, so I am indeed one of the ‘children of the 70s’ that Blackwood mentions, carrying the inter-generational memory of its rise and fall. Whether this re-emergence is just nostalgia, a cyclical phenomenon, or progressive commentary remains to be seen. Contemporary forms of Australiana suggest that new and competing versions are emerging which are both a nod to the past and an attempt to reposition an Australian voice for changing contextual circumstances. Given the consistent historical fascination by artists and designers, including myself, to investigate themes of national identity, it is likely that this and successive generations will continue to seek out ways of depicting Australia in fashion which is both a reflection of the contemporary *zeitgeist* of the times and a means to position Australia in a global market.

Hybridity, Diversity and Globalisation

International trends are cyclical styles that are often adopted on a global level and do not appear to emanate from any specific culture or cannot be assigned to an identifiable culture. For example, the trend for a skirt length or jacket style in a particular season or the trend for a geometric floral could emanate from any fashion centre. Unmistakably international or ‘global’ (Craik 2009b, 411) styles include those that appeal to a wide market – wardrobe staples (jeans, t-shirts, plain basics) and classic tailoring, for example, which appear neutral or devoid of specific cultural resonances (Kaiser 2012). Increasingly, it is also being recognised as problematic to assign culturally specific styles (such as Japanese-style prints) to any specific centre as the contemporary fashion industry in both its means of imagination and production is completely global (McNeil 2010).

In *Fashion* (2010), one of the first major comprehensive surveys of Australian fashion and textile design since the 1980s, Mitchell Oakley Smith describes Australian designers’ approach to design as a ‘cultural mish-mash’, noting that the ‘close and complementing combination of European and Eastern cultures and influences uniquely combined with our own Indigenous heritage’ (Oakley Smith 2010, xi) provide a unique style and design viewpoint characterised by multiculturalism and diversity. Oakley Smith’s overview of designers reflects the extent to which Australian designers have looked predominantly elsewhere for inspiration since the Australiana phase drawing from international trends and Asian lexicons of ornament. While researching the book, Oakley Smith acknowledges that ‘it seems there remains a cultural cringe’ (Oakley Smith 2010, viii) related to perceptions of antipodean fashion, indicating a lingering lack of faith in national fashion design identity at the time.

In Oakley Smith's portrait of 70 leading Australian designers in 2010, each designer was represented by 5-7 colour images. By systematically analysing these images, I found that only one of the designers drew on Australian themes in surface or print design: Hotel Bondi Swim used Australian-themed beach prints with kangaroos and surfboards. Romance Was Born used a map of Australia as a prop in the photoshoot background (however, the label later utilised Australian motifs in their 2015 collections as previously outlined). Multicultural representations included Japanese-style prints by Akira Isogawa and Material By Product; Japanese, Indian and Pacific culture styles were adopted by Easton Pearson; Indonesian Batik style was recognisable in Scanlan Theodore. Fused (global-cross-cultural) styles were evident in vintage florals by Leona Edmiston and tropical exotic style by Flamingo Sands. Prints from a range of other designers were indistinct to any culture and therefore deemed international or global in style: stripe, traditional floral all-over patterns, textural or abstract florals, geometric and geometric florals or simply plain fabric were all ubiquitous. Although this book cannot possibly be exhaustive or fully representative of the entire span of Australian fashion and its surface design content, it does provide insight into the use of specific cultural motifs in fashion design at that period of time.

Robyn Healy identified globalisation as a contributor towards 'image problems' for Australian designers: 'It has been crucial, within a global marketplace, for the continual growth and sustainability of Australian design to build up a marketing system ... to disseminate an image of Australian design as fashionable' (Healy 2010, 174-75). The favouring of international (neutral) chic, although desirable as a means to appeal to a wide global market, has contributed to another problem for Australian designers – a perception of bland globalised design indistinct from anywhere else in the world. The risk of losing a uniquely Australian identity altogether, replaced by a bland homogenised and globalised blur through the processes of hybridisation, could leave Australian designers invisible or unable to be distinguished on a global stage (Busch 2006). Hannah Busch, a design thinker and curator, actively pursues a vision for Australian design to be not just recognised, but highly celebrated on an international level. In her essay 'Designing Our Identity' which accompanied the *Smart Works: Design and the Handmade* exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney in 2006, Busch calls for a new approach to Australian design which focuses on strengths rather than weaknesses. She outlines how Australia as a youthful nation is grappling to determine where it fits in a global environment and that our design industry will be 'particularly susceptible to globalisation' (Busch n.d.).

To counteract the 'banality found in the international creative scene' (2006), Busch argues that designers need to work harder at defining an Australian design identity by focusing on our cultural points of difference:

The stories of production, the source of the materials, the history and narratives behind a product's designers and development are as important to our design identity as the tangible qualities. Of course, it is never going to be easy, if at all possible, to illustrate the essence of Australian design in one paragraph. The beauty of Australia and our designers is our eclectic background, our varying cultures, our diverse landscape. Our design identity should be equally diverse and fluid. (Busch 2006)

I agree with Busch in that Australian design and Australian fashion design do not appear to have a strong visibly definable contemporary identity. The diversity and pluralism of multiple cultures and approaches appear to dissolve and outweigh designer interest in preserving aspects of Australian difference. Does it matter? Does Australia (or any country for that matter) need to be distinct? National and state initiatives

continue to support the idea of promoting an Australian style (Craik 2009b), but it largely now comes down to subjective positions. If individual designers deem national identity as significant, such as *Romance Was Born* and *Hotel Bondi Swim*, then that is acceptable in the same way that it is acceptable for Australian label Easton Pearson to create clothing with Indian, Pacific or Japanese stylistic elements.

The encroachment of bland globalisation and erosion of distinctive diversity in design was identified and commented upon in 1955 by Victor Segalen in *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity* when he proposed that exoticism³⁴ could 'protect contemporary life from the relentless banality wrought by the transformation of capitalism' (Harootunian 2002, vii). Segalen's essay was an early consideration of colonialism and alterity, and the processes of contact between cultures. He recognised the ontological value in exoticism, seeing it as a way to preserve that which he saw to be humanity's most precious possession; its diversity. He defined exoticism by the sensation and charm of difference and its ability to instil visual pleasure, to 'revitalise and beautify everything' (Segalen 2002, 19). Segalen died before his essay was complete; however, it was published in 2002 and recent attention to Segalen in a range of fields, including post-modern sociology, post-colonialism, literary criticism and anthropology, indicates his role as a theorist is of contemporary relevance (Forsdick 2011). I have found his theories useful, particularly in relation to my final chapter on creative practice, where I discuss them again.

Orientalism has helped designers to understand the need to avoid essentialising cultures; however, what is helpful in Segalen's essay is the consideration of how to use the visual pleasure of the decorative to preserve aspects of diversity and not lose them altogether. This idea is evident when considering Jenny Kee's approach in the 1970s and '80s where 'exoticism in her work was evident ... through ethnic pastiche' (English 2010, 87); a purposeful seeking of the unique in Australian symbols which teased out the colours, motifs and patterns that represented a distinctly Australian sensibility, constructed into new forms and conserved through design. In this sense, Kee has been extremely influential to my practice, not necessarily in terms of what she produced, but in her creative thinking.

The contradictory forces of desiring to depict the diversity of fused cultures even as they seem to be blended into sameness suggests that the consequences of cultural globalisation could result in either homogenisation or, its opposite, heterogenisation. This indicates that the Western desire to depict aspects of the exotic as a method of preserving diversity could do the complete opposite – blurring cultural interpretations into an indistinct mass. This theory presents uncomfortable contradictions for the artist interested in 'other' cultures if in fact that very interest or yearning for the cultural 'other' accelerates the erosion of world cultures through the process of globalisation (P. Burke 2009).

Anthropologist Johnathan Friedman asserts that identity of a culture can be mapped within territorial boundaries and defined within a 'place' as distinct from 'another place' (Friedman, quoted in Papastergiadis 2005, 50). In this way, cultural identity is seen to be deeply fixed in landscape and geography. Friedman argues that once the cultural producer (artist/designer/writer, for example) drifts outside those borders, the resulting new hybrid creations are paradoxically 'lacking authenticity' and part of the force that is 'attacking traditional and national cultures' (Friedman, quoted in Papastergiadis 2005, 50). This problematic narrative leaves no space for the negotiation of cultural difference or interaction, and this narrow view would be at the expense of a wide variety of cultural forms and result in the possibility of whole societies being fixed and atrophying, unable to flourish.

³⁴ Scholar Alden Jones defines exoticism in art and literature as the representation of one culture for consumption by another. (Oshinsky 2004). Exoticism is not a movement necessarily associated with a particular time period or culture (such as orientalism). Exoticism is often linked with fantasies of opulence and may take the form of primitivism or ethnocentrism.

These paradoxical and contradictory forces are difficult to navigate when attempting to locate a position for art practice. Professor Nikos Papastergiadis calls for an urgency in developing a new model for understanding the effects and processes inherent to hybridity. In 'Hybridity and Ambivalence: Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture' (2005) he contends that scholars have not provided a philosophical framework for artists to organise their ideas and make sense of their experiences and desires, particularly for diasporic and indigenous artists. An alternative to either fixity or mobility in contemporary culture needs to be defined that allows creative producers to reference instances of cultural alterity. As 'artists were carefully and imaginatively working with the complex symbols that circulate in everyday life, developing new ways to combine traditional and contemporary media, and teasing out the survival of cultural ideas in alien contexts' (Papastergiadis 2005, 39), there have also been criticisms that these new visible forms of fusion are neutralising the subordinate culture. How, then, is an artist to dodge these censures, to understand alien cultures? Contemporary artists are consistently moving across boundaries or engaged with issues not solely tied to their locales or places of birth, which propels a continuous examination of the conditions of belonging and points of difference. This quotation by Papastergiadis is apt;

Critics who expect indigenous artists to confine their cultural imagination to the territorial boundaries and ancestral techniques of their homelands will be forever disappointed and disapproving of hybridity. (Papastergiadis 2005, 43)

Papastergiadis outlines points which help to level the field of competing discourses, providing a new starting point for discussion. Firstly, that there is no way of going back and gluing together first nations' 'authentic culture' decimated by colonialism. Secondly, there is also no way of addressing or balancing out the perceived dominating force of Western hegemony because horizontal forms of exchange are occurring rapidly which are entirely impossible to pause. Thirdly, nations cannot 'wait to play catch up' to have the equivalent power required to stand in equal terms with their dominator. Instead, a 'new common humanity' is proposed as an urgent task of 'rebuilding a new kind of universalism' in an age which is undoubtedly and irrevocably multi-cultural and multi-faceted (2005, 58).

It is a Utopian vision, but one that at least makes possible a position to interact and respond to cultural interaction through art. For Australian artists interested in hybridity, it may be helpful to think more along terms of a universal humanity, or at the very least an Australasian³⁵ one. Hybridity can reveal how diverse cultural forms and symbols of one society can be 'reconfigured as they are internalised by different people' (2005, 43). For myself, I am Australian born³⁶, although I lived for several years in Polynesia and have travelled extensively in Asia. Australia, for me, is a geographical crossroad of these areas and accordingly that is translated into my artwork; it is the outward manifestation of this 'internalisation' posited by Papastergiadis.

Cultural exchange is a process that has been occurring for centuries, not just in the form of textile design, but in syncretic religions, eclectic philosophies, languages, cuisine, architecture, music and, of course, people. It is a necessary unfolding and one that would be impossible to halt. Professor of Cultural History at the University of Cambridge Peter Burke (2009) points out that no single culture can remain pure. He

³⁵ In 1877 Marcus Clarke coined the term 'Australasia'. Encouraged by groups of neo-imperialist British-Australian visionaries who imagined the vast area from the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand as a new empire (Willis 1993). Proposals for the ideal of Australasia began in the early 1800s; however, early settler hostility towards Asia quashed the idea. Physiographically and geopolitically, Australasia is now defined as New Zealand, Australia (including Tasmania) and Melanesia, namely, Papua New Guinea and neighbouring islands north and east of Australia in the Pacific Ocean.

³⁶ Although Australian born, I have a mixed ancestry of English, Irish and Caucasus (Northern Turkish) descent.

also outlines that there will always be negative and positive attitudes towards hybridisation. In the process of fusing cultural symbols, some things can be lost in the process of hybridisation (P. Burke 2009), but so, too, can new things be formed. Having introduced the topic here, I investigate this idea further in Chapter Five as I question what elements of Japanese culture are lost when appropriated into Australian design.

In this chapter I have outlined scholarly definitions and discussions around the classification of an Australian fashion and textile identity. Whilst notions of national identity are constantly being constructed, a nationally distinct imagery is most often recognised or defined by depictions of landscape and symbols which are inhabitant to it. In the specific field of fashion and textile design, intense periods of nationalism in the 1970s and '80s have given way to a more nuanced multicultural approach to design that draws on surrounding geographies as a response to the drive of globalisation and from resistance or fear of associations with Australiana. In view of my desire to avoid both negative associations of Australiana and globalised neutrality in my design and art work, I have reviewed contemporary forms of Australiana in fashion and introduced theories from Victor Segalen who proposes the adoption of an exoticism that seeks points of unique difference, and Nikos Papastergiadis who advocates an approach of humane universalism. I have suggested that embracing an 'Australasian' vantage point when creating hybrid cultural art forms may be helpful.

The ideas outlined above form the challenge for my project, to find ways to present landscape motifs in a high fashion sense, without falling into the pitfalls of flagrant Australiana or its reverse, low-key neutrality. In the next chapter I examine the source of my cross-cultural fascination, namely, traditional Japanese design, and then following that in Chapter 3 I track the emergence and influence of these Japanese arts on Australian material culture and identity.

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Figure 36. Kitagawa Utamaro, *The Omando Dance*. 1783.

Chapter Two

Japanese Aesthetic Traditions in Edo Era Japan

An engagement with traditional textile arts and aesthetics of Japan has been fundamental to my thesis. Japanese arts, like those of many other countries, encapsulate a diverse range of mediums, which can be traced back over several millennia. My interest has centred predominantly on the Edo era (1603-1868) and the medium of hand-painted and woodblock-printed *ukiyo-e* (floating world pictures), and the printed textiles of *kimono* and Japanese dress depicted within them, such as *katazome* (pattern printed cloth) made from *katagami* (hand-cut pattern stencils), and *saraca*, a Japanese pattern type that evolved through a process of cross-cultural interaction. Although these traditions existed prior to and post the Edo period, for the purposes of a succinct account in this chapter, I have focused primarily on the Edo era, which was the zenith period for these practices (Faulkner and Lane 1991). There is no shortage of scholarly records of *ukiyo-e*³⁷ written in English. The tremendous effect that the medium had on the West is well documented³⁸, as are descriptive, historical and sociological accounts of the prints and the artists, woodcarvers, printers and publishers who created them³⁹. This chapter considers the formal qualities of *ukiyo-e* and the patterned textiles depicted within them in order to understand my consistent preoccupation with the medium and identify ways in which I can merge some of the aesthetic properties into my own creative practice. This chapter also assists in identifying the modes of Japanese influence on textile design present in the work of Australian designers discussed in the following chapter.

In addition, I outline my research into the philosophy of Japanese aesthetics, which has aided in an understanding of more than just the surface attributes of Japanese arts. The study of Japanese aesthetics in the West emerged alongside Japonism in the mid to late nineteenth century. There is an abundance of translated versions and descriptions to draw from, so I have been necessarily selective in how I represent what is a complex cultural, religious and artistic philosophy that stretches through centuries, in a different language to my own. I have attempted to activate my aesthetic sensibilities of this Japanese understanding throughout the duration of my research, the results of which I discuss in the following and final chapters. I have given attention here to elements of the philosophy which have correlated with my own artistic outlook and awareness, finding resonances that assist the translation of some of these qualities into my own artwork.

³⁷ An influential early designer and theorist was Christopher Dresser who wrote *Traditional Arts and Crafts of Japan* in 1882. A steady account has continued to be published since that time (see bibliography).

³⁸ This is discussed further in Chapter Three. The manifestation of Japonism in Modernism was immense, deeply influencing the period's most significant artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, James McNeill Whistler and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

³⁹ The *ukiyo-e* printing process was carried out in stages. An artist first created an original image. A woodblock engraver cut the appropriate number of blocks to print the colourways required and finally a printer was employed to make copies. This may have contributed to the stable development of shared idioms and common characteristics by a variety of artists during the Edo period. A publisher was responsible for commissioning the artist, whether for book illustration or advertisement etc (D. Bell 2002).

Ukiyo-e

Between the twelfth to late sixteenth century, Japan experienced prolonged periods of political unrest, civil war, foreign invasions and power struggles between social classes. During the Edo period, from around 1600 onwards, the ruling *shogunate* (chief military commanders appointed by the Emperor) strictly governed and enforced protocols on all aspects of Japanese life. To promote peace, the *shogunate* excluded all foreign influence, essentially enforcing an extended period of self-imposed isolation. Until 1854 when the United States Navy forcibly opened Japanese ports to the rest of the world⁴⁰, the nation had enjoyed centuries of relatively peaceful seclusion. During the Edo era, the middle class of merchants and artisans, the *chonin* (townspeople), became economically more powerful than the noble *samurai* class resulting in their compelling influence on the development of Edo culture⁴¹. Not only did the *chonin* greatly assist in the development of an idiosyncratic national art, these wealthy citizens with their decadent consumerism contributed to a swiftly urbanising, thriving popular culture with a demand for leisure activities.

The term *ukiyo-e*, with its underlying meaning of 'floating world pictures', is synonymous with the hedonistic gratification and bourgeois culture of the Edo era. The genre developed and flourished in the economic and cultural conditions of the period, particularly in the eighteenth century⁴². The distinctive Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock print⁴³ is recognised by its peculiar stylistic character of polychromatic, often ornately patterned compositions of clear linear quality and descriptive mode of representation. Some artists painted their *ukiyo-e*; however, this version of the medium still contained the characteristic woodblock type appearance of delineated outlines and sharp patterns (Harris 2012).

Ukiyo was originally a word associated with Buddhism in the middle ages, pertaining to the vanity of human passions, the evanescence of life and the longing for an idealised world and after-life (Faulkner and Lane 1991). The novel of 1661 by Asai Ryōi, *Ukiyo Monogatari; Tales of the Floating World*, explains the idea as:

living only for the moment, savouring the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the maple leaves, singing songs, drinking sake, and diverting oneself just in floating, unconcerned by the prospect of imminent poverty, buoyant and carefree, like a gourd carried along with the river current: this is what we call ukiyo. (Ryōi, quoted in Hickman 1978, 5-6)

During the increasingly metropolitan and urbane Edo era, the connotations of the term *ukiyo-e* came to encompass the self-indulgent, stylish world of pleasure for the large population of *chonin*, or everyday townsfolk of Edo (now modern Tokyo). The upper classes and members of the Imperial court (*kuge*) and *samurai bushi* (warrior class of military nobility) considered *ukiyo-e* plebeian, something you could buy for the same price as a bowl of soup (Hara 2014). Social expectations for the upper classes dictated propriety and therefore a preference for the esteemed classicism of traditional Japanese *Rinpa*, *Nanga*

⁴⁰ Commodore Perry of the United States Navy forcibly opened the ports of Japan to the world after 200 years of almost total isolation during which the only Western contact was in a tightly controlled exchange with the Dutch. (Faulkner and Lane 1999).

⁴¹ Edo city had a population of roughly one million people in 1720 (Jackson 1997).

⁴² *Ukiyo-e* is seen to evolve out of the genre schools of Japanese art of the Momoyama period (1573-1615). It had acquired its basic themes, sinuous lines and emphasis on dramatic spatial relationships by the 1720s. Between 1720-1760 artists began to experiment with adding colour to the woodblock prints, initially first by hand and eventually with a series of cut woodblocks (Faulkner and Lane 1999).

⁴³ The Japanese had used woodblock prints from as early as eighth century to print Buddhist literature and images. The medium was reserved for this purpose until the seventeenth century when it became secularised (Harris 2012).

and *Nagasaki* Schools of painting, of which production remained in place⁴⁴ alongside *ukiyo-e* in the Edo period (Harris 2012).

Ukiyo-e prints depicted actors from the *noh* and *kabuki*⁴⁵ theatre in elaborate costumes, *geisha* (courtesans from the brothels), *bijin* (beautiful women) and actresses who helped perpetuate the latest fashions in hair, makeup and *kimono*. The prints were also used as posters to promote teahouses, fashion and textile designs and a variety of merchant produce; to illustrate travel guides, calendars, story books; to provide botanical illustrations and *shunga* (erotic paraphernalia). *Ukiyo-e* is inextricably linked with the area in Edo called *Yoshiwara*, a designated brothel and entertainment district which was the 'centre of an urban counter culture that governed the sophisticated stylistic canons standing in contrast to mainstream society ... the Yoshiwara was enveloped in a highly idealized mystique ... a magical place, populated by beautiful women' (Chock 2014, 64).

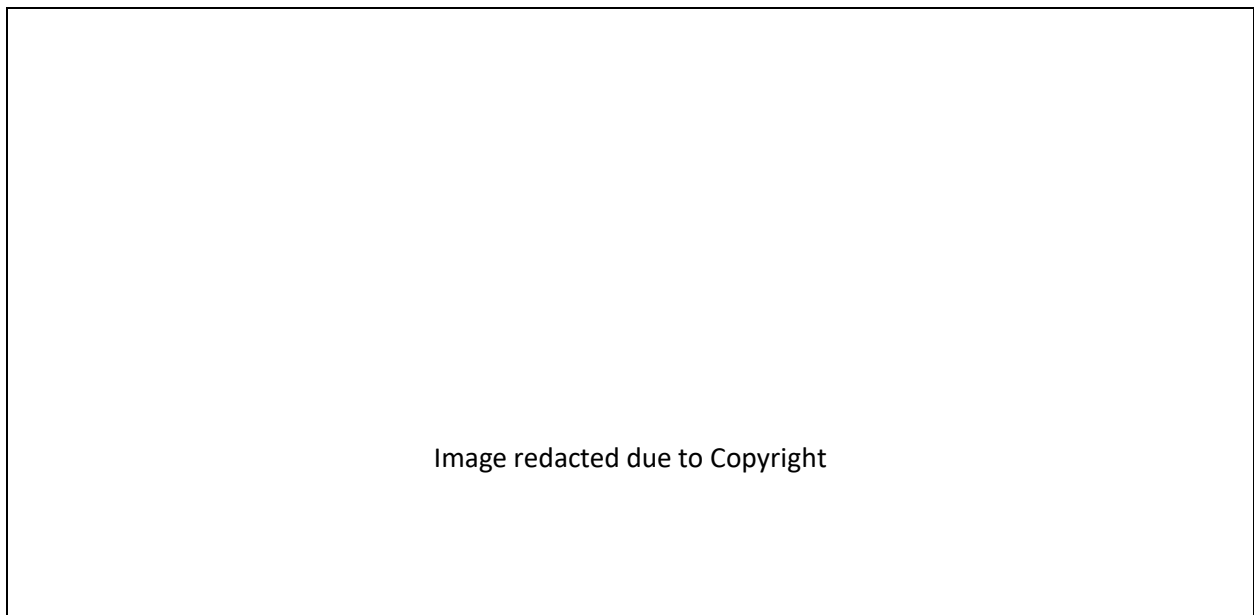


Figure 37. A life-size diorama replicates an Edo period (1603-1868) *ukiyo-e* seller's stall of prints and printed books. Edo-Tokyo Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

The *ukiyo-e* seller/publisher provided an immersive retail experience, with new prints in constant production to meet demand (Figure 37). The prints were inexpensive and mass-produced, providing Edo's citizens with a source of visual pleasure, functioning in a very similar way to contemporary societies'

⁴⁴ The nobility continued to commission traditional paintings of the *Tosa* and *Kano* schools (which originated in the fifteenth century) throughout the Edo period. Although *ukiyo-e* was considered plebeian, it was also a popular item for some upper-class citizens (Harris 2012).

⁴⁵ *Noh* theatre is a major form of classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed since the fourteenth century depicting traditional Japanese stories and was predominantly supported by nobility. The *kabuki* theatre is a classical Japanese dance-drama established in 1603 and continuing into modern times, however it was more aimed at the middle classes. *Kabuki* theatre is known for the stylisation of its drama and for the elaborate makeup and costumes worn by its performers. Its golden age is considered between 1673-1841 which is within the Edo period of Japan (Frédéric 2002).

insatiable consumption of magazines, social media feeds and picture books of brightly coloured images of beautiful celebrities, new products, artful graphic design and avante-garde culture.

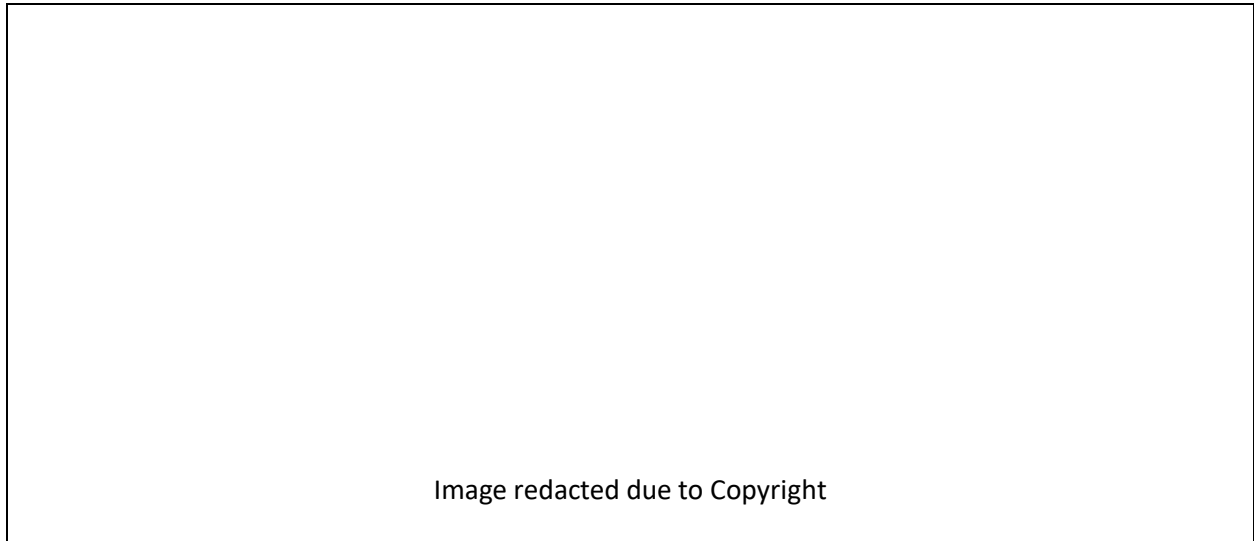


Figure 38. Utagawa Kunisada, *Beauty in Red*. 1848. Figure 39. Utagawa Kunisada II, *Courtesans of Shin-Yoshiwara*. 1859.

Ukiyo-e favoured intensely hued colour applied in precisely defined shapes of flat colour which emphasised the geometric patterning of the entire picture plane. As can be seen in Figures 38 and 39, flat areas of colour are often broken up into intricately detailed areas of repeating patterns depicting *kimono* or segments of landscapes or interiors in a highly stylised manner. The shapes often contrast with vast areas of negative space creating a sharp contrast between areas of crowded detail and open space, or dilute areas of colour in simple black line contrast with intense areas of patterned colour. The ivory colour of the paper is also used within the picture plane to imply flat bands or stacked zone-like spaces. Using fine black outline, detailed networks of pattern and space interact and define movements of figures, landscapes, gestures and surface decorations. Dynamic spatial arrangements and tensions are created within the precision of line making, which can be as fine as single threads of hair or plant foliage. *Ukiyo-e* always tends towards asymmetry which further enhances the tension or stillness vital to the character of the medium. Usually quite small and able to be held in hand, the shallow space and sharp perspective of the images were able to be taken in by the eye at once, contributing to the tight cohesion of the overall image. Adding to the sense of dense shallow space was the tendency to crop compositions or pictorial devices, spreading figures or landscapes beyond the boundaries of the picture plane, even when spread over a triptych (D. Bell 2002). The artist's signature in calligraphy, the publisher's *hanmoto* (a stamp, seal or trademark), plus a calligraphic title and sometimes a *mon* (family crest), usually artfully placed within a negative space, added to the overall balance and complexity of the image.

A characteristic found in any *ukiyo-e* that depicts cloth is the intricate patterning of *kimono* (full length robe), *obi* (belt) and *kosode* (basic robe or inner garment), *noren* (curtain), *futon* (bedding) or other decorated surface⁴⁶. This delight in pattern and ornament has been the most persuasive and influential

⁴⁶ *Ukiyo-e* also depict textiles such as *shibori* (tie-dye), *hira-ori*, *aya-ori* and *shusu ori* (woven textiles), and *shishu* (embroidered textiles) among other techniques, however I have focused on depictions of printed/dyed textiles.

element of *ukiyo-e* on my creative practice. The extent to which the artisans of the Edo period mastered the art of applying intricate and multiple layered decoration to a variety of everyday objects, whilst maintaining a sense of overall balance and cohesion is staggering and a quality I often try to achieve in my own artworks. The interconnection between the textile designs depicted and the overall print was achieved because *ukiyo-e* artists were employed as textile and pattern designers, creating large books of pattern designs for artisans called *hinagatabon* (design compendium) (Harris 2012). In the cash economy of Edo, artists were employed by *kimono* shops, dyers and fabric producers to produce books of designs which could then be applied to a variety of objects (Harris 2012). For example, Kitagawa Utamaro, who was a prolific *ukiyo-e* artist, produced innumerable *bijin-ga* (beautiful women pictures) which depicted his textile designs for Kyoto shopkeepers as well as pattern books of textile designs. It was always one of *ukiyo-e*'s functions to keep stylish Edoites well informed of the latest fashions (D. Bell 2002).

In Figure 36, Utamaro has depicted 20 individual patterns which contrast within rhythmical sweeps of line that define elements of the figures' outfits and their material objects. The patterns are concentrated into an asymmetrical compact area of shapes within the overall composition, with large areas of completely empty space surrounding the figures allowing a visual pause for the patterns to vibrate harmoniously without seeming to blur or become indistinct. The patterns have a colour palette which is pleasantly tonal, although many *ukiyo-e* artists used clashing colours and patterns whilst maintaining cohesion of the overall image (such as in Figure 39). Fine details such as the fringing on the sash or the courtesan's hair and finger movements are all clearly defined, adding to the complexity of the image. There is a simplicity and quietness in the image, despite the extravagant array of patterning, another characteristic that *ukiyo-e* artists regularly achieved⁴⁷.

Traditional Japanese Aesthetics

What is now termed an appreciation of aesthetics in the West⁴⁸ – that is, the way we define beauty or sensuous knowledge, how we recognise and judge it – has an equivalent in Japan which pre-dates written language. Its origins as a philosophy, or threads that added up to one, emerged in ancient Japan alongside the religions of Shinto⁴⁹ and Buddhism⁵⁰. Shinto with its emphasis on the wholeness of nature and character in ethics, and its veneration of nature sets the tone for Japanese aesthetics, merging harmoniously with the Buddhist tradition where all things are considered as either evolving from or dissolving into nothingness, where nothing is permanent. Donald Richie, a foremost author in English on Japanese culture, has written extensively about Japanese aesthetics. He suggests:

⁴⁷ A complete overview of the characteristics of *ukiyo-e* is outside the scope of this exegesis. A thorough account of the medium is found in Faulkner and Lane (1991) and Harris (2012).

⁴⁸ The term 'aesthetics' was first used in the West in 1750, derived from the Greek word *aesthesis* (to perceive sensation) (Richie 2007).

⁴⁹ Shinto (the way of the gods) is the traditional indigenous religion of ancient Japan originating in the Jōmon period (14,000 to 300BCE). The religion includes creation myths, superstitions, rituals, ethical and moral theology, but not a written dogma. Shinto gods (*kami*) are sacred spirits which take the form of ancestral spirits and objects in nature such as wind, rain, mountains, trees and rivers. It remains Japan's major religion alongside Buddhism with over 80,000 shrines throughout modern Japan (Bowring 2005).

⁵⁰ Buddhism was introduced to Japan from Korea by Buddhist Monks in the sixth century. A peaceful syncretism between Japanese Buddhism and Shinto has been in evidence since Buddhism was introduced. Although seen as separate religions and philosophies, Shinto *kami* spirits are understood to require the enlightenment offered by Buddhism, hence Buddhist shrines often exist within Shinto shrines and vice-versa (Bowring 2005).

For a complete account of Japanese religion, see Bowring (2005).

The artistic impulse in Japan was internalised to a degree uncommon in any culture. This being so, aesthetic concerns could be employed with an unmatched ease and naturalness ... Japan presented during its integrated periods the still surprising spectacle of a people who in the most natural way made art a way of life ... Japanese culture became structured with its aesthetic values at the centre. Aesthetic concerns often prevailed even over religious beliefs and duties ... the art was not illustrating a religion, but a religion becoming an art. (Richie 2007, 68-69)

In Richie's *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics* (2007), he proposes that the dissolution of the mystic disciplines of Shinto and Zen Buddhism⁵¹ transferred into all aspects of everyday life in Japanese culture, infusing a manner across all social classes, in theatre, poetry, painting and the tea ceremony⁵². Every gesture taken from the humblest farm worker to the richest aristocrat was affected by the sensitivity of Shinto-Zen-Buddhism. 'In the Edo period, this aestheticization reached extraordinary heights' (Richie 2007, 69) before becoming vulgarised in its own decadence at the close of the Edo period, which I discuss shortly.

Western observers have often remarked on the sense of emptiness in Japanese design (Hara 2014). Whether it be space within a plain ceramic vessel, a sparse *ikebana* flower arrangement, the *chanoyu* tea ceremony, austere architecture and interiors, *karesansui* raked gardens, *haiku* poetry, music, the space within *ukiyo-e* prints or a *byōbu* painted folding Japanese screen, a void, a pause, or area of spatial emptiness can be discerned. In *Court Carriages with Maple Trees* (Figure 40), for example, the negative space around the carriages and foliage is almost equal in weighting to the negative space, which hovers without perspective, as an infinite space that buoyantly upholds all around it. This emptiness is far from a Western sense of nothingness, rather it can be traced back to a primordial Shinto belief in the essence of 'gods dwelling in nature, who were impossible to touch ... because empty equals the possibility of being filled, the gods may then find it and enter' (Hara 2014, 14). The ancient Japanese devised a mechanism to make some point of contact with the gods by creating a demarcated space which could be a hedge, rope or fence, a square of emptiness called *shiro*. When a roof is added, the structure becomes a *yashiro* or basic Shinto shrine (Hara 2014) and the gods may now enter the emptiness and bring their benevolence. This emptiness is seen as a space of potentiality; nature itself is seen as a dynamic whole, never complete or permanent, an always changing force that is to be admired and appreciated.

The concept of empty space was already a firm tenet of Japanese culture when in the mid-fifteenth century the ruling *shogun* Ashikaga Yoshimasa further cultivated the unostentatious, subdued and meditative aspects of Zen Buddhism into his aristocratic example. During Yoshimasa's reign his court actively supported the growth of the *Higashiyama* culture, famous for tea ceremony (*chanoyu* or *sado*), flower arrangement (*kado* or *ikebana*), *Noh* drama, and Indian ink painting. His reign stimulated further development of the sensibility of beauty in plainness, rusticity and natural grace or *wabi* and *sabi*. These terms are perhaps the most well-known Japanese aesthetic terms in the West and are often conjoined into one term *wabi-sabi*.

⁵¹ A school of Buddhism emphasising the value of meditation and intuition rather than ritual worship or study of scriptures (Bowring 2005).

⁵² For further reading on the complex history of social life in which aesthetic ideals become central to Japan's cultural identity, see Ikegami (2005). Ikegami outlines how networks in all types of arts, including the tea ceremony and poetry, have shaped tacit cultural practices in Japan, rendering politeness and politics as inseparable and therefore ingrained across the culture. She argues that in Western cultures politics and art are very separate, compared to Japan where it is distinctly integrated.

Image redacted due to Copyright

Figure 40. Unknown artist. *Court Carriages and Maple Trees*. 17th century.

Wabi is the Zen Buddhist principle of an austere beauty; a serene accepting of the vicissitudes of an impermanent life, of finding a beauty in poverty and bleakness, even loneliness and sadness. *Sabi* refers to the patina of age and a lyric melancholy of dwindling beauty. Donald Keene quotes observations from the poet-priest Ton'a (1289-1372) that 'only after the silk wrapper has frayed at the top and the bottom does the scroll look beautiful' and from the essayist Yoshida Kenko (1283-1340) that 'if man were never to fade away ... but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us. The most precious thing in life is uncertainty' (Keene, quoted in Richie 2007, 21). *Wabi* and *sabi* both point to the transience of life and the beauty of things in passing, so the short-lived cherry blossom and the old cracked tea bowl have become the oft-cited emblems of this aesthetic phenomenon. Within Zen philosophy, *wabi-sabi* also refers to a mindful approach to everyday life. To achieve the *wabi-sabi* ideal, the seeker must search for *fukinsei* (asymmetry, irregularity), *kanso*, (simplicity), *koko* (basic, weathered), *shizen* (without pretense, natural), *yūgen* (subtly profound grace, not obvious, an awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses that are too deep and mysterious for words), *datsuzoku* (unbounded by convention free), and *seijaku* (tranquillity) (Carter 2008).

That so much can be implied by two short words reflects the depth of meaning in many of the terms within Japanese aesthetic philosophy. Most categories have sub-categories and further sub-categories to describe even the most intangible and elusive sensation. For example, *yūgen*, which is a category within *wabi-sabi* is a concept so rich that it inspired many of the nation's most venerated poets, artists and philosophers over many centuries. Although *yūgen* shares all the same characteristics of *sabi* of an aged, imperfect tranquillity, it also denotes a very subtle 'beauty of gentle gracefulness' (Tsubaki 1971, 1). The following description comes from Japanese scholar Daisetz T. Suzuki:

Yūgen is a compound word, each part *yū* and *gen*, meaning "cloudy impenetrability" and the combination meaning "obscurity", "unknowability", "mystery", "beyond intellectual calculability" [sic] but not "utter darkness". An object so designated is not subject to dialectical analysis or to a clear cut definition ... It is something we feel within ourselves ... It is hidden in the clouds, but not entirely out of sight, for we feel its presence, its secret message being transmitted through the darkness. (Suzuki, quoted in Tsubaki 1971, 56)

Andrew Tsubaki argued in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* that *yūgen* ‘is strictly speaking an untranslatable word’ (1971, 57). He explains that the most commonly rendered word in English that could describe *yūgen* would be ‘elegance’ or ‘grace’, but that these words do not adequately outline *yūgen*’s fathomless sentiment. Other English words that are relevant to understanding *yūgen* are understatement, intimation, aristocratic grace, composure, equilibrium, serenity and quietism.

The very nature of many Japanese aesthetic terms as unknowable, unattainable and diffuse are in a sense part of the philosophy itself⁵³. The grasp of many of its conventions are made intuitively and perceptively rather than rationally and logically. For example, *aware*, which means something that provokes an emotional response – ‘the aspects of nature (or life, or art) that move a susceptible individual to an awareness of the ephemeral beauty of a world in which change is the only constant’ (Richie 2007, 71) – can be seen as a type of nostalgia that can be considered alongside *yūgen*’s sense of the mysterious quiescence beneath all things. *Shibui* (a restrained monochrome astringency suggesting purity and austerity) is another equally complex notion that is as important as *sabi*, however ‘there is no exact English counterpart’ or word equivalent (D. Bell 2002, 58). These notions, sitting underneath or alongside the philosophies of *wabi-sabi*’s cultivated aesthetic of a beauty found in rusticity and deterioration provide a rich ground which I have explored in my creative production.

Though *ukiyo-e* prints were secular in nature, many still retained the spiritual preoccupation of earlier forms of art⁵⁴ that *ukiyo-e* evolved from, although it is presented in a markedly different format (D. Bell 2002). David Bell notes in ‘Explaining Ukiyo-e’ (2002) that there appears a contradiction or inconsistency when applying traditional Japanese aesthetics to *ukiyo-e*; terms such as *wabi-sabi*, *yūgen*, *aware* and *shibui* do not seem to match the intricately detailed and often richly coloured prints. Bell explains that *ukiyo-e* was such a unique medium, solely produced in the one city of Edo, that it sat outside the normal conformity adhered to in the rest of society:

The floating world of Tokugawa Edo was almost alien to the entertainment worlds of the earlier capitals. The *kabuki* theatre, the brothel quarters (*Yoshiwara*), the teahouses, all encouraged a degree of self-indulgence and excess, for some citizens at least, that had never been experienced before in Japan. This was reflected in the repeated attempts of government to control excessive behaviours through regular publication of sumptuary edicts. This was the world that represented *ukiyo-e* and which generated a demand in its artworks, not for the artless, the restrained, or the aged, but for the novelty, flair, change and slick, rich decoration. (D. Bell 2002, 60)

Aesthetic terms like *suki* and *iki* can apply to *ukiyo-e*. *Iki*, which is understood as the interaction of gestures between people, has been translated by the French into notions such as ‘chic’ or ‘coquette’ as it has a characteristic of being slightly erotic and flirtatious, but in a very subtle way. Its closest English translation may be ‘rakish’, ‘cool’, ‘fashionable’ or ‘playful’; however, *iki* was always expressed being devoid of lewdness or vulgarity, it was a passionate yet constrained composure, which had ‘unimpeachable refinement’ (D. Bell 2002 68). It was a quality of ‘unconsummated interaction between individuals’ (D. Bell 2002, 68), hence it contained the constraint of *sabi* but with a slight amount of *hade* (showiness). Carefully contrived poses within *ukiyo-e* that flaunted a bit of neck or wrist in a nonchalant

⁵³ Semiotician and philosopher Roland Barthes in his account of Japan, *Empire des Signes* (1970), discusses the semiotic practices in Japanese culture. He found ‘the signs within Japan so beguiling and so satisfying that he [did] not feel compelled to understand their meanings’ (Bolton 2015, 19), indicating that the enigmatic signifiers of Japanese cultural practice can be appreciated without going ‘beyond their surfaces’ (Bolton 2015, 19). 2015 in Bibliography – also see my accompanying note in the Bibliography.

⁵⁴ Earlier forms of Japanese painting included those from the Kano School, *yamoto-e* (traditional Japanese painting) and *sumi-e* (Ink-wash painting). For a comprehensive overview of Japanese painting, see Sadao and Wada (2003).

fashion were seen to be *iki*. *Suki* was described in terms of ‘subtle elegance and eccentricity ... [a] delight in the unusual, curious or idiosyncratic ... a love of pleasure and creative freedom’ (D. Bell 2002, 74); it was a gentle elegance that can be seen in the many portraits of Edo era *bijin* (beautiful women pictures).

Kachō-ga

A theme within *ukiyo-e* art which has been of great influence on my art work and a more visible form of *wabi-sabi* sentiment is *kachō-ga* (or *kachō fugetsū*) meaning ‘flowers and birds’ (Narazaki 1970). The aim of *kachō-ga* is never simply to portray a botanical or representational depiction of flowers or birds, but to express a subjective emotion. First developed in the Shinto-influenced Heian period in traditional Japanese painting (794-1185), *kachō-ga* can also mean ‘wind and moon’ such as a breeze on a fine day or the full moon at night. More importantly, the meaning of *kachō-ga* refers to the mind that finds pleasure in the miniscule detail or moment of interaction where the observer witnesses the song of birds, trees rustling in the breeze, or an insect zooming past. *Kachō-ga* is about the contemplation of natural phenomena and the aesthetic observation of such fleeting beauty. *Kachō-ga* by extension also pertains to a refined, poetic way of life that finds chief pleasure in the study of nature in keeping with the ancient Buddhist and Shinto religious beliefs that the genre emerged from.

Rather than seeing a landscape vignette objectively, Japanese art has tended to interpret the object philosophically as a subjective parallel to human life. This is not to say that a theoretical or objective attitude was absent; the apprentice of *kachō-ga* would apply himself⁵⁵ to sketching birds and flowers from life with precision and there were certainly botanical and zoological illustrations produced in Japan (Narazaki 1970). Despite these exceptions, the greatest value in *kachō-ga* was deemed its highly emotive approach and the artist’s relationship to the subject matter.

This idea is exemplified by the convention in *kachō-ga* of coupling things together to suggest a particular season, time of day or associative symbolic content of the motif. The many hundred examples include: pine tree and eagle; bamboo and tiger; plum blossoms and the moon; peonies and butterflies; lonely creeks with solitary fishermen. The point of these combinations, which occur in many forms in Japanese art, poetry and theatre, is to combine objects to create a vehicle for the artist’s own emotions and ideas, or particular view of life in a pleasing harmony of associations. The full moon with a tree shedding autumn leaves may allude to a melancholic longing for a loved one, or a brightly flowering tree with a family of butterflies may allude to a blissful domestic situation. In every case, the artist of *kachō-ga* has never viewed the birds, trees and moon as beautiful objects in their own right, instead they are invested with the artist’s own idealistic personal yearnings.

The Buddhist sense of impermanence was translated often by well-known *ukiyo-e* artist Katsushika Hokusai through the depiction of small moments of pure enjoyment witnessed up-close in nature, such as *Peonies and Butterfly* (Figure 41). The peonies elegantly sway in the breeze as a butterfly peacefully meanders by. In the leisure-seeking Edo age, to sit and watch such a scene ‘was one of the greatest pleasures that life had to offer’ (Narazaki 1970, 33).

⁵⁵ To my knowledge, *ukiyo-e* art was a male occupation. There were no female *ukiyo-e* artists that I have come across in my research, however future research by other scholars may prove otherwise.

The grouping of things together, as in *Peonies and Butterfly*, is a sensibility of associating nature with aesthetic forms in contrast, harmony or disparity with other objects. Witnessing the seasons in Japan is an integral part of everyday life and intrinsic to Japanese culture. As the seasons change and produce different phenomena, parallels are drawn between nature and the minutiae of human life. A plant may grow and die in one season, another may change each year, some things have a life span of centuries or eons, changing subtly on cue in response to the laws of nature. From these observations, the Japanese have a year-round calendar filled with ritual flower viewings, tree viewings, moon and snow viewings, endless festivals and events that mark these natural occurrences. In art and in everyday life, there are many examples of how traditional Japanese culture has cultivated a high level of aesthetic sensibility in everyday life with an apparent sense of graciousness about the blessings of nature.

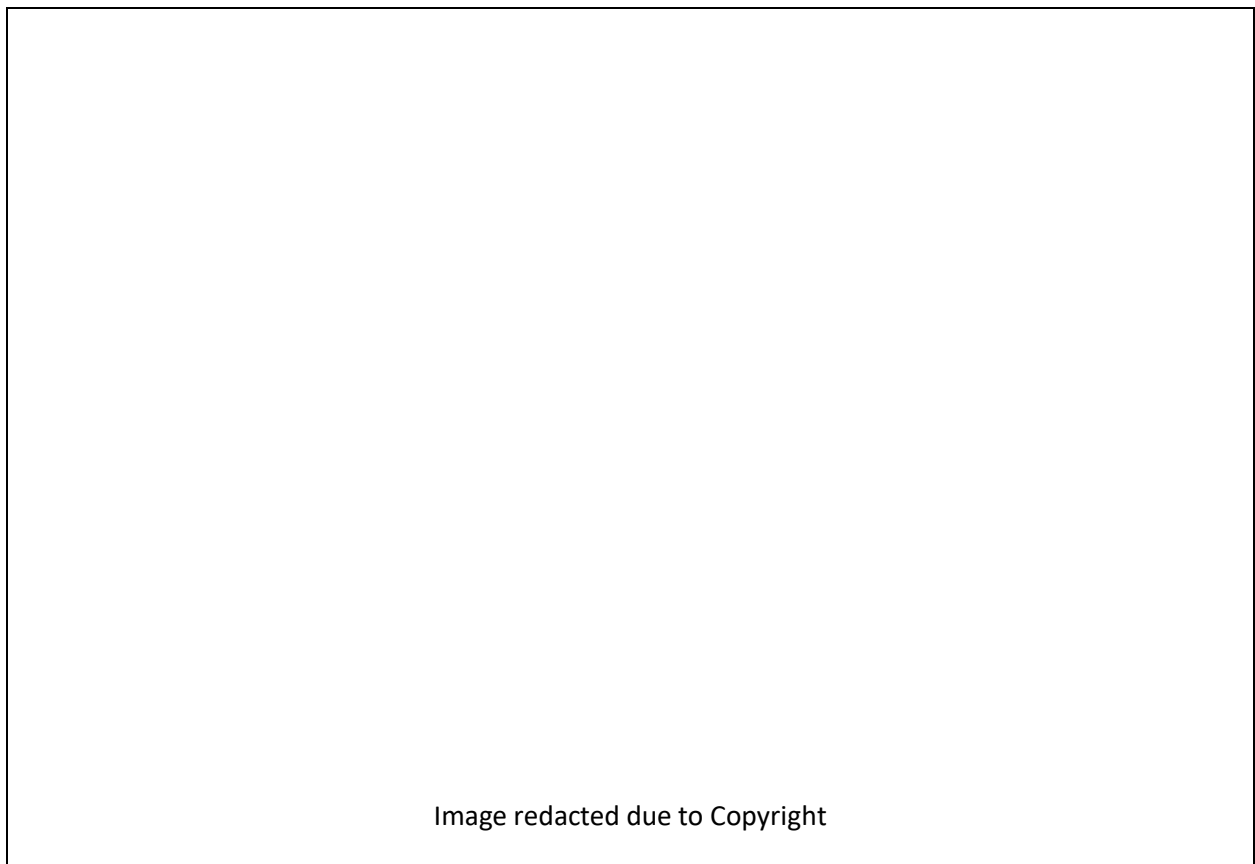


Figure 41. Katsushika Hokusai, *Peonies and Butterfly*. 19th century.

The *kachō-ga* print was also a means to explore tenets of the *wabi-sabi* ideal for both the artist and the audience through seeking *fukinsei* (asymmetry, irregularity), *kanso*, (simplicity), *shizen* (without pretense, natural), *yūgen* (subtly profound grace, not obvious) and *seijaku* (tranquillity). The prints offer something more than just material representations of birds and flowers. They signify the seasons of the year and display the workings of the artist's soul. A bird embodied in a painting, fluttering above flowers or the branches of trees, represents the spirit of the subject, not merely its actuality. The uniqueness of Japanese art lies in its ability to convey a sense of transience together with the eternal cycle of nature, such as the way that spring returns each year with its blossoms.

Textile Design in *Ukiyo-e*

The Japanese have a vast art historical record of printed, hand painted, stencilled and dyed processes that apply pattern to textiles in a plethora of ways. Extant artefacts record stencils used on cloth as early as the Nara period (696-794) when the *katazome* method (dyeing fabrics using a resist paste applied through a stencil) emerged, continuing to develop throughout the Heian (794-1185), Kamakura (1185-1336) and Muromachi (1336-1573) periods. Other mediums that developed were *saraca* cloth (a combination of woodblock and stencil printing seen in Figures 42 and 43), *tsutsugaki*, which is a hand drawn resist method similar to *batik* (Indonesian resist-dye method), and *bingata* (Figure 50) (stencil process unique to the Japanese Ryukoku Islands), which were likely adopted during very early maritime trade prior to the sixth century between Japan, India and South East Asia (Mizoguchi 1973; Crill 2008) that then evolved into localised techniques.

Textiles were designed, dyed and created, subject to the philosophies of Japanese aesthetics, in keeping with the all-pervading nature of its life-encompassing Buddhist-Shinto approach. Where decoration in the West has been seen historically as inferior to fine art⁵⁶, 'the very richness and abundance of Japanese decorative motifs may be explained in part by the conviction that their role of ornamenting life is a vital one' (Mizoguchi 1973, 7). Japanese design is emphatic in establishing connections between object and ornament – not only in the sense that the ornament or decoration must correspond pleasingly with the form of the object it is applied to, but also in how the symbolic narrative of the design can enhance or reinforce its utilitarian service.

Many of the forms of printing Japanese textiles are traditional in the sense that the medium, technique and symbolic meanings of the motifs were handed down generation to generation via artisan to apprentice or through family members (Jackson 1997). The Shinto belief in animal and tree spirits and the desire to wear symbolic representations of auspicious organic patterns derived from them was a factor that stimulated the high quality present in printed textiles in Japan across all social classes. Patterned cloth in Japan was a site for a very specific type of communication, whether worn or displayed within interiors, it signified personal and social status, wealth, gender, religious beliefs and ideological values. As a commodity of exchange for sale, cloth was instrumental in the growth of Heian and Edo period economies and an important item of trade and prestige, particularly at the time of weddings, when a family could establish in a most public and visual way their status within a community.⁵⁷

From as early as the Heian period (794-1185), the famous Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji* (Genji Monogatari, circa 1000) describes the sumptuous court clothing of old Kyoto in vividly detailed descriptions. The novel records the elaborately refined aesthetic sensibility of the fabrics, clothing and

⁵⁶ With the onset of the industrial revolution in Britain, locally manufactured items carrying Chinoiserie, Turquerie and Japonist styles and historical Rococo and Gothic decoration were ubiquitous. The volume of objects which carried decoration had increased dramatically and by the early twentieth century, European society had become saturated with ornament (Snodin and Howard 1996). Due to the sheer variety of 'grammars' of ornamentation available, twentieth century critics including Louis Sullivan in America and Adolf Loos in Austria felt empowered to make value judgements on the merits of particular styles relative to each other. In doing so they were contemplating the notion that there was a moral dimension to pattern. Sullivan and Loos became highly critical, if not scornful, of the practice of applying decoration to surfaces in buildings, interiors and fashion and called for a serious reconsideration of ornament. Loos published his influential essay *Ornament and Crime* in 1908, resulting in wide-reaching repercussions in all design fields. He believed the excessive application of certain styles of ornament was a primitive, irrational and indulgent desire that needed to be resisted (Snodin and Howard 1996).

⁵⁷ The wedding, whether for upper-class nobles or country peasants, involved a wedding trousseau of gifts that were mostly textile based. Wedding *kimono* and *futonji* (bedding covers) were traditionally included (Jackson 1997).

physical spaces within rooms, which were decorated with motifs and colour combinations that indicated not only the wearer's social rank, but also expressed his or her private personality and emotional nature, as well as a profound connection with the natural environment. In *Wa*⁵⁸: *The Essence of Japanese Design* (2014) Menegazzo and Piotti explain:



Figure 42. Variations of Indigo dyed *karakusa* and *saraca* patterns. Edo era. Figure 43. Detail. Utagawa Kuniyoshi, *Girl in the Snow*. 18th century.

None of these elements were left to chance, every decision, from the choice of paper on which to write a letter, or the selection of its accompanying perfume, sprung from a common code of feeling in which even fabrics carried a structured symbolic language that was as complex as that of poetry. (Menegazzo and Piotti 2014, 215)

Designs were chosen by families and individuals to bestow good fortune, longevity, perseverance, renewal, protection and other talismanic qualities. The pine tree which lives for many years was a symbol for longevity as were cranes which were thought to live for a thousand years, therefore the combination of these two symbols in a pattern could be doubly auspicious. Cranes mate for life so this motif was also especially popular as a motif for wedding *kimono*. The peony represents female beauty and sexuality, therefore also appropriate for weddings or for a young *geisha* (high class courtesan trained in a variety of performing arts). A prostitute may go as far as to portray a flower's reproductive organs decoratively on her *kimono*, alluding quite explicitly to her occupation (D. Bell 2002). Bamboo was recognised for resilience due to its strength and flexibility to bend in strong wind. The plum blossom was a favourite symbol, admired for its beauty and attributes of renewal brought by spring. Every type of symbol, whether inanimate object or Shinto god, could be depicted by the textile designer and dyer to fulfil the whims of the Heian and Edo clientele. An individual's *kimono* could bear witness to one's knowledge and good taste and provide 'iconographic clues to identity' (D. Bell 2002, 115). There are limitless examples of meanings, chosen in a comparable way to the *kacho-ga* artist, where the motif's symbolism was often deeply personal and subjective; a fisherman may wear auspicious symbols from the ocean, a fireman a

⁵⁸ *Wa* is the Japanese character that refers to not only harmony and peace but to Japan itself and Japanese culture. It has evolved into an expression which has helped Western culture describe the elusive sense of Japanese beauty that manifests itself in an often contradictory fusion of artisanal complexity and simplicity, order and irregularity, asymmetry and character (Menegazzo and Piotti 2014).

lion to symbolise strength, a child may be given an anchor pattern to symbolise a stable start to life (Jackson 1997).⁵⁹

Further clues to the reading of a pattern can be discerned in the scale, colour and type of fabric; for example, a butterfly could be a symbol of elegance and grace, but if it was a small repeating pattern (*komon*) it could indicate a lower social status. The larger the butterfly, the higher the social status, which explains in part why a motif in Japan at the height of the Edo period's ostentatiousness came to encompass the entire picture plane of the *kimono*⁶⁰. The plant dye colour was also considered. 'Colours themselves were seen as the essence or "spirit" within the plant. When transferred to cloth, the spirit in the colour would protect the garment's wearer' (Yang and Narasin 2000, 31). Where an older female or married woman was expected to wear subdued colours, a younger female would wear brightly coloured or clashing colours. Colour could also represent the season and be appropriate for certain occasions; for example, bright spring-like colours and blossoming motifs could be suitable for a young woman to wear to a cherry blossom viewing, whereas an older woman might decide that bright yet autumnal colours with depictions of partially faded blooms would be more appropriate due to her age and status. Many specific rules pertaining to the production of cloth and who could wear it were strictly controlled and enforced by the *shogunate* to ensure that social classes remained distinct and the status quo was upheld⁶¹.

Though understood as traditional, Japanese patterns developed over centuries absorbing the effects of change and outside influence, particularly from China prior to the Edo period, before the country became restricted in its foreign trade. Of major stimulus was Buddhism, which after emerging from India in approximately seventh century BCE, spread across Central Asia, passed into China and crossed to Japan by way of the Korean Peninsula, arriving in Japan in the mid sixth century carrying an accumulation of artistic traditions and pattern designs with it, which can be seen as a very early kind of globalisation (Mizoguchi 1973). The prolific array of masterfully developed Edo textile patterns had been subject to an intense form of cross-culturalism up until that period, as well as morphing in new directions with the whims of fashion and social changes enforced by successive ruling *shogunates*. By the mid Heian Period (794-1185) the intensity of Japanese cultural borrowing from T'ang (618-907) China began to diminish, giving way to an increasingly original and unmistakably Japanese style (Mizoguchi 1973).

Although the range of decorative approaches to applying patterns to cloth in Japan is infinite, characteristics that are common reflect many of the same attributes found in the overall composition of a *ukiyo-e* or *kachō-ga* print. A tendency toward asymmetry and dynamic spatial arrangements, fine outlines and complex, intricate, yet stylised motifs contrast with vast areas of empty space. Couplings of motifs are common and purvey the same meaning as a *kachō-ga* arrangement. Scale is used to great effect, particularly on back panels of *kimono* (Figure 36 and 44) where a large scale motif can be placed. The textile dyer would have purchased textile design books or created his own depending on his level of expertise. The idea of a floating world is reinforced in many Japanese paintings and prints, where a

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive overview of the meanings of patterns on textiles in Japanese culture, see Mizoguchi (1973), Yang and Narasin (2000) and Jackson (1997).

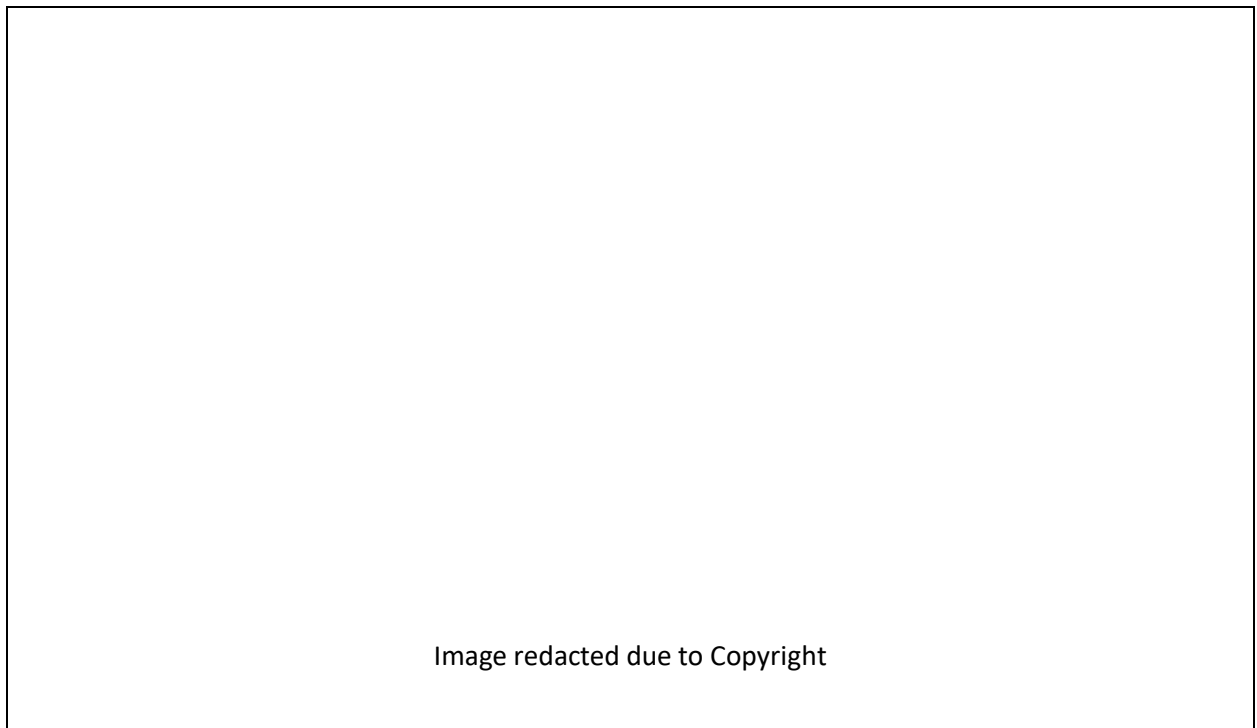
⁶⁰ Motifs also became larger to be seen better on the *Noh* and *Kabuki* theatre stages, however these were understood to be costumes rather than everyday dress.

⁶¹ As the Edo period developed and the merchant class, which included the textile dyers, cotton merchants, *ukiyo-e* artists and *kimono* sellers, grew affluent in the bourgeois cash economy, the Tokugawa *shogunate's* ideals of class separation became increasingly difficult to enforce and no longer reflected the social reality. 'Since clothing was one of the most visible signifiers of wealth and status, it was often the main focus of sumptuary laws. The wearing of particular fabrics and colours, and the use of certain decorative techniques, were restricted according to social class' (Jackson 1997, 56). For example, when dragon and phoenix patterns (which were reserved for royalty or high nobility) and the wearing of silk emerged in the *chonin's* costume, laws were passed to forbid it.

landscape comprised of buildings, clouds, plants, figures and large areas of negative space (representing *kami* or spirit) drifts across the picture plane (see Figures 44 and 45).

Ancient motifs such as the honeysuckle or *karakusa*, which was very popular in the Japanese Asuka Period (552-645) period (seen in the twining background motifs in Figure 42) were adopted from China, but were believed to originate in Greece (Mizoguchi 1973). The pattern moved eastward through Persia, India and Central Asia, appearing in Chinese and Korean kingdoms. Its twining leaves have literally crawled across history, across time and across ornamental objects for thousands of years.

Part of its success and longevity can be attributed to the rhythmical fluidity with which it can adapt its shape to almost any object with endless variations for tendril, petal and leaf. *Karakusa* patterns could be translated as simple *komon* (small repeating patterns for lower classes) or large complex and intricate designs for aristocracy. Because of the overlap in mediums, artisans and techniques, it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between one pattern family and another, particularly when they become fused. For example, alongside *karakusa* are *saraca* (printed cottons made with wood blocks and *katagami* stencils⁶²), another globally influenced pattern style which contains the pattern-figuration legacy of many countries, religions and artistic influences.



L to R: Figure 44. Edo period *katagami* printed cotton *yukata* (light kimono). 18th century. Figure 45. Utagawa Kuniyasu, *Karaori of the Daimonjiya*. Early 1800s.

⁶² The *katagami* stencilling technique was used to create Japanese versions of *saraca* called *wa-saraca*. *Katagami* stencils are forerunners of today's contemporary silk screen process. The earliest extant stencils are dated 1689-1703. Made from mulberry paper, the stencils literally mean 'pattern paper' and are made with very precise and intricate designs cut with a sharp blade. The paper is then treated with persimmon juice, giving it the tough brittleness required for brushing resist paste through the open areas of the stencil. *Katagami* designs are characteristically dynamic in design, with the *notan* principles of light and dark proportions creating stylised silhouette motifs (Blakemore 1978, 8).

What the Japanese called *saraca*, the English and Portuguese called chintz (Yoshimoto 1994) (see Figure 46). The ships of the United East India Company of Holland had bought Indian *saraca* into Japan during the early Edo period. Given the restrictions to outside trade, the Japanese highly valued even the smallest scrap of *saraca*, enjoying the exoticism of its flowered arabesques, cranes, fans and tortoiseshell which had been deliberately altered by Indian craftsmen to suit Japanese taste (Ito 2003). Priced exorbitantly, *saraca* goods were ‘high fashion on the street’ (Yoshimoto 1994, 5) afforded only by rich *daimyo* (princes) and nobles or the wealthiest merchants. Indian versions were hand printed with carved wooden blocks to create a highly decorative and colourful fabric which was exported to Europe. Chintz had been made for centuries before the arrival of Europeans, with fabrics created for trade within India itself and also with neighbouring South East Asian countries, including Thailand and Indonesia. A popular chintz/*saraca* motif was the tree of life pattern⁶³ which has existed in the decorative arts histories of many civilisations, morphing and fusing between cultures in the process of exchange and trade. These transactions in textiles have been documented as early as the fifth century (Crill 2008).

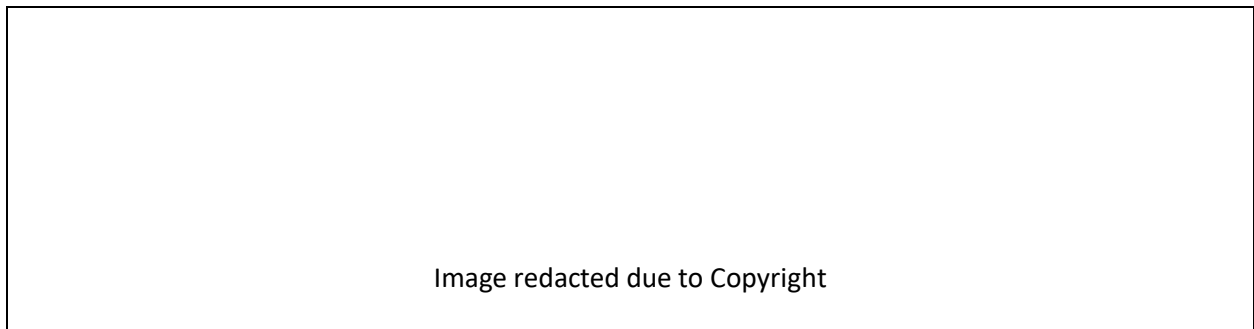


Figure 46. Samples from an album of Japanese *katazome wa-saraca* (also known as chintz) where traces of Indian, Chinese, South East Asian, Indonesian and Japanese motifs can be discerned.

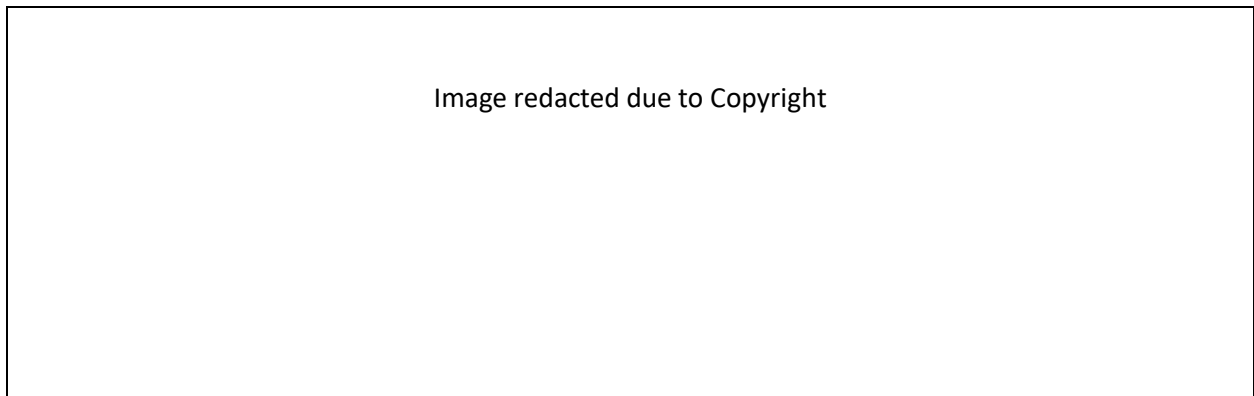


Figure 47. Example of an Edo period *Karakusa Monyo* (pattern book) of *saraca* and *karakusa* patterns, sometimes called a *hinagabaton* (design compendium).

⁶³ The tree of life, also called the tree of knowledge or the world tree, is a widespread motif appearing around the globe on a variety of objects. It is often seen as a metaphor for the connection of all forms of creation to a common descendant. See: World tree, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/world-tree>, retrieved 18/4/18.

European countries also started sending out their own designs to be copied by the Indian craftsmen in the seventeenth century, which were essentially adaptations of Indian designs to Western taste. This idea of adaptation was seized upon by merchants from the Dutch and French East India Companies, resulting in slightly different fabrics being produced for each area without ever completely losing their exotic character (Snodin and Howard 1996). This intervention of various cultural preferences in motif, colour and style was to spell the beginning of a vibrant period of trade-driven cross-collaborations which would last for centuries⁶⁴. Eventually Japan created its own distinctive styles of *wa-saraca* (*wa* meaning Japanese) in the seventeenth century, which evolved in new directions influenced and inflected by existing styles (see Figure 47).

Part of my fascination with globalised patterns such as *saraca* is their absorption of symbolic meanings and their ability to travel with their meanings across geography, picking up nuances and fusions as they move. Sachico Ito, in his account of the history and purpose of *wa-saraca* cloth, describes the patterns in terms of an 'important visual language', of possessing a 'beauty that evokes an invisible power', as being able to 'show us the soul of their creator' as objects infused with the aura of past lives, histories and emotions (Ito 2003, 10):

"Pattern as language" is the starting point from which we can unlock the mystery of the essence of *saraca* by considering the spiritual inheritance transmitted by its patterns. The undiminished originality of primal power resonates over the centuries. (Ito 2003, 29)

Ito not only gives an historic account of Japanese *saraca* cloth, he argues for it as the 'pattern of life' (Ito 2003, 140), a fabric which has been produced in various forms in an unbroken progression across eras and in various countries, entrenched in the daily life of world citizens across the globe and across time, originating alongside humanity's very own understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe. Ito claims that *saraca* is incarnated in the print on print trends seen in contemporary fashion (Ito 2003) just as chintz has been described as the ancestor of modern-day fashionably printed cloth (Crill 2008). The idea that these fabrics are like the two leaves on the tree of life, slightly different but essentially the same, stemming from the same trunk and root system, reinforces my sense that cloth can carry culture, contain culture and blend cultures as it grows and evolves in new directions.

Printed *wa-saraca* cotton cloth became central to Edo culture as the *shogunate* tried harder to enforce control over the *chonin*, resulting in forms of flamboyant splendour in everyday clothing becoming more subdued at times. 'The history of urban dress in the Edo period tended to fluctuate between opulence and restraint where the gorgeous ostentation denied them was consciously rejected in favour of a new fashion aesthetic known as *iki*, which roughly translates as chic' (Jackson 1997, 58). Outward ostentation was replaced with indigo-dyed cotton kimono, previously considered 'lowly'. *Saraca* patterns on cotton became increasingly complex and decorative to compensate for the foregoing of brightly coloured

⁶⁴ At the height of the Edo period when imported *saraca* was so popular, elements from English, Middle Eastern, Indian, Chinese and Japanese motifs had gradually begun to combine in the hands of Indian craftsmen, and chintz/*saraca* became increasingly a reflection of cross-cultural influences. Popular motifs such as the 'tree of life' which were viewed by Europeans as 'Indian' were in fact a combination of Chinese, Islamic and European elements that conformed to Western tastes (MacKenzie 1995). Coinciding with the Chinoiserie craze in Europe, imports from India began to incorporate Chinese stylistic influences, and recognisably Chinese motifs such as bamboo and peonies began to appear. Chinese porcelain designs were incorporated into textile designs, and were adapted alongside other Persian and South East Asian motifs of peacocks, monkeys and butterflies. An extensive array of decorative styles began circulating across continents, creating a complex web of influences and an abundant proliferation of new interpretations, re-working of traditions and overlaying of cultural symbols. 'Fantasy was built upon fantasy; imaginary Orients overlaid each other. Indian craftsmen adapted and modified the model patterns in light of their own experience' (MacKenzie 1995, 114).

patterns or high quality fabrics. In *Fireworks at Ryōgoku Bridge* (Figure 48), a group of *chonin* watch fireworks from the bridge around the year 1820. The *iki* aesthetic of reduced colourways in the print designs and the favouring of geometric, striped or smaller repeating floral motifs on cotton can be seen in the dozens of printed *kimono* worn by the group.

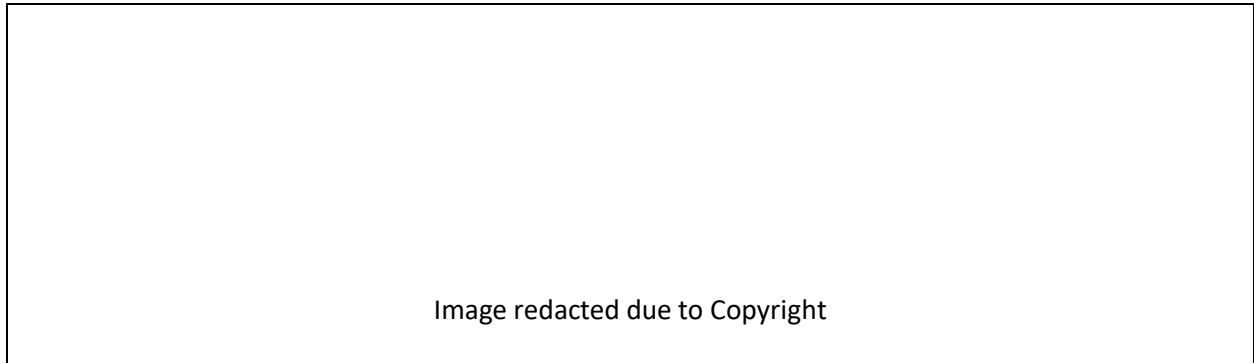


Figure 48. Utagawa Toyokuni, *Fireworks at Ryōgoku Bridge*. 1825.

Artisans became adept at creating sumptuous cloth simply with cotton and indigo dyeing by the masterful application of successive layers of patterned stencils in shades from light blue to indigo black, such as those in the *kimono* in Figure 44 and the sample textile book in Figure 47. The reverence for process, contributed by the consecutive artisans who designed, dyed and stitched a *kimono* or *obi*, is another element of Japanese aesthetics that somehow eludes English translation. Perhaps coming close is the term *koko* (basic, weathered) which can go some way to explaining the crepe-like appearance of cloth that is dyed and washed, but never ironed. *Kimono* panels were dried in the sun on panels of wood to keep them crisp and textured. These careful processes added to the literal expression of the *kimono*, in addition to reflecting an individual's personal emotions, age, sexual availability or vocation through design. All these signs could be 'read' and commented upon; a popular pastime in the Edo Floating World, where it became an expected leisure activity as important as sipping sake or blossom viewing.

At the close of the Edo period around the middle of the nineteenth century, textile design production and *ukiyo-e* had become uncontrollable by the *shogunate*. An 'over-ornate decoration characterise[d] the final decadent phase of the development of *ukiyo-e*' (D. Bell 2002, 73) as Japan finally opened its doors to a very modern world. The *shogunate* was overthrown and the emperor restored to power, marking the beginning of the Meiji period and Japan's new progressive outlook.

This chapter has introduced the art of the *ukiyo-e* print and its unique idiosyncrasies. I have been fascinated with the medium since an undergraduate 20 years ago and my aims were to appraise its aesthetic qualities, to arrive at an understanding of them to translate into my current creative practice. As a contemporary artist I have found inspiration in the *ukiyo-e* artists' composite role of designing textile patterns as well as correlating *ukiyo-e* prints, that depict those textiles worn on the body, further narrating stories about the individual in a semiotic language of meaningful communication. I have outlined Japanese aesthetic philosophies in a way that allows me a gentle grasp of their mysterious impenetrability, to contemplate how my own aesthetic aspirations might coincide with their tenets.

The remarkable beauty, quality and simplicity of a hand-stencilled print on a dyed cotton garment or a simple Japanese household artefact such as a *furoshiki* (small wrapping cloth, still in use in Japan today) have always intrigued me with their peculiar quality. I never cease to be startled by the ingenious arrangements of pattern, the gradations in scale and texture, and the enchanting depiction of natural phenomena on cloth achieved by generations of unknown craftspeople⁶⁵. This chapter has reviewed some of the qualities of Japanese printed textile arts such as *katazome* (stencil dyeing) with *katagami* stencils, *bingata* and *saraca* cloth although there is much more to investigate outside the parameters of this exegesis. *Saraca* has become particularly significant to my research as I come to understand it as a vehicle that carries cultures, religions, art and ornament across the globe, absorbing influences as it navigates and ultimately never ceases to adapt and change in alien hands.

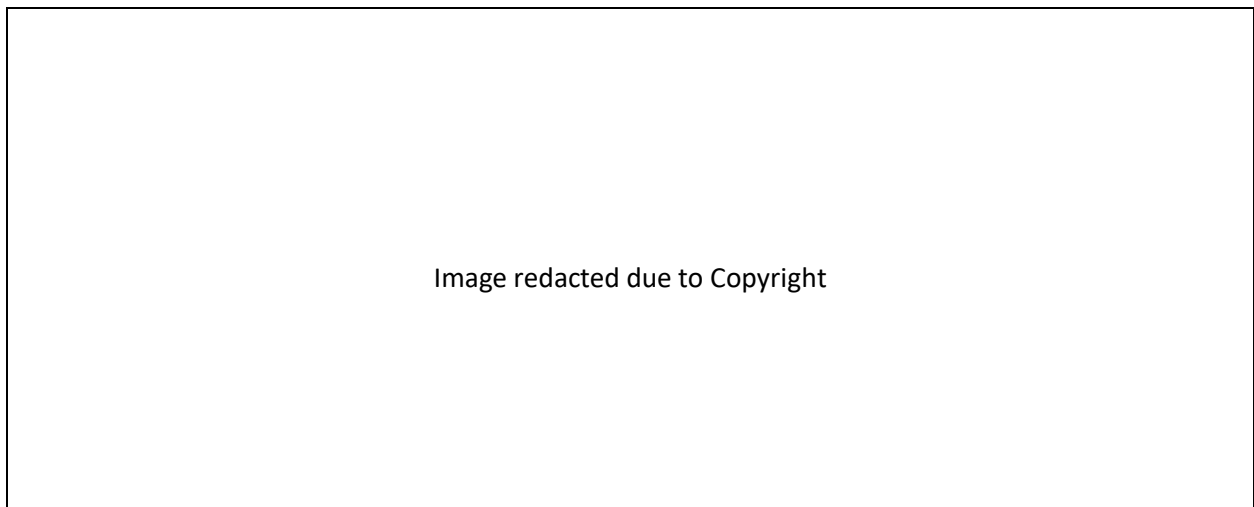


Figure 49. Kenya Hara, *A Way to Read the Map of the World*. 2014.

It has been said by authors that Japan is the final station at the end of the silk route⁶⁶ (Mizoguchi 1973; Menegazzo and Piotti 2014). Hara, in *Wa: The Essence of Japanese Design* (2014), describes Japan as the receptacle of the world's pinball machine, collecting influences from cultures all over the world on the way to Japan (see Figure 49). I argue that if the silk route is an undefined site of inter-cultural trade and exchange in textiles and if the pinball machine's receptacle is pushed further South-East still, then Australia becomes the receptacle and the new final station of the silk route. In my 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territory', Australia is just another port of call that the pinball passes through, another meandering route of criss-crossing cultural influences that propels the continual interchange and fusion of textile motifs through the sharing of religion, culture and everyday activities. Japanese *saraca* has been deeply

⁶⁵ *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* by Soetsu Yanagi, a book that describes Japanese aesthetic beauty and the importance of a hand-crafted aesthetic, was translated into English by the potter Bernard Leach in 1972, and it has been re-published in 1989 and 2013.

⁶⁶ The silk route ran from China in the East to Iran (then known as Persia) to the Mediterranean civilisations in the west. This vast region encompassed Afghanistan, Pakistan and Northern India, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan (formerly Soviet Central Asia) and Chinese provinces of Mongolia. It was an ancient network of trade routes and site for cultural interaction for textiles for centuries; its origins could be as old as that of civilisation (Sumner 1999).

influential to my creative practice in this sense, allowing a space for the creativity of new forms and development from Japan to Australia, where once again, new influences and inflections are added.

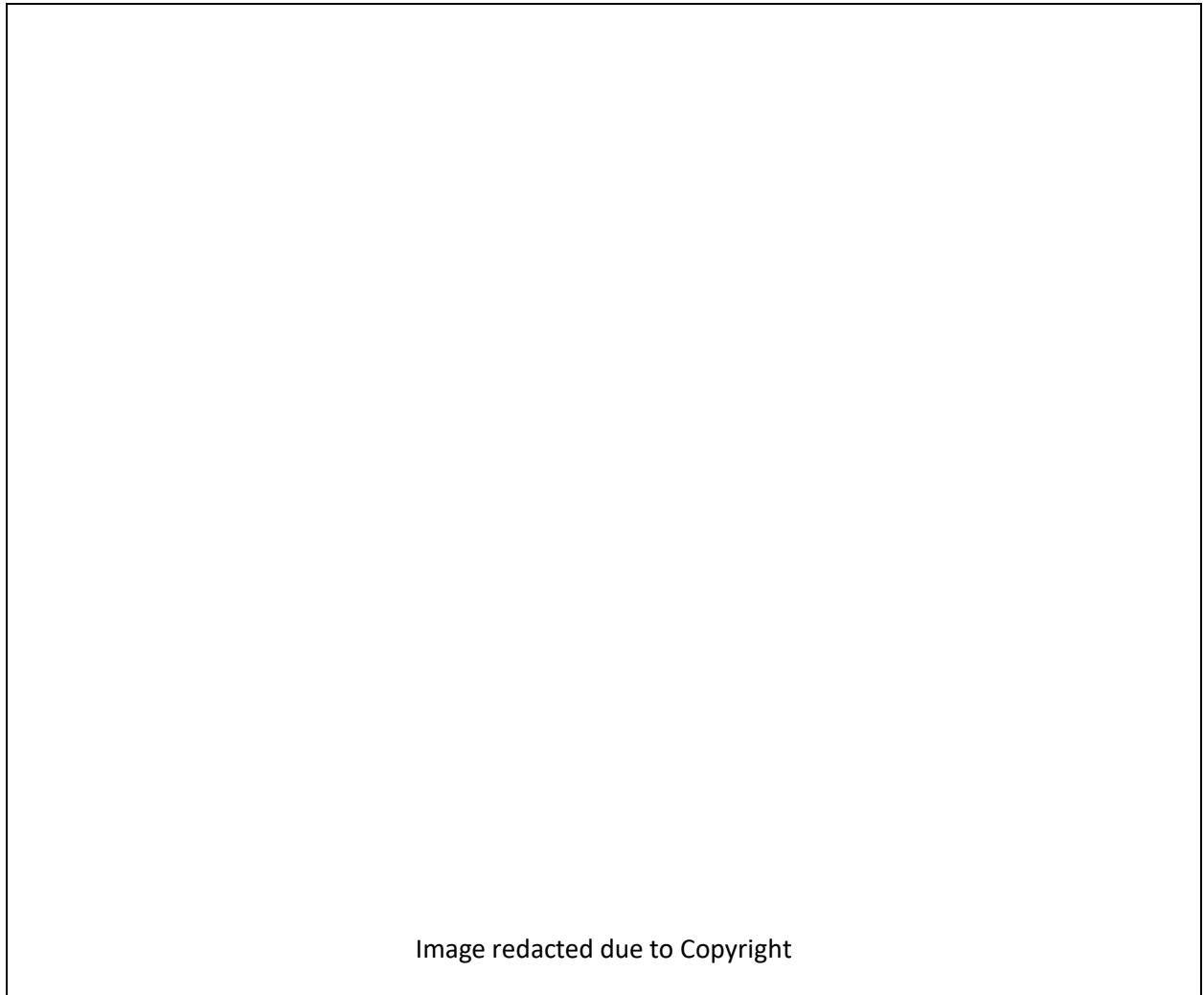


Figure 50. Okinawan *Bingata* (stencil dyed) textile detail from the Ryukuku Islands. n.d

Image redacted due to Copyright

Figure 51. Margaret Preston, *Bird of Paradise*. 1925.

Chapter Three

Japonism in Australian Art and Printed Textile Design

Recently published literature has only lightly touched on the specific topic of the Japanese influence on contemporary printed textile and surface design in Australia, despite numerous Australian designers drawing considerably from the arts of Japan. Select prominent Australian dress scholars go so far as to acknowledge and identify its occurrence, however a lack of any other in-depth comment reveals that the topic is significantly under-researched. In the catalogue essay for *The Japan Inspiration: Influence in Craft and Design*, an exhibition of ceramics at The Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1997, Eugenie Keefer Bell recognised that 'Japanese influences are evident in other areas of contemporary craft practice, such as textiles, wood, furniture, metal and jewellery' (E. Bell 1997, 6). This catalogue along with Bell's 2003 thesis 'Interpreting Japan in Australia 1870s-1970s' document the translation of aspects of Japanese design into ceramics and architecture in Australia. The scope of Bell's thesis does not encompass textiles for fashion, nor activity after the 1970s; however, it has been a useful resource for documenting the historical context in which Japanese culture became accessible in Australia (E. Bell 2003)⁶⁷ and is therefore an invaluable resource because scholarly comment on Australian Japonism is extremely limited.

Although academic research specific to textile and fashion is found in the 2010 book *Australian Fashion Unstitched, The Last 60 years*, where editors Bonnie English and Liliana Pomazan present a variety of scholarly essays, only one sub-heading entitled 'Asian influences' briefly outlines Australian designers for whom Asia plays a key role. These include Vixen, Akira Isogawa, Easton Pearson and Caravana. Jennifer Craik in 'Is Australian Fashion and Dress Distinctively Australian?' briefly reflects on Linda Jackson and Jenny Kee's blend of Australian Aboriginal and flora and fauna motifs with 'other motifs of the exotic (derivative of African, New Guinean and Japanese) in boldly coloured, extravagant designs to demonstrate a new level of Australian confidence and pride' (Craik 2009b, 434). Craik also mentions the Mambo surfwear designs of Bruce Goold which appear to possess both typically Australian and Asian influences. Margaret Maynard (2001) and Jennifer Sanders (1992) have also mentioned the influence of Japanese motifs in Australian textile design.

This chapter describes significant representations of Japonism in Australian printed textiles from the 1970s onwards and acknowledges it as a stylistic influence within the discipline. I identify noteworthy examples in the printed textile designs of Bruce Goold (Mambo) and Georgia Chapman (Vixen) among other designers, in order to consider their approaches and the attendant implications. Akira Isogawa and Florence Broadhurst have also been recognised as particularly significant to this topic due to their consistent and intentional incorporation of Japanese principles in design and their centrality to key moments in my creative production. For this reason they are the focus of case studies in Chapters Four and Five. Given my interdisciplinary approach to the research topic and the lack of comment in the field of textile design, the research in this chapter is not confined only to the medium of textiles. In

⁶⁷ Eugenie Keefer Bell's research focused principally on the locating and compiling of records of colonial Australia's first engagement with Japan through catalogues, reports, popular press and international exhibitions and their official publications. Bell altruistically intended the collation of this material into a single document to be a 'base for subsequent interpretative scholarship' (E. Bell 2003, 3) and certainly provides invaluable background research material.

chronological order, I briefly review artworks that have been important to the development of my creative production such as select Heidelberg era impressionist paintings and the work of modernists such as Margaret Preston, which also assists in outlining the historical record of Japanese/Australia relations and frames my examination of the contemporary emergence of Japonism in modern printed textiles.⁶⁸

Japonism in Australian Art

I have used the term 'Japonism' throughout this exegesis to describe the influence of Japanese arts on the work of Western artists, designers and craftspeople. Japonism is not an inherent quality of Japanese artefacts, rather it is ascribed through the eyes of an ethnocentric West. The term was first used in 1872 by the French author and collector Philippe Burty 'to designate a new field of study of artistic, historic and ethnographic borrowings from the arts of Japan' (Lambourne 2005, 3). Japonism profoundly influenced Western artists, introducing a new paradigm in design which was at once 'ecstatically received' and provided a 'fresh draught' of influence (MacKenzie 1995, 124) into nineteenth century disciplines which has continued to the present day.

When Japan's self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world ended along with the Edo period around 1854, Japan immediately began trade agreements with Russia, Great Britain, the United States and France (Wichmann 1981) resulting in a flood of Japanese artefacts to the Western world. The influx of Japanese traditions of textiles, printmaking, architecture and dress had a profound effect on the West, stimulating the emergence of modernism and ushering in a discernible change in the modern art, culture and dress (Wichman 1981; E. Bell 1997).⁶⁹ Although the West had already indulged in waves of orientalist fads of exoticism in styles such as Chinoiserie and Turquerie throughout the eighteenth century, Japonism's effect was perceived as more sincerely adopted by artists and designers:

The West's ebullient enthusiasm for Japan is unlike any other Orientalism. More impassioned than its embrace of the near East, more comprehending than its knowledge of China, and more engaged than with Kiplingesque India, the decisive Japonism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created philosophical and cultural involvements with Zen Spiritualism, haiku reductivism, Kabuki grandiloquence ... and [had] a profound effect on contemporary art and dress. (Martin and Koda 1994, 73-4)

Japonism's effects were also received in Australia. The 'fashionable taste for Japan' (Eagle 1987, 51) became apparent in Australia in the era between 1860 to 1890 when cultural interaction and trade began, initially stemming from immigration associated with the gold rush in Victoria and the pearling industry in Western Australia (Broinowski 1992; E. Bell 1997). A series of colonial International Exhibitions of Japanese items, beginning in Sydney in 1879⁷⁰, further introduced Australians to Japanese artefacts and

⁶⁸ Many contemporary fashion designers have drawn repeatedly on the influence of Japan for inspiration in terms of fashion silhouette and shape (English 2010). For example, Rebecca Patterson and Megan Salmon have both looked to contemporary Japanese designers such as Issey Miyake, Comme des Garçons (Rei Kawakubo) and Yohji Yamamoto for design inspiration. Nevertheless, this topic is outside the scope of this exegesis.

⁶⁹ The manifestation of Japonism in Modernism was immense, deeply influencing the period's most significant artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, James McNeill Whistler and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Japanese influences also contributed to the development of Art Nouveau (E. Bell 1997). For more information, see *Japonism: The Japanese Influence on Western Art* (Wichman 1981). Japonism created another wave of orientalism to feed the European obsession with the exotic that had already been in evidence in the adoption of Chinese, Turkish, Indian and other Eastern cultural stylistic elements into European decorative and fine arts throughout the seventeenth century (D. Bell 2002).

⁷⁰ The Sydney International Exhibition, which had a large Japanese court, was attended by over one million people. Other events followed in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. For a comprehensive overview of the Australian colonial encounter with

culture. Imports of *kimono*, furniture, fans and other 'bric-a-brac' (Eagle 1987, 58) were inexpensive and enthusiastically incorporated into the eclectic interiors of Australian homes of the Victorian period.

Mary Eagle's article 'The Mikado Syndrome: Was there an Orient in Asia for the Australian 'Impressionist' Painters?' (1987) in the *Australian Journal of Art* identifies the Japanese influence in Australian Impressionist paintings that have long been held in the Australian psyche as 'the first truly Australian phase of painting' (Eagle 1987, 45, original emphasis). She notes that:

In *9 by 5 Impressions* [Melbourne, 1889] there are aspects that appear Japanese. There are radically simplified descriptions of subjects briefly observed, with high view points and flattened perspective depth, asymmetrical compositions, a colour combination of yellow-blue-green-red, an occasional flat area of colour or a bit of calligraphic line and one or two eccentrically narrow formats. The ephemeral, unserious, everyday subjects of many *9 by 5* paintings are characteristic of Japanese art. (Eagle 1987, 45)

Eagle's article documents evidence that during this formative period of Australian art and nationalism in the 1880s and 90s, artists were being directly influenced by Japonism. Figures 52 to 56 can be observed as examples of this influence, although Eagle lists many more. Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, John Russell, Rupert Bunny, Sydney Long and Mortimer Menpes were all actively discussing and referencing Japanese art⁷¹ (Eagle 1987) and absorbing its mediated influence through European Aesthetic⁷² movement artists such as Camille Pissarro, Raoul Dufy, Pierre Bonnard and James McNeill Whistler⁷³. It is recognised that Japanese art was seen and appreciated in Australia in the 1880s, however the idea that it was having an effect on painting was not commented upon by media at the time, nor claimed by any of the artists except in personal correspondence. The *9 by 5 Impressions* exhibition received an unprecedented response from the public and press of the day, not for any sense of Japanese content, but because of the strong perception of the first truly nationalistic art that captured the atmosphere, character and impression of Australia, which it undoubtedly had (Eagle 1987).

It has only been in retrospect that scholars such as Eagle or Alison Broinowski have been emphatic about what was unremarked upon at the time. Broinowski comments,

Japonist allusions were too prevalent in the work of the Heidelberg painters, in the narrow formats, the angling of streets, coasts and quays, the cropping of objects, the use of solid black, of empty space and high horizons, the scattering of spontaneous moving figures, the purple shadows, and the use of blue, green and yellow with red accents, to be co-incidental. (Broinowski 1992, 42)

Japan, see *Interpreting Japan in Australia 1870s-1970s: A study of Significant Moments in the Australian Reception, Appropriation and Interpretation of Japanese Themes in Architecture and Design* (E. Bell 2003).

⁷¹ Eagle presents evidence of the knowledge and admiration of Japanese artists via artists' personal letters (Eagle 1987).

⁷² The Aesthetic movement promoted a fashionable taste for cheap oriental items such as Japanese fans, vases and liberty silks with unconventional floral arrangements and was eagerly taken up by the 'bohemian' Tom Roberts, Charles Conder and John Russell (Eagle 1987, 55; Broinowski 1992, 41).

⁷³ James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) was a central figure in the Aesthetic movement, which was founded on the philosophy of 'art for art's sake' and emphasised artistic principles, elevated taste, and creative eclecticism. He advocated for Japanese art, adopting many of its aesthetic qualities and was a vital influence on the *9 by 5* artists (Eagle 1987). See: 'James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903)', www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/whis/hd_whis.htm, retrieved 16/2/18.

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Top L to R: Figure 52. Tom Roberts, *By the Treasury*. 1889. Figure 53. Tom Roberts, *Andante* (also known as *Woman at the Piano*). 1889. Bottom L to R: Figure 54. Sydney Long, *The Valley*. 1898. Figure 55. Charles Conder, *Riddell's Creek*. 1889. Figure 56. Arthur Streeton, *Sirius Cove*. 1895.

Japonism was a hybridisation of many ideas and sources, mediated between Japan to Europe and back to the rest of the world, providing alternative fresh aesthetic and compositional devices to Western visual arts. Equally in Australia, artists used stylistic elements and interpretations of Japonism, fusing these with local themes to forge a new aesthetic that was enthusiastically adopted as uniquely Australian. It is likely that these artists were fully aware of their emulation of the arts of Japan but the political climate of the time in Australia encouraged a subterfuge of any Japanese sympathy.

Australian scepticism of 'Asians' had stemmed in part from the prejudiced mistrust, hatred and persecution of Chinese and Japanese culture during the gold rush years of the 1850s and '60s⁷⁴ and any direct association 'outside the lines of what was strictly fashionable was asking for trouble' (Eagle, 1987, 57). Japan did not have an influence on Australia in terms of economic, imperial or cultural power and was therefore unacknowledged by artists. Japanese imports were cheap and even *ukiyo-e* prints, despite being widely admired, were inexpensive and categorised as decorative items rather than high art – another reason for the Australian artists to distance themselves from this association.

Alison Broinowski recognised that most Australian artists were dissociated from any form of Japanese connection in her comprehensive overview in *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (1992). Whilst documenting artistic responses to Asia by Australians from colonial to modern times, Broinowski presents the idea that Australians in their Eurocentricity, in their 'stubbornness to look West instead of East', have foolishly ignored an image of themselves as Australasian 'because of their ignorance and ... ambivalence towards Asians' (Broinowski 1992, 45).

Broinowski argues that early Australian artists missed an opportunity for artistic and cultural expansion because of the racial discrimination in place in Australia leading up to the adoption of the White Australia Policy in 1901. She notes that many artists travelled all the way to Europe to 'learn from Europeans what was happening in their own hemisphere' (Broinowski 1992, 45).

The meandering landscapes filled with negative space within some of the Heidelberg era artwork has been perceived by Eagle and Broinowski as a latent form of Australian Japonism. These artists were intent on creating a renewed aesthetic of Australian identity in the visual arts to replace the perception of early Eurocentric visions of the landscape and it is interesting that the Japanese arts played a role in that new definition⁷⁵.

The next discernible phase of Japonism important to this exegesis is the contribution of Margaret Preston. The body of work produced in Preston's career as a printmaker and artist in the fine, applied and commercial realms has been crucially important to the traditions of Australian art (Edwards 2005) and of

⁷⁴ Even prior to this, racism and fear of being 'surrounded by enemies' (Broinowski 1992, 7) resulted in Australia gradually moving towards a series of policies that prevented non-European immigration. 'The White Australian Policy' was in place by Federation in 1901. See: 'Australian Immigration', Commonwealth of Australia, National Communications Branch, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, www.directory.gov.au/portfolios/home-affairs/department-home-affairs, retrieved 16/2/18.

⁷⁵ Other significant Australian artists and designers to utilise a Japonist aesthetic during the twentieth century are too numerous to list, however most notable are Violet Teague, Robert Juniper, Thea Proctor, Jessie Trail, A.B. Webb, Paul Haefliger, Lionel Lindsay, Ethel Spowers and Brett Whitely in his late career. Exhibitions in the twenty-first century which have examined the Japanese-Australian connection include *In the Japanese manner: Australian Prints 1900–1940*, 2011, which exhibited the work of Australian artists inspired by the traditional Japanese woodblock printing art of *ukiyo-e* as part of the National Gallery of Australia's Travelling Exhibitions Program (see: 'The Japanese Manner', 2011, <https://nga.gov.au/JapaneseManner/Index.cfm>, retrieved 23/03/18); *Zen to Kawaii: The Japanese effect* at the Queensland University Technology Art Museum in 2009 (Hickey 2010); and *Tokyo Vogue*, Brisbane City Gallery in 1999, which was a collection of Australian fashion items that had been influenced by Japan (Craik 2017).

great significance to subsequent generations and myself. Preston continually sought to understand the essence of Australian art, and the definition of a national style that drew on a fusion of principles from Asian and Aboriginal art consumed her artistic career (Edwards 2005). She determinedly advocated for Australian artists to study in Asia, rather than Europe, 'scorning filial piety to Grandpa G. Britain' and encouraging an art based on geography, not history (Broinowski 1992, 54).

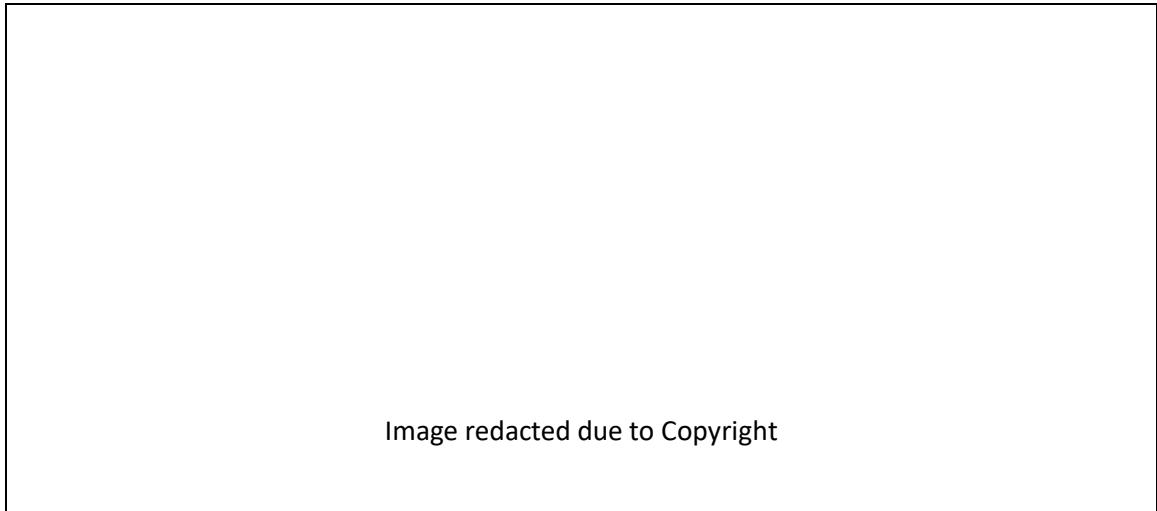


Figure 57. Margaret Preston, *Australian Rock Lily*. 1933.

As part of Preston's early career training in Paris in 1905, she studied Japanese art which highlighted a range of qualities that later appeared consistently in her work. She saw *ukiyo-e* prints in Paris at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1912 (Edwards 2005) and visited China, Korea, Indonesia, Polynesia and many other regions throughout Australasia. In 1934 Preston travelled to Japan to study the technique of woodcutting from the son of Hiroshige, indicating the depth of regard she allocated to the craft (Butel 1985, 29). The presence of Japonism was most profound in her woodcuts of the 1920s where her conscious use of Australian flora and fauna as subject matter is fused with Japonism:

Her study of Japanese art ... awakened her to a range of qualities ... a delight in asymmetry; pattern as a dominant element in design; the close-up observation of natural patterns so that they are revealed in discrete units; the celebration of the uniqueness of particular flora; the pleasure in the small event, making the unimportant emotionally and aesthetically significant. (Butel 1985,12)

Preston's woodcuts of the 1920s have been highly influential on my artistic career. In particular, I am inspired by the strength and vigour of the woodcut medium with its bold graphic quality which allows the works depicting flora to be feminine without being overly ornate. The Mosman series depicting the foreshore around Sydney (Figures 58 and 59) and her depictions of Australian native flowers and birds (Figure 51 and 57) have been particularly influential for some of the final works in 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'.

Her approach of particularising nature and landscapes into flat decorative panels with areas of simplified and complex patterning reveals her acute awareness of the Japanese picture plane in composition.

Despite her deliberate use of Japanese aesthetics, Preston's subject matter remained securely tied to Australian motifs, particularly floral specimens, distinctive architecture and capturing the harsh Australian light, reflecting her desire to interpret rather than emulate Japanese principles.

Preston's opinion of the importance of the formation of identity in Australian art was broadcast widely through her regular essay contributions and front cover features in Australian art and home magazines and by means of her public presence as a prolific exhibitor (Edwards 2005). Her 'ideal of an art created from a combination of the principles, motifs and techniques of Asian, Western and Aboriginal art' (Edwards 2005, 75) had precedents in broader European concepts which had been stated in scholarly writings on the decorative/fine arts in the early twentieth century. Ernest Fenollosa proposed in 1912 that an artform unified by the 'dispersion and contact throughout the vast basin of the Pacific (including the arts of Micronesia, Melanesia, China and Japan)' (Fenollosa, quoted in Edwards 2005, 76) could create a new form of art. Preston passionately argued for such an art, seeing her blend of Aboriginal, Pacific and 'use of Japanese pictorial principles under the rubric of a geographical imperative' (Edwards 2005, 76). These ideas accentuate my findings in Chapter One, which proposed that an approach to a cultural design identity that draws on the broad geographic basin of Australasia can be useful.

Preston's embrace of Asian and Japanese principles occurred during a period when Australian-Japanese relations were in a precarious state. Although trading partnerships between Australia and Japan continued throughout the 1920s and '30s, negative stereotypes of the Japanese were portrayed in Australian mainstream media in newspaper articles, cartoons, films, plays, and taught in school to children (Broinowski 1992; E. Bell 2003). A handful of artists, travellers and writers voiced differing opinions about Japanese culture, but the imminence of war created a fear and hostility that supported racism and exclusion and a deep reluctance for any type of association.⁷⁶

By the 1930s, Preston looked to Aboriginal art exclusively as the foundation for the development of an authentic national art; however, it is her Japonist phase of the mid-1920s that I have found most influential⁷⁷. Preston's work is important to this exegesis for the conscious and purposeful blend of Australian motifs with Japanese design, and also for the lineage of influence that flowed to textile designer Bruce Goold who I discuss shortly.

⁷⁶ In the late 1920s, Japan became increasingly militarised and from 1933 onwards invaded China and South East Asia, alarming Australians to increase military defence. During the Pacific War, Japan invaded the Philippines, Malaya, Thailand and the Dutch East Indies resulting in all Japanese civilians in Australia being interred in 1941. In May 1942, Japanese midget submarines were spotted in Sydney harbour and Darwin was attacked, causing extensive damage and loss of lives. The Japanese treatment of World War II prisoners of war cast further shadow over inter-cultural relations. After World War II trade links were re-established and Japan and Australia eventually became allies. Australian attitudes toward Japan improved through education and generational change and by 1976 the two countries signed the *Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation*, shaping the mutually beneficial modern relationship of the nations. Attitudes of discrimination during the inter-war years should be considered in the historical, political and social context of the time period. For a full account of Japanese-Australia relations, see: 'Events that influenced Australian-Japanese relations 1901-present', http://www.skwirk.com/p-u_s-16_u-430, retrieved 25/3/18.

⁷⁷ In 1947 Preston designed a series of textiles and wool scarves that were printed by Silk and Textile Printers of Sydney for their *Modernage* fabric range with Australian motifs, making her one of the very few textile designers active in Australia prior to the 1970s, (Edwards 2005) Other textile designers of note pre 1970s included Douglas Annand, Frances Burke and Michael O'Connell.

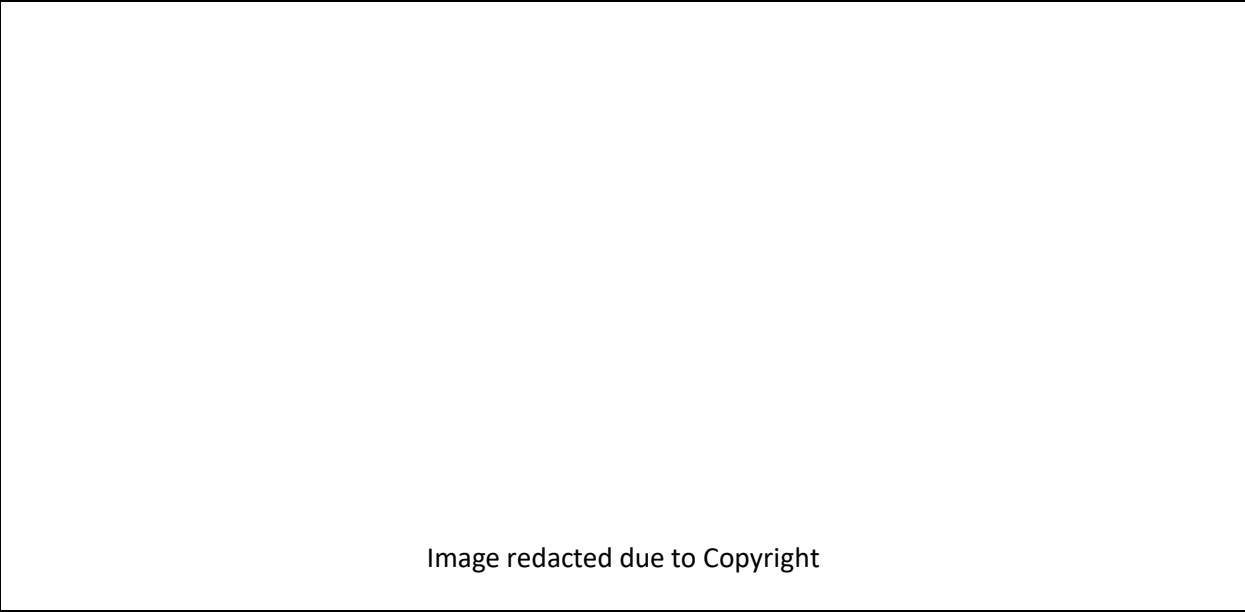


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Figure 58. Margaret Preston, *Mosman Bridge NSW*. 1927.

Figure 59. Margaret Preston, *Sydney Heads (2)*, 1925.

During the course of this research, the West Australian artist A.B. Webb has also become significant. He chose quiet, still and moody subject matter of the Swan River's flora, fauna and landscapes, imbuing these with a Japanese sense of design derived from *ukiyo-e* prints of the nineteenth century. I discuss Webb in the final chapter, as one of his paintings became a key inspiration for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'.

Japonism in Australian Printed Textile Design Post 1970s

I have already mentioned the importance of Jenny Kee and Linda Jackson as Australiana artists and designers of the 1980s. These designers were the first to embrace multiculturalism in textile design, drawing on Japanese among other cultural lexicons to create a distinctive new aesthetic and a colourful legacy of brashness and boldness in design. Improved postwar relations with Japan resulting from generational change and peaceful and prosperous economic ties encouraged artists to embrace cross-culturalism. Bruce Goold was a central Mambo⁷⁸ surfwear textile designer in the 1990s who found new ways of articulating Australia in textile design that also drew on Japanese design to dramatic effect. Goold cites Margaret Preston along with Katsushika Hokusai, Choki Eishosai and Utagawa (Andō) Hiroshige (*ukiyo-e* artists) as his major artistic influences (Golding 1998). Both Goold and Preston have been identified as having contributed toward a sense of Australiana style (Craik 2009b), yet both have claimed Japan as an important reference (Edwards 2005; Golding 1998).

⁷⁸ Mambo is a surfwear fashion label established in the mid-1980s. In 1994, the first Mambo 'Loud Shirt' was released, which was an Australian version of a Hawaiian 'Aloha' shirt. This shirt became one of Mambo's best sellers and started the Mambo 'Loud Shirt' style. In 2000 Mambo designed the athlete's uniform for the opening ceremony of the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney and in 2006 were named 'Australia's sixth most authentic brand' alongside Bonds, Speedo, R. M. Williams and Billabong, indicating their status as an iconic Australian brand. See 'Mambo Graphics' (2011).

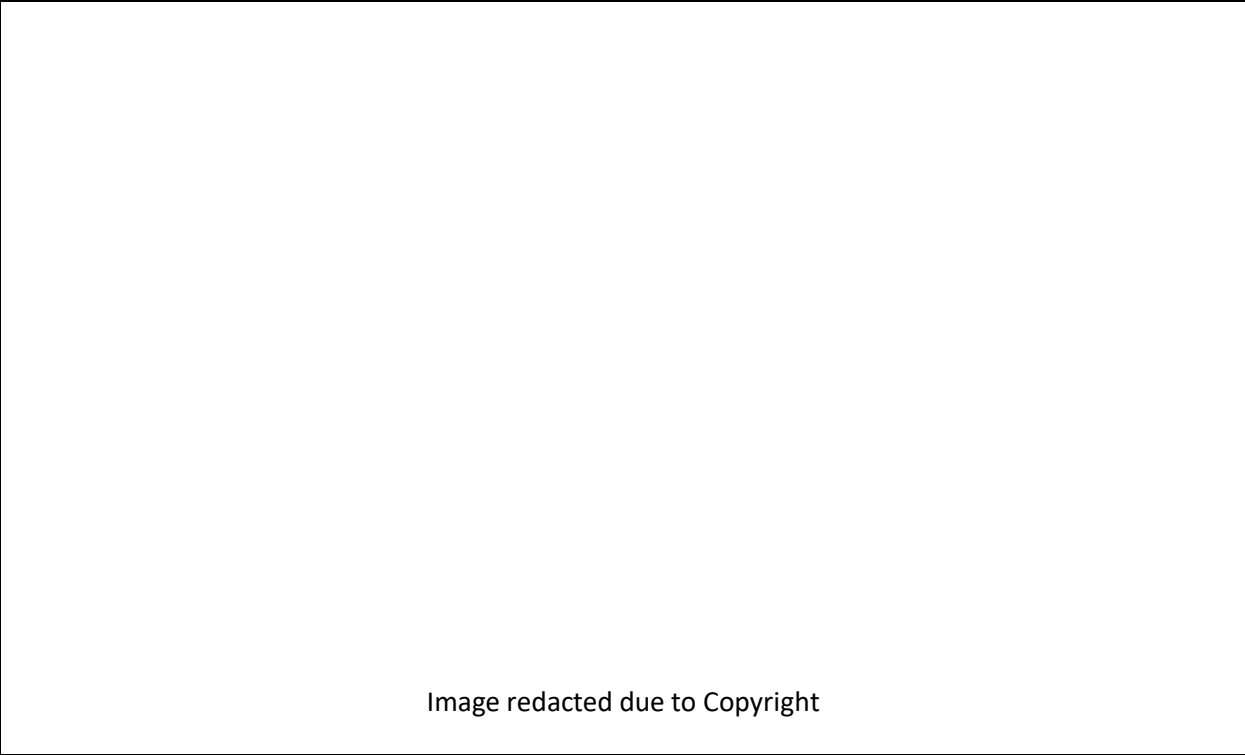


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Figure 60. Mambo, *Currawongs and Snake Loud Shirt* (Print design by Bruce Goold). 1995.

Goold's linocuts were transformed by Mambo into repeating patterns which became synonymous with the brand through its range of 'Loud Shirts', board shorts and t-shirts (Figure 60) which were well received by a global audience and have become iconic Australian designs.

Goold's artwork is characterised by a strong graphic woodcut style, which he hand-colours. The subject matter is predominantly Australian, featuring birds, trees, animals, floral specimens and iconic architecture such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, imagined as a *ukiyo-e* courtesan's hairdo in *Madame Butterfly* (Figure 65). This tongue-in-cheek Australian iconoclasm is typical of the Mambo surfwear fashion line that Goold worked for in the 1990s. *Bogon Moths* in Figure 62 is a screen printed textile, now housed in the Powerhouse Museum collection after exhibition in *Contemporary Australian Textiles* in 1991. It is an excellent example of the blending of traditional Japanese aesthetics with peculiarly Australian motifs. By comparing the traditional Japanese *katagami* stencil in Figure 61, which reveals the typically dense composition for an all-over *kimono* pattern, with Goold's print, the correspondences are obvious. Other prints such as *Cicadas* (Figure 64) and *Icarus Party* (Figure 63) also reveal an interesting translation which reframes cultural borrowings into new materials and meanings, and articulates a new perspective on design identity through cultural fusion. As with the latent Japonism in some of the Heidelberg era art, which was viewed at the time as remarkably Australian, it can be seen here the emergence of something that is initially regarded as typical Australian design but on closer inspection reveals that it has been inflected with a Japonist aesthetic.

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Top L to R: Figure 61. Unknown artist, Japanese *katagami* stencil. 19th century. Figure 62. Bruce Goold for Mambo, *Bogon Moths*. 1989. Bottom L to R: Figure 63. Bruce Goold, *Icarus Party*. 1994. Figure 64. Bruce Goold for Mambo, *Cicadas*. 1978. Figure 65. Bruce Goold for Mambo, *Madame Butterfly*. 1993.

Vixen Australia is a fashion label established by textile designer and artist Georgia Chapman⁷⁹ in Victoria in 1992. The label's hand screen printed textile pieces have been regularly exhibited and some have been acquired for the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Victoria and the Powerhouse Museum. The label has been deemed nationally significant for its superior limited edition garments, which arise from a craft-based practice (Cyberfibres n.d.). Chapman favours Japanese motifs and relates the hand-crafted aesthetic of Japanese textiles as the predominant reason for its significance in the development of her print lexicon (Figure 66). She contends:

The artisan approach to creating textiles that is commonplace in Japanese culture is also in keeping with the values of my business. I have always looked to other cultures that have a rich textile history. The East appeals to me because of the rich history of pattern and motif and the complexity of pattern structures – for me, it's the most exotic style and has probably been my constant inspiration over the last twenty years. I research traditional motifs and patterns, drawing on historical and cultural sources, then reinterpret and reinvent through colour and print techniques and I like to combine prints in unexpected ways, combining images, colours and textures creating a new hand-printed fabric. Working with hundreds of different swatches of fabric and multiple prints a story starts to emerge. There is nurturing and story telling in an artisan approach. (Chapman, personal communication, 2010)

⁷⁹ The label was originally established with Meredith Rowe, who left the partnership in 2000. Chapman's recent exhibitions at the Powerhouse Museum include *Sourcing the Muse* (2002) alongside Akira Isogawa, Nicola Ferrati, Easton Pearson and Michelle Jank, and *Smart Works: Design and the Handmade* (2007) with over 40 Australian and New Zealand artists displaying contemporary handmade designs (D*Hub).

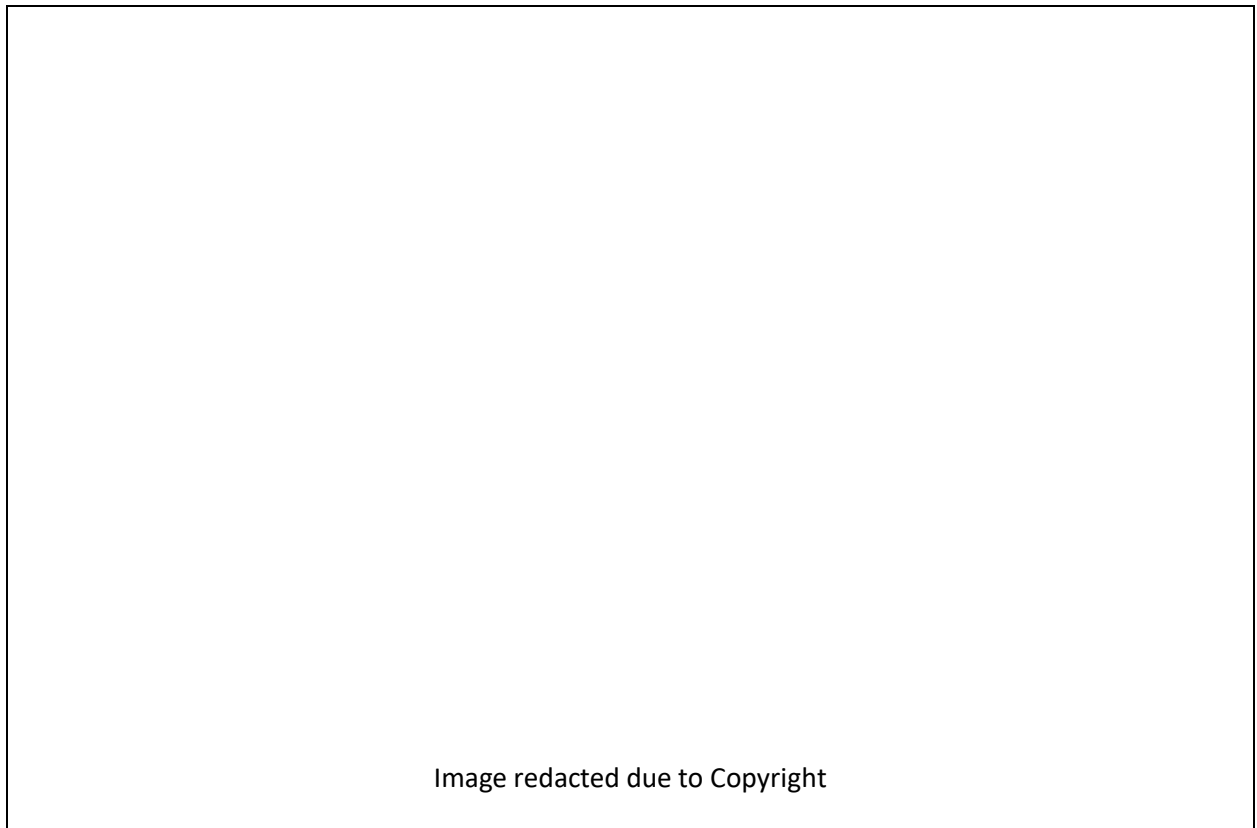


Figure 66. Georgia Chapman of Vixen Australia creating stencil designs for screen print. n.d.

Chapman's use of the screen print medium, which is the contemporary descendant of the Japanese *katagami* stencilling process, corresponds well to the faculty of making desirable, yet unsought-for, discoveries. When screen print sampling, the translation from hand-drawn stencil to screen print on fabric creates an alchemical exchange that can only be realised through experimental investigations. For example, the overlaying of colours can create new shades, negative space can change due to an adjacent print, a smudge or mis-print might reveal a new composition, or a fabric texture may vary the print's appearance. The print sampling process, which would also have been practiced by Japanese *katazome* practitioners, allows scope for the research of colourways, repeat of motif, scale relationships, and background versus foreground relationships.

Chapman often uses the device of incorporating a Japanese-inspired pattern placed in a particular position on a garment to enhance the body by following its natural curves in a similar manner to the placement of print on traditional *kimono* in a *fukinsei* placement (asymmetry or irregularity). Motifs derived from the natural world are placed in such a way as to imply an incompleteness whereby the viewer or wearer must then supply the missing symmetry and participate in the creative act (Figure 67). Chapman's use of tonal variations in colour within one fabric creates a layered, decorative aesthetic which is easily identifiable as hand-printed, encoding values of authenticity and artistry (Figure 68).

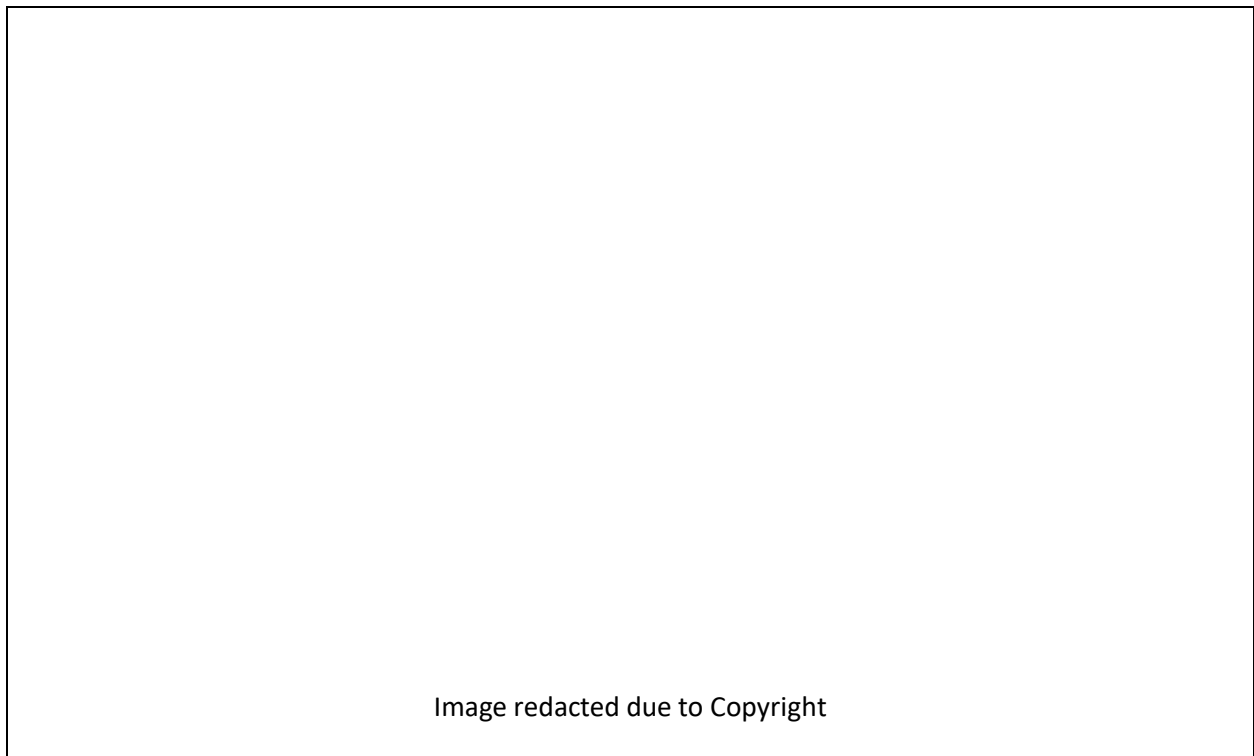


Figure 67. Vixen Australia Fashion Catalogue. 2005. Figure 68. Vixen Australia Fashion Catalogue. 2005.

Georgia Chapman’s designs for Vixen can be considered a form of constructed exoticism, where other cultural design principles and ethnographic elements are fused to create new objects for fashion:

More than anything else, I think I’m like a bower bird, borrowing from other cultures to create my own particular look. That’s the Australian component of my work – the combinations of patterns, motifs and colours. (Chapman, personal communication, 2010)

This comment indicates that Chapman sees her deliberate combination of styles as a defining Australian element of her work and she does not need to justify borrowing other cultural motifs; the combining of other aesthetic styles is simply the *raison d’être* of the designer. The Vixen label encapsulates a twenty-first century eclecticism, found in International and Australian fashion labels that perceive other cultural motifs without a sense of copyright, utilising pattern designs that circulate globally, belonging to multiple traditions simultaneously.

The two designers I have examined here, Bruce Goold and Georgia Chapman, are an important influence on my creative practice, but they do not reflect an exhaustive list of contemporary printed textile designers influenced by Japan⁸⁰. For example, Sheree Dornan has a textile practice that has been described as an ‘imaginary tableaux that evokes romantic eras. Dornan’s textiles’ [sic] evoke real worlds, too, bridging East and West, and history with present day’ (Quinn 2012, 88). Recognised in 2012 by international fashion author Bradley Quinn as a ‘textile visionary’ (Quinn 2012), Dornan’s labels Love in Tokyo and R_e_e_d_o_r work with reclaimed vintage *kimono* and *obi* textiles, often incorporating the

⁸⁰ Other independent textile-print designers that I have observed to have drawn on Japanese design (based on appearance only) include Nicola Cerini, Catherine Martin, Ink & Spindle, and Rokoco Textiles.

smallest scraps into bespoke fashion items, working from the Japanese idea of *boroboro*, meaning something tattered or repaired, exemplifying the Japanese aesthetic ideal of *wabi-sabi* in that the fabric reflects the beauty of natural wear and use. Dornan also uses screen print and digital print to create original limited edition textiles often inspired by vintage kimono *katagami* designs (Figure 69). She remarks,

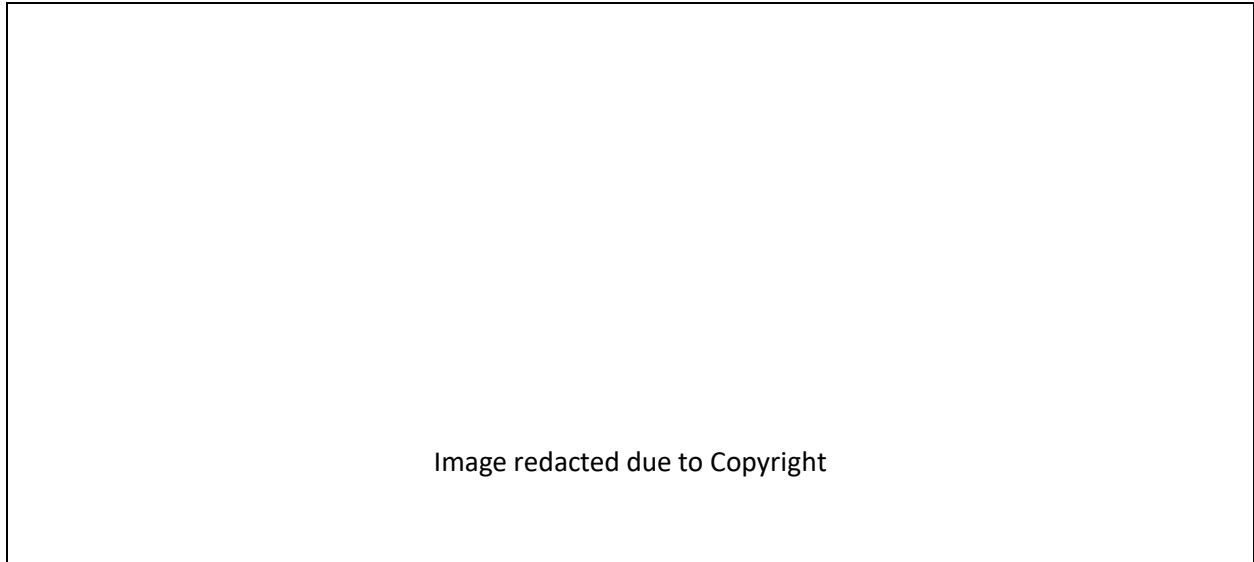


Figure 69. Sheree Dornan, *The Bird and the Kimono*. 2010.

I've never been to Japan, but the philosophies of the approach to art making and design have really influenced me ... I've collected Japanese artefacts for years and they always inspire me to create new textile designs, because of their colourway or irregular layout. (Dornan, personal communication, 2018)

This chapter has described artists who have drawn direct or mediated inspiration from Japan despite the historical circumstances of racism that stagnated that process. As political and social influences have changed over the last century, the positive reception of Japanese-derived styles in Australian art and design has increased, particularly from the 1970s onwards. Contemporary Australian designers are characterised by an embrace of multicultural and multidisciplinary design where attitudes of discrimination, present in the inter-war years, have largely been replaced with the understanding of Australia as a tolerant, united, multiracial country where equality and diversity are present.⁸¹

Contemporary designers may look frequently to Japan but may also be inspired simultaneously by many other currents of influence, given the wide acceptance of hybrid forms in modern society. The creation of a piece of art or design is complicated. Many cultural traditions and techniques may contribute toward a design and that influence may be received through direct contact with that culture via travel or mediated

⁸¹ See: Multicultural Statement, Australian Government Home Affairs, <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/LifeinAustralia/Documents/MulticulturalAffairs/english-multicultural-statement.pdf>, retrieved 16/4/18.

through existing artwork, publications, personal contacts or via many circuitous routes. Eugenie Keefer Bell observes:

Artists and designers may respond directly to Japanese images, forms, attitudes, spatial organisation, materials or methods of construction. The success of the resulting objects or images is not determined by the accuracy of the author's reading of the Japanese original, but in the articulation of its resonances into new forms. (E. Bell 1997, 8)

Designers may create subtle or overt interpretations of Japanese material language. They may be engaged with the culture to the extent of visiting the country to study its art, such as Margaret Preston, or observe it from a distance, creating imaginary forms or 'resonances', as Bell calls them. For example, Sheree Dornan, who has not travelled to Japan, can still be deeply influenced by the culture, as what Georges Lemaire calls the 'armchair orientalist' in his tome *The Orient in Western Art* (2000). Lemaire claims that the artist who creates from pure imagination, inspired solely through pictures and literature and the artist's interpretation, 'the journey not taken', can be the most profound in terms of design (Lemaire 2000, 8). This idea suggests that the creative process can sometimes be a necessary form of mis-interpretation or mis-reading, where a dislocation from direct engagement with the subject can create a tension that transforms the artist's chosen medium into interesting new forms and meanings.

An examination of the motives for Australian practitioners to draw on Japan are similar to reasons why other Western nations have done the same for hundreds of years. Artists have found in aspects of Japanese culture opportunities to reflect or construct new meanings, views, or ways of understanding the world. Japonism may provide designers and artists with a mode to engage with exoticism or romanticism or new ways to imagine experience through the eyes of another culture (E. Bell 1997).

The attraction may be to a medium or layout – for example, the graphic *katagami* style adopted by Margaret Preston or Bruce Goold, which translates so well into the form of wood-cut block or screen-printed design – or the aesthetic approach of using *fukinsei* placement, which is common to all the artists and designers in this chapter. Egyptian scholar Mohammed Mahmoud Khalil considers Western-inspired orientalist art as essentially a search for the decorative (Lemaire 2000), whilst English theorist David Brett attributes decorative art to the search for pleasure (Brett 2005), indicating that Japonism, as a form of orientalism, can gratify the inclination toward ornamentation. These yearnings may be pursued solely or in combination with other attributes of Japonism. Eugenie Keefer Bell suggests that Japonism can represent a desire for qualities of Zen Buddhist reductivity or *haiku* eloquence, fulfilling a spiritual aspiration (E. Bell 1997). An engagement with the extraordinary manifestations of exoticism inherent in Japanese textiles and the fascination with unfamiliar cultures or with the unseen and unknown holds deep fascination for designers and artists. The rejuvenation of traditions or disappearing techniques and the valuing of material culture through creative collaboration can also be a driving force for designers.

This chapter has acknowledged designers who have engaged with Japonism and considered the use and significance of these representations. In the following chapters I consider two designers, Florence Broadhurst and Akira Isogawa, who have drawn on Japanese aesthetics in very different ways, allowing a deeper examination of cultural appropriation, trans-orientalism and the use of traditional Japanese aesthetics such as *wabi-sabi* in Australian design. These designers are particularly important because of the impetus their work provided in the development of my creative production for this projec

Image redacted due to Copyright

Top L to R: Figure 70. Florence Broadhurst, *Peacocks* (Detail). Circa 1970.
Figure 71. Florence Broadhurst, *Kabuki* (Detail). Circa 1970. Middle L to R: Figure 72. Florence Broadhurst, *Japanese Bamboo* (Detail). Circa 1970. Figure 73. Florence Broadhurst, *Japanese Floral* (Detail). Circa 1970. Bottom L to R: Figure 74. Florence Broadhurst, *Birds of Paradise* (Detail). Circa 1970. Figure 75. Florence Broadhurst, *Cranes* (Detail). Circa 1970.

Chapter Four

Japonism in the Work of Florence Broadhurst

An account of contemporary Australian printed textiles influenced by Japan would not be complete without acknowledging the design influence of Florence Broadhurst. Her body of Japanese surface designs for wallpaper and textiles were initially released in the mid-1970s in Sydney, Australia, and although popular at the time, the prints ceased to be promoted after Broadhurst's death in 1977. Since being re-launched by Signature Prints in 1999⁸², the print designs have been globally successful, produced and consumed on wallpapers and interior fabrics, high fashion textiles, luggage, kitchen appliances, home decor items, shoes, bed linen, carpets and more, posthumously giving Broadhurst credit as an Australian design icon (O'Neill 2006; O'Brien 2004; Schmidt and Tay 2009; Leser 2006).

In this chapter, after presenting a short biography, I assess the integration of Japanese design into Broadhurst's collection of prints and consider how a sense of timelessness, through the use of Japonism, is partially responsible for the continued popularity of her work. I also consider Broadhurst's borrowing of Japanese elements in terms of cultural appropriation.

This chapter introduces the first body of artwork I created for this research, namely, *On the Surface*, also the title of the exhibition I held at the Moores Building, Fremantle, in 2013. The work featured a series of textile designs and fashion illustrations inspired directly from my research into Broadhurst's designs. The series of work is discussed for both its merits and limitations in relation to answering the main research question in this exegesis of how Japonism can contribute to Australian printed surface design and art.

Early Life and Career

I first came across the work of the Australian artist and designer Florence Broadhurst as an undergraduate art student in 1999. I immediately felt an affinity with her graphic works which interpreted Asian patterns boldly and brightly. Much of what has been written about Broadhurst focuses on her persona, as she re-invented herself several times across different continents and decades. Two biographies, *Florence Broadhurst: Her Secret and Extraordinary Lives* (O'Neill 2006; authorised) and *A Life by Design: The Art and Lives of Florence Broadhurst* (O'Brien 2004; unauthorised), and a documentary-style film *Unfolding Florence* (2007) help to piece together the remarkable story of her life. However, the focus of these examples is mostly on her flamboyant exploits, deceptions and reconstructed identities, the glamorous aspects of her life as an artistic personality who was murdered in 1977. Her killer is still unknown, leaving a mystery hovering over her memoir.

Two articles have been published which attempt a more thorough evaluation of Broadhurst's career. 'Imagining the Orient: Cultural Appropriation in the Florence Broadhurst Collection' by Vicki Karaminas

⁸² Global success and unprecedented demand for the prints began from 2001, when British magazine *World of Interiors* devoted seven pages to Broadhurst's designs. This was followed two years later by Italy's *Casa Vogue* (2003) which published five pages on the Australian designer (Leser 2006). In 2015, Signature Prints continued to expand their market for Florence Broadhurst prints globally (Lennie 2015 personal communication).

(2007) calls for a discussion on design ethics, in particular the use of design motifs beyond and out of context of their original cultural significance. A *Fashion Theory* journal article of 2009 titled 'Undressing Kellerman, Uncovering Broadhurst: The Modern Woman and UnAustralia' by Christine Schmidt and Jinna Tay (2009) focuses on Broadhurst's contribution to modernity as an Australian woman. It also states:

Broadhurst, through repeated reconstructions of her persona and constant re-layering of her identities, concocted versions of herself in order to pass through Shanghai, London and Sydney societies ... Despite this resurgent public recognition of [her] life and achievements, scholarly analysis of their legacies in the fields of fashion and design are still relatively neglected. (Schmidt and Tay 2009, 482)

Realising that very little had been written about Broadhurst, I travelled to Sydney in 2015 to visit the State Library of New South Wales which retains Broadhurst's archive of personal papers, the Powerhouse Museum which stores her extant design albums and Signature Prints which now possesses the rights to her designs and hundreds of her original silk screens⁸³. This primary research, along with the existing texts mentioned, form the basis for the research in this chapter.

Florence Broadhurst was born in 1899 in rural, isolated Mount Perry in Queensland. She was an ambitious and capable child and as a young adult in 1922, transformed herself into a vivacious flapper named 'Bobby Broadhurst' travelling extensively throughout Asia for fifteen months as a musician, singer, dancer and comedian with the *Globe Trotters*, a musical comedy sextet (O'Neill 2006); this, at a time when 'going to Brisbane was considered exotic' (*Unfolding Florence* 2007). The tour included China, India, Burma, Assam, Siam, the Malay States, Java, Sumatra and Japan (O'Brien 2004). Broadhurst based herself in the commercial centre of colonial Asia, Shanghai, from 1924 and established a new quartet *The Broadcasters* (which also toured Japan) and began a lifelong pretence that she was British⁸⁴.



Figure 76. Florence Broadhurst in India in the 1920s. Figure 77. Florence Broadhurst, *Cranes*. Circa 1970.

⁸³ In 2018, the entire Broadhurst collection of print designs and silk screens were sold to an Australian company, Materialised. Their website claims: 'Materialised now have the exclusive rights for both textiles and wallcoverings for the Australasian markets and are excited to be offering this collection of furnishing fabrics and commercial wallpapers. As the new home of the iconic Florence Broadhurst Design Library, our digital printing technology will breathe new life into the Florence Broadhurst range, adding versatility and unforeseen creativity for wall coverings, drapery and upholstery'. See: 'Materialised is uncovering the Florence Broadhurst Archive', <http://materialised.com.au/florence-broadhurst/>, retrieved 19/4/18.

⁸⁴ Broadhurst created a complex web of lies and deceptions which she cultivated until the day she died. Telling tall stories became part of the intrigue and enigma of Florence Broadhurst's biography resulting in difficulty for her researchers as many of her claims were fictitious.

Press clippings I found in her personal papers confirm her performance as ‘Bobby Broadhurst’ in the Japanese city of Kobe in 1924:

After a successful soiree at the Tent Hotel in Yokohama, Japan, the *Kobe Herald* claimed The Broadcasters were “up to New York and London standards” and another reviewer declared, “Miss Bobby’s charming voice evoked enthusiastic encore calls”. (O’Brien 2004, 49)

Notes and photos from her personal albums of the period attest to her spirit of adventure and her sense of the flamboyant, the artistic and the avant-garde. Photos of Broadhurst show her visiting the Great Wall of China and Taj Mahal and other significant sites where she would have been exposed to a range of stylistic and cultural influences albeit from a British colonial vantage point.

In Shanghai in 1926 she established the Broadhurst Academy Incorporated School of the Arts where she and her employees ‘provide expert tuition in every branch of Music and Elocutionary Studies, ... Drawing, Painting, Modern Ball Room and Classical dancing. The credibility and success of this venture demonstrates exactly what a capable business woman Broadhurst was, using networking and marketing well before the terms were a common practice’ (O’Brien 2004, 49). In March 1927, Nationalist armies took control of Shanghai and Broadhurst, along with most expatriates, fled the city, travelling solo to London. By 1933 she had married and opened a dress salon, claiming to be a French couturier, Madame Pellier. By 1939, she had left her first marriage, closed her store in London, met a new husband, Leonard Lewis, and had a son, Robert. Moving back to Australia in 1949, Broadhurst had been ‘British’ for twelve years and carried on this pretence as she established herself as an artist⁸⁵, socialite and charity patron in the Sydney suburb of Manly.



Figure 78. Kobe in the 1920s. Figure 79. *Noren* (curtain), Meiji period (1868-1912).

In 1959, at the age of 60, she registered *Australian (Hand-Printed) Wallpapers*, later changing it to *Florence Broadhurst Wallpapers* as her success grew. In the 1950s, many Australians were living in dark, gloomy homes that did not reflect their Antipodean environment. Broadhurst decided it was her mission to introduce colour to Australian homes. Her desire was to ‘cure people who display timid decorator syndrome. You spot them easily. They’re always afraid of bold design and bright colour’ (*The Australian* 1968).

⁸⁵ Broadhurst chose to paint the Australian landscape with some success. She claimed to the media to be an English aristocrat, trained in art and that she was friends with the Queen Mother and Winston Churchill, all of which were untrue.

For almost 20 years, until she was murdered in 1977, Broadhurst was Australia's foremost wallpaper designer, building a successful business due to her tireless effort to promote her business and herself around the globe. With clients such as Estée Lauder and Qantas, and promotion in popular magazines of the time, her papers and textiles had become status symbols of glamour and prestige. Broadhurst completely revolutionised⁸⁶ the Australian wallpaper industry, which had largely been awash with conservative designs imported from Europe and America. After her death, fashions changed and the trend for wallpapers diminished. The collection of film positives and silk screens languished in a series of business takeovers. Many times the entire collection was almost destroyed, being considered worthless. David and Helen Lennie, the proprietors of Signature Prints, appraised the design collection to be of high cultural value and the designs were painstakingly brought back to life and re-launched in 1999.

Broadhurst's son, Robert Lloyd Lewis, believes her time in Asia 'made a huge sensory impression on her' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2004) inspiring the bamboo, peacocks, butterflies and water birds that featured in her figurative designs. A photograph in her role as Bobby Broadhurst in the 1920s shows her reclining in India, wearing a robe decorated with cranes (Figure 76). It is not difficult to see how this photo, which she kept in a personal album, could have influenced the design of *Cranes* (Figure 77) which she launched in the 1970s and still in high demand today. The design is intricate and timeless, most certainly inspired by Japanese *kimono* designs, which often depicted cranes as a symbol of longevity.

Japanese Bamboo (Figure 72) borrows a traditional Japanese motif and arranges a dynamic pattern with strong vertical lines which accentuate height when applied to a wallpapered room. The radial leaves of the bamboo create a pleasing, bold pattern of extreme contrasts. Broadhurst printed these patterns in wild clashing colours such as bright orange and red or metallic silver on lime green. When compared to the *noren* design in Figure 79, it is not difficult to see the correlation between design inspiration and output.

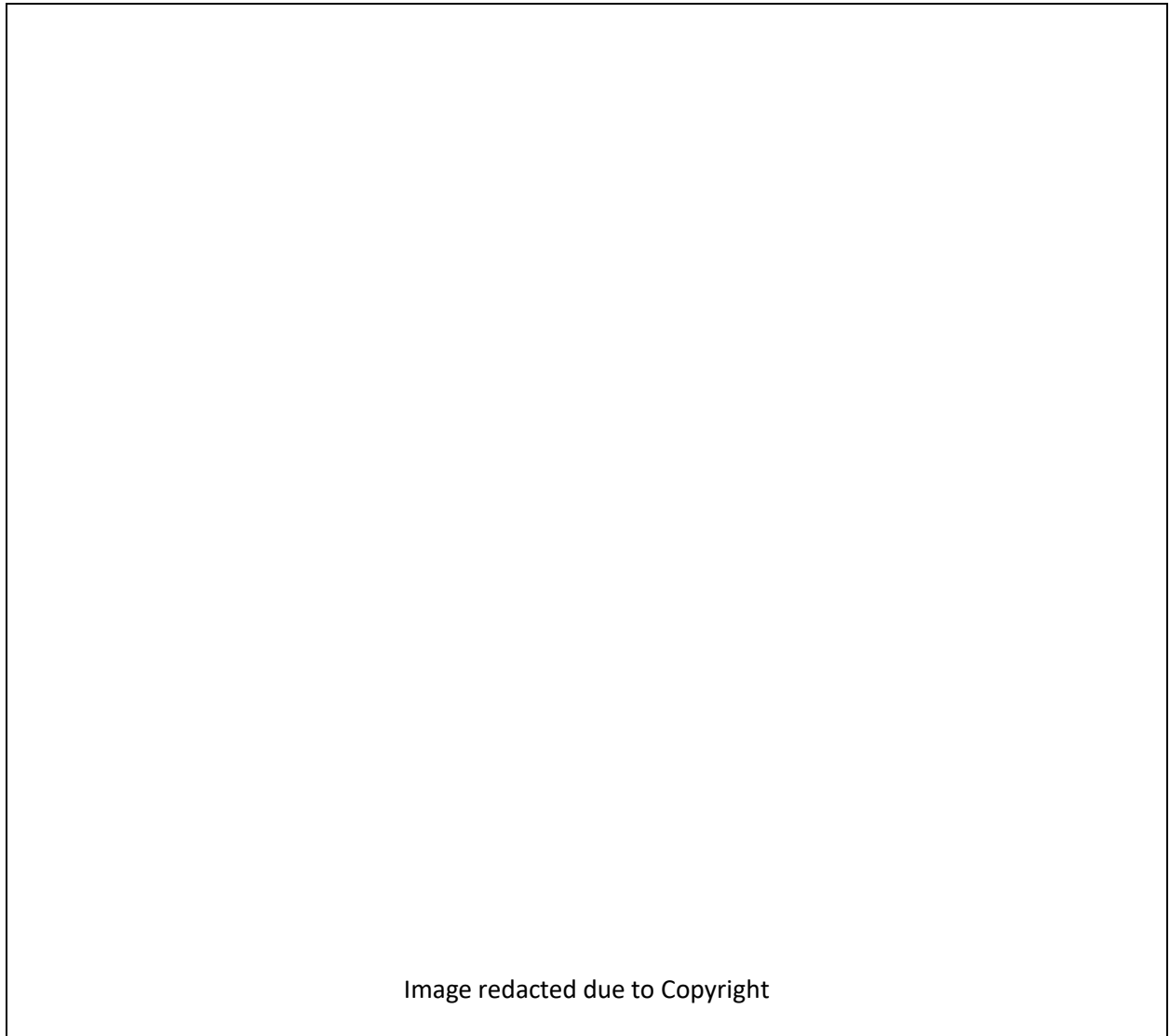
The only written evidence of Broadhurst's understanding of Japanese art is from a personal letter she wrote to her family stating her admiration for the Japanese (*Unfolding Florence* 2007) although the fact that Broadhurst visited the city of Kobe in the 1920s indicates that she would have witnessed *noren* (Figures 78 and 79) and *kimono* and other textile and design objects in use in Japan at the time. Accounts of Broadhurst's personality in the biographies and documentary film indicate that she was an adept director, stylist and colourist. She collected items in her travels – colourways, patterns and ideas which later were worked into her designs. Broadhurst 'may have had a possible aversion to association with Japan' (Van De Ven, personal communication, 2015) due to the 'discrimination against Asians' present in Australia post World War II (as outlined in Chapter One) and as an astute business woman, released her Japanese inspired prints in the 1970s when she perceived the public was ready to receive them.

The Resurgence of Florence Broadhurst Designs and Timeless Design

Since Signature Prints relaunched Florence Broadhurst's designs in 1999, her wallpapers can be found in nightclubs, restaurants and residences globally. Leading fashion designers including Karen Walker, Akira Isogawa, Nicole Zimmermann and Kate Spade have used the designs extensively often in subsequent seasons, which demonstrates astonishing longevity given the nature of contemporary fashion's desire for

⁸⁶ Florence and her staff of printers, colourists, artists and assistants invented a system of waterproofing her papers for use in wet areas and experimented extensively with various mediums and techniques to create a superior, world-class product of the highest quality (O'Brien 2004).

the new⁸⁷. David and Helen Lennie have suggested that ‘the phenomenal resurgence and popularity of the designs is due in part to the mystique of Florence’s life’, however they add ‘personality alone cannot sell thousands of metres of wallpaper, it is the strength of the designs which have made this possible’ (personal communication, 2015).



L to R: Figure 80. Florence Broadhurst, *Japanese Bamboo Wallpaper*, *Japanese Bamboo Design*, and *Japanese Floral*. Figure 81. Kate Spade (New York) with Florence Broadhurst *Japanese Floral* design.

⁸⁷ In 2005 an article in *The Age* stated, ‘the world has gone Broadhurst crazy, even more so in Europe and America than in Australia’ (Follow 2005). There is a global demand for the wallpapers by interior decorators and designers across Europe, Asia and America. Australian mainstream brands such David Jones, Qantas and Mimco have commissioned the designs for application in a variety of products. The designs have been used on the set of the television show *MasterChef*, while celebrities such as Cate Blanchett, Stella McCartney and Marc Jacobs have featured them in their family homes, assisting the perception of them as status symbols of excellence and glamour in Australian design.

Of the 530 original 1960-70s designs, only 30 or so have been re-launched and many of these have a Japanese aesthetic, indicating that David Lennie, as the new custodian of the print collection, understood the Australian market would respond well to this style⁸⁸. The designs *Kabuki*, *Cranes*, *Chelsea*, *Nagoya*, *Japanese Bamboo*, *Japanese Floral*, *Japanese Fans*, *Oriental Filagree*, *Exotic Birds*, *Birds of Paradise*, *Egrets*, *Shaboo Bamboo*, *Pagoda*, *Phoenix*, *Oriental Filagree*, *Oriental Porcelain*, *Abstract Butterflies* and *Ikeda* all contain an obvious conceptual relationship in subject matter and visual debt to Japan in their *katagami*-like (Japanese stencil paper) design which suited the medium of screen print so well. The reduction of complicated representational ideas into simple forms and using empty space as an element of balance can be seen with frequency in the pattern collection. Several designs are created with the theme of bird and foliage, reminiscent of Japanese *kachō-ga* pictorial prints from the *ukiyo-e* medium.

The extent to which Japan has been represented in the Broadhurst collection can be seen as a type of ethnographic assembly of imagery where designs 'appear as a taxonomy ... the gathering of motifs and symbols in the collection contain what deserves to be kept, remembered and treasured. Artifacts and customs are saved out of time' (Karaminas 2007, 14), capturing a version of Japan within Australian material culture.

Japanese Floral (Figure 81), for example, the highest selling and most popular print design from the Broadhurst collection was first released to the public in the early 1970s. A deceptively simple single hand-drawn motif repeats vertically, twisting and flipping occasionally to keep the eye moving, with an overall asymmetrical layout when repeated. Negative and positive space and areas of intricate detail contrast with block areas accentuating its boldness, utilising *notan* (effective use of dark and light in one pattern) principles of dark and light, often seen in traditional Japanese design where contrast and rhythm become optically attractive. Although it contains some of the eccentricity of the 1970s in which it was created, it also contains a harmonious sense of balance and positive and negative space, unique to Japanese all-over patterns, allowing a reading of timelessness.

To name something as timeless is to imply that it is either 'eternal and unending' or that it belongs to 'no particular time' (*Macquarie Dictionary*). The state of being timeless is 'so good or beautiful that it cannot be affected by changes in society or fashion' (*Reverso Online Dictionary*) and often has qualities of simplicity, durability, adaptability and pleasing proportions. It may have elements that allude to a time period of the past, indicating that its style has stood the test of time. 'It is neither "in" nor "out" of fashion at any time, although may change in popularity over time' (Leusink 2006, n.p.). During the 2000s and 2010s the appeal of *Japanese Floral* has not diminished, despite its ubiquity. '*Japanese Floral* is a classic design but it's also an icon of good Australian design, because of its boldness. It never gets old because it was inspired by classic design in the first place' (Lennie, personal communication, 2014). Many of the other Japanese-style designs have enjoyed a similar long run of popularity, which Lennie comments is

⁸⁸ The Broadhurst collection also contained pop art, Australiana, tapestries, psychedelic swirls, small florals, geometric style prints and more. When visiting the Powerhouse Museum archives, I saw many more Japanese-inspired designs that were released in the 1970s, which now remain undisclosed to the public. It is disputed whether Broadhurst drew all the designs in the collection. Staff in her wallpaper factory are likely to have completed some designs with Broadhurst overseeing as director (O'Neill 2006). Both biographies and the documentary style film *Unfolding Florence* (2007) plus subsequent articles and book reviews have repeatedly brought into question the true authorship of her designs (O'Neill 2006; O'Brien 2004; Karaminas 2007). Often focusing on the salacious, much of what has been written about Broadhurst has cast suspicion on her and marred the possibility of really understanding her work in the context of contemporary Australian design. Janine Burke stated in her book review for the authorised biography *Florence Broadhurst: Her Secret and Extraordinary Lives*: 'As long as doubts remain about the authenticity of her designs, it will be difficult to assign her a secure place in Australian cultural history and to estimate her worth' (J. Burke 2006). In my opinion, these aspersions on Broadhurst reveal an ignorance of the established role of the designer as director and leader of an aesthetic who not necessarily always needs to put pen to paper.

usually unheard of in the fast-moving cycle of fashion trends: 'It just keeps giving. Usually once a design has been seen in a magazine once or twice, it's done, no one else will touch it. Florence's designs just seem to keep getting better with time, everyone wants them' (Lennie, personal communication 2014).

I believe the longevity of Broadhurst's designs can be explained in part by the Japanese elements in the work and the perception of them as peculiar in their asymmetry, and contemporary in their sharpness of design and therefore consistently popular. In *Ornament: A Social History Since 1450* (1996), Snodin and Howard argue that 'in traditional Japanese design we have to be aware, for as heirs of the modern movement we tend to find in them a sophisticated minimalism and freshness which is somehow eternally up-to-date' (Snodin and Howard 1996, 210), a premise which is central to my interest in Japanese textiles. Scholars have noted the reading of timelessness in Japanese design in several ways. Rossella Menegazzo in *Wa: The Essence of Japanese Design* (2014) states, 'Japanese design appears to be both looking both back to the past and forward to future developments ... evolving along two parallel lines (Menegazzo 2014, 9), recognising the ability to appear contemporary and ageless at the same time. Haekyung Yu's (et al 2001) conclusions in 'An Analysis of Modern Fashion Designs as Influenced by Asian Ethnic Dress' listed Japan as a major influence in contemporary fashion trends and suggested that the stylised surface patterns and geometric shapes of the *kimono* are equivalent to Western Modernist movements such as Cubism in its pursuit of basic structure (Yu et al 2001). These scholarly insights all emphasise the ability of Japanese design to represent a mode that has transcended narrow classification into one historical period. For example, Art Nouveau, which was an international style of art, architecture and applied art, can be seen as representative of a particular time period around the turn of the nineteenth century. Japanese textile designs have been consistently developed, morphing and changing from antiquity into the contemporary age, yet have retained their characteristic identity. A Nara period (645-794) surface design arrangement of flowers, birds, butterflies and clouds, for example, could easily be read or perceived as a contemporary design.

As outlined in the Introduction, designers use pictorial semiotics drawn from a variety of art historical grammars of ornament and symbol systems – also known as families of patterns; floral, geometric, abstract, conversational, ethnic, oriental and so on – to infuse textiles with non-verbal communication (Meller and Elffers 2002). Japonism is classified visually as 'oriental', relegated to a categorisation within typical textile systems as a standard model in design and therefore classic/timeless. In a discussion of ethnic style patterns and their qualities by Meller and Elffers (2002) another convincing reason for a perception of timelessness is given:

Any pattern or style with a foreign or exotic feeling ... [has] a common implicit theme of a withdrawal from our technological world through an embrace of the forms of some older, often simpler (supposedly), and certainly less industrialised society. (Meller and Elffers 2002, 359)

Consumption of Broadhurst's designs can be perceived as a fulfillment of a yearning for an exotic pre-industrial world, an idea which I revisit in the final chapter in relation to my own work. Curator at the Powerhouse Museum Anne-Marie Van de Ven puts Broadhurst's appeal down to 'the fact that she's using cranes and natural elements that ... link to our lifestyle aspirations of being connected to nature in some way' (personal communication, 2014). Van de Ven considers Broadhurst's work comparable, in terms of enduring appeal and quality, to '60s and '70s contemporaries Marimekko and Eames. O'Brien observed in the unauthorised biography that Broadhurst's part-Asian, part-European designs fulfil a desire for styles that appear global (O'Brien 2004). Marketing and publicity of Broadhurst and her designs by Signature Prints would have also contributed to the longevity of the designs, although as Lennie remarked, 'the

designs sell themselves' (Lennie, personal communication, 2015). A combination of all these reasons has contributed to her posthumous recognition as a design icon.

Other key elements of Broadhurst's style, after motif choice and bold colour, were scale and texture. In 1970s Australia, bold, large, oversized patterns in bright lurid colours like these had never been seen before. Broadhurst also developed a technique of pre-printing her papers with a subtle texture to create an appearance of movement and variation as your eye moved around the papers. These hand-worked hatching, slub and hessian textures that were under-printed on many designs softened the overall artwork and added a sense of quality, depth and craftsmanship to the product. This deliberate roughing and texturing of her papers and fabrics can be considered a form of applying a *wabi-sabi* aesthetic of *koko* (weathered), in that it applied a faux vintage feel to the work, adding to the sense of belonging to 'no time' and therefore creating a timelessness.

Cultural Fusion

Broadhurst's work has come under scrutiny by some scholars in terms of her authenticity (J. Burke 2006) and appropriation from other cultures (Karaminas 2007). The journal article by Vicki Karaminas 'Imagining the Orient: Cultural Appropriation in the Florence Broadhurst Collection' (2007) calls for a discussion on design ethics regarding the use of design motifs beyond and out of context of their original cultural significance. Citing Edward Said's *Orientalism* of 1978, Karaminas deems Broadhurst culpable to a negative form of orientalism:

Motifs are selected, gathered, detached from their original temporal occasions, and given enduring value in a new arrangement. In doing so, specific meanings are erased and cultural significance shifts and slides ... the sceptre of imperialism most certainly haunts Broadhurst's designs. (Karaminas 2007, 15)

Karaminas comments that there is a danger when motifs are copied from one culture to another, that they can lose true significance by failing to establish meaningful social references that are necessary to give integrity and relevance. She argues that Broadhurst was 'implicit in the process of cultural appropriation', corrupting and objectifying Eastern symbols (Karaminas 2007, 15). Karaminas' comment that the designs lose significance, integrity and relevance implies that the symbolic meaning of the designs (such as the crane being a symbol of longevity) is lost in the translation between cultures. I return to discuss this topic with reference to the work of Akira Isogawa in the following chapter.

Broadhurst certainly borrowed from Japan without evidence that she wished to transfer any cultural content or meaning along with the designs. However, terms such as 'erased' and 'corrupt' by Karaminas are not likely to have been Broadhurst's aims and in early 1970s Australia, artists and designers were largely ignorant of the issue of perceptions of plundering culture as an act of hegemonic power or as a perceived offence. In fact, much political rhetoric during the 1970s was aimed at healing the relationship between Australia and Japan⁸⁹. Broadhurst was predominantly concerned with aesthetics and introducing

⁸⁹ After World War II trade links were re-established and Japan and Australia became allies. Australian attitudes toward Japan improved through education and generational change, and by 1976 the two countries signed the *Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation*, shaping the mutually beneficial modern relationship of the nations. Attitudes of discrimination during the inter-war years should be considered in the historical, political and social context of the time period. For a full account of Japanese-Australia relations, see: 'Events that influenced Australian-Japanese relations 1901-present', http://www.skwirk.com/p-u_s-16_u-430, retrieved 25/3/18.

an artistic, high quality, hand-made product of vibrant colour to the drab post-war interiors of Australian consumers (O'Neill 2006).

When drawing from other cultural lexicons and re-working traditional patterns, there is an 'exotic consumerism' occurring, a term coined by dress theorist Valerie Steele. Steele and Major point out that

Part of the appeal of exotic consumerism is its supposed relation to a set of values, including authenticity and artistry. Objects that appear to be made by hand or that seem connected to cultural traditions may exert powerful appeal to the modern urban individual. (Steele and Major 1999, 70)

Steele and Major, also remark that there is 'the risk of a perception of cultural purloining' (Steele and Major 1999, 70), and are quick to add, however, that fashion designers are not anthropologists or theorists and that the history of fashion and fabric design in all its imaginable forms is inextricably linked with global borrowings and re-shaping (Steele and Major 1999). Echoing this, Met curator Andrew Bolton has stated that '[designers] are driven less by the logic of politics than by that of fashion, which typically pursues an aesthetic of surfaces rather than an essence governed by cultural contextualisation' (Bolton 2014, 19).

In the Introduction to this exegesis, I introduced the scholarship of Adam Geczy who addresses the borrowing of designs from other cultures, recognising that appraisal of the design ethics of cultural appropriation or assimilation is a complex topic. Geczy uses the term 'trans-orientalism' to frame a discussion on how cultures received and interacted with each other, replacing limiting frameworks of canonical theories of orientalism by post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said, to enable a more useful discussion of the topic for contemporary practitioners. Broadhurst's approach was ahead of her time as she was one of the earliest Australian surface designers to look globally for motif ideas, borrowing pattern motifs and styles freely from 'other' cultures, introducing the exotic and fusing them into local design. It could also be argued that her role as a modern woman/designer who had extensively travelled throughout Asia posited her cultural environment as a globalised one, deeming her an early contemporary cultural producer who contributed toward the modern multicultural Australian design identity, through her re-packaging of Japanese designs for an Australian public eager for the new, the vivid, and the different.

Her use of bright, bold colourways and large format motifs was an affirmative device to alter and disrupt the collection's interpretation as simply copied or plagiarised Japanese prints; the designs become re-interpreted motifs of a hybridised contemporary multicultural Australian aesthetic. Reflecting this idea, O'Neill writes, 'viewed today, the Broadhurst designs appear to demonstrate a remarkable awareness of "Australian-ness" at a time when the nation was only beginning to come to grips with where its heritage lay' (O'Neill 2006, 69). Nicky Zimmermann of fashion label Zimmermann comments on Broadhurst's work:

I think that it's typically Australian – a bit whacky. There is a sense of fun with it. It doesn't have a serious feel to me. (Quoted in O'Neill 2006, 195)

Broadhurst's work is successful for many reasons. It is visually dynamic and harmonious, balancing both symmetrical and asymmetrical motifs with a confident use of intense colour. In the face of the broad acceptance and success of Broadhurst's work, the tension created by cultural appropriation is appeased through its classification as an example of our multicultural Australian design identity. Broadhurst's taxonomical gathering of Japanese motifs into a collection marketed toward the Australian public has paved the way for other designers, including myself, to perceive a multicultural approach to design.

On the Surface

The artworks I made during the early first phase of this research were shown at an exhibition in 2013 at The Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, titled *On the Surface*. The title was a reference to the medium of surface design in that I was designing for surfaces such as textiles and wall papers and presenting them as artworks, although in retrospect it is also a title that suits my furtive attempts to uncover a sense of Japanese aesthetic sensibility. My aims were to create prints with an emphasis on Australian content, inspired by the Japonism in Florence Broadhurst's collection. I admired Broadhurst's contradictory sense of contemporary freshness and perceived timelessness as well as the *katagami*-like appearance of her designs.

I also treated this body of work as an opportunity to move away from screen printing and begin using a digital medium – hand drawing designs, then using Photoshop to manipulate them and accessing a digital printing service. I had been screen printing every day for a decade and I physically needed to move away from that process. Improvements in digital printing meant that I could create prints that appeared to be screen printed, without the environmental mess and laborious process of screen emulsion, exposure, wash out and physical printing of the surface in careful layers. It was important to me that the designs were still hand drawn or drawn with the appearance of having been cut from a stencil, with sharp corners and layers of colour, rather than diffuse lines or tonal areas of design. In this way, the designs retained the hand-printed *katagami* reference that I was drawn to. I also began my first foray into creating contemporary *ukiyo-e* illustrations, which were hand-drawn images that were then digitised and printed and worked back into with collage, pencil and ink, imitating the early *ukiyo-e* artists who accentuated their printed sheets with a range of mediums (Harris 2012). I developed my own *im*, or signature stamp (my middle name Ashe, also the name of my textile/fashion label), and *hanmoto* (a stamp, seal or trademark) which was based on a print design of a stylised lotus flower I created in 2002 (Figure 82).

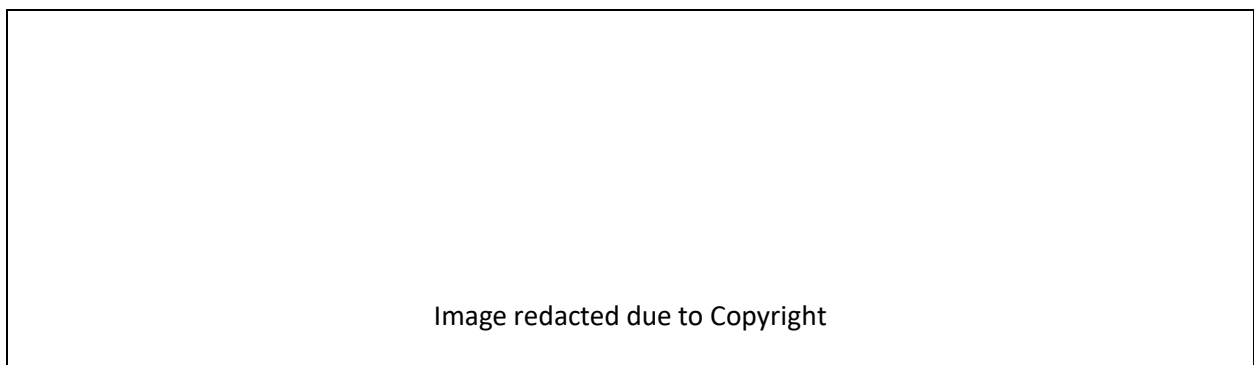


Figure 82. Ashe *im* signature and *hanmoto Lotus* stamp. Figure 83. Japanese screens. n.d.

My subject matter was mediated by looking at Broadhurst's most successful designs and drawing from Japanese textile design books. For example, one of the first designs *Paradiso I* (Figure 88) was my version of Broadhurst's *Japanese Floral* and although it was received well, I felt it neither appeared Australian or Japanese, but was moreover read as a floral (global) pattern. My first attempts at depicting Australian themes in a Japonist way include *Waratah Moon*, *Illawarie*, *Illawarie Lyrebird*, *Paradise Lost* and *Canopy* (see Figures 84 to 92). In the *Illawarie* prints, I chose the Australian lyrebird for its decorative tail, and the

Australian *illawarie* eucalyptus blossom, which I developed into singular motifs, then plotted the designs asymmetrically, with negative space between each element. My use of motifs has been stylised after traditional Japanese motifs such as the bamboo or chrysanthemum flower, so that at first appearance, or when viewed from a distance, the prints seem Japanese, until closer inspection reveals local specimens. *Canopy* was a Japanese grid or trellis design onto which I transplanted a view of an overhead view of eucalypt trees in graphic pattern. *Island Nation* (Figure 90) is a repeating pattern that uses the floating island pattern type seen frequently in Okinawan *bingata* stencils for *kimono*. The island has an overall shape that could allude to the island of Australia or Japan, and exotic (introduced floral species) and native plants such as *hardenbergier* (native wisteria) flowers and leaves cascade from the edges of the island to allow an overall reading of decorative exoticism. The buildings depicted include the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge, iconic symbols of Australiana and a range of houses of worship; Christian churches and Japanese Temples can be found as well as mosques and cathedrals, representing the multicultural nature of the island nation. The *Temple Garden*, *Fuji Moon* and *Bonsai Treehouse* (Figures 92, 91 and 87) prints read as Japanese-like or oriental patterns, so were successful in that they were inspired by Florence Broadhurst, however they did not completely fulfil my objective of portraying an aspect of the Australian environment. The designs appeared Japanese inspired, but the elements that confirmed Australian fusion were not emphatic. Other designs, such as *Illawarie Lyrebird*, appeared strongly representative of Australian motifs, moving closer to a reading of Australiana. On reflection, my objectives of fusion were not entirely realised; however, I had gleaned helpful insights into directions that were worth pursuing by identifying two prints, *Island Nation* (Figure 90) and *Waratah Moon* (Figure 84), as containing elements that spoke to my research question.

The exhibition also included lengths of wallpapers to show the designs in repeat and my first series of *ukiyo-e* (see Appendix) comprising three *bijin-ga* (beautiful women prints). My *bijin-ga* included prints from the *On the Surface* collection and although these prints read as *ukiyo-e*, their quality was circumscribed by newer work as the project progressed and I reserve my discussion on these for the final chapter.

Transferring my practice to digital design offered a flexibility to experiment with colour, allowing for examples in the bright bold colourways like those that Florence Broadhurst preferred. However, this body of work also marked a point where a preference for a diluted and understated colour palette, seen in the Japanese screens in Figure 83, pointed this collection in a direction away from the influence of Broadhurst's prints. The work changed direction again, during the next cycle of making, which involved another exhibition and working in collaboration with Akira Isogawa, which I address in the following chapter.

This chapter has outlined how Japonism contributed to Australian printed surface design through examining how Florence Broadhurst introduced an early form of trans-orientalism into her design lexicon. I have also commented on my early creative practice for the project, the clear shift of moving from analogue printing to digital design, and the ways in which Japonism can indicate a sense of timelessness. In the following chapter I focus on Akira Isogawa's use of Japanese design, including his engagement with Florence Broadhurst's print designs and continue commentary on the development of final works for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'.

Image redacted due to Copyright

Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, Ashe prints for *On the Surface* Exhibition. 2013. Details of Digital Prints on paper. Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, 2013. L to R from top: Figure 84. *Waratah Moon*. Figure 85. *Canopy*. Figure 86. *Illawarie*. Figure 87. *Bonsai Treehouse*. Figure 88. *Paradiso I*. Figure 89. *Illawarie Lyrebird*. Figure 90. *Island Nation*. Figure 91. *Fuji Moon*. Figure 92. *Temple Garden*.

Image redacted due to Copyright

Figure 94. Akira Isogawa, *Floral Silk Crepe Dress* featuring Ashe Textile Designs. 2017. *Marie Claire Australia*.

Chapter Five

Japanese Aesthetics in the Work of Akira Isogawa

A garment can transcend, giving it a soul. I translate fabrics into soft and romantic silhouettes, using natural fabrics like silks and cottons, which are kind to the skin. Distressing fabrics and alchemically treating them, gives the feeling of already “being loved”, thus evoking emotion. Even one-off fabrics found in flea markets can be given new life. Richly embellished fabrics echo Eastern influences, and I have great respect for their traditions. Inspiration can be found from the past – re-using vintage textiles and sometimes creating replicas of them, incorporated with specific craftsmanship.

The number of hours someone has spent on manual work like this makes it priceless.

I see craftsmanship as an implement with which to realise one’s vision. Past, present and future; that slogan continues in almost everything around which my work evolves. Timeless beauty and femininity in my design is profound, in a way for the wearer to express their inner soul. (Isogawa n.d)

There is no practice more relevant to the topic of Japonism in Australian textile design than that of Japanese-born Australian citizen Akira Isogawa. Journalist Peter Robb identified an incongruity when he asked, ‘how was it that a designer so absorbed in the history of Japan and its ancient silks – their spinning, weaving, dyeing, their cutting into hieratic costumes of gorgeous formality and subdued splendour – should have found his first, best and most loyal buyers in the land of the T-shirt and thong?’ (Robb 2012, 50) Robb’s article, though interesting, does not actually answer this question, whereas this chapter intends to do so. This chapter outlines Isogawa’s emergence in Australian fashion and examines the tangible qualities of his textile products that possess an aesthetic sense of cultural fusion.

I examine Isogawa’s work in terms of his use of traditional Japanese *wabi-sabi* aesthetics and his transference of symbolic meaning of motif between cultures, to draw inspiration for my own body of work. After visiting the Akira Isogawa studio in Sydney in 2015 and showing him my portfolio of Japanese-inspired designs, we arranged to collaborate on a print design for his collection for the following season. I returned in 2016 and created a series of textile designs and illustrations for his Autumn/Winter 2017 collection (Figures 94 and 112 to 123) which I also discuss in this chapter in terms of their contribution to the overall project.

Early Life and Career

Born in Kyoto in 1964, Akira Isogawa’s father was a Japanese bureaucrat who was determined that his son would follow him into a steady career in social welfare. From their family home, Isogawa’s mother ran a dry-cleaning business. In the 1980s, to the distaste of his father, Isogawa would sketch clothes and spend all his spare money on designer clothing by Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, working in restaurants, delivering noodles on his bicycle to fund his sartorial habit (Robb 2012). In 1983, Isogawa began studies in Social Welfare at Bukkyo University. He moved out of home to achieve an extra degree of freedom, paid for by more restaurant work; however, after three years he decided against doing the final fourth year and planned a trip to Australia with a friend. He had an uncle growing mushrooms in Mittagong near Sydney and this at least provided a reason to head in that direction. The friend pulled out at the last moment, but Isogawa travelled on alone.

In 1986, at 21 years old, Isogawa permanently immigrated, leaving the stifling regimented conservatism of his life in Japan behind him. Studying fashion at the Sydney Institute of Technology in 1988 (then the East Sydney TAFE College), Isogawa was seeking a new life which included the freedom of possibility and opportunity that Australia could offer him. In 1988 on a trip home to Japan, he visited the *Kobusan* vintage Kimono House at the Toji Temple, just 10 minutes from his parents' home and an appreciation of his own culture surfaced:

I was born there and raised there and, until I left Japan, I really didn't realise how unique the culture is, because I was in it, so it was impossible to see objectively. I realised, what it took for me to appreciate the traditional Japanese history, and all sorts of artisans that exist [there] still. The culture is very strong because it's such an old country. (Isogawa, quoted in Pryor 2014)

Establishing his clothing line in 1993, he immediately embarked on a single-minded vision of creating soulful, thoughtful, beautifully crafted garments in feminine silhouettes for his first self-titled store which he opened in Woollahra, Sydney, that same year. His label has been a fixture of contemporary Australian fashion from the beginning; when Mercedes Australia Fashion week launched its first event in 1996, he sent his models down the runway in red socks and his notoriety for elegance and quirkiness was established. Isogawa describes this time as his 'greatest fashion moment ... it was corporate, I felt a little bit nervous ... but the success of my collection there made me feel that I could be a commercial designer, I could do it' ('Akira Isogawa' 2006).

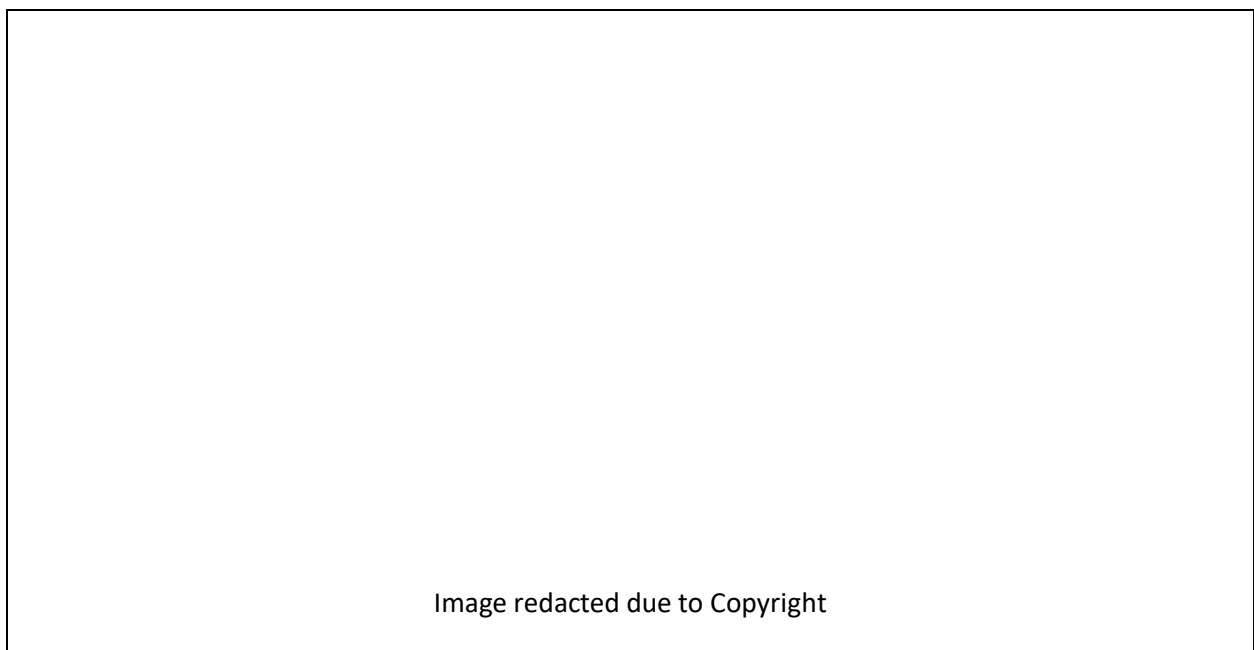


Figure 95. Australian Legends Stamp. 2005. Figure 96. Akira Isogawa, Spring/Summer 2015/16. Sydney Fashion Week.

In 1999 Akira began showing in Paris and has continued this presentation annually, one of very few Australian designers to do so. In the fashion design world, to 'make it' in Paris is perhaps the singular sign

of true international acceptance (Kawamura 2005). His work was immediately favourably reviewed in *The New York Times* and *US Vogue* by the world's most respected fashion critics.

The Akira label is now internationally renowned, represented in high-end boutiques in the UK, USA, Spain, Switzerland, Russia, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, France, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait and New Zealand. There are four stand-alone Akira boutiques, two in Sydney, one in Melbourne and one in Brisbane. He is one of Australia's most respected and successful⁹⁰ fashion designers, reflected in his inclusion in *Australian Legends* (2005), a series of postage stamps released to commemorate Australia Day, bearing his image (see Figure 95). The stamps honoured Australians who have made a significant contribution to the development of Australian identity and Isogawa's inclusion is evidence of the complete adoption of him as an Australian. When I interviewed Isogawa in his studio he remarked, 'I feel I am Australian' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015) as he had spent more years living in Australia than in Japan.

Akira Isogawa's Aesthetic

Akira's clothes have an intensity, a vibrancy, a richness you have never seen before. Maybe it's the vegetable dye, or the way certain dyes go with certain fibres, certain weaves. Ancient wisdom in modern dress. (Robb 2012, 51)

I attribute the vibrant richness acknowledged above by Robb to Isogawa's understanding and application of the philosophies of *wabi-sabi* and other traditional Japanese aesthetic approaches. Referring to the attention to detail and artisanship in each garment, Alison Goodrum called it an aura; 'this aura forms a clear contrast to high output-low quality mass produced items for the mass market' (Goodrum 2005, n.p.). Central to his aesthetic is the incorporation of select elements of Japanese material culture in the form of traditional Japanese fabrics and patterns which are re-interpreted for his Australian and international audiences (Hume 2005). It is not the case that Isogawa simply inserts Japanese fabrics into his collections, although he has done so at times. Rather, each piece is a considered article where experimentation with new and innovative methods of textile manipulation and his expertise in blending old and new cultural traditions are evident.

This is manifested in each collection as a selection of prints, embellishments, colours and patterns which contain a dual sensitivity of ancient and modern. Isogawa, as both textile and fashion designer⁹¹, interprets traditional Japanese prints of *katazome* and *saraca* motifs and re-works them. For example, a pattern may be enlarged into an oversized motif in bright colours or a pattern may be rearranged and inserted with disruptive *datsuzoku* (unbounded by convention) elements, to alter the reading from traditional to modern. He often juxtaposes prints against layers of soft textural textile manipulation like *shibori* (Japanese form of resist dyeing) or *origami*-type (Japanese paper folding) pleating or wrapping, all with a restraint that imbues the entire ensemble with *kanso* (simplicity) and *seijaku* (tranquil) beauty that

⁹⁰ His accolades are numerous including Designer of the Year and Womenswear Designer of the Year at the Australian Fashion Industry Awards in 1999 and the Australian Fashion Laureate award for his contribution to the Australian fashion industry in 2007. His work has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art twice and included in the Powerhouse Museum's Fashion of the Year retrospective. More recently his garments were exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of the *Kamisaka Sekka: Dawn of Modern Japanese Design* (2012) exhibition. The Object Gallery in Sydney recorded its highest audience attendance ever when Isogawa exhibited his deconstructed garments there. He has frequently collaborated and designed for the Sydney Dance Company, the Australian Ballet and the Australian Symphony Orchestra (Karaminas 2005).

⁹¹ Isogawa sources artisans to interpret and produce his work. He has taken many trips to Bali, India, Korea, China and Vietnam, Japan and Australia to find the right people to collaborate with, which he has always humbly acknowledged (Isogawa, personal communication 2015). Print designs are designed by Isogawa or commissioned from artists (including myself) and these designs usually have a clear link to traditional Japanese *katagami*, *karakusa* and *saraca* textiles.

is quietly contained. The overall silhouettes are modern and contemporary, often in sync with contemporary Japanese designers such as Issey Miyake or Rei Kawakubo.

Quoted in this chapter's epigraph, Isogawa's artistic statement from his website mentions the concept of 'distressing fabrics and alchemically treating them, [which] gives the feeling of already "being loved", thus evoking emotion' (Isogawa n.d). Fabrics are deliberately distressed, crinkled or overdye, re-washed and re-shaped to achieve a certain quality. 'I tend to wash everything, so that its handle is pre-loved, tactile and welcoming, rather than untouchable' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015). This organic sensuality relates to the aesthetic realm of *wabi-sabi* philosophies, such as *koko* (basic, weathered) and *shizen* (without pretense, natural), where a preference for items that look like they have had a previous life is favoured over common presentation of new fashion which is often pristine, ironed and neat. A rack of Akira Isogawa clothes exude an aura⁹² through a sensuality derived from the evidence of touch. The fabrics, often silk or blends of natural fibres appear crepe-like, crumpled and soft, with visible evidence of hand work such as embroidery, or hand-drawn or stencilled printed patterns, or vintage materials.

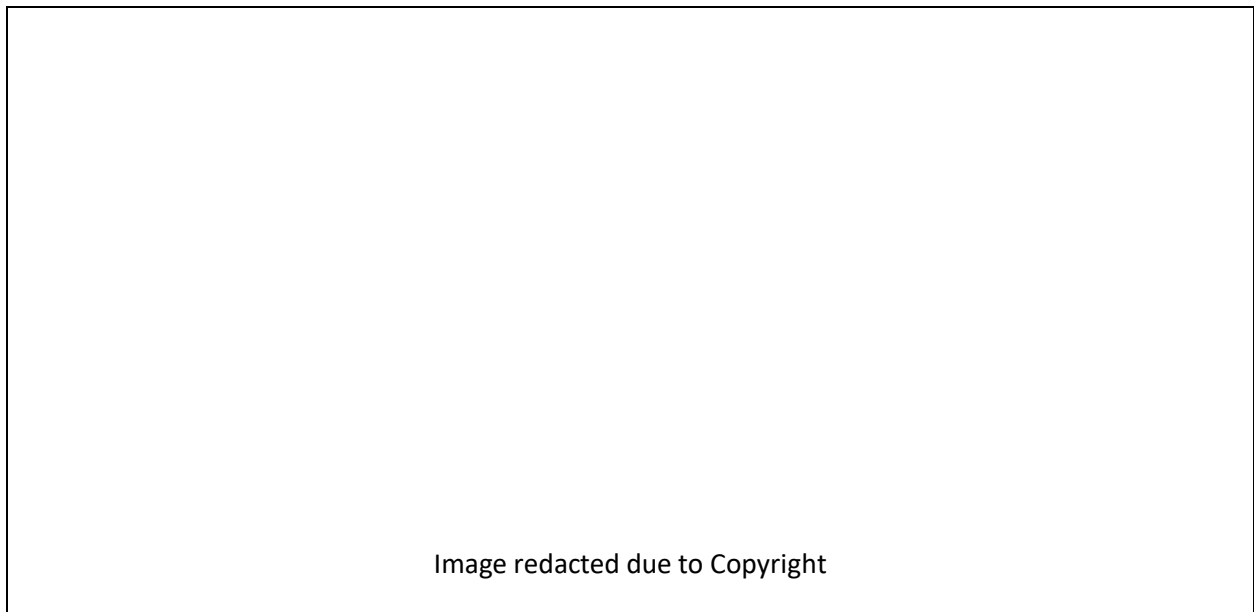


Figure 97. Akira Isogawa, Printemps Collection 2009. Figure 98. Akira Isogawa, Printemps Collection 2009. Figure 99. Akira Isogawa, Printemps Collection 2009.

Isogawa seeks an element of *yūgen* (a compound word, each part *yū* and *gen*, meaning 'cloudy impenetrability' and the combination meaning 'obscurity', 'unknowability', 'mystery', 'beyond intellectual calculability' but not 'utter darkness' (Tsubaki 1971, 56) a type of emotive quality in a fabric that suggests other times or places, past lives that have been lived, hinting at stories of human life. Vintage *obi* with

⁹² 'In contemporary vernacular, aura is a term that describes a 'transcendent or elusive quality that exudes from a person or thing' (Humphries 2014, 74). Walter Benjamin (1936) introduced discussions about the aura of art and objects in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and other essays. He argues that an aura can only be perceived from an original work of art. However, I agree with Claire Humphries' (2014) findings in 'Material Remains: The Afterlife of Personal Objects' which state that re-productive artistic mediums can still retain and produce aura. I discuss aura again in the final chapter.

specific motifs such as the chrysanthemum (a symbol of longevity and rejuvenation in Japan) that may have been used for weddings or special life moments are re-worked within limited edition garments, or completely re-produced by carefully chosen artisans for larger production runs. 'I think of the chrysanthemum, which has such a distinct form as a sign of the inner spirit, it's a bit spiritual, it honours the ancestors and has a special meaning' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015). These antique fabrics breathe a timeless quality that asks its wearer or viewer to ponder the many hands that have contributed to or touched the fabric, who wore it, who designed the motif in the first place, who carefully stitched the *kimono* or *obi* together. 'Fabrics echo traditions and I make replicas or new forms to tell the same, or new stories' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015). Isogawa's re-worked print designs often have elements of *fukinsei* (asymmetry, irregularity) typical of traditional Japanese prints and his choice of colour palette oscillates between vivid and soft shades.

Japanese motifs sourced from vintage *kimono* or pattern books have been featured in every Akira Isogawa collection, of which there are up to three a year: Printemps Été (Spring/Summer), Automne Hiver (Autumn/Winter) and Resort. Each season and collection interprets new influences, inspirations and ideas for ways to execute the printed or embellished fabric. 'For every season when I start thinking about the colour palate or motif I go through *Textile Design 11 [Traditional Karakusa Arabesque]* and *Textile Design IV [Traditional Sarasatic another term for saraca]* by Kamon Yoshimoto⁹³ to draw inspiration' (Hello Bookcase 2014).

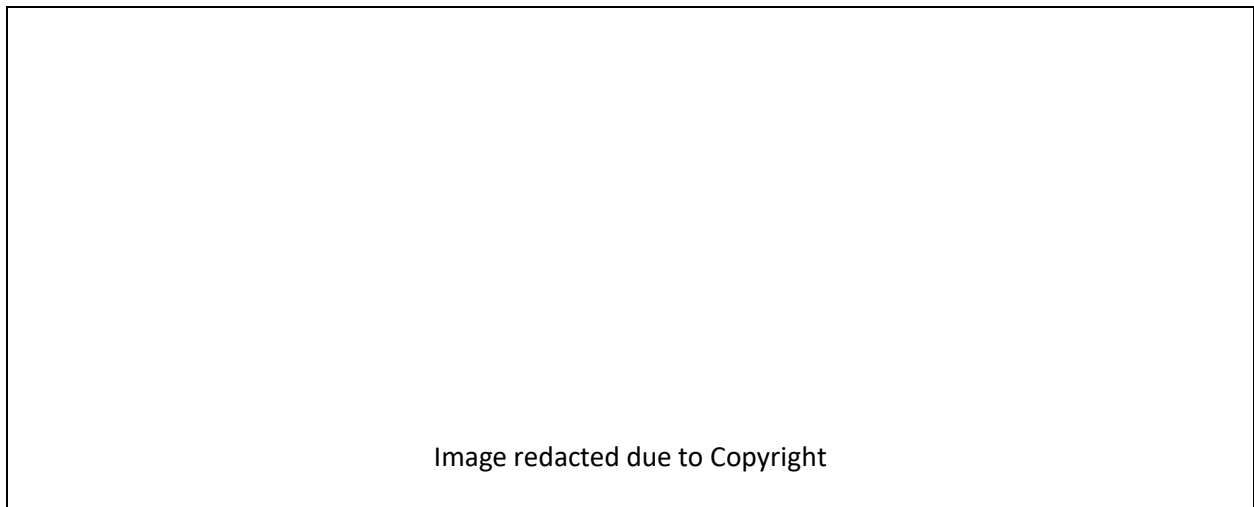


Figure 100. Akira Isogawa, Printemps Collection 2008. Figure 101. Akira Isogawa, Printemps Collection 2010. Figure 102. Akira Isogawa, Resort Collection 2011.

Isogawa's extensive use of hand-rendered elements of embroidery, origami, collage and print techniques has been identified as a reason for his success, as these techniques amplify his garments to the realm of refined artisanship. 'His effect on Australian fashion has been to define a simple beauty,' said the then

⁹³ Both of these books are also in my own personal collection and I, too, use them often as a reference for design.

Vogue editor Marion Hume, 'his eye, the way he sees disparate elements and fuses them together into a ravishingly dainty dress' (quoted in Karaminas 2005, 462).

The 'Moment' Between Florence Broadhurst and Akira Isogawa

Florence Broadhurst and Akira Isogawa are now well-known designer names in Australia; however, in 1999 when Isogawa first saw the designs of Broadhurst, her work was yet to be re-launched to the world and he was still an emerging designer. It was a pivotal moment in Australian design and one that could have easily been missed. Isogawa was visiting the Signature Prints factory as a last resort at solving a printing problem he was having with a project for dance costumes due to premiere at the Sydney Opera House. David Lennie (Signature Prints), the custodian of the Florence Broadhurst print collection, decided to test the designs on Isogawa, to see what reaction they stirred, so after helping solve Isogawa's printing problem he simply indicated a pile of loose, dusty, faded and stained papers for Isogawa to look at and left him to explore. Isogawa remarks upon this moment:

I guess he [David] wanted to leave me to interpret ... without pre-conceptions. The paper was old ... it seemed printed many years ago ... I had never seen anything like this. (Isogawa, quoted in O'Neill 2006, 187)

Amongst a variety of designs, Isogawa found the large hand-drawn and printed designs *Nagoya* and *Chelsea* which reminded him of traditional Japanese *kimono* textiles and he instantly visualised their potential for use in contemporary fashion for the body instead of 1960s Australian fashion for walls. The designs brought back melancholic memories of motifs his grandmother used to wear everyday (O'Neill 2006). 'It gives me a feeling of being somewhere else [like] the Far East, or somewhere exotic in another time. I feel really in touch with this sensitivity' (Isogawa, quoted in O'Neill 2006, 188). This 'sensitivity' could be called *aware* (nostalgia that provokes an emotional response) or *yūgen*. As explained in Chapter Two, the aesthetic of *yūgen* is a tangent of *wabi-sabi* and therefore must also contain its qualities. That moment, when Isogawa rediscovered Broadhurst's Australian-Japonist lexicon of designs, contained all of these elements: the aged patina, the beauty of things in passing, a reminder of the transience of life. It was a quintessential moment in time that stimulated circumstances that effected the future reception of both these significant Australian designers⁹⁴. As a key instance of trans-orientalism, my conception of this sensual experience has also directly inspired creative works for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'.

Isogawa decided there and then to use two of Broadhurst's designs in his upcoming debut Paris show, which subsequently proved to be a runway success and the pivotal point in Isogawa's career:

When I worked with her prints, I didn't feel like I was making such a great leap away from what I was already doing and designing. In a strange way, I felt like Florence and I were totally in sync. (Isogawa, quoted in O'Brien 2004, 220)

Isogawa was the first of many designers who borrowed the rights to Broadhurst's designs to add a unique element to their range. In my interview with him in 2015 he said:

She had such a vision, she was a revolutionary. She was the first textile designer/artist to be able to spot the new inspiration which may not have existed in this country before, which is the

⁹⁴ Broadhurst's designs were re-discovered and re-launched to the world internationally via Isogawa's unique fashions, beginning the trend and global demand for her print designs (O'Brien, 2004) (see Chapter Four).

aesthetic of the Far East, which is different to South East Asia ... perhaps we are used to Papua New Guinea, South Pacific, Maori and Indigenous, but the beauty, a particular beauty from the country of Japan, it hadn't existed and she pioneered that in our industry ... without her, we would have a different view, or maybe took [sic] longer to recognise that particular beauty. Florence Broadhurst is iconic. Her style is unrestricted in regard to time and space. She fused Australian bold sensitivity with Eastern aesthetic. (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015)

Isogawa used the *Nagoya* design in his first range shown at Paris Fashion Week in 1999 and was discovered by the highly influential founder of Browns in London, Joan Bernstein, who ordered the complete collection and powerfully promoted his work internationally⁹⁵. This success may have happened regardless of the inclusion of Broadhurst's designs, however there is no doubt that the bold designs combined with Isogawa's deft touch created a new fresh aesthetic (Figure 104).

In terms of the criticisms of Broadhurst's cultural appropriations, Isogawa does not see any problem with the borrowing and fusion of cultural images from around the world. Isogawa imagined that Broadhurst would have been inspired by many cultures including Japanese *kimono* on her travels through Asia:

She would have spent some time in England and hand-picked a Liberty print or something like that. Then mixed all that influence [to] create this empire in Australia. It all makes sense to me the way she designed ... because that is what I do. I think Australia is a good place for this because it is far from the rest of the world. I see a lot of Australian artists, designers, who are able to view distinctive cultures, global cultures, with distance. (Isogawa, quoted in O'Neill 2006, 188).

In the Gillian Armstrong documentary *Unfolding Florence: The Many Lives of Florence Broadhurst*, Isogawa is interviewed regarding his introduction to Broadhurst's designs and he states:

I wasn't aware they were designed for wallpaper, all I knew is that they were exotic and they would be brilliant to use on textile for fashion. I feel really connected in a way because it's so Japanese, but yet it has got freshness which Australia can give and I felt in sync with her art work ... by expressing her inspiration from other cultures[s] and expressing that in Sydney. (*Unfolding Florence* 2007).

In a move that is uncommon in fashion, Isogawa has re-used the same Broadhurst prints over many collections (see Figures 103 to 106), which span from 1999 to 2015. David Lennie believes that the timelessness of Broadhurst's designs allows a transcending of normal fashion cycles and the constant pressure to be new:

Fashion designers are continually trying to invent new things. They have archives but they don't use them. Akira used the *Chelsea* print for one range and said he couldn't possibly use it for the next season, but he ran it for four years, gave it a break, then ran it again. And he absolutely adored what it did for him. (Lennie, quoted in 'Broad Strokes' 2005, n.p.).

As I have already argued in the previous chapter, this perceived timelessness comes in part from the Japanese inspiration for the designs. Although executed with a fresh eye for dynamic scale, the prints *Nagoya* and *Chelsea* contain bright yet soft colourways that add to a timeless or vintage quality, and

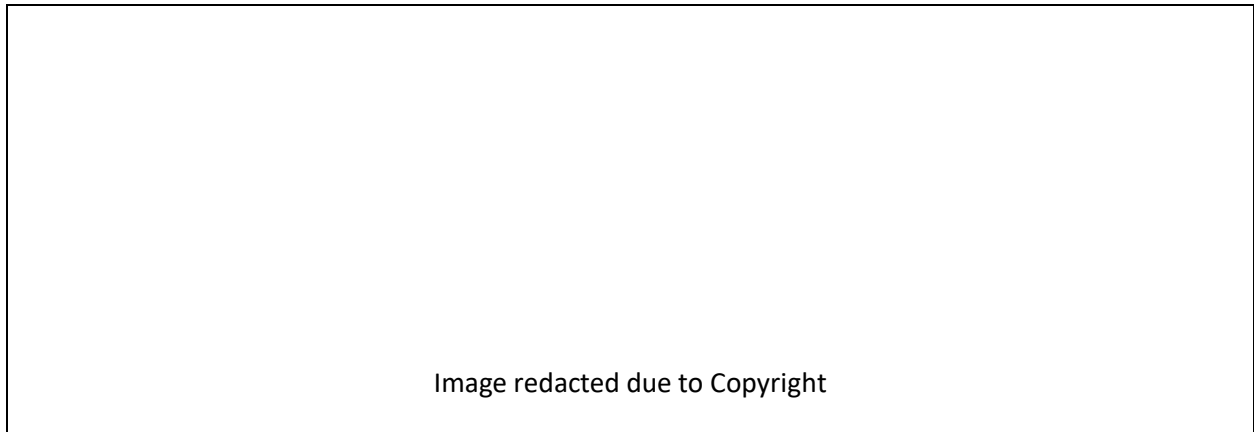
⁹⁵ Browns is an iconic fashion boutique established by Joan Bernstein in London in 1970. Known for discovering talents such as John Galliano, Alexander McQueen and Christopher Kane, it also brought designers such as Calvin Klein, Armani, Ralph Lauren and Jil Sander to London. Browns has continued to support both young and established fashion designers and remains one of Isogawa's major supporters, helping his international career immensely. As Bernstein states, 'I'm happy to say he is now a household brand' (quoted in *Marie Claire Australia*, 2006. Magazine article retrieved from authors scrapbook).

possess very strong links to traditional Japanese textile design in their subject matter of fruit blossoms and chrysanthemums.

The subsequent interplay of influence filtered into contemporary Australian textile design from designer Broadhurst to Isogawa is an apt illustration of how a uniquely Australian product can be inflected with Japanese inspiration.

Cross-Cultural influences

When the National Gallery of Victoria presented *Akira Isogawa: Printemps-Été* in 2004, he was the first Australian fashion and textile designer ever to present a solo exhibition at a major national or state institution in Australia. In the catalogue essay for the event, curator Marion Hume spoke of Isogawa's work in terms of being able to 'trace the essence of both Sydney and Kyoto in his style' (Hume 2005, 6) recognising that his use of Japanese form and content has been inflected by his Australian experience.



L to R: Figure 103. Akira Isogawa, Fashion collection featuring *Nagoya* design. 2015. Figure 104. Akira Isogawa, Fashion collection featuring *Nagoya* design. 2004. Figure 105. Akira Isogawa, Fashion collection featuring *Chelsea* design. 2015. Figure 106. Akira Isogawa, Fashion collection featuring *Chelsea* design. 2015.

Isogawa has introduced a sensibility to Australian dress which stems from his Japanese heritage but is firmly filtered through an Australian lens. I suggest that the environment has had a strong influence on his design, steering and directing choices to suit the Australian woman. A statement by fashion academic Vicki Karaminas, supports this idea:

Isogawa's designs are a dialogue between the costume and textile traditions of his native Japanese heritage and the more relaxed approach of the Australian fashion climate. The development of textiles exploring colour, cut, and fabric, as well as applying new technologies or traditional Asian techniques ... is a way that Isogawa successfully captures the fusion between the culture of Japan and that of the Australian continent. (Karaminas 2005, 467)

Isogawa is extremely sensitive to colour and light, characteristics which he ascribes to the Australian environment and its clear colours:

For me what is special about Australia is this particular light that is so different from Japan. The light there is so diffused and everything appears greyer. Here the colour is so clear and I find it very inspiring. I use the inspiration from Japanese culture – such as the vintage kimono – and interpret that and make it relevant to Australian culture by referring to the quality of light. (Christmass 2012)

His designs are often bright, but have backgrounds of cream and ivory, similar in nature to a *kachō-ga* (bird and flower print) which creates a toned-down quality that appeals to the Australian woman's sensibility for the casually elegant or informal (Craik 2009b). Isogawa is very conscious of this trade in aesthetics and can clearly articulate the inspiration and flexibility that the Australian environment has on his work:

I come from Kyoto and I show in Paris, but I am more influenced by the light and colours of living in Sydney than any other city in the world. I've been very fortunate to be able to base myself in such a positive, young country which doesn't have a strong sense of tradition. I think that's a positive thing because without tradition you can make new rules and bring fresh ideas. (Isogawa, quoted in Christmas, 2009)

It is possible, but unlikely, that Isogawa would have created a similar body of work had he stayed in Japan. The culture and environment of Australia that has welcomed and adopted him has created a dynamic cradle for his development and the impetus for cross-cultural design. It is only on reflection on his native culture, seeing it from a distance, that has enabled him to perceive the restraint and conformity he left behind in Japan compared to the relative freedom of his life in Australia (Pryor 2014). Isogawa has remarked in several interviews (Pryor 2014; Leigo 2016; Christmass 2009) the extent to which the freedom to express his Japanese heritage within Australian design has affected his career. In reference to this creative freedom to express cultural fusion, he said, 'that's the really wonderful thing about Australia, that that's completely acceptable, that Australia is such a multi-cultural country' (Isogawa, quoted in Leigo 2016, n.p.). In another interview he remarked;

How I view Japanese culture is quite different to how a Japanese designer who lives in Tokyo, for example might view it. Based here, you look at it from a distance, with different eyes. And you notice things here, too, that others may take for granted. I am interested in the traditions of Japanese techniques in textile development, but in terms of shape and aesthetic, I tend to follow what I think suits the Australian woman. (Christmass 2009)

Isogawa helped introduce elements of an Eastern aesthetic into Australian dress by utilising traditional styles and fabrics from his ancestral culture, re-working them successfully for the contemporary Australian fashion industry and thereby contributing to the acceptance of an Eastern sensibility in Australian design. Isogawa positions himself as an Australian, designing clothes for Australian women that are inflected by his Japanese-Australian experience.

When cultures cross and collide in contemporary design, traditional motifs move across borders. I am interested to understand what happens to the meanings of highly symbolic patterns such as Isogawa's favourite chrysanthemum when it is used in Australian fashion. Haekyung Yu's study of 2001 which analysed the use of an Asian influence in modern (Western) dress states:

Japanese surface patterns and colour have had the most significant impact on modern fashion ... stylised floral patterns, such as the Japanese apricot blossom or chrysanthemum; stylised pictorial patterns of clouds and bamboo ... appear with some frequency in modern textile design ... Traditional Chinese geometric patterns and the so called 'eight precious objects', among them the bat and crane, appear frequently in patterns of fashionable modern textiles. These patterns

have come into frequent use even though the religious meaning implied in the eight precious objects seems to be missing in today's fashion. (Yu 2001, 314)

Isogawa remarked in 2015 in a personal communication that it is his intention to imbue his garments with the traditional meanings of Japanese motifs, challenging what Yu has stated above. Isogawa intended the talismanic value of his patterns to be discerned and appreciated by his customers, but like all signs and symbols, they are consumed by their audience as a semiotic language that is dependent on their own subjectivity to interpret. Humans, 'as a species driven by a desire to make meanings' (Peirce 1958, 302), decipher signs within Isogawa's garments (and other fashions) both consciously and unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of conventions. Through the process of globalisation, cultural codes have developed across numerous industries which consumers use to make associations and understandings about brands, both positively or negatively. The customer consumes symbolic signs that align with the social identity they wish to cultivate through fashion, which in this case could include the desire to be aligned with high-quality design or the desire to be associated with the hand-made or slow fashion⁹⁶. Wearing Japanese prints in the mind of the consumer may also constitute a sartorial search for authenticity (Maynard, 1999), where the individual is able to pick and mix their wardrobe, arranging a reading through the language of their dress that positions them as a global citizen, in sympathy with a desire for originality, Eastern mysticism or an alignment with a type of neo-bohemia or Zen philosophy.

Collaborating with Akira Isogawa

My collaboration with Akira Isogawa was pivotal to the overall research project as it introduced a working methodology of *wabi-sabi* into my textile design and encouraged academic research into Japanese aesthetic philosophy.

The first design meeting with Isogawa was important as I was allowed the privilege of looking through his archive of previous and current collections (see Figures 109 to 111). He carefully guided me through the garments, explaining different prints (of which many he had designed himself) and their significance. On close inspection, a print which appeared like a densely arranged traditional Japanese floral of chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms and irises had Persian-style arabesque motifs. He described it as 'very Australian. Multi-cultural' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2015), which was significant as it indicated his view of cloth as a place where cultural ideas and symbols can merge and that his understanding of Australian culture was inherently multicultural.

We discussed the problem I had encountered myself that although the medium of screen print allowed a hand-made quality much favoured to the flatness of digital printing, the cost and environmental hazard were not conducive to reproduction even for limited edition runs of garments⁹⁷. Through a process of discussion via email and our initial meeting, I translated a series of images and colour palettes that

⁹⁶ Slow fashion is the opposite of fast, inexpensive fashion that is mass produced. It may be considered a reaction against fast fashion and its associated environmental problems of pollution and landfill. Slow fashion is produced with quality materials and manufacturing to lengthen the life of the garment. Developing a garment with a cultural and emotional connection is also the purpose behind slow fashion; consumers will keep an article of clothing longer than one season if they feel emotionally or culturally connected to it (Valverde 1999).

⁹⁷ Isogawa still seeks out and uses screen printers in India and Indonesia; however, inconsistencies in quality and the problem of overseeing production were constant barriers to meeting delivery deadlines. As a compromise, Isogawa uses digital print within his collections as well as some screen print and other hand-worked elements to retain the overall quality and perception he desires.

Isogawa provided, with his encouragement to experiment with the scale of textile motif on the body and layout. To circumvent the drawback of using digital prints, I experimented with adding texture to the designs digitally using Photoshop software. Isogawa responded most favourably to designs which were unfinished and slightly messy, retaining evidence of pencil lines or layered textures which he described as 'having character' (Isogawa, personal communication, 2016) but could also be described as possessing a beauty of things imperfect, namely, *wabi-sabi*:

Wabi-sabi, in its purest, most idealised form, is precisely about these delicate traces, this faint evidence, at the borders of nothingness. Wabi-sabi accommodates to degradation and attrition, corrosion and contamination make it richer, solicits the expansion of sensory information [and] is comfortable with ambiguity and contradiction. (Koren 1994, 26-27)

The process of working with Isogawa was very experimental. Although he initially encouraged me to create cleanly delineated designs with intense bold colour, he later suggested that I 'rough them up' and lighten the colourways (Isogawa, personal communication, 2016). I developed two 'multicultural' Japanese all-over patterns, *Multi* (Figure 112) and *High Summer* (Figure 119), which had the overall appearance of Japanese prints, but also included injections of motifs from other cultures. Individual motifs from these designs such as the chrysanthemum and peony flower motif were isolated and arranged into different *fukinsei* (asymmetrical) layouts. I was asked to experiment with overlays of a decorative but disruptive graffiti element which introduced *datsuzoku*, a rebellious type of freedom in design that is unbound by convention and a theme in Japanese aesthetics, the results of which can be seen in Figure 114.

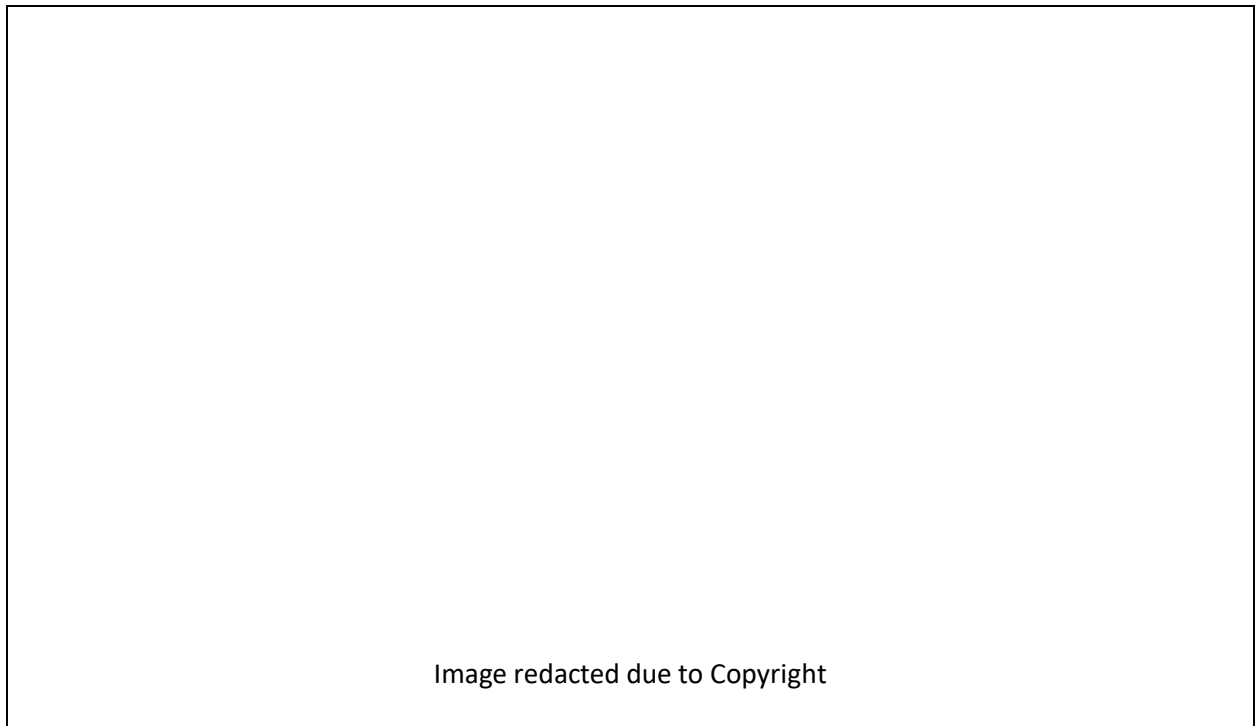


Figure 107. Ashe Digital Textile Designs for Akira Isogawa Collection 2016/17. *Vogue Australia*, 2017. Figure 108. Ashe Digital Textile Designs for Akira Isogawa Collection 2016/17. *Vogue Australia*, 2017.

Over a period of four months, over 50 designs were created which I overlaid into a modern *ukiyo-e* style cropped fashion illustration (see Figures 115, 116, 120 and 121) so that scale on the body could be discerned. This intense phase of design, discussion, reflection and review elucidated the way in which Isogawa navigates through the design process. The final designs that were chosen for production for his Autumn/Winter 2017 and Spring/Summer 16/17 collections, *Trellis* and *Trellis Chrysanthemum* (Figures 94, 122 and 123) were arrived at after much experimentation and attention to detail. The design layout needed to operate in a specific scale to proportions of the body that were pleasingly in balance and therefore *shizen* (without pretense, natural, nonchalant), with elements of *kanso* (simplicity) and *seijaku* (tranquillity) which were created by the understated colour palette.

This chapter has outlined the creative work of Akira Isogawa and drawn focus to the ways in which the Australian environment has fused with his Japanese-influenced designs. His contemporary interpretation of *wabi-sabi* aesthetics in fashion and textiles, experienced first-hand in my collaboration with him in 2015/16, was a decisive phase of my project where a working methodology of Japanese aesthetics became more evident in my own creative production.

As an international figure and ambassador of Australian design in Europe, the world has recognised a simple beauty and casual elegance in the work of Akira Isogawa as a significant aspect of Australian fashion. Isogawa's unique perspective on design has been readily adopted into Australian popular culture, as reflected in journalistic and scholarly commentary and representations in national galleries and museums. His garments are a contemporary emblem of our multicultural society, reinforcing Isogawa's comment that he is 'as much Western as Eastern' (Hume 2005, 9).

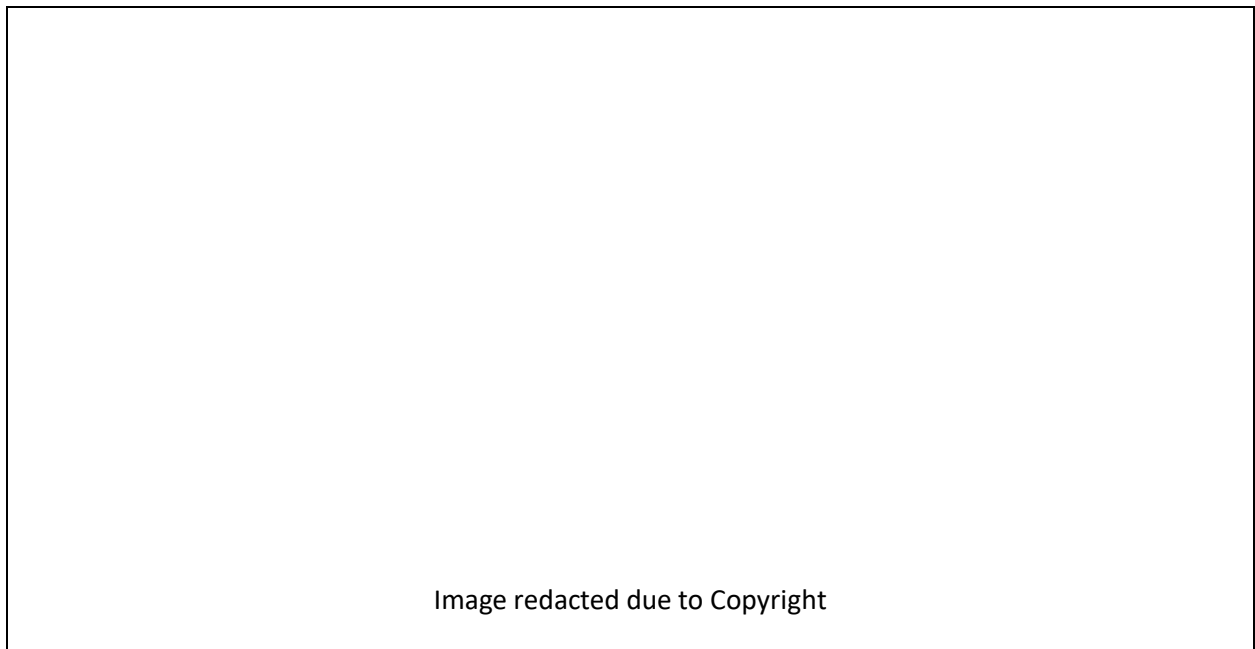


Figure 109. Meetings in The Akira Isogawa Studio. 2015. Figure 110. Meetings in The Akira Isogawa Studio. 2015. Figure 111. Meetings in The Akira Isogawa Studio. 2015.

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Figure 112. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *'Multi'*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 113. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Multi Grid*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 114. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Multi Graffiti*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 115. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Drape Graffiti Matisse Cerise*. 2016. Illustration for Akira Isogawa. Figure 116. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Drape Indigo Multi*. 2016. Illustration for Akira Isogawa.

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Figure 117. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Tissue Peony*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 118. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Multi Green*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 119. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *High Summer*. 2016. Digital Textile Design for Akira Isogawa. Figure 120. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Drape Red Tissue Peony*. 2016. Illustration for Akira Isogawa. Figure 121. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Drape Gold High Summer*. 2016. Illustration for Akira Isogawa.

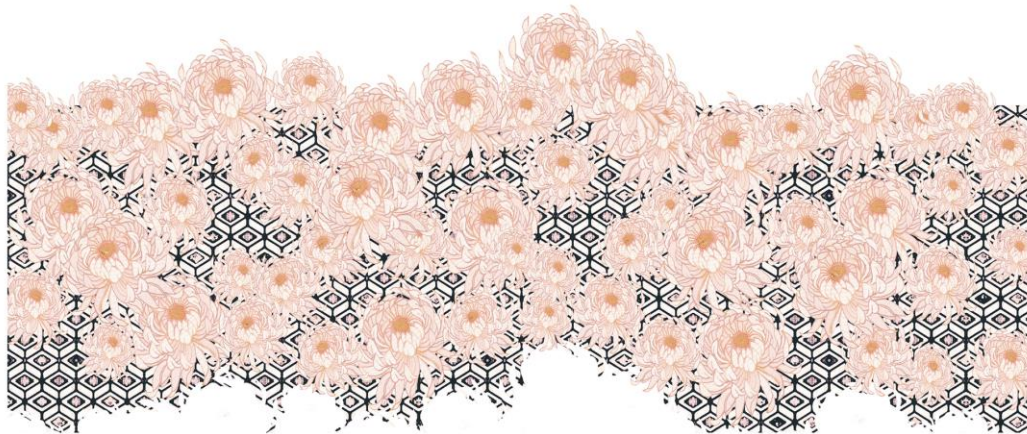


Figure 122. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Drape Trellis Trio*. 2016. Illustration for Akira Isogawa. Figure 123. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Chrysanthemum Trellis Repeat*. 2016. Digital Repeat Print for Akira Isogawa.

Chapter Six

Imaginary Aesthetic Territories – My Antipodean Floating World

In this final chapter of my exegesis, I bring together the culmination of research from consecutive cycles of studying, making, reflecting and imagining, and re-visit key objectives and aims. I refer again to the Venn diagram (Figure 21) from my Introduction which outlined the triangulated areas of influence in their primary, secondary and tertiary combinations; landscape traditions in Australian art, Australian fashion and textile design, and Japanese *ukiyo-e* art/aesthetic philosophy. The overlapping spheres of inspiration combine in the central zones to assist in developing creative production for ‘Imaginary Aesthetic Territories’.



Figure 124. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Pictorial Venn Diagram for Imaginary Aesthetic territories*. 2018

By creating a pictorial Venn diagram for my personal reference (Figure 124) which corresponds to the original in Figure 21, the visual and metaphorical idea of fusion of influences becomes evident and each important area of research is clearly represented. My objective to depict the Australian environment and landscape in relation to fashion, replacing previous stereotypes of kitsch Australiana with a timelessness and 'freshness which is somehow eternally up-to-date' (Snodin and Howard 1996, 210) through the application of Japanese aesthetic philosophies, resides within the central intersection of influences. The objective to merge my landscape painting and printed textile design for fashion practice into one cohesive methodology and artistic approach is also situated at the centre, drawing from each sphere. Throughout this chapter I discuss my own approach to Australian Japonism by teasing out the significance of ideologies examined in relation to the fields of contemporary art and design and by reviewing how I have represented those findings through my creative practice.

Drawing the Landscape with a *Wabi-Sabi* Sensitivity

In Chapter Two I described how over millenia the Japanese cultivated an aesthetic philosophy which pervaded every aspect of life through the syncretic influence of Shinto-Buddhism. Artists depicted nature with the influence of philosophies such as *wabi-sabi* (the beauty of things impermanent) across all creative mediums and were emphatic in establishing connections between object and ornament. The Shinto belief in animal and tree spirits and the desire to wear or display symbolic representations of auspicious patterns were important to mark social rank and status, but also to express personality and emotional nature, as well as a profound connection with the natural environment.

A parallel in Western philosophy is discussed in the introduction to *Landscape and Power* (1994) by art historian W.J.T. Mitchell, where he outlines how images of landscape can be read with social and subjective identities projected into and upon it. He describes how comprehension of the landscape is drawn through the senses as well as by the meanings we give it, and he proposes the idea that landscape can be 'deciphered as textual systems' (1994, 1) by incorporating symbolic motifs, as opposed to the 'pure, formal, visuality' associated with modernism:

Natural features such as trees, stones, water, animals and dwellings can be read as symbols in religious, psychological, or political allegories, characteristic structures and forms [...] can be linked with generic and narrative typologies such as the pastoral, the georgic, the exotic, the sublime, and the picturesque. (1994, 1)

Mitchell reasons that artists have deliberately used symbolic systems in landscape art to create an alternate reading of the work, inflecting social and cultural constructs of identity into the medium. For example, the 'exotic' landscape may depict a utopia, an 'unspoiled paradise where the nineteenth century fantasies of [an] ideal, picturesque and romantic landscape would seem to be perfectly preserved' (Mitchell 1994, 20), indicating a predilection for peace and harmony or a golden age gone by. An example of the exotic symbolism of landscape projected onto cloth and fashion is the Hawaiian shirt, which is typically decorated with scenes of perfect waves and idyllic tropical islands to represent a carefree lifestyle associated with living close to the ocean⁹⁸. By wearing a Hawaiian shirt, the wearer literally embodies and

⁹⁸ This pattern has been reinterpreted by Australian designers for the surfwear industry, such as the Mambo Loud Shirts discussed in Chapter Three.

projects a clear narrative of their authentic/preferred/constructed identity through the non-verbal communication of dress, an idea I return to shortly. As outlined in the Introduction, fashion and textile designers also use the symbolic nature of pattern to imprint meaningful communication about their brand identity. These resonant ideas – that Edo artists use symbolic motifs from the landscape to express specific intentions; that contemporary artists can depict the landscape as a ‘textual system’ to be read (Mitchell 1994, 1); and that textile designers can utilise print as a meaningful form of communication – are important modes of operation that fuse to inform ‘Imaginary Aesthetic Territories’. These approaches all favour a semiotic reading of the work, where an added layer of meaning is implied in addition to its formal representation.

It is my relationship with the landscape which impels me to draw and therefore create. I have located it as the activating force and centre of my practice, as I perceive it springing forth with a natural impetus rather than triggered by the necessity for income, or directed by outside influences like my textile designs, which are moulded by industry/market demand. The process of drawing the landscape or motifs such as buildings or flora and fauna from it has always been an intuitive and implicit practice that I related to an effortless mode of recreation; a form of leisure or refreshing break from the normal routines of life, where a meditative state and connection to nature could be enjoyed whilst sketching. Designing printed textiles for consumption in the high fashion industry is also a pleasant aspect of my practice; however, it is affected by the requirement to produce a desirable commodity that reflects contemporary trends, able to be sold or marketed to generate revenue.



Figure 125. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, 2014 *Moon sketch*.

The process involved in this research and exegetical account has been to find ways that depictions of the Australian landscape can be used within fashionable textiles and artworks to depict identity, combining both of my practices. In Chapter One I described my perceived problem with representations of Australian motifs on clothing being perceived with negative perceptions of Australiana qualities – a reading I wished to avoid. To transcend associations with the 1970-80s Australiana trend, I have drawn on the timeless qualities associated with Japonism, which I outlined in Chapter Four, to reposition the reading of

Australian motifs on cloth from a possible comprehension as kitsch or passé, to one of timelessness which can be defined as ‘belonging to no-time’ (*Macquarie Dictionary*).

The stage of my artistic inquiry that responded to Florence Broadhurst’s Japanese-inspired printed patterns helped in developing designs that represented a timelessness through Australian Japonist fusion, as did my collaboration with Akira Isogawa. By utilising knowledge gleaned from my theoretical research into Japanese aesthetics and philosophy with notions of timelessness discussed in Chapter Four, a new way of seeing and imagining emerged that organised and interwove this knowledge. By contemplating this knowledge whilst drawing, I have effectively developed my previously intuitive approach to depicting landscape into a defined methodology, which I will further extrapolate on in this chapter.

Recognising forms in nature that resonate with the graphic forms within *saraca* (patterns of life textiles) and *katazome* (stencilled patterns for *kimono*) has developed in tandem with my consideration of the tenets of *wabi-sabi*. Whilst viewing the landscape, I seek *fukinsei* (asymmetrical) pattern formations between objects, or position myself to draw or photograph a scene in such a way. For example, in Edo *ukiyo-e kachō-ga* (bird and flower prints) there are often dense clusters of leaves, blossoms or flowers in one area of the image floating within otherwise predominantly negative space. I have pursued finding these arrangements as they naturally occur, by moving within and around the landscape before committing to a drawing or sketch. For example, *Caesia and Stars* (Figure 126) was developed from a drawing of a Eucalyptus *Caesia* tree in blossom, which hangs in an asymmetrical position across the picture plane. The *Caesia* is endemic to Western Australia and blossoms in winter, representing the reverence and beauty of the rhythmic cycle of the coming spring that emerges from the dark of winter. The moonless night sky filled with stars provides the coupling of two motifs to suggest a particular time of year or emotive quality which was the aim of the original Edo *kachō-ga* artists. By creating this arrangement, the print can be read at first glance as a timeless ‘oriental’ style print; however, on closer inspection, the image reveals a distinctively Australian theme and seasonal observance.

The raw hand-drawn artworks of landscape and motif that result from my sittings in nature often become both repeating pattern and small-scale artworks in their own right (see Figures 125 and 126). The process of creating textile designs from these sketches has become a product in and of itself. In ‘Landscape, Place and Identity in Craft and Design’ (2015), textile artist and professor Kay Lawrence suggests an approach to practice where

visual, material, spatial and temporal processes of [artistic] disciplines interrogate questions of identity in relation to place and landscape. While craft and design are often thought to be primarily involved in producing “things”, they can also be understood as process – an approach, an attitude or action; a way of doing things. (Lawrence 2015, 7)

Lawrence advocates for the process of enquiry through design, making and materiality, to address themes of landscape, place and identity. The meanings that we give a landscape or place can be inflected by the dwelling, immersion and response to a place, where the experience of it is inflected by identity, and fused with social and cultural forces to create a constructed landscape image.

Lawrence describes the experience of depicting the landscape *en plein air* – stopping, sitting, looking and recognising ‘the bodily experience of being there ... in that place, at that time in all its sensory complexity’ (Lawrence 2015, 7) to record an artistic impression.



Figure 126. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Caesia and Stars*. 2017.

Lawrence's example of sensitivity to surroundings is in keeping with the spiritual and metaphysical basis of *wabi-sabi* teachings whereby 'truth comes from the observation of nature' (Koren 1994, 40). *Wabi*, in particular, pertains to the inner spiritual path and perception of the 'inward and subjective' (Koren 1994, 23), combining with *sabi's* reference to outward material objects (such as the landscape) and the 'temporal events' (Koren 1994, 23) that occur within it. As opposed to drawing from secondary source material (which was my approach in relation to works influenced by Florence Broadhurst or for Akira Isogawa) I have found that the experience of depicting the landscape is not restricted to the visual alone; it is modified with bodily sensations, emotions or memories. A depiction of discomfort could be symbolised by prickly branches that seem to probe, anxiety could be shown by emphasising foreboding clouds on the horizon and so on.

The graphic forms of nature which intrude into my perceived line of sight, such as the *Caesia* tree described above, become selected motifs to study and draw as I visualise them as a printed textile that repeats endlessly in a reflection of nature's cycles which are also endless. In this space of calm, I reflect on my place and connection with the landscape and consider the various phenomena for their subjective symbolism, positioning myself as a *kachō-ga* artist as described in Chapter Two. This entails cultivating a sensitivity to the smallest moment in nature and finding correlations to express a subjective emotion through the contemplation of natural phenomena and the aesthetic observation of its fleeting beauty. Rather than seeing a landscape motif objectively as a botanical object to simply be depicted, I seek subjective parallels to human life and connections between motifs that might communicate a narrative. *Spinifex* (Figure 131), for example, draws on Bruce Goold's graphic *katagami*-style prints of Australian insects for inspiration, but also reflects my subjective sensations of the heat, discomfort and dryness I found almost unbearable when first arriving in Perth. The sinister-looking insect that hovers over the spinifex becomes a symbolic motif of the stinging irritation of that experience. In doing so I have taken

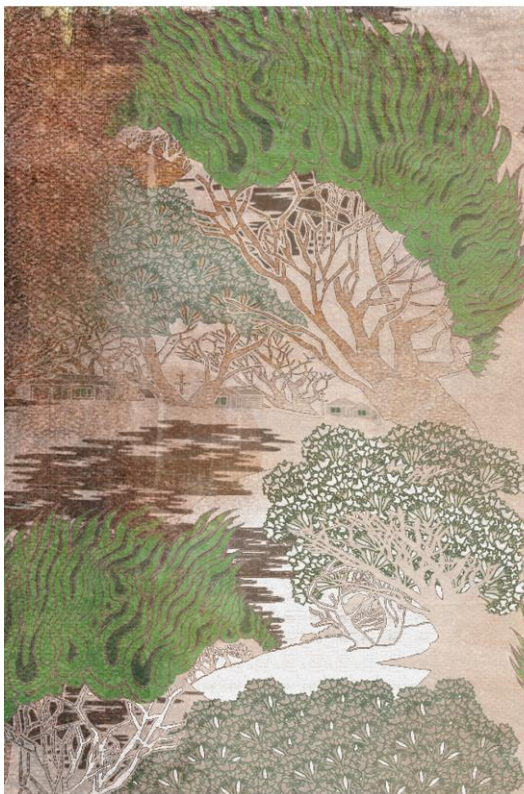
the image from simply a being a study of nature to one that acts like a *kachō-ga* print capturing seasonal moments.

Another *kachō-ga*, *Moon over Indian Ocean (Triptych)* (Figure 150) draws aesthetically from the Australian-Japonist work of A.B. Webb, a West Australian artist who chose quiet, still and moody subject matter featuring Swan River landscapes, imbuing them with a Japanese sense of design derived from *ukiyo-e* prints (Gooding, 2004) (see Figure 143). Webb's desaturated images, devoid of human activity or indication of a specific time period, allude to a quietude and agelessness that resonates with my intentions for the landscape I have constructed in this image. Borrowing frameworks of what constitutes a reading of timelessness in design (as discussed in Chapter Four), such as the relegation of 'oriental' type prints to a categorisation of 'classic', is aimed for in this print to produce a sense of belonging to 'no particular time' and therefore possess enduring or 'classic' qualities. As a contemporary *kachō-ga* multimedia print, *Moon over Indian Ocean* also records my early impressions of the landscape of Fremantle in Western Australia, which I perceived as strange, with its blend of gothic convict-built architecture, dry parched eucalyptus and windswept beaches. In a typical *kachō-ga* arrangement, ominous crows, that reach far outside the picture plane dominate the foreground and are subjective symbols of the inhospitable and alien landscape I was trying to apprehend upon arrival in the area. Peaceful black swans in the middle ground, represent an elegant beauty and reflect my eventual appreciation for the landscape which developed through years of living in Western Australia.

The sense of emptiness and negative space perceived in traditional Japanese art, which I discussed in Chapter Two also contributes to my prints. I perceive the openness (or nothingness) of unlimited space so ubiquitous in the Australian landscape as equivalent to the empty space of potentiality described by the Zen-Buddhist-Shinto tradition (Hara 2014). A void, a pause, or area of spatial emptiness, which can be discerned in most of my print designs, relates to the primordial sense of the dynamic whole of the universe, a space that is never complete or permanent, an always-changing force that is to be admired and appreciated. In the moments of reflection, whilst sitting in the environment, I detect the feeling of wonder, sensation of awe, calmness and perfection in nature which can be described aesthetically as *yūgen* (an awareness of the universe that triggers an emotional response too deep and powerful for words) (Yūgen.com n.d.).

I have put into practice Lawrence's idea that the meanings that we give a landscape can be inflected by the dwelling, immersion and response to a place, and that the experience of it is inflected with our identity (Lawrence 2015). Whilst drawing in the Tasmanian landscape in 2014, I recalled a memory of a bushfire that surrounded our family home when I was a child. As the memories filtered through into my drawing, not only did the moment of panic and terror of being isolated with a raging fire about to consume my home become re-recorded, but also the blackened landscape and eventual return to blossoming beauty of the native habitat that follows so quickly after a bushfire, was contained in the drawing (Figure 125).

The image was later turned into a repeating pattern, *Cruel Summer* (Figure 128), which reiterated the cyclical nature of death and reformation that repeats over and over within the landscape through seasonal change and natural phenomenon such as bushfires, floods and storms. Not only does the repeating device of the print refer to this cycle, but the rising moon shape and symbolism of fire, which is at once destructive and regenerative, is found within the print, reinforcing the theme of cycles that are never complete.



L to R from top: Figure 127. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Cruel Summer*, Wallpaper. 2016. Figure 128. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Cruel Summer*. 2016. Figure 129. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Cruel Summer* (Detail). 2016. Figure 130. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *It's a Cruel Summer I*. 2018.

All things, including the universe itself, are in constant, never ending state of becoming or dissolving. Often we arbitrarily designate moments, points along the way, as “finished” or “complete”. But when does something’s destiny finally come to fruition? Is the plant complete when it flowers? When it goes to seed? When the seeds sprout? When everything turns to compost? The notion of completion has no basis in wabi-sabi. (Koren 1994, 15)

Originally the *Cruel Summer* print was *iki* (sharp, crisp, measured) with a *katagami*-like (stencil) appearance printed on a smooth wallpaper length (see Figure 127) (influenced by Florence Broadhurst’s cleanly delineated designs) made specifically for an exhibition in 2014.⁹⁹ After working with Akira Isogawa and distilling his lesson on the importance of patina and character in *wabi-sabi*, I began to experiment with roughing the edges of the design, scratching and overlaying textures. Essentially, I was degrading the image, rapidly adding age through the speed of a digital format, deliberately distressing, even erasing some areas, to reflect my patchy childhood memories of the event (Figure 129). I was introducing the idea of *wabi-sabi*’s aged patina of ‘impoverished rusticity’ (Richie 2007, 73) and imperfect beauty to my works.

The perception of important subjective symbols within the environment became more apparent during the final phase of the research. For example, insects and birds increasingly appeared in my prints as I frequently perceived them whilst in the landscape. The plight of the rapid disappearance of the Red Tailed Black Cockatoo from the Western Australian landscape became a theme which informed the prints *Black Cockatoos* and *Shibori Cockatoos*. Environmental concerns have an innate affinity within Japanese aesthetic philosophies derived from the Shinto-Buddhist tradition. Nature is venerated and worshipped and understood as the ultimate model; ‘we are to regard it, to learn from it ... nature is our guide’ (Richie 2007, 73). My *kachō-ga* works become contemporary expressions of this reverence for nature, localised in this case to Western Australia.

Paradiso (Figure 136) is another Western Australian-inspired *kachō-ga* which depicts a landscape with native and introduced (exotic) bird and flower species in a woodblock print style, inspired by Akira Isogawa’s idea that one cloth print could communicate multiple cultures whilst retaining a sense of Australian Japonism. The repeating pattern in *Paradiso* merges motifs from different geographic locations within an Australian-esque landscape, arranged in a Japanese textile print formation. Cloaked in *fukinsei* (asymmetry) and floating in negative space, native motifs become camouflaged as Japanese patterns. For example, the design *Melaleuca* (Figure 134), a flower emblematic of the Australian environment (Gardner 1968), is visually similar to the chrysanthemum flower which is emblematic of Japan (Mizoguchi 1973), creating a design which oscillates between two cultures.

A similar correspondence occurs between the design *Waratah* (Figure 84) and the Japanese chrysanthemum. The prints become a reflection of the multiculturalism evident in contemporary Australian society whilst reinforcing the cross-cultural reference points of this project.

⁹⁹ I exhibited the print as a wallpaper in the 2014 Perth Fashion Festival Fashion Forms Exhibition (see Appendix for additional imagery associated with this exhibition).



L to R from top: Figure 131. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Spinifex*. 2013. Figure 132. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Multi Indigo*. 2016. Figure 133. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Shibori Cockatoos*. 2014. Figure 134. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Melaleuca*. 2014. Figure 135. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *High Summer*. 2016. Figure 136. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Paradiso*. 2016. Figure 137. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Gothic Moth*. 2017. Figure 138. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Monarch*. 2014. Figure 139. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *White Cockatoos*. 2014.

In appraising an approach to depicting the landscape, I have utilised ideas and techniques drawn from Western scholars such as Mitchell and Lawrence, combining them with attitudes inherent to Japanese aesthetic philosophy. Both modes of perceiving and depicting the landscape become important points for cohesion and application of this knowledge, which ultimately assists in guiding ways to develop motifs that create a language for cloth that can be interpreted in my artworks.

East-West Imaginings

The title 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories' was formed at the very inception of this study in relation to the fictional dream-like perceptions of Japan that have fed the conventions of Western Japonism since the eighteenth century (Bolton 2015; Barthes 1970). At its height, European Japonism of the nineteenth century reflected the Western imagination in its depiction of a 'fairy-land', an enigmatic and imaginary Edo of floating pagodas and moss gardens of serenity¹⁰⁰ (Martin and Koda 1994) which along with Egyptomania, Chinoiserie, Turquerie and other stylistic genres was part of the European fascination with the constructed exotic. As discussed in the Introduction and Chapters One and Two, these styles were products of trans-orientalism, a reciprocal East-West dialogue (Geczy 2014) where motifs, textiles and objects of all kinds were created and consumed in response to cultural interactions that criss-crossed globally through the processes of exchange, trade and hybridisation.

These styles, rather than atrophying in a distant past, continue to provide 'a locus of infinite and unbridled creativity' (Bolton 2015, 17) and important stimulus in contemporary fields of design and art. For example, the idea of an imaginary site for new creative practice is discussed by Andrew Bolton with reference to how contemporary couture designers such as John Galliano (then for Christian Dior), Martin Margiela, Yves Saint Laurent, Dries Van Noten and Alexander McQueen created costumes and illustrations for the Met Museum's exhibition *China Through the Looking Glass* (2014) through chinoiserie, an imaginary version of China;

the designers featured in this catalogue are travelers to another country, reflecting on artistic and cultural traditions as exoticised extensions of their own. Their China is one of their own making: mythical, fictional and fantastical, it exists only in their minds. (Bolton 2015, 20)

In a similar way, albeit through Japonism, much of the work in 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories' conjures a utopian site for creation that exists outside time and space, in a no-time, no-place. A utopia¹⁰¹, an imagined society that possesses extremely pleasant or near perfect qualities for its citizens – and which translates from Greek οὐ ('not') and τόπος ('place') to mean 'no-place' (Sargent 2010) – has a direct correlation with the imagined fabrications inherent to orientalism (Martin 1994). In *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress* (1994), Martin and Koda describe the European fascination for the far-off lands of the East:

¹⁰⁰ Seventeenth to nineteenth century trade in *ukiyo-e* prints and *saraca* printed *kimono* such as the one in Figure 44 would certainly have assisted the formation of this invented fantasy.

¹⁰¹ The term 'utopia' was coined from Greek by Sir Thomas More for his 1516 book *Utopia*, describing a fictional island society in the south Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South America. These imagined ideal societies have taken many forms in historical literature and art. According to Lyman Tower Sargent, 'there are socialist, capitalist, monarchical, democratic, anarchist, ecological, feminist, patriarchal, egalitarian, hierarchical, racist, left-wing, right-wing, reformist, Naturists/Nude Christians, free love, nuclear family, extended family, gay, lesbian, and many more utopias' (Sargent 2010, 21).

The perilous voyages to Cathay and Edo and even the narrower crossing to the mysterious harems and itinerant lifestyles of North Africa and the Middle East, gave Europe a secular heaven-on-earth, a paradise undefiled by Western civilisation. The early discoverers and the traders sought a land never to inhabit, ever to see as different – a perfect “other”... vested with exotic mystery. (Martin and Koda 1994, 1)

Prints and illustrations created within my research become the material culture of an alternate other-land much like the imaginary worlds promulgated by early European perceptions of a Japan ‘located in an elsewhere of endless possibilities’ (Bolton 2015,19) during the nineteenth century craze for exoticism. My works hover in a place that could be Australia but could also be a ‘non-Australia’ or ‘other-Australia’, a fictitious fantasy land or parallel universe where cross-culturalism exists harmoniously, a stylised idyll, picturesque and hedonistic, ‘concocted from the Western desire and imagination’ (Martin and Koda 1994, 11).

My first attempt at depicting my own ‘Imaginary Aesthetic Territory’ was in the print *Island Nation* (Figure 90) (which I described in Chapter Four) that depicts an island in a *katagami* (stencil) appearance that has an ambiguous similarity to the shape of the Australian continent. The landscape has been exoticised into a tropical archipelago with a variety of iconic symbols of Australia and portrayals of houses of worship to represent the island’s multicultural nature¹⁰² across its surface. In this invented utopian Australian/Australasian/Japanese ‘place’, new representations of the contemporary hybrid cultural identity of Australia are made. The print utilises a Japanese use of pictorial space and draws on the legacy of floating world-type motifs ubiquitous in Edo Japanese arts (see Figure 44 in Chapter Two and Figure 142 below) where entire landscapes seem to float across space.

I further developed the concept of a divergent reality in my print *Antipodea* (Figure 144) which is also informed by the pinball machine narrative provided by Kenya Hara in Chapter Two (Figure 49). Hara (2014) described Japan as the receptacle of the world’s pinball machine, collecting influences from cultures all over the world on the way to Japan. I argued in Chapter Two that if the silk route is an undefined site of inter-cultural trade and exchange in textiles and if the pinball machine’s receptacle is pushed further South-East still, then Australia becomes the receptacle and the next station of the silk route. *Antipodea* imagines this continuation of influence across Asia and Australia and beyond by depicting a cross-cultural floating world of pleasure and hedonism settled in an Austral-asian-esque landscape.

The title *Antipodea* refers to the term ‘antipodean’, which signifies ideas of the diametrically opposed and also the southern region of the globe including Australia and New Zealand. I have turned and flipped the map of the world around, creating a new territory of islands that are reversals of our known Asia-Pacific basin, with Tasmania and Western Australia at the top of the map and Japan at the bottom¹⁰³. Anne-Marie Willis in *Illusions of identity: The Art of Nation* (1993) observes that the shape of Australia in ‘its distinctiveness and relative symmetry allow it to be abstracted, stretched in all directions, appear in all colours and sizes and still be recognised as a sign of Australia’ (Willis 1993, 15).

¹⁰² Dystopia, the antonym of utopia, can portray a society in a state of collapse or disintegration, full of fear and turmoil. Although this was not my focus for the overall readings of my prints, I have introduced glimpses of dystopia within some works to hint at the reality of the modern world. For example, on closer inspection of the *Island Nation* print (Figure 90) leaking oil tanks in the ocean and drain pipes leaking toxic sludge into the waterways can be discerned.

¹⁰³ ‘Only convention and history dictates the standard view of the world with Australia down the bottom’ (‘Down under map of the world’, <http://www.chartandmapshop.com.au> retrieved 1/6/18). The idea of flipping the map upside down (so that Australia or the ‘Land Downunder’ comes out on top of the world) is not new; it has appeared on tourist paraphernalia and alternative maps of Australia.

Image redacted due to Copyright

L to R from top: Figure 140. Unknown artist, *Dia Toa Senka Gakushu Exu* (Japanese WWII Pictorial Map of the Pacific). 1941. Figure 141. Unknown artist, *The Unfinished Washington Monument and the Capitol, Washington D.C.*. Circa 1860. Figure 142. Unknown artist, Kimono textile of the Edo period. Early 1800s. Figure 143. A.B. Webb, *Sunshine and Shadow*. 1921.

Antipodea is also informed by East-West reciprocity and imagination by studying examples of how Japanese artists have historically depicted the West, subverting the common idea that it is the West that depicts the East by drawing inspiration from a Japanese print which depicts the West (which I will discuss shortly) and a Japanese WWII map which represents Australia (the West) through the eyes of Japan (the East). The map includes symbols such as emus, palm trees, miners, sheep, wheat, kangaroos and lyrebirds, indicating the natural resources inhabitant to Australia (Figure 140).

The use of maps with symbolic icons of 'scattered distinctive flora and fauna, historical sites, buildings, bridges, obvious national symbols can be found in nearly all countries' (Willis 1993, 16) where merely a minimal necessary resemblance to real artefacts stands in as 'assumptions about appropriate symbols to represent nation' (Willis 1993, 16)



Figure 144. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Antipodea*. 2018.

Anne-Marie Willis reminds us that ‘the visual conventions of map-making and our culturally specific competence in reading signs’ (Willis 1993, 14) such as touristic postcards, artworks or other cultural paraphernalia are always only ever a construction of national identity often created by political or economically driven discourses. Bound within a geographic space, these symbols ‘invent nations where they do not exist’ (Anderson 1985, 15) and ‘though imaginary, the consequences of belief in the idea of nation have material effects’ (Willis 1993, 19). These material effects include providing a nation with ‘a pervasive way of making communal life meaningful beyond the immediate circle of family and beyond different social formations a subject may move through in the course of a lifetime’ (Willis 1993, 20). The idea that nation as a mythic construction can affect one’s understanding and meaningful relationship to their place in the world is captured within *Antipodea* by expanding ‘place’ beyond the borders of the asymmetrical land mass of Australia and merging it into the surrounding geography of the Asia-Pacific. The print depicts a landscape without borders, a region that includes places I have called home, a territory peacefully inhabited. To indicate this, I have re-drawn and re-positioned map-like symbols across the floating world within *Antipodea*, including architecture of personal significance such as a church from the island of Moorea in Tahiti, the Cascade Building and Tasman Bridge in Tasmania and an imaginary Japanese-esque temple. The print then becomes a landscape that can be read as a complex textual system of narrative typologies, an idea I presented from Mitchell (1994) at the beginning of the chapter.

In *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (2008), Hannah Sigur outlines the many ways that Japanese design influenced western arts and in return the many ways that the Japanese absorbed images, functions and mediums of Western and European arts between the eighteenth to twentieth century. An example from Sigur's book which directly influenced the *Antipodea* print is shown in Figure 141. Drawn in ink by an unknown Japanese artist around 1860, *The Unfinished Washington Monument and the Capitol, Washington D.C.* depicts the American city seen through the eyes and artistic education of a Japanese citizen¹⁰⁴. The artist would have been a delegate sent to America to record the modernisation of the West which the Japanese were desperate to catch up with after the long period of isolation in the Edo era (Sigur 2008). The depiction of the American landscape is overtly Japanese in style; it is a Japanese construction, a Japanese imagining of a Western city. The print intrigued me as it represents a reality that is neither right nor wrong; it is simply a constructed viewpoint of a landscape grounded in the conventions of Japanese artistic practice. The image stimulated rhetorical questions that helped induce further imagining of creative production for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'. For example, what if history was altered and Australia had been peacefully inhabited by the Japanese and other global nations in 1788? How, then, would we, as a nation, view the landscape and our native flora and fauna? *Antipodea* attempts to portray the West through Eastern eyes, instead of the East through Western eyes¹⁰⁵. I intend these subversions to assist in a re-imagining of the lines of global cross-cultural influence in design, toppling historical perceptions of East-West and West-East hierarchies, and re-enforcing the idea of trans-orientalism.

The Fashion Image and *Ukiyo-e*

I discussed in the Introduction that the desire to decorate the body is intrinsic to the human experience (Fogg 2006) and that wearing print allows an individual to embellish and express their identity and reflect it to the outside world; 'we wear clothes, cover ourselves in codes and creations, in order for us to be seen how we truly are' (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 10). Prints designed for fashion can suggest strong links between the pattern motif and the body and, by extension, between the body and an individual's preferred/projected identity. My textile prints displayed on their own can be perceived as a contemporary form of *kachō-ga* (bird and flower print) and be appreciated for their narrative content, rhythm, design or *wabi-sabi* aesthetic; however, the body is absent. I have found it useful to present my prints within contemporary *ukiyo-e bijin-ga* (beautiful women print), where an emphasis on the non-verbal communication of dress can further enhance the symbolic narratives introduced in the print designs and reintroduce the fashioned body back into the works' reading.

With the objective of moving away from my previous practice where the creation of paintings, textile designs and fashion ranges were three separate finished objects, I appreciate that this new approach of creating artworks that depict textile designs on fashion still responds to all these fields without actually producing any physical textile or fashion products. My exploration into *ukiyo-e* prints, which began in relation to my research into Florence Broadhurst's work for my *On the Surface* exhibition (see Appendix), became more developed whilst collaborating with Akira Isogawa in terms of print placement and scale

¹⁰⁴ Around the close of the Edo era, Japanese artists were becoming more exposed to European artistic styles and began to fuse European and Japanese techniques to produce landscape *ukiyo-e*, which were eagerly consumed by the Japanese public. The implementation of a horizontal picture plane, the use of one- and two-point perspective and shading techniques all began to appear in early Meiji era (1868-1912) *ukiyo-e*.

¹⁰⁵ Parallels to culturalised depictions of landscape can be drawn by considering the numerous references in Australian art canons to European artists such as Eugene Von Guérard and Conrad Martens who struggled to depict Australia other than in a European manner during the colonial period in the eighteenth to nineteenth century (Radford 2007).

relationships, and has culminated in my final body of work as I apply the knowledge gleaned from all phases of research.

Bijin-ga were one of the main themes in *ukiyo-e*; the others being *kabuki* actors and landscapes, which included *kachō-ga* (bird and flower) prints and *shunga* (erotica) (Harris 2012)¹⁰⁶. I have adopted the *bijin-ga* mode of presentation along with its traditional role which was to record popular fashion, etiquette and pastimes of beautiful women of the Edo period. The identity of females portrayed in Edo *bijin-ga*¹⁰⁷ reflected changes in the urban society of Edo's conception of femininity, which also had an impact on fashion. During the Edo era, depictions of females in *bijin-ga* were the product of multiple influences (including the bias of the artist/publisher, the woman's position in society, her occupation, etc.) and, therefore, multiple print designs, symbols and sometimes the use of text were used to further narrate the prints. The women in *bijin-ga* were the equivalent of today's celebrities. They were actresses from the theatres, dancers, musicians and *kimono* models. In the Edo period, just as in the contemporary age, both men and women were fascinated with stylised depictions of women and the fashionable and elegant life they portrayed. *Bijin-ga* were intended to give their audience an insight to the 'expensive pleasures of the Yoshiwara district' (Harris 2012, 60) which was the centre of Edo's floating world.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the prints were purchased 'by the fashion conscious and pleasure seeking public of the floating world' (Harris 2012, 62) to inform them of the latest hairstyles, fashion and interior products and textile designs, whilst symbolically providing representations of their emotional nature. The textile print, with its all important symbolic messages of identity, communicated through colour, scale and motif, were enormously important and like today's fashion, 'styles and patterns of clothing were constantly changing' (Harris 2012, 63), requiring the fashionable Edo-ite to continuously update their look to stay 'in vogue at the time' (Harris 2012, 63).

This concept of clothing within art that can communicate identity is also supported in Western scholarship on dress and textiles by Geczy and Karaminas in *Fashion and Art* (2012) when they comment:

In a work of art, more of the clothed picture of humanity is literally revealed; we see clothes themselves, how they work on the body and what they signify with regard to gender, age, class, status and even cultural and sometime political affiliations. The painting or other art object is a text to be decoded; the image becomes a central fact, no longer just an illustration to a history of dress, but the text itself. (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 180)¹⁰⁸

The implications of Geczy and Karaminas' idea that the artwork representing clothing is a 'text to be decoded' are revealed in the final body of work for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'. For example, *High Summer* (Figure 146) depicts a woman just past the days of youthfulness, which can be perceived by the ripe fruit entwined with the native and exotic flowers of her outfit and the autumnal colours that represent beauty, albeit fading. Objects within the prints become explicit signs to be read by the audience depending on their own subjectivity and the nature of humans, 'as a species driven by a desire to make

¹⁰⁶ The most significant *bijin-ga* artists of the Edo era were Kondo Kiyoharu, Okumura Masanobu, Suzuki Harunobu and Kitagawa Utamaro (Harris 2012).

¹⁰⁷ The representation/objectification of women in art and perceptions of female beauty in *ukiyo-e* art are important subjects relevant to but outside the scope of this exegesis. Refer to *Regarding Beauty: A View of the Late Twentieth Century* by Benezra and Viso (1999) and *Empire of the Senses: Beauty Prints from the Floating World 1790-1899* by Hunter (2014).

¹⁰⁸ Geczy and Karaminas set a hierarchy here between what constitutes a 'work of art' compared to 'just an illustration'. The term 'illustration' became inadequate and I adopted the term 'multi-media' artist, rather than 'textile designer' or 'illustrator', as my preference for the perception of my prints is that they are interpreted as artworks.

meanings' (Peirce 1958, 302) (as discussed in Chapter Five), to decipher pattern, motif and colour by relating them to global semiotic conventions.

Another example *The Cat* (Figure 145) represents a young woman, comprehended by means of the bright colours of the blossoming buds of native Australian flower motifs that can be read semiotically as emblematic of spring and the tenderness of youth and its associated qualities of innocence and beauty. The inclusion of the cat, an image which appeared with some frequency in *ukiyo-e bijin-ga*, adds a symbolic element of playfulness, knowingness, mystery, femininity and arrogance (Jung 1964). Like all my *bijin-ga*, *The Cat* contains elements that could be modern or from another era – for example, the bob haircut alludes to 1920s hair styles but could just as easily be contemporary. The print designs and wallpaper are all intended to oscillate between time periods, possibly from one era, but possibly from another, ultimately landing in none, becoming 'without time' and therefore timeless. The *kimono*-esque garments also play a key role in placing the *bijin-ga* and textile designs I have produced for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories' 'outside of time'.

It's a Cruel Summer (Figure 130) contains three textile prints – *Shibori Cockatoos*, *Cruel Summer* and *Paradiso* – effectively collapsing the ideas and themes within them into one print – or considered another way, onto one body/identity, one outfit/image. A similar approach has been taken with all my *bijin-ga* prints, drawing influence from the artisans of the Edo period such as Kitagawa Utamaro, who mastered the art of applying intricate and multiple layers of printed textiles into a *ukiyo-e* print whilst maintaining an overall cohesion in the image (as discussed in Chapter Two). My contemporary *bijin-ga* represent a modern form of the symbolic representation of identity through a reading of textile and pattern upon worn cloth.

The Japanese *kimono* and *yukata* (light *kimono*) have varied in shape and style over centuries; however, its perception as an unchanging garment (Steele 1995) has resulted in it becoming a sartorial shorthand reference to Japan. The appearance of the *kimono* in contemporary Western fashion has been consistent since Paul Poiret first began to incorporate it into his French fashions in the early twentieth century causing dress scholars to argue that Japan has 'had more influence on European fashion design than any other Asian nation' (Knox 2011, 141).¹⁰⁹ The *kimono* has been re-worked in Western fashion by innumerable Western designers due to its basic structure which can be altered in uncountable ways, incarnating as smoking jacket, bathrobe, beachrobe, high fashion garments of many types from couture gown to *prêt-à-porter*, whilst still indicating its traditional format of structured wrapping across the body with a tie at the waist.

Items such as the bathrobe are global staples (basic/common garments) in many cultures, but in fact are a direct descendant of the *kimono*, although through constant use in international cultures, their earlier forms and meanings have been forgotten, buried beneath layers of history and adaptation. Items such as the bathrobe have become globalised objects, signifying that the item has come to be perceived as a culturally and historically determinate/indeterminate garment. Its affiliations to Japan are firm, but its reading can easily oscillate into contemporary fashion or traditional costume, providing a reading of the simultaneously ancient and modern, never 'out' or 'in' fashion, but a timeless 'classic' placing it as a fitting vehicle for my textile designs¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ The *kimono* was also adopted by men and women as a garment of leisure during the obsession for Japonism in Europe in the nineteenth century (Snodin and Howard 1996).

¹¹⁰ The wearing of *kimono*, even in a subtly referential form such as a bathrobe-type garment, can elicit 'the ludic role of dress as a performative act, enabling the wearer to encompass a temporary identity of self-staged cultural/exotic other' (Bolton 2015,



Figure 145. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *The Cat*. 2017. Figure 146. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *High Summer*. 2017

To encourage the production of a body of *ukiyo-e bijin-ga* prints, I engaged a solo exhibition at Fremantle’s Round House in Fremantle in 2017 (‘ASHE X FFC’ – See Appendix). *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* by Leonard Koren (1994) was a useful reference text during this phase as the book attempts to break down the ‘history of obfuscation’ (Koren 1994, 15) to reveal the philosophy for a Western audience by giving clear examples of *wabi-sabi* characteristics. Koren advises against the need for design that aligns with the logical and rational worldviews of the industrialised modern society we live in; instead he encourages contemplation of the vague subtleties of the concept, which are intentionally thwarted even in Japanese teachings. As I considered the *kachō-ga* and *saraca* patterns I had already developed, I re-worked the designs into new arrangements, keeping in mind Koren’s teachings;

Most revealing about the meaning of wabi-sabi is the fostering of the myth of inscrutability for aesthetic reasons. Some Japanese critics feel that wabi-sabi needs to maintain its mysterious and elusive – hard to define – qualities because ineffability is part of its specialness. Wabi-sabi is, they believe, a teleological benchmark – an end in itself – that can never be fully realized. From the vantage point, missing or indefinable knowledge is simply another aspect of wabi-sabi’s inherent “incompleteness”. (Koren 1994, 17)

I have applied this sense of incompleteness¹¹¹ outlined by Koren into my *ukiyo-e* prints by cropping the picture plane even closer than that practiced by the original Edo artists. By emphasising a small glimpse

19), a playful game of ‘dress-up’ that can be imagined when wearing *kimono*-type garments. The online quarterly *Kyoto Journal* discusses how the wearing of kimono by both contemporary Japanese and ‘foreigners’ affects ‘the body posture, the gait and the stare’ (Raz 2011) and often produces a certain withdrawal and stillness. The *kimono* and philosophies of wearing *kimono* are vast topics outside the scope of this exegesis. For more information, see Milhaupt’s (2014) *Kimono: A Modern History*.

¹¹¹ Incorporated into the philosophical system of *wabi-sabi*, three lessons are paramount: 1. All things are impermanent (e.g. the inclination toward nothingness is unrelenting, even solid things like rocks, planets and stars are nothing more than an illusion of permanence and will one day blow away into dust). 2. All things are imperfect (e.g. on close inspection even the sharpest blade when magnified is a series of micro-pits, chips and variations). 3. All things are incomplete (e.g. everything is in a state of becoming or dissolving) (Koren 1994).

of the entire body, often completely removing facial features or hints at the figure's culture, race or gender, much is left to interpret which allows the audience to construe an identity based on the print designs and garments¹¹². By depriving the audience of the complete picture, I hint at what is incomplete and outside the frame of the image, at the periphery. Also, through partial obscuration of the textile designs, implied by erosion of the overall print in places I seek qualities of *yūgen* which were described in Chapter Two; cloudy impenetrability, obscurity, unknowability, mystery, but not utter darkness, 'hidden in the clouds, but not entirely out of sight, for we feel its presence, its secret message being transmitted through the darkness' (Suzuki, quoted in Tsubaki 1971, 56).

Imitating the *bijin-ga* of Edo Japan, which were often used to sell lifestyles or fashions, the figures in my prints are part of an imaginary (antipodean) floating world where 'we never witness anything ugly or uncomfortable, all is charm and elegance' (Harris 2012, 64) to cultivate a sensibility of decadence, hedonism, comfort and desire so inherent to the medium.

The sensuality and slight nuance of eroticism within the languid body language of the figures in *bijin-ga* and the 'hidden meanings in the picture which would incite the imagination' (Harris 2012, 73) can be perceived as the equivalent of the contemporary western idea that pervades much advertising content, that 'sex sells'¹¹³. For example, a *sake* company could promote their product by commissioning a *bijin-ga* of a woman posing with their goods in a sophisticated setting that reflected the image the company wished to promote for itself (Harris 2012). Women posed in *bijin-ga* with an idle self-contained elegance reflecting the erotic ideal of Edo Japan, which was less about lewdness and obvious skin baring than a 'flirtatious allure and a light coquettishness ... untainted by any vulgar or wanton feeling'¹¹⁴ (D. Bell 2002, 68). A slightly revealed wrist or ankle, peeking out from a *kimono* hem was much more desirable than palpable smut or crudity (D. Bell 2002). (See Figures 145, 146, 147 and 149).

Notions of the erotic infused much *ukiyo-e* of the Edo period through its relationship to the *Yoshiwara* or brothel quarters, although its use also had a philosophical dimension¹¹⁵. The *ukiyo-e* artist had to learn the art of depicting an inobvious *bitai* (elegant coquetry or protracted erotic tension) characterised by suggestiveness rather than consummation, in keeping with broader aesthetic ideals in Japanese philosophy that favoured a sense of potential, the subtle and suggestive and ever-incomplete. A *bitai* analogy could be to imagine sexual tension as a sustained wave that never breaks and crashes. *Ukiyo-e* *bijin-ga* artists continuously attempted to depict this sense of withholding by incorporating a sense of *aware* (the pathos of life and transience of things) to represent moments of fleeting pleasure or unrequited love, the *vanitas*¹¹⁶ of human passions (D. Bell 2002). These emotions could be implied by

¹¹² Although I created several *bijin-ga* for 'ASHE x FFC' (see Appendix) that included facial features, the response to these from my audience was almost completely focused on constructing an identity based on facial appearance, instead of 'reading' the cloth, I therefore began to further crop the image in future works.

¹¹³ 'Sex sells' refers to the use of sex appeal in advertising to help sell a particular product or service. Sexually appealing imagery may or may not pertain to the product or service in question. See: psychologyformarketers.com, retrieved 22/5/18.

¹¹⁴ In Chock's (2014) *Shunga: Stages of Desire*, it is pointed out that although erotic connotations can be perceived in some *bijin-ga*, this is not the equivalent of today's pornography. Neither were the *Shunga* (erotic prints) of the day an exact equivalent of contemporary versions of pornography, despite their explicit and theatrical depictions of sexual acts. In any case, the subject of sexuality in Edo Japan is a complex topic that is outside the scope of this exegesis.

¹¹⁵ *Ukiyo-e*, as a descendant of early Buddhist and Shinto devotional prints, 'retained something of the spiritual pre-occupation of these early precursors' across all mediums, including *bijin-ga* (beautiful women prints) and *shunga* (erotica) prints (Harris 2012, 118).

¹¹⁶ 'A *vanitas* is a symbolic work of art showing the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death, often contrasting symbols of wealth and symbols of ephemerality and death. Best-known are *vanitas* still lifes, a common genre in Netherlandish art of the 16th and 17th centuries; they have also been created at other times and in other media and genres'. See: 'Vanitas', <https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/?q=vanitas>, retrieved 22/5/18.

facial expressions, body language, props like love letters or other symbols such as *kachō-ga* couplings between animals and plants in the landscape.

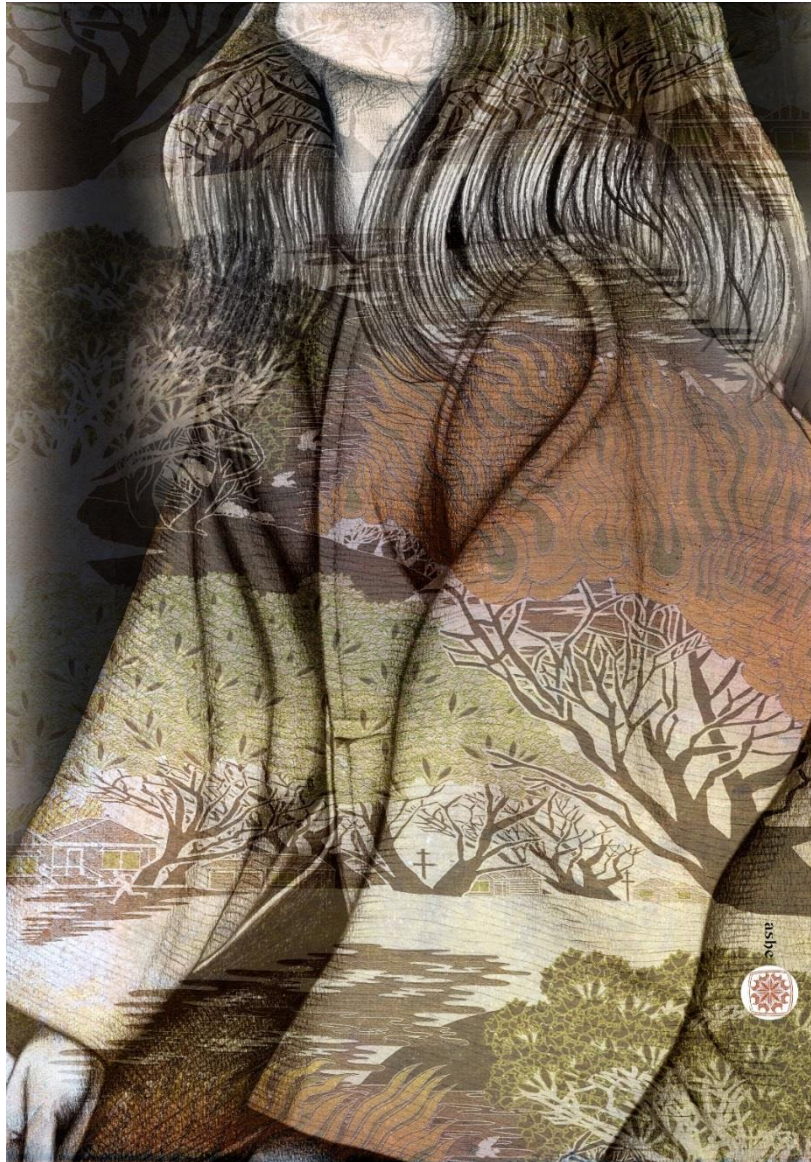


Figure 147. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *The Gully and Dark Moon*. 2018.

This notion is described in ‘Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising’ (Phillips and McQuarrie 2010) where a discussion on the use of pathos within fashion advertisements as a means to transport the viewer into an intense form of engagement ‘that allow[s] consumers to perform a narrative’ (Phillips and McQuarrie 2010, 380) and induce a persuasive form of brand loyalty is outlined. The article describes the impact of a fashion ad on its viewer when the presentation lacked a narrative or emotional engagement, to one that incited their sense of curiosity, or provoked ideas of a poignant expression that could ‘fulfill their emotional goals’ (Phillips and MacQuarrie 2010, 385). The sense of pathos described in the latter was by far the most successful in terms of ‘positive outcomes for the brand’ (Phillips and MacQuarrie 2010, 380) and has encouraged me to depict a similar pathos or *bitai* (elegant coquetry or protracted erotic tension) in my works.

Perceived as an equivalent type of fashion advertisement or social media feed of the Edo era, *ukiyo-e bijin-ga* utilised the same psychological devices on its audience as do contemporary fashion imagery of

today in its deliberate incorporation of this sense of pathos. *Bijin-ga* prints were cheap and easily accessible from the many market stalls that lined the streets of Edo and the *Yoshiwara* and were ‘enormously influential, in much the same way that today’s technology is able to disseminate popular culture far and wide at enormous speed’ (Harris 2012, 62). *Bijin-ga*, like all *ukiyo-e*, were light and portable and able to be shared and transmitted amongst its highly mobile citizens. Individuals could collect *ukiyo-e* to decorate their homes and fulfil their fantasies for the highest fashions and pleasures of the day.

The final *bijin-ga* and *kachō-ga ukiyo-e* prints and *hinagatabon* (design compendium) (Figure 148) I have produced are intended to be artworks to be read as images that construct identity through trans-orientalism and Japonism, reflecting the ‘layered series of enfolded exchanges’ (Bolton 2015, 18) between my appreciation of Japanese arts and my relationship to the Australian environment. The immersive haptic quality of the *hinagatabon* invites a sensory appreciation of age and wonderment for an imaginary antipodean world through its textless depictions of narrative pattern and *wabi-sabi* aesthetic. The *hinagatabon*, like some of the *bijin-ga* prints, has a patina that appears to have been developed over time. By using the *Antipodea* print on the *hinagatabon* cover, I allude to some type of cultural record of the past; however, its contents which seem to oscillate between new and old disrupt this reading, pushing the compendium into a space of timelessness. The object is also a tacit reference to the moment of re-discovery when the Florence Broadhurst prints were first appraised by Akira Isogawa in 1999, as discussed in Chapter Five.



Figure 148. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Hinagatabon Cover Design*. 2018.

Exoticism, Cultural Yearning and Preservation of Diversity

In Chapter Three I reviewed the ways in which Australian artists have engaged with Japonism in the fields of art and design and appraised their approach and the attendant implications. Artists’ reasons for engaging in Japonism were broad, ranging from an appreciation of purely aesthetic qualities or attraction to mediums such as the woodblock print, to the gratification of pleasure through decoration, a desire for qualities of Zen Buddhist reductivity and the fascination with unfamiliar cultures.

My own interest and preoccupation with Japonism encompasses all these reasons, reflecting my admiration and appreciation for the arts of Japan. However, there have been key discoveries throughout

the research process, distilled through reflection on successive cycles of theory and creative production that have elucidated fresh understandings and been catalysts for new artistic inquiry and method. Two texts in particular have assisted in framing new ways of seeing and creating: *In Praise of Shadows* by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, originally published in 1933, and Victor Segalen's brief but profound notes in his 1955 *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*, which I introduced in Chapter One.

Although both these texts are decades old, they remain applicable in contemporary art and design due to their compelling aesthetic perceptions. Segalen's essay was not published in English until 2002, but since then has received approving critical attention in a range of fields from sociology, post-colonialism, literary criticism and anthropology, indicating the contemporary relevance of his ideas (Forsdick 2011). *In Praise of Shadows*, a short and eloquent essay on Japanese aesthetics, was translated to English in 1977 (republished in 2001 and 2017) and has been noted by numerous scholars, artists, architects and designers for its profound insights into relevant issues of modernity, culture and aesthetic contemplation (Grayling 2002).

In Praise of Shadows (Tanizaki, 1977) greatly influenced my final phase of creative production as the essay articulates the clash of aesthetic traditions between East/West and ancient/modern, powerfully describing instances of Japanese beauty that Tanizaki perceived to be diminishing from his society with the onset of modernism. Without actually discussing Japanese aesthetics per se, the novel-like commentary observes many instances of a *wabi-sabi* aesthetic, describing items in language such as the 'inexpressable aura of depth of mystery, of overtones partly suggested ... the sheen of antiquity ... dark, smoky patina and pensive lusters of shallow brilliance ... empty spaces with misty films of darkness ...' (Tanizaki 1977, 20-30) and laments the rapid disappearance of what was unique about his culture. Tanizaki considers the layered tones of various kinds of shadows and their power to reflect low-sheen materials like gold embroidery, cloudy crystals and the patina of objects whilst narrating the collision between the shadows of traditional Japanese interiors and the glaring light of the modern age. A particular insight, that western paper reflects light, whilst traditional Japanese paper absorbs it (Tanizaki 1977), encouraged me to begin printing onto absorbent materials such as linen and paper that had no sheen. I also began deepening and darkening the imagery I had developed, to elicit some of the shadowy patina Tanizaki described. I experimented with the digital speed of Photoshop software and worked back into the final print designs with mediums such as charcoal, chalk, metallic inks and paint, then aged the linen by rubbing it with abrasive textures and tinctures or folding and wrinkling it to suggest it had been salvaged from another age or time.

I also kept in mind comments by Akira Isogawa (discussed in Chapter Five) where he compared the strong differences in the quality of light between Australia and Japan. 'What is special about Australia is this particular light that is so different from Japan. The light there is so diffused and everything appears greyer. Here the colour is so clear and I find it very inspiring' (Isogawa, quoted in Christmass, 2012).

In response to this, I further enhanced the opposition of clear bright colours in the prints with shadowy areas of imperceptibility to encompass notions of the diametrically opposed, of light and shadow that can be compared to the opposition of East to West, yet blended all within one composition to represent fusion. I introduced metallic objects such as jewellery to my *bijin-ga* (such as *The River (Enso)* in Figure 149) which served the dual purpose of creating a highlight of lustre to darker areas in the print and another device to disrupt an accurate allocation to a specific time period by the audience. It was at this point, at the very end of the creative project, through reflection on qualities that Tanizaki described, that my

objective to bring all aspects of my practice together crystallised through the blend of Australian landscape, fashion, textiles, semiotics of pattern, painting and Japanese aesthetics.



Figure 149. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *The River (Enso)*. 2018.

The second text I referred to in the final stages of the research was Segalen's 1955 *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity* which helped illuminate my own preoccupation with Japonism. Segalen's essay was an early consideration of the links between colonialism, globalisation and alterity through processes

of contact between cultures. His definition of exoticism had the usual characteristics of the sensations of difference and visual pleasure, but he also recognised the ontological value in exoticism, seeing it as a way to preserve cultural diversity. Segalen recognised capitalism's violent seizure and colonial expropriation, and the rapid globalisation and blandness that could potentially result from it. In reasoning for ways to preserve difference and 'give the notion of exoticism an authentic meaning' (van der Grijp 2009, 7), his essay considers the sensorial aspects of exoticism, recording his impressions and defining its qualities (Forsdick 2011). Through a series of diary entry reflections whilst visiting a variety of locations (including Paul Gauguin's studio in Tahiti) Segalen tried to understand our interest in the 'other'. Whilst contemptible of some of his contemporary colleagues' judgement of indigenous populations that were characterised by arrogant ethnocentrism, he recognised that an engagement with exoticism was prone to producing poetic and artistic responses.

Segalan separated the touristic imaginings of exoticism from his version, which was less about space and place than perceptions of time and aesthetic contemplation. 'It cannot be about such things as the tropics or coconut trees ... rather it is about time. Going back: history. An escape from the contemptible and petty present. The elsewhere's and the bygone days', he also added, 'it is about the perception of diversity ... the knowledge that something is other than one's self' (Segalen, quoted in Harootunian 2002 xiii). For Segalen, exoticism was the way to understand self, by being confronted with what one is not, suggesting that contemporary depictions of the exotic can provide an understanding of self through a positioning of the artist in relationship to the 'other'. Segalen also argued that the exotic could be a means to 'bring the mystery once associated with an elsewhere back to one's own time and place' (Harootunian 2002, xiv), evoking the idea that contemporary depictions of the exotic can somehow preserve swathes of the historic past, bringing them into the future and conserving them as depictions of former ethnographic variety. In this sense, Segalen can be seen as a utopian idealist whose ideas underline my desire and yearning for cultural otherness that I first perceived as child who dreamed of distant exotic lands (as described in the Introduction).

Segalan lamented yet accepted the onslaught of globalisation; he grieved the 'wearing down' of diversity and the 'mediocrity of the masses and an everyday life landlocked in repetitive routine' (Segalan 2002, viii). 'If the homogenous prevails ... the way will be cleared for the Kingdom of the Lukewarm; that moment of viscous mush ... pre-figured grotesquely by the disappearance of ethnographic diversity' (Segalen 2002, xiv).¹¹⁷ Segalen advocated ardently for hybridity as a form of preservation of diversity. Exoticism provided an escape from conformism, a means to self-discovery and a way of saving art from being crushed into a shapeless sameness. Segalen's contribution has been to posit a mechanism for appreciating difference and recognising and preserving its aesthetic value, positing representations of the exotic as a reflection of the yearning for a pre-industrial past and a means to self-discovery. This idea is also supported by anthropologist Paul van der Grijp in *Art and Exoticism* (2009) who says:

To look for something we do not find in our own society ... the search for the authentic, the pure, and the natural has been translated into a yearning for the exotic in numerous forms. The central idea being that it is always better elsewhere ... Our Arcadia may not be simply elsewhere but it may also be located in another time, a Golden Age either in the past or in a projected future. (Van der Grijp 2009, 314)

¹¹⁷ This idea that art and design could be reduced to bland homogenisation foresaw the issue Australian designers (who I discussed in Chapter One) faced when being accused of bland internationalism in the early 1990s, as designers reacted to the exuberance of Australiana, reducing their cultural production to 'classic' and bland styles bereft of any cultural signifiers.

Van der Grijp's book positions exoticism definitively as a yearning for otherness and 'in a more active sense, the evocation of images from faraway lands with which we are generally unfamiliar'¹¹⁸ (van der Grijp 2009, 10). This definition accords with my aims for 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories' to be a floating world landscape outside time and space, in a no-time, no-place of unfixed/oscillating geography and historical era. Its fictitious nature also reinforces the idea that landscape and identity are always cultural and subjective constructions, that national identity is manufactured and imagined through a combination of our environment and personal subjectivity, as outlined in Chapter One.

The key authors I have looked to in this chapter, Tanazaki and Segalen, both shared a disdain for the onslaught of the modern world's erasure of cultural diversity. Segalen strove to provide ways to 'protect contemporary life from the relentless banality wrought by the transformation of capitalism' (Harootunian 2002, vii) and Tanazaki grieved the rapid disappearance of what was unique about his Japanese culture and argued for ways to preserve an exotic past. One particular statement from Tanazaki has resonated particularly strongly, which was to 'contemplate an aesthetic arcadia in the modern ruins of the twentieth century' (Harootunian 2002, xiii); the influence of this concept can be observed in the imaginary lands drawn in my work *Antipodea* (Figure 144) and *Island Nation* which appears completely decorative and hedonistic until closer observation of details in the print reveals polluted waterways oozing toxic sludge and leaking oil rigs floating in the ocean to reflect the problematic side of modernisation (Figure 90). Tanazaki's vivid descriptions have elicited an aesthetic response to artistic inquiry in my work that draws on these ideas whilst simultaneously assisting in further incorporating Japanese aesthetic philosophy into my creative production. Segalen's ideas can be seen to support concepts of trans-orientalism which accept the inevitable clash and hybridisation of cultures yet seeks new ways of imagining and depicting contemporary culture whilst preserving that which is unique about cultural difference.

Diversity and depictions of it are important to remind us of our humanity, our past and the things that make us different and unique. When Europeans first arrived in Australia, they noted the exotic difference and uniqueness of the wildlife, flowers and landscape (Willis 1993) and attempted to capture its likeness albeit in a European style of painting. Considering ideas of alternate cultural perceptions have spurred me to find new ways to imagine and depict Australian diversity, by reflecting on the unique and distinctive flora and fauna of the landscape, which cannot be found anywhere else in the world, and the variety of multicultural influences in contemporary Australian society.

Successive depictions of landscape in Australia reinforce that its characteristics are a complex tapestry of cultural constructions of place. I do not claim to have found a definitive way of depicting Australian cultural or fashion identity, only one that reflects my own multicultural Australasian experience and one that is anchored in notions of landscape – continuing but re-imagining this convention. As Anne-Marie Willis expressed so eloquently:

There is no single referent, no final point of reference in the "real" landscape, the images are buried and emerge in the shifting sands of cultural reference that extend well beyond the shores of this continent. (Willis 1993, 64)

The ideas and insights presented in this chapter resonate profoundly with my overall intentions for the reading of 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territories'. The integration of knowledge derived from scholarship outlined in this chapter, particularly that of Tanizaki (1977) and Segalen (2002), has enabled a 'filling in'

¹¹⁸ Van der Grijp also provides a warning about the negative sides of exoticism: 'Exoticism can slip into ethnocentrism if accompanied by a devalourising attitude, and into racism when it produces rejection and hostility' (van der Grijp 2009, 10).

of the central convergence of influences in the Venn diagram I re-introduced at the beginning of the chapter and assisted in the methodological realisation of my creative practice for the project.

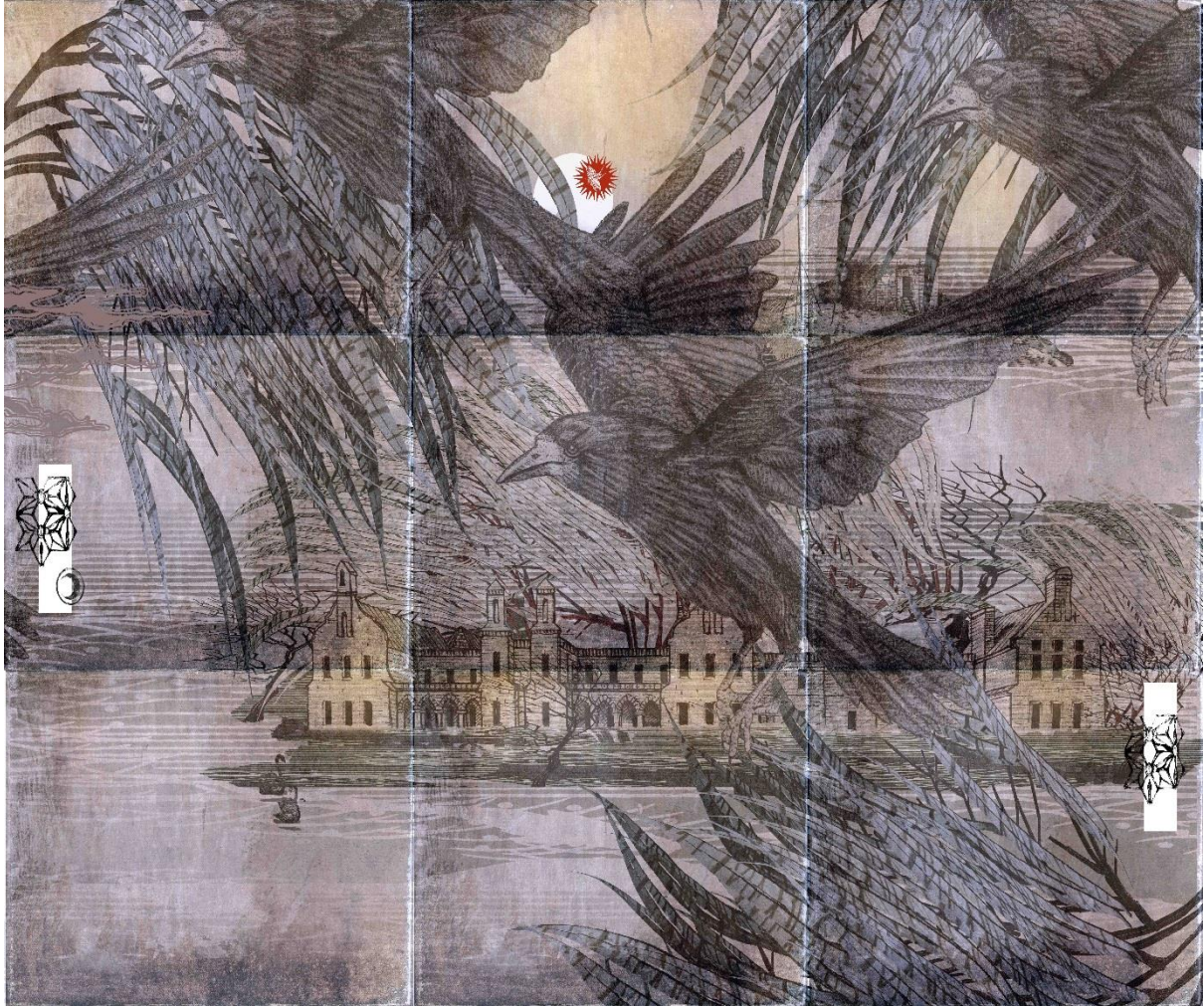


Figure 150. Kelsey Ashe Giambazi, *Moon over Indian Ocean (Triptych)*. 2018.

Conclusion

The work discussed within this exegesis was completed over a period of six years from 2012-2018 and inevitably the motivations and aspirations at the outset of the project have shifted slightly during that time. Due to the underlying methodological framework of practice-led research, this has not resulted in a conceptual crisis, but instead provided a richness and depth to my creative practice, which I could not have imagined at the beginning. Returning full circle to my opening paragraphs in the Introduction of this exegesis, I reflect here on the overall investigation undertaken and its aims to fuse understandings from my experience of the Australian landscape with an appreciation of the traditional arts of Japan to create an 'Imaginary Aesthetic Territory', a utopian floating world of Antipodean/Australasian cross-cultural identity. To further reiterate this fusion of ideas, I have also aimed to blend previously separate aspects of my practice, combining knowledge from the fields of art, fashion and printed textile design into one cohesive format.

Propelled by a lifelong fascination with the decorative, a yearning for the exotic, and an interest in cultural identity, this exegesis has systematically examined the role that Japonism, as a form of constructed exoticism, has played in the development of my and other artist/designers' creative practice in Australia. In this conclusion I consider the most compelling moments of understanding derived through practice-led research and discuss how this project has contributed to contemporary fields of fashion/art/design. I also reflect on possible new lines of inquiry from this point onwards.

The exegesis has become essentially a means to describe and understand my own cultural identity, which cannot be simply ascribed to place of birth, genetic ancestry, religion or subjective position, but is something perpetually re-imagined and perceived by individuals on a personal level and collectively by countries on a national and international level. That the landscape and its motifs can powerfully symbolise a centrality to my cultural identity has developed in tandem with an understanding of how other cultural influences such as those from Japan can inform, inflect and enhance my contribution to Australian cultural production. Professor Nikos Papastergiadis, whom I introduced in Chapter One, asked whether it was possible to have authentic attachments to a place and develop a form of cultural identity that is influenced by movement (Papastergiadis 2005) and my answer would be a definitive yes. My imagining of an art that is attached to place cannot necessarily be confined to border lines on a map. My view of place, belonging and identity are derived from multiple sources throughout Australasia. Thanks to an itinerant father, I have lived and travelled in Polynesia, New Zealand, Australia and parts of Asia, and as my late father would say when asked 'where are you from?' he would always reply, 'I am a citizen of the world, but I live in Australia'.

Originally this research project was designed to acknowledge Australian textile designers and artists drawing on Japanese aesthetics, to glean differences in approach, thereby creatively feeding my own practice. My aims were to incorporate the aesthetic qualities I appreciated in Japanese design and to fuse them with motifs drawn from my Australian experience. However, a clear shift in my practice occurred when I began to ask: what other qualities do Japanese arts possess that I can explore in my printed textile designs for use in new artworks? The investigation into Japanese aesthetics, such as *wabi-sabi* and *yūgen*, on a deeper level than simply formal qualities, has been the most compelling aspect of the project's theoretical and practical inquiry. The contours of my analysis shifted significantly during my collaboration

with Akira Isogawa, and through the subsequent research, distillation and commencement of using tenets of Japanese aesthetic philosophy.

As I explained in Chapter Two, I understood the limitations of undertaking research into a vast philosophical field that is founded in an entirely different language and culture to my own; however, this has not presented a predicament for me, rather it hints that there is much more to learn and uncover for future research and understanding of how the topic can contribute to innovative new ideas and ways of seeing. Japanese aesthetic philosophy, particularly in how it was applied within Edo period *ukiyo-e* art and textile design, has introduced a profound and nuanced approach to contemplating and expressing notions of the Australian landscape and cultural identity.

In Chapter 6, I made a series of observations about the four key ways that Japonism has contributed important moments of fusion/overlap and interpretation to the creative and theoretical lines of investigation within the research. The first was the understanding of how the Australian landscape could be perceived with a Japanese (*wabi-sabi*) aesthetic philosophy. By combining this perception with other Western discourses about the qualities of timeless design, I was able re-position the reading of Australian motifs on cloth from a possible comprehension of kitsch to one of 'no time' or timelessness. Within this appreciation of observing the Australian environment via a Zen-Shinto-Buddhist viewpoint, I have developed a means to articulate the metaphysical sensations of my lifelong sense of awe, connection and unfathomability in relation to the Australian landscape within a framework of contemporary art. Another benefit has been to discover the epochal art historical field of aesthetic philosophy from Japan that interprets and depicts that vastness across a range of artistic mediums. I have also proposed that when the landscape is interpreted with the philosophies of Japanese *wabi-sabi* aesthetics, in particular those that pertain to the reduction of complex representational landscapes into pattern components within an artwork or textile design, it is in keeping with contemporary landscape art which can be read as a narrative of symbolic typologies (Mitchell 1994), providing a semiotic reading for the audience to decipher subjectively.

The second key observation was how eighteenth and nineteenth century conventions of Japonism as a Western form of constructed exoticism or 'other-world fantasy land' (Martin and Koda 1994) could be used as a means to re-imagine East-West reciprocation of culture, providing a fitting vehicle to express contemporary cross-cultural concerns. The third was the importance of the *ukiyo-e* print in the form of *bijin-ga* (beautiful woman print) and *kachō-ga* (bird and flower print) and my contemporary interpretations of their historical qualities to express the emotional and spiritual nature of figurative representations whilst simultaneously recording the fashion and etiquette of the day.

My fourth observation referred to pinpointing my own personal ideological reasons for an engagement with Japonism and Australian Japonism, having outlined several reasons for other artist/designers' engagement in Chapters Three, Four and Five. The most compelling scholarly comment was from Victor Segalen (2002) whose ideas about exoticism as a means to preserve and record diversity and 'revitalise and beautify everything' resonated with my intentions for the final works. In fusing cultural forms, I do not wish to diminish or subjugate societies in Said's (1978) terms of orientalism as discussed in the Introduction. Rather, I aim to preserve and acknowledge aspects of the rich cultural diversity I have observed on my travels throughout Australasia and present them as emblematic symbols of contemporary civilisations' trans-orientalism. Also within my fourth observation of Japonism's influence on my practice, I recognised that Jun'ichirō Tanazaki's lyrical descriptions such as the 'inexpressable aura of depth of mystery' and other poetic insights about objects of Japanese material culture in *In Praise of*

Shadows (1977) significantly influenced my aspirations for an aesthetic ideal. These principles transformed my work from *iki* (measured, exact, cool) to *wabi-sabi* (beauty of things imperfect) and the attendant sub-categories of aesthetic paradigms that compose the philosophy such as *fukinsei* (asymmetry, irregularity), *kanso* (simplicity), *koko* (basic, weathered), *shizen* (without pretense, natural), *yūgen* (subtly profound grace, not obvious, an awareness of the universe that triggers emotional responses that are too deep and mysterious for words), *datsuzoku* (unbounded by convention free) and *seijaku* (tranquillity) (Carter 2008).

In the Introduction I outlined that little scholarship has been allocated to the links between fashion and art. Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas, editors of *Fashion and Art*, state ‘there is yet to be established a more overarching discourse, let alone a marshalled set of ideas that may then lead to something resembling a field’ (Geczy and Karaminas 2012, 11). This thesis makes significant contribution to this emerging interdisciplinary field via an exegesis and a body of contemporary artwork that speaks equally to both fields, drawing on theoretical and practical concerns from both disciplines. Whilst it can certainly be recognised that aspects of the project contribute to the individual fields of fashion and textile design, Japanese aesthetics, and Australian landscape art, it is the synthesis of these approaches which makes this project a significantly unique voice in contemporary discourse.

To my knowledge gleaned from a thorough survey of these fields, I have not discovered another artist with a similar approach. For example, artists I introduced in Chapter One like Guan Wei create Australian landscape art that comments on multiculturalism, while Helen Downie uses the narrative of printed cloth within her artworks but not with the aim of depicting cultural identity or merging cultural influences. Many artists merge Japonism with landscape motifs, such as the Australiana designers, however the format there is predominantly commercial fashion garments. Where my work makes a departure from other artists is in my suggestion that landscape motifs printed on cloth could be seen as a worn reading of identity, reinforced by the proximity of cloth to the body, as opposed to a painting/drawing or photograph of a landscape which exists separately from the body. In ‘Dress and Art’ (2010), Sandra Rosenbaum outlines the historical role of the artist to convey messages encoded in dress by meticulously reproducing the splendour of outfits or details that project personal aesthetics, philosophical ideas, and portray character, intelligence, civility, demeanour and expression. I have harnessed this understanding and combined it with depictions of landscape intended to be read within this language of clothing. As a vehicle to further express the narrative potential of these imprinted inscriptions on cloth, the overall image is privileged with a multi-layered expression and embodiment of cross-cultural Australian identity.

In its East-West imagining, this research can be located in the linear progression of the conventions of Western constructed exoticism in the form of Japonism, yet forges new fields of inquiry by contemplating the multicultural trans-orientalism evident in contemporary Australian culture via the depiction of imaginary aesthetic territories.

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Figure 58. Margaret Preston, *Mosman Bridge NSW*. 1927, Woodcut Hand-coloured, 25.2 x 18.7cm, Art Gallery of NSW. Image reproduced from Edwards, Deborah. "Margaret Preston." edited by Art Gallery of New South Wales. Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2005.

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Appendix



Kelsey

Ashe featured in 'Fashion Futures' By Bradley Quinn, Merrel Publishers London, 2013.

invitation

“a special evening with two leading Textile Designers”

The DIA (WA) Council is delighted to invite you to a presentation by two leading West Australian textile designers Sheree Dornan (Love in Tokyo) and Kelsey Ashe (Ashe). The designers, who are both featured in the upcoming book "Textile visionaries" by Bradley Quinn will show examples of their work and discuss their design practice and current focus.

Date: Tuesday 2nd July, 6 - 8.30pm
Venue: The London Room at the George Hotel
Light refreshments will be served
Ticket Cost \$30, DIA members \$20
RSVP 28 June
Booking is essential
www.trybooking.com/DAHV

 **Design Institute of Australia**

About the designers

Sheree Dornan - Textile and Garment Designer. With a background in Building Design and Illustration Sheree changed direction in her design career in 2001 to designing textiles and garments. After contract work designing textiles prints for the Australian and International markets, Sheree opened a studio and retail concept store Love in Tokyo in Fremantle's West End in 2003. Her work incorporates digital print designs - over dying - screen print designs - embellishment - reuse of reclaimed textiles and objects. Sheree uses a combination of methods in her designs creating unique and limited edition pieces - garments, interior wall panels and objects. Sheree's work is featured in Bradley Quinn's latest book "Textile Visionaries" due for publication July 2013.

www.shereedornan.com,
[instagram.com/shereedornandesign](https://www.instagram.com/shereedornandesign),
www.lovetokyoinkyo.com.au,
 Love in Tokyo facebook



Kelsey Ashe inspired by the historical ornamentation of cultures antique and exotic, Kelsey Ashe has a deep fascination with patterns and decoration and its use in our lives. Kelsey has completed both an Honours and Masters degree in textiles and is currently completing her PhD in this field, researching in particular how a traditional Japanese aesthetic has influenced the design of contemporary Australian printed textiles. Textile designs created by Kelsey Ashe have been used by leading Australian labels Empire Rose, Morrison, Wheels and Dollibaby and more recently Kelsey has been commissioned by international labels Nautica and the Vanity Fair Corporation. In 2012 Kelsey was invited to exhibit at the Future of Apparel Summit in the U.S.A facilitated by the Chelsea School of Design in London's T.E.D. (Textiles Environment Design) project.

www.ashestore.com.au
www.facebook.com/ashestore

Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. 'A special evening with two leading Textile Designers', Design Institute of Australia, 2013.

On the Surface

Fremantle textile designers Kelsey Ashe Giambazi and Sheree Dornan present an exhibition of digitally printed textiles, artisan objects and garments.

From Thursday 26th September to Sunday 29th September: featuring new work and celebrating inclusion in the internationally published "Textile Visionaries - Innovation and Sustainability in Textile Design" by renowned fashion author Bradley Quinn.

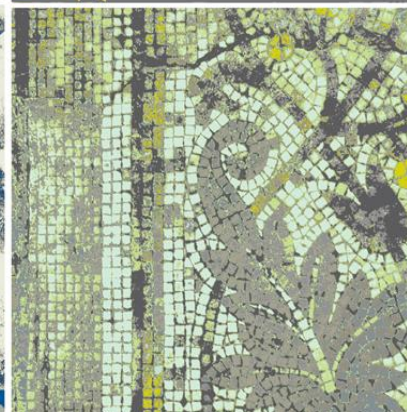
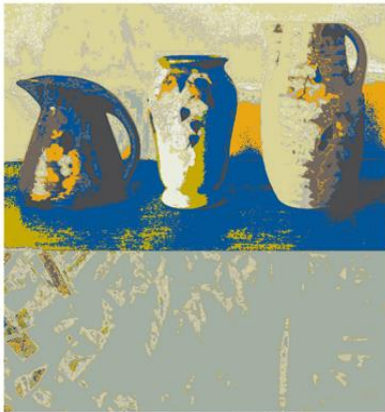
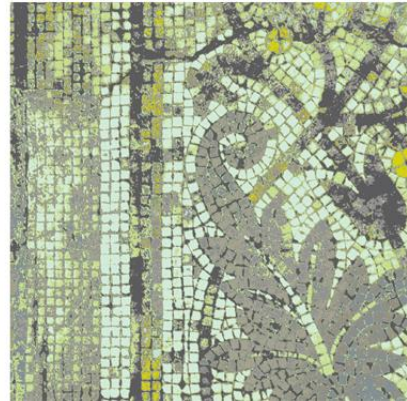


Express Winemakers

Thursday 26th September to Sunday 29th September 2013

Moore's Building
Contemporary Art Gallery
Fremantle

46 Henry Street, Fremantle WA
Gallery open 10am - 4pm



Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. 'On the Surface' Exhibition, Moore's Building Contemporary Art Gallery, 2013.



Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. Cover and End Paper Designs 'Textile Visionaries, Innovation and Sustainability in Textile Design', By Bradley Quinn, Lawrence King Publishers: London, 2013.

KELSEY ASHE

The hand-printed fashion fabrics designed by Kelsey Ashe are sumptuous textiles in all their splendour, adorned with motifs that comment on the relationships between culture, humanity and the environment. 'Ashe fabrics worship nature,' says the designer with a smile, underlining her commitment to sustainable design. 'Wherever possible, I try to source fabrics that are organically grown; or that are produced using sustainable methods. The hand-printing processes I use do not include any chlorine or formaldehyde, and dyes with toxic metals are totally banned.'

From her studio in Fremantle, just south of Perth in Western Australia, Ashe seeks fibres and fabrics from stocks that are certified 'organic'. She also enquires about the conditions in the country of origin, and refuses to buy any textiles from areas where child labour may be used. 'I am mindful of claiming to be "eco-friendly" in an industry which is renowned for waste product,' Ashe says. 'However, what I can do, is make a personal contribution through choosing environmentally-friendly fabrics where possible, avoiding toxic processes and recycling printed off-cuts to minimize waste. This mindful approach guides me to make small, but hopefully significant, changes.' In recent years, Ashe has seen the demand for eco-friendly fabrics rise dramatically, and noticed that consumers are increasingly concerned about the fabric's origin and life cycle. 'Today, terms such as "hand-printed" and "eco-friendly" are synonymous with a set of values, which include authenticity,

artistry and sustainability,' she says. 'Fabrics made from organic fibres and printed by hand have a powerful appeal to modern urban individuals. Such consumers seem to want to wear fabrics which are signifiers of their conscience, and they help the wearer create their own environmentally-aware identity.'

Ashe's ideology motivates her to take her commitment to sustainability to deeper levels, even leading her to make prints that address environmental themes. Issues such as river pollution, urban litter, environmental disasters and the destruction wrought by plagues of introduced species question humankind's respect for the environment. 'The narratives are too subtle to be obvious at first glance,' Ashe says. 'I start by using the overall beauty of the print as a seductive device which will draw the viewer in. A closer look at the decorative detailing reveals hidden motifs, showing litter, polluted water, deforestation and landfill scars, acting as gentle prompts to cause consumers to contemplate how we treat the environment.'

The striking beauty of Ashe's designs, which often draw on the rich textile traditions of Asia, have attracted interest from Australia's top fashion labels, who have commissioned her to create prints for their collections. Several of them became sell-out fashion designs, many others adorned garments worn by celebrities and socialites. Ashe decided to launch her own fashion and homeware label 'Ashe' in 2002, creating new prints and motifs for each collection. 'I never intended to be



LEFT / Ashe creates some of the most beautiful textile motifs made in Australia today, so it's no wonder that she has a following far beyond the country's borders. The hand-printing processes she uses do not contain toxic chemicals, and her fabrics are organically-grown.

a fashion designer,' Ashe says. 'I studied textiles as an art practice and not a part of a fashion course. My conceptual approach to design prompts me to dig under the surface of an idea and address issues I'm passionate about.'

With a few media-acclaimed collections and a reputation for making elegant, distinctive and exotic designs, Ashe's fashion label has become a great showcase for her printed motifs. 'My fashion work evolved out of my textile practice,' Ashe says, 'and the garments are made with the same commitment to sustainability. No garment is intended to be a seasonal trend. Each is designed to be long-lasting, and some items, like my hand-printed silk gowns, have become collector pieces.' Ashe actively promotes a move away from the culture of 'throwaway chic' by crafting small runs of garments intended to be timeless in appeal and made from precious fabrics that are durable and long-lasting. 'My garments have always carried the slogan "to collect and cherish",' Ashe says. 'I often tell my customers that when they buy an Ashe dress they can look forward to handing it down to their daughter, and will perhaps even get to see them worn by their granddaughters.'

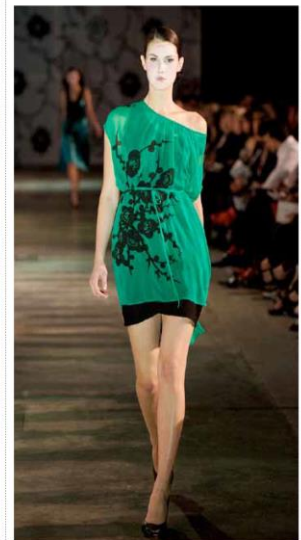
Kelsey Ashe takes sustainability to deeper levels, designing prints that address issues such as river pollution and the destruction wrought by plagues of introduced insects.



OPPOSITE PAGE / Ashe's work is rooted in Australian sensibilities but includes inspirations from the far East and Europe. This motif combines the stark simplicity of English woodcuts with motifs that mimic eighteenth-century chinoiserie.

BELOW / When Ashe applies her textile expertise to fashion design, she has only one goal in mind: 'To make each garment as individual as the wearer.' As a result, Ashe's fashion collections feature limited edition and one-of-a-kind garments hand-printed with her motifs.

RIGHT / Ashe had the opportunity to exchange skills with a rural textile workforce in Pakistan. There, skilled embroiderers translated her hand-drawn illustrations into beautiful textile motifs. The detail shown here is the head of a phoenix bird, drawn by Ashe.





TOP LEFT / Ashe's print catalogue consists of hundreds of patterns, some of which have been licensed to leading fashion labels. Ashe draws each by hand, as this detail of a dragonfly reveals, then uses computer applications to reconfigure them for printing on fabric.

ABOVE & TOP RIGHT / The Athena gown is crafted in 100% silk, chosen because of its ability to drape over the body. Like the knee-length scarlet silk cash dress shown right, Ashe's motifs adorn the surface, making her signature style immediately recognizable.



THIS PAGE / It's rare to find a designer who demonstrates such a broad range of styles and techniques. Ashe's work is wide-ranging in style and thoroughly sustainable in its choice of materials and manufacturing processes. The motifs shown here reveal the breadth of Ashe's vision, from the natural, the exotic and the real.



8 page Feature on Kelsey Ashe in 'Textile Visionaries, Innovation and Sustainability in Textile Design', By Bradley Quinn, Lawrence King Publishers: London, 2013.



Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. 'Fashioning Forms, The craft of Fashion' Telstra Perth Fashion Festival Exhibition, Gallery Central, Perth, 2014.



Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. Silk Textile swatches presented to Fashion Designer Akira Isogawa, 2014.



Collaboration with Akira Isogawa, 2015-16.



Kelsey Ashe Giambazi. 'ASHE X FFC' Fremantle Fashion Festival, The Round House, Fremantle, 2017.

KELSEY ASHE GIAMBAZI

CURRICULUM VITAE

12 Trusting Lane, White Gum Valley, 6162 | info@ashestore.com.au | 0417 927 969 | D.O.B. 15/07/77

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Professional Artist, Designer, Curator, Writer and Lecturer. Extensive knowledge and experience in the field of Curation, Exhibition and Teaching. Exhibited locally, nationally and internationally and recognized as a leading Australian Textile Designer.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS:

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (Art) Curtin University) 2012-2017, Master of Arts (MA) (Textiles) 2010, Curtin University, Bachelor of Arts (Art) (Hons) 2001, Curtin University, Bachelor of Arts (Art) 2000.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- 2017** **Co-curator** “Intersect” Fashion Exhibition, Perth Convention Centre, Perth
- 2017** **Group Exhibition** “Fremantle Fashion Collective” PS Art Space Fremantle.
- 2017** **Group Exhibition** “Art Ricca” Beehive Montessori” Cottesloe.
- 2017** **Solo Exhibition** “ASHE X FFC” Round House Fremantle.
- 2016** **Co-curator** “BESPOKE” Curtin Fashion Exhibition, B Shed, Fremantle.
- 2015 - Now** **Fashion | Textiles | Illustration Lecturer** Curtin University, School of Design & Art.
- 2012 - Now** **PhD (Art) Candidate** Curtin University, School of Design & Art.
- 2005 - Now** **Designer | Director | Owner | Exhibitor** ASHE Textiles. Textile and Fashion Design, sold nationally and internationally. Recipient of five Department of Culture & Arts grants.
- 2016** **Designer Collaboration** Akira Isogawa, Printed Textile featured in VOGUE Australia, 2016.
- 2015** **Group Exhibition** “Art in the Playground” Lance Holt School, Fremantle.
- 2015** **Group Exhibition** “The Dolly Project” The Lister Gallery, Subiaco.
- 2014** **Group Exhibition** “Fashion[ing] Forms; The Craft of Making” Gallery Central, Perth.
- 2014** **Group Exhibition** “Arte Ricca” The Beehive Montessori School, Cottesloe.
- 2013** **Guest Speaker** Design Institute of Australia 2013 DIA Design Event, Perth.
- 2013** **Co-Curator/Exhibitor** “On the Surface”, Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery.
- 2012** **Group Exhibition** “SoDA 12” John Curtin Gallery, Bentley.
- 2012** **Featured Designer** *Textile Visionaries - Innovation and Sustainability in Textile Design and Fashion Futures* By Bradley Quinn (Lawrence King Publishers UK, Merrel Publishers UK).
- 2011 – 2014** **Contract Designer**, Clients: Chelsea School of Design, London. (Textiles Environment Design Project. Wheels & Dollbaby, Patrick McMurray, Morrison, Nautica, Creed and Timberland.
- 2011** **Group Exhibition** *Vanity Fair Corporation; “The Future of Apparel”* South Carolina, U.S.A.
- 2010 – 2000** **Selected Group Exhibitions** 2010: “Atmosphere” Fremantle Fashion Festival Fremantle. 2009: “Illumination” Form Gallery Craft West, Perth, “Collections 2009” Perth Fashion Festival Fashion Central Gasworks, Perth “Collections 2008” Perth Fashion Festival, Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Perth. 2007: “Fremantle Fashion Festival” Moores Building, Fremantle, “Style Aid; Reflections” Perth Convention Exhibition Centre, Perth. 2006: “Perth Fashion Festival Runway Event”, Moores Building, Fremantle. 2005; “Mercedes Australia Fashion Week New Generation”, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2004: 2002: “Fib”, Goddard de Fiddes, Perth. 2001: “Post Mortem” The Moores Building, Fremantle. 2000: “Licensed”, John Curtin Gallery, Perth, “100°” John Curtin Gallery, Perth, “Pillow Talk”, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, “Shell Fremantle Print Award”, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle.