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Double-dipping: crafting nostalgic resonance

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Abstract

This project contemplates where New Zealanders will turn to in the future for resonating, identity-based design, and explores two potential scenarios. The first scenario questions whether existing ‘classic’ motifs – currently enjoying pride of place on national identity T-shirts and accessories, and commonly used over the last century within the tourist souvenir industry – will still be relevant, and still resonate, if used in different ways. The second scenario questions whether a new round of more obscure, overlooked, ‘lower case’ and everyday domestic artefacts and experiences will resonate with New Zealanders.

This project sets out to ‘craft nostalgic resonance’, through conceptual recycling from my own biography, in order to connect with viewers through personal recognition located within their own biography. It draws from experiences and artefacts specific and personal yet at the same time, inevitably, part of a larger collective story, in the creation of a new range of identity-based souvenirs for New Zealanders. The resulting body of work, and its successful public dissemination, proves that it is possible to craft nostalgic resonance through conceptual recycling, and that this approach could be extended to both a wider range of original artefacts and experiences, and a wider range of souvenir products in the future.

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Figure 1. mindthatbogan T-shirts, 2000
From top left: state house, swappa crate, hutt valley, pitbull, MUZZA, SHAZZA, red rose tattoo, skull tattoo, Ford Cortina, Holden HQ.

Introduction

Project impetus and approach

In 2000 as part of my final project towards a Bachelor of Design in Textiles I undertook a 'bogan ethnography' as a means to explore how fashion takes inspiration from street level and makes the uncool cool, and to 'celebrate' bogan stereotypes through the production of products for sale to those outside of this subculture. 'Boganism' was selected as one of the last bastions of anti-cool in New Zealand while at the same time being a significant part of our national culture, as well as – on a more personal and authentic level – being part of my own culture.

One of the outcomes of the *mindthatbogan* project was a range of T-shirts that was sold by a local fashion retailer over a period of several months. Motifs on these T-shirts involved stereotypical imagery derived from this subculture and drawn from my own experiences of attending high school in the Hutt Valley in the 1980s (Figure 1). Although my own personal stories and meanings were presumably lost to the viewer, the images acted as prompts, often triggering personal recognition located in the viewer's own biography. T-shirts, a popular form of souvenir, were used as a medium to communicate these ideas across a wide market – for their financial, physical and conceptual accessibility.

Five years later, a revolving selection of these T-shirts were still selling at The Dowse Gallery in Lower Hutt where, ironically, the original inspiration came

from. The range continued to attract media attention with several spots on national television, and numerous newspaper articles and product plugs – most recently in relation to the state house: an image of my work and a summary of the project's context was included in *We Call It Home: A History of State Housing in New Zealand* by Ben Schrader (Bain, 2000; Boyd, 2005; Edwards, 2001; Enting, 2001; Gracewood, 2004; Packer, 2003; Schrader, 2005; "State house tees," 2005; Walker, 2004, 2005).

It was the ongoing popularity of these T-shirts, across a wide range of people and markets – from local Hutt Valley residents, to architects and designers (the state house being a favourite), to ex-pats overseas (the most recent sighting being a 'hutt valley' in Siberia), to prominent musicians and television presenters – that intrigued me ("Building up," 2005; *Jon Toogood*, 2003; McLaughlin, 2000; Nichol, 2004; *Pacifier*, 2004; Simon Roy, 2004). Although this was initially the outcome I was striving for, at the time I had little idea of how widely resonant these cultural concepts truly were.

These timely T-shirts were part of a wider expression of a shift from the previous cultural cringe of things associated with New Zealand I had experienced growing up, to a rise in national pride and boldly declaring our identity (Boyd, 2005; Spratt, 2007). This change to a more positive perception of New Zealand



has been attributed to the 1999-2000 government change that saw the Labour Party channelling money into arts and culture, and creating a brand for New Zealand tourism (Peter Biggs as cited in Boyd, 2005; Skilling, 2006). It is important to note here, that according to a recent Tourism New Zealand report, New Zealanders still harbour a cultural cringe towards certain activities, objects and practices, seeing these local offerings as inferior to their 'overseas counterparts' (Colmar Brunton, 2003, p. 22).

New Zealand is now producing consistently recognised creative products – both nationally and internationally – in film, music, fashion and design, contributing to New Zealanders being more eager than ever to celebrate and display our cultural identity (Tourism New Zealand, 2006). This is also being fuelled by younger, more positive generations growing up without personal references to any cultural cringe or the negative associations with these iconic motifs of previous generations (Boyd, 2005; NZ on Air, 2000; Spratt, 2007). This sentiment is reflected at local auction houses, where, according to auctioneer Dunbar Sloane Jr, New Zealanders have 'shrugged off the cultural cringe' and are 'waking up and buying their own heritage back', in quite a change from twenty years ago when anything produced locally was considered 'rubbish' (Spratt, 2007, p. 14).

Currently riding this wave of national pride is a plethora of isolated-motif, New Zealand-themed T-shirts. From established fashion labels such as Workshop, Huffer and Little Brother, through to smaller independent designers Localitees

and Billi Tees that focus solely on national pride T-shirts and products, the inevitable cheaper 'knock-offs', and even local playschool fundraisers. There appears to be no shortage of variations or consumers (Figures 2-3).

Many involved in this industry do not see this national pride trend dying off anytime soon (Boyd, 2005), so where to next? Peter Corrigan discusses imitation spurring change in fashion in relation to class division at the time of Queen Elizabeth I – the imitation of the upper class by the lower class, led to the upper classes needing to distinguish themselves again, only to be imitated again, 'and so on without any apparent limit'. This 'dance of distinction' (D. Bell & Hollows, 2006, p. 7) when applied to the national identity T-shirt trend, raises the question: how many more T-shirts and accessories with isolated images of tui, fantails, cabbage trees, flax bushes, pohutukawa, New Zealand maps, 'Aotearoa', 'home', and so on, can we digest? How long before the fore-runners or trend-setters search for differentiation from this saturated, exhaustive and perpetuated imagery of national identity? Where will the next wave of national identity products draw its inspiration from, and in what form will it be expressed?

This project sets out to 'craft nostalgic resonance', through conceptual recycling from my own biography, in order to connect with viewers by means of personal recognition located within their own biography. The use of the term craft follows author and curator Grace Cochrane's (1997, p. 53) usage: rather than craft implying 'a category of objects', it refers instead to an attitude or approach to



making that includes 'a concern for materials and processes and a total understanding of the task at hand – not, these days, in unquestioning tradition, but towards an imaginative end'. Cochrane (2004, p. 24) likens this to the term's use when applied not only to other creative fields, but to areas such as speechwriting – with the implication of 'knowing how to do something very well'. The term 'conceptual recycling' (as discussed in more detail in chapter 1) refers to the use of existing archetypes, ideas or traditional techniques or materials in a new manner or new context, for their 'nostalgic resonance' rather than environmental or sustainability reasons (Williams, 2004, p. 28).

This project does not intend to try to recreate the 'gritty' street appeal of the *mindthatbogan* range, but rather attempts to extend this appeal, and the national identity T-shirts' ongoing appeal, to a new range of souvenirs, involving a shift in both format and inspiration. This project steps back further in my history, to explore my younger, formative years growing up in regional New Zealand.

I was born in Wellington in 1973 to third generation New Zealanders of United Kingdom heritage. Along with my two brothers, I grew up in Napier until I was seven, and then on the semi-rural outskirts of Hastings until I was eleven, when we moved back to Wellington. My father has a background in agriculture, is an ardent DIYer (do-it-yourself) and comes from a long line of carpenters. My mother is a writer, editor, trained teacher and quilter, and comes from a long line of dressmakers and milliners. Our house was on an acre of land,

ample to accommodate numerous pets, and provide Dad with plenty of scope for weekend DIY projects.

Activities and holidays were fairly typical, and family and outdoors orientated: helping out around the house and property, Saturday morning sports, camping, and of course, trips to the A&P Show (Agricultural & Pastoral) in the spring. Holidays included trips to friends' and families' baches at Lake Taupo and various coastal locations, and later as often as possible to the Bay of Islands for sailing. Our family's cultural influences were largely international rather than local, stemming mostly from Britain – Disney animation being shunned in favour of live-action English dramas and comedy. The few local programmes I was aware of – *Billy T*, *Gliding On*, *Keep Cool til After School* – were obviously different, even at that age, in content and production, in comparison. Although our cultural influences and aspirations broadened upon moving down to Wellington and attending high-school, they were still internationally focused – it was cool to wear Esprit, Reebok, Doc Martens imported from Shellys in London, read international magazines and spy thrillers, watch international TV and film, and listen to Aha and Duran Duran rather than The Herbs and The Exponents.



Figure 4. From top left: 1-2. Bronz; 3-11. Mr Vintage; 12-15. Little Brother.

Project overview

When contemplating where New Zealanders will turn to in the future for resonating identity-based design, a number of possible directions come to mind – of which two in particular were chosen to focus on. The first scenario questions whether existing ‘classic’ motifs – currently enjoying pride of place on national identity T-shirts and accessories, and commonly used over the last century within the tourist souvenir industry – will still be relevant and still resonate, if used or applied in different ways. Has the use of these ‘classic’ New Zealand motifs been exhausted, or is there still room for them to be ‘reclaimed’ – that is conceptually recycled – and used to craft nostalgic resonance in the creation of souvenirs for New Zealanders? This may include a shift in format to a more subtle expression, in response to the current very straightforward and literal declaration of the isolated motif identity T-shirt format.

The second scenario questions if a new round of more obscure, overlooked, ‘lower case’, everyday, domestic artefacts and experiences will resonate with New Zealanders (Attfield, 2000, p. 45). Can the conceptual recycling of overlooked things in the ‘lower case’ be used to create resonating, identity-based New Zealand design; artefacts and experiences that were perhaps missed out in Richard Wolfe and Stephen Barnett’s (1989) initial roundup of ‘classic’ Kiwiana? It is important to note that I am not trying to determine future Kiwiana, nor to elevate these things to iconic status. The aim is through conceptual recycling, to craft nostalgic resonance through the creation of souvenirs for New Zealanders.

These two directions were selected because they have the most relevance to me and my formative years and therefore generate the most personal nostalgia. This choice is in line with both Wolfe and Barnett’s (1989) selection of Kiwiana from their formative years and Morris B Holbrook’s (1993) discussion of nostalgia’s attachment to experiences from one’s youth. Because of this personal, first-hand experience, these two questions allow me to keep my design and production ‘authentic’, a notion I will discuss in the next chapter, which focuses on the theoretical, practice-based and methodological issues that frame this thesis.

Chapter 1

Theoretical framework and current practice

A review of theoretical and practical material covering collecting, souvenirs, Kiwiana, national identity, nostalgia and conceptual recycling was undertaken to position my work. It informs and defines my question, and provides a theoretical framework and methodology for my research through design. This chapter discusses some of the key theoretical considerations shaping the thesis derived from this review.

Why we collect things

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1993) believes that we have both a physical and psychological dependence on objects and that cultural evolution relies on such dependence. He sees this external order of objects and routine as necessary to keep external randomness at bay, constructing and stabilising our personal identity and internal order. These objects function as 'external props', demonstrating the collector's power, status, and place socially; serving to remind us of where we are in relation to where we've been and where we hope to go, situating us in time; and acting as tangible evidence of, and giving permanence to, our relationships and connections to others (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). This can be applied to New Zealand national identity T-shirts, situating us in this time and acting as tangible and public evidence of our connection to this place, 'as symbols of identity and badges of belonging' (Kelly, 2003, p. 209). Moreover, Grant McCracken (as cited in

Belk, 1995) believes that our collections talk about us in the same non-verbal way that clothing does.

No single motivation can be applied to all who collect and all objects collected: people collect different things, in different ways, for different reasons. According to Russell Belk (1995), collecting as an activity, regardless of what is being collected, creates a valid and sanctioned sense of purpose; a sense of contributing to the preservation of history; of being part of something larger. The most common reasons for collecting are gaining 'a feeling of mastery, competence or success' as well as self-completion (Belk, 1995, p. 87). Often items are related to an experience in our own life and it is through the collecting of these objects that we achieve a more complete sense of self, an extension of self that is possibly not being fulfilled in other areas of our lives, such as work and home. These items act like souvenirs, as prompts for the past: when and where they were acquired, with whom, at what cost and for what occasion and so forth, transporting the collector back to this time and place (Belk, 1995). T-shirts are a very visible and communal example of this; whether purchased for locals, or purchased and gifted to foreigners or locals overseas – a connection to time and more specifically place, is made. Belk (1995) also believes that there is a certain psychological security and comfort in collecting that revolves around ownership and control.

Despite the way that collecting in general is viewed as feminine or even childish, males dominate most areas of collecting which are competitive, aggressive and work-like in nature. Belk (1995) and Csikszentmihalyi (1993) write of the general difference in what is collected, with men collecting predominantly impersonal and historical things that represent power and status such as cars, houses, boats and weapons – masculine and expensive things. These things, often reflected in public and private collections, are already validated and accepted as having historical and/or monetary value, indeed investment is often used to validate such collecting.

The things women tend to collect, however, according to Frederick Baekeland (as cited in Belk, 1995, p. 98), are generally 'personal and ahistorical', representing kinship and having intrinsic value – their production (such as knitting, crocheting, quilting and embroidery) often involves voluntary labour, and, therefore, less expense (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Such things are among the ranks of the familiar, the overlooked, the everyday, what Judy Attfield (2000, p. 45) terms things in the 'lower case'. Author and journalist Rosemary McLeod (2005) believes the reason women's domestic handwork has been overlooked as a valid culture is that it is not as measurable as the money and status that comes with male success. She sees these textile handicrafts, however, as a record of ordinary women's lives, creating a history that is far from insignificant.

People consume history through old objects, often found as bargains in junk shops – the objects acting as a demonstrated link to their past (C. Bell, 1996; Mars & Mars, 2000). Although these 'souvenir' pieces are collected for different reasons from why they were originally produced, for some it is still to do with personal experience and identification, and therefore, no doubt, also a hefty dose of nostalgia. Perhaps it is also as a means of self-completion, reacquiring things from one's childhood or acquiring things that were not possessed originally (Belk, 1995).

For other collectors however, it is the 'ironic distance' discussed by Louise Crewe and Alison Goodrum (Sconce as cited in Crewe & Goodrum, 2000, p. 36) that separates the collector from the original buyer or receiver: collectors buy artefacts not out of identification, but out of 'knowingness' and symbolic capital. Gerald Mars and Valerie Mars (2000, p. 108) discuss a kind of 'inverted superiority' in the subsequent 'kitsch' display of these artefacts; not too dissimilar from buying and wearing a 1970s leisure suit or a *mindthatbogan* T-shirt now. This safe distance of 'knowingness' results in these original period artefacts being sought out, collected, and invested with renewed respect, worth, interest, integrity and importance.

According to Belk (1995), the rising popularity of collecting and displaying things is both natural and inevitable in a consumer culture. He believes it is also inevitable that such collecting will start to feed off this same consumer culture with a rise in the collection of branded goods and artistic depictions

of these. Locally, this is evident with products such as the Edmonds Baking Powder rising sun logo and slogan; Dick Frizzell's Four Square man paintings; and many national identity T-shirts employing the likes of Vogel's, Weet-bix, K-Bars, Fresh-Up, Kiwi Bacon and Marmite to name a few. Everyday mass-produced items are more likely to be collected by people than the subject matters of previous centuries such as nature, antiques, fine art or handcrafted objects (Belk, 1995).

Souvenirs and things in the 'lower case'

Souvenirs, more often than not, are about specificity of place, a memento to time out of the ordinary, representing the 'exotic other' (Hitchcock, 2000; Mars & Mars, 2000, p. 94). They are material items that are bought, kept or given as a reminder of a particular place or occasion; items that have a relationship with something or someone; items that have or develop value – either decorative, monetary, status-making or personal. These items inevitably develop memorial functions, becoming keepers and prompters of memory and acting as 'traces' of experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Hitchcock, 2000; Stewart, 1993).

Anthropologists John Taylor (1998) and Majorie Kelly (2003) write of souvenirs as proof of having been somewhere. This could be extended to having been part of something when one considers artefacts of Kiwiana, the *mindthatbogan* and New Zealand national identity T-shirts – proof of identity, common heritage and belonging. These national identity T-shirts could be seen as acting as

prompters not only of memory to the wearer, but when overseas especially, to others who also share this connection to New Zealand – often inviting fellow Kiwis to identify themselves (C. Ward, personal communication, April 21, 2007).

The lifespan, life journey or 'biography' of souvenirs is somewhat similar to what Attfield (2000, p. 3) terms 'the material culture of everyday life'. It is this journey of an object, when applied to souvenirs – and expanded to include their point of origin – that is of particular interest to me within the scope of this project. According to Attfield (2000, p. 5), objects attract interest when they are 'new', popular and visible – an 'exotic' spectacle. Objects might also possibly attract attention as they fall from grace or are 'exposed as inauthentic'. Otherwise, they go on to join the everyday clutter – souvenirs coming from the exotic, the 'other' become 'wild things', joining the ranks of the mundane, the familiar, the everyday (Attfield, 2000, p. 4). They go from being mementoes of time out from the ordinary and indeed time out from time, to being part of a domestic ritual (Mars & Mars, 2000). Eventually, perhaps as their owner dies, they are discarded – passed on to other family members, to junk shops, sold on internet auction sites such as TradeMe, or simply binned. The object, whether passed to a family member or discovered in a junk shop, has taken another turn in its journey. It has been recycled, its original story perhaps lost forever, and no doubt has completely new meaning to its new owner; whether it is a connection to the deceased relative (if received from a family member) or collected as symbolic capital or 'self-conscious kitsch' from a junk shop (Mars & Mars, 2000, p. 109). The collected object has shifted from being an

authenticator of experience and prompter of memory, to the new, organised context of the collection (Stewart, 1993).

To complete this biography of souvenirs, it is necessary to also include the point of origin – the original place, experience or occasion – of which the object has become a souvenir. It is only through the removal of this artefact from its origin, that it becomes a souvenir and acquires value. It represents the exotic, as opposed to being familiar, mundane or even kitsch within its local environment – think plastic tiki and polished paua shells within New Zealand versus overseas (Mars & Mars, 2000; Stewart, 1993; Taylor, 1998). According to sociologist Claudia Bell (1996), these objects, once home and out of context, become permanent, tangible representations of place. This is possibly becoming true of the national identity T-shirt: with the local market fast becoming saturated (from high to low, to rip-offs, to playcentre fundraisers) these T-shirts are becoming familiar and commonplace within New Zealand, and yet when removed from their origin – that is, taken overseas – they continue to represent the exotic.

It is also interesting to consider the production and authenticity of souvenirs – the production is often determined by what visitors expect to buy, especially with mass-produced souvenirs. This expectation is generally based on preconceived and stereotyped ideas of a place, culture or time, and these expectations want fulfilment in souvenir form (C. Bell, 2004; Bunn, 2000; Stewart, 1993). Preconceived ideas of a place are often formed by tourists

prior to even leaving their own country, ‘framed’ and perpetuated by the tourism industry (C. Bell, 1996; Taylor, 1998). This is demonstrated with certain forms of Maori tourism in New Zealand, where *hangi*, customary dress and cultural performances in particular are delivered, not because this is still common, everyday practice, but because this is what is recognised, expected and wanted as part of an ‘authentic’ Maori cultural experience. This promotional material creates familiarity and tourists come to see the ‘real thing’ (C. Bell, 1996, p. 40). It is important to note that this is not the only level of souvenirs being produced. For example, high-end Maori souvenirs and products are gaining more momentum and recognition in the market through initiatives such as *toi iho*,¹ events such as the inaugural Maori Market,² and high-end gift stores such as Kura and Ora in Wellington.

Souvenirs are often subject to size and weight limitations as well as visitor expectations. According to Bell (1996) they are often poorly designed, with questionable function, meaningless outside the context in which they are purchased, and disposable. The most popular and successful souvenirs are uncontentious, aesthetic and portable – takeaway representations of, in this instance, our country (C. Bell, 1996). Paula Ben-Amos (as cited in Graburn,

¹ *toi iho* is a registered trade mark created by Te Waka Toi, Creative New Zealand’s Maori arts board and is used to distinguish, promote and sell authentic and quality arts, crafts, exhibitions and performances by Maori artists (*toi iho*, n.d).

² The Maori Market is an event showcasing contemporary Maori art, ‘with items ranging in price from \$500 to \$80,000’ held for the first time in Wellington earlier this year (*Maori Market*, 2007).

2000) likens the condensed, simplified representation of the souvenir to pidgin languages – in order to have meaning for outsiders, these experiences have been stereotyped as a simple means of intercultural communication. The very format of the printed T-shirt, when considering the majority of national identity T-shirts available, is about communicating to others: ‘worn with intent, as symbols of identity and badges of belonging’ (Kelly, 2003, p. 209; Taylor, 1998) (Figures 2-3).

In her essay on authenticity in tourist art, Stephanie Bunn (2000, p. 172) discusses one concept of Western authenticity (in relation particularly to museum collections): ‘traditional authentic goods are made by the members of a society, using materials produced by that society, made for the people of that society and used by them’. Bunn (2000, p. 172) goes on to state that, based on this, all other artefacts, including those aimed at tourists, ‘may be termed ‘fakes’’. Nelson H Graburn (as cited in Bunn, 2000, p. 172) distinguishes between the two through the terms ‘inwardly directed’ and ‘outwardly directed’ arts, which Bunn (p. 185) further defines as goods produced authentically for the society: ‘something of high quality, full of implicit meaning, not made for sale’ versus goods produced for consumption outside this culture which are ‘a low quality, meaningless commodity’. This idea of authenticity is supported by Kelly (2003, p. 209) when she concludes that T-shirts for Hawaiian residents ‘are designed by those who share their customers’ lifestyles, values, and concerns, accurately and meaningfully communicated in the designs themselves’.

Although it could be argued, considering Bell’s notion of souvenirs as poorly designed, disposable and meaningless, that this is predominantly the case in today’s mainstream commercial tourist souvenir market, locally this is confused by museum and gallery shops, such as Te Papa in Wellington, stocking a wide selection of sophisticated and high-end, locally produced, quality souvenirs, alongside more traditional and mass-produced products. Research findings from *Demand for Cultural Tourism*, a study commissioned by Tourism New Zealand in 2003, suggests however, that a large number of tourists are less exposed to this high-end, locally produced market (Colmar Brunton, 2003). As well as being ‘offended’ that souvenirs did not differ from region to region, ‘they are damning of the fact that many of these items are not made in New Zealand’ (Colmar Brunton, 2003, p. 26). Recognising the importance of souvenirs in tourism, and supporting my own ‘authentic’ approach, the report argues that it is ‘critical that these elements of dissatisfaction be remediated as a matter of priority’ (Colmar Brunton, 2003, p. 26).

Taylor (1998, p. 45) discusses how often the local meaning of objects is overlooked, focusing instead on creating new products with commercial potential, such as the hei tiki featuring on plastic salad servers, ashtrays, swizzle sticks and tea towels. Ironically, as with the hei tiki, it is often through this commercial production that things become known, are therefore sought-after as souvenirs and, in this case, elevated to iconic status (and simultaneously ‘airport kitsch’) (Taylor, 1998, p. 45). Events such as the recent inaugural Maori Market and museum shops like Te Papa’s are evidence that locally,

'inwardly directed' and 'outwardly directed' arts are not mutually exclusive; souvenir goods can be well crafted, with respect and 'knowingness', maintaining meaning and authenticity for the local culture.

The souvenir as substitute for the experience

Belk (1995, p. 135) discusses Robert F Kelly's findings that close to 30% of museum visitors do not enter the galleries, rather taking a 'been there, done that' approach by visiting the gift shop instead and purchasing a souvenir as proof of visiting. These findings support Susan Stewart's (1993) theory that the souvenir can act as a substitute for the real thing, whether experienced or not. Bell (1996) talks about how often tourists to New Zealand spend more time in the museum souvenir shop than in the museum itself, which according to local carver Joe Sheehan (Rigby & Sheehan, 2005), mimics 'the museum experience' by providing information and stories about the objects they stock. The 2003 study *Demand for Cultural Tourism* (Colmar Brunton, 2003) found that 'shopping for souvenirs' rated constantly in the top five cultural products in all regions of New Zealand for both international and domestic visitors (more often than not, in the top two) and that 76% of international visitors planned 'shopping for souvenirs' as an activity. Mars and Mars (2000) discuss the souvenirs being bought at the beginning of the holiday, right after the accommodation was paid for, before the actual holiday really began. These discussions suggest that the purchasing of a souvenir of the experience is equally, if not more important, than actually engaging with the experience itself. Taylor (1998) talks about people buying postcards of Maori cultural

performances in Rotorua – itself a manipulated experience solely for tourists – to send home to friends, despite having no intention of attending the performance. These images were what had been perpetuated, therefore what was expected, despite having little relevance to the tourist's personal experiences.

Belk (1995) discusses how consumers are assured of good taste when purchasing souvenirs from a prestigious source – such as a museum. Often these museum shops specialise in 'authentic reproductions' of works they hold. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York also has shops in department stores, the New York Public Library, and shopping centres, some even outside of the United States. It also has a website and produces a catalogue six times a year that is mailed to around three million people. Now one doesn't even have to leave the house to purchase souvenirs!

So is the souvenir, like nostalgia itself, better than the real thing? Do these purchases – if one by-passes the experience but buys the T-shirt, the postcard, the miniature, the 'authentic reproduction' – still function as souvenirs? And what about the T-shirt, made and printed in China with New Zealand scenery sold to an American tourist in a downtown Auckland souvenir shop? Stewart (1993) believes that the owner or possessor of the souvenir is the 'curiosity' – that souvenirs speak more of their possessors than they do of their makers or origin. Although souvenir purchasers want the 'real thing', the measure of this authenticity differs across groups, and for some foreign tourists, simply having purchased something 'on site' is sufficient authenticity (Kelly, 2003;

Taylor, 1998). So are souvenirs like nostalgia – do people actually need to experience something to buy into it?

Nostalgia

In general, nostalgia can be defined as a fondness, a longing, a wistful yearning for the past, and for possessions and activities associated with the past (Holbrook, 1993). Nostalgia generates mixed feelings of happiness, sadness and longing when recalling people, places or events from the past – ‘the good old days’ – the simple, stable, honest and moral times of days gone by; a past that is untouchable and safely (rather than sadly) out of reach; a past that evades mortality; a romanticised, idealised and sanitised past – free from political and social issues (David Lowenthal as cited in C. Bell, 1996; C. Bell, 2004; Wood, 2005).

Nostalgia is linked to distance, both geographically and temporally. In the case of Kiwiana, enough time has passed so that we are able to begin to appreciate our culture (or even to realise that as Paheka we have a unique one) without the previously experienced cultural cringe (Boyd, 2005; NZ on Air, 2000; Spratt, 2007). For Kiwis overseas feel a similar sense of nostalgia for New Zealand, due to a geographical distance from their homeland and culture. This in itself is a relatively recent phenomenon, with those going overseas before the 1970s still generally thinking of Britain as ‘home’ (Belich, 2001).

In the example of British fashion designer Paul Smith, Crewe and Goodrum (2000) explore this idea of nostalgic distance. They talk of people acquiring local identity and a ‘sense of place’ through purchasing particular pieces of clothing (Crewe & Goodrum, 2000, p. 32). In this case it is a slice of Britain: tradition, heritage, local roots, quality and elegance. For consumers buying a piece of this identity and place, for example from a Paul Smith outlet in Japan, it could be seen as nostalgia of distance, as opposed to the time-based nostalgia of local British consumers. This could also be said of New Zealanders overseas proudly displaying their identity and a sense of nostalgic distance from their home country through a national identity T-shirt (“Fat Freddy’s,” 2006; *Jon Toogood*, 2003; ‘Sally’, n.d; Smith, 2007). According to several producers of these T-shirts, between 20 – 40% of their goods are going offshore (L.Currie, personal communication, June 22, 2007; Billie, personal communication, June 19, 2007).

There is also the fashion of ‘irony chic’ where people buy into a look not out of identification, but out of ‘knowingness’. Raphael Samuel (1994, p. 83-92) touches on this same ‘ironic distance’ when writing about retrochic, or ‘the nostalgia industry’ a style that ‘plays with the idea of the period look’, yet is firmly rooted in the present, catering to the consumer’s hankering for the good old days. According to Samuel (1994, p. 95), unlike other kinds of style revivals, retrochic often involves ‘tongue-in-cheek’ imitation, taking a poke at the past in a playful and irreverent manner, often focusing on humorous, odd or unexpected aesthetic elements. Retrochic is not concerned with historical

accuracy or authenticity, nor is it deceptive about its origins; retrochic reinvents, rather than imitates the past, and is more concerned with aesthetics and surface than substance (Samuel, 1994).

Holbrook (1993) discusses differing opinions over whether nostalgia is attached solely to one's own experiences from one's youth or whether, as suggested by David Lowenthal, it extends to include those from a collective historical memory of a particular era. Does this nostalgia extend to entire eras that one has not experienced but is perhaps familiar with through oral and visual history – vicarious experiences? Bell (2004, p. 176) argues that we can be nostalgic for something we have not experienced, citing New Zealanders' nostalgia over landscapes repeatedly used in the media – not necessarily visited or experienced first-hand, but recognised as part of the image of New Zealand, as '*ours*'.

Nostalgia and Kiwiana

Nostalgic memories are reinventing our past, and we are becoming increasingly nostalgic about things we possibly did not experience, yet still identify as being part of our collective heritage. As Bell (1996) questions (in relation to popular TV commercials) how many Kiwis actually owned a bach or tasted freshly baked cookies in a farmhouse kitchen? Bell (1996; 2004) sees nostalgia as important. It is a way of constructing and maintaining our identity for both locals and outsiders, possibly in response to globalisation.

The publishing of *New Zealand! New Zealand! In Praise of Kiwiana* in 1989, popularised the term Kiwiana whilst setting out to identify which experiences,

customs, people and artefacts define us culturally. In doing so, it confirmed (if not raised them to) their iconic status (C. Bell, 1996, 2004). These individual accounts of cultural history by authors Wolfe and Barnett have, however, clearly resonated with a large audience. *Kiwiana! The Sequel* was published in 2001. This self-examination of predominantly Pakeha culture has come about largely as a response to the Maori cultural renaissance of the last 20-30 years, New Zealand's enforced decolonisation from Britain after it joined the EEC, and increased globalisation and subsequent domination by American culture – all contributing to our need to affirm local and national identity and values (Belich, 2001; C. Bell, 1996, 2004).

Kiwiana comprises images, artefacts, and experiences that trigger a positive and patriotic sense of national identity and which have been elevated to national symbols (C. Bell, 2004). The perpetual use of these motifs by museums, in adverts, on postage stamps and calendars etc., sentimentalises and affirms their mythological status, cementing them as cultural icons (C. Bell, 2004). And yet, if they were not perpetuated, would they still be so prominently and collectively celebrated? Bell questions whether they would even be recognised as anything other than common, everyday things as most of them are - or would they just be forgotten? Their perpetual use and promotion as cultural icons creates a repetitious cycle, further building on their obvious resonance with New Zealanders.

Kiwiana unites and differentiates (Pakeha) New Zealanders from others as a culture. It alienates those outside of this culture, and likewise immigrants to New Zealand, as they may not readily understand, recognise or connect with this common history (C. Bell, 1996, 2004). Although decades ago when the phrase was coined and first written about, and up until recently, it was considered an affirmation of an 'unstated' Pakeha culture (C. Bell, 2004, p. 177); today however, through its perpetual use and prolific promotion, it has become anything but. Although Kiwiana is still simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, it is constantly expanding to include more artefacts, images and experiences and these national symbols are becoming increasingly recognised internationally, affording outsiders a greater level of recognition than ever before. The haka, recently performed for the All Blacks by a French dance troupe of women in high heels (Ford, 2007), the All Blacks and The Lord of the Rings landscape are examples of this (Tourism New Zealand, 2006).

According to Holbrook (1993) nostalgia is often attached to everyday, common and unobtrusive objects – a preference for the common objects of one's youth. By Wolfe and Barnett's (1989) own admission, their selection of Kiwiana focused on the 1950s and 1960s as these were their formative years. It is not surprising therefore, that a large part of what we know as Kiwiana falls into this everyday, common category – Edmonds Baking Powder and cookbook, the buzzy bee toy, jandals, NZ Rail crockery, cleaning and food products – a category of things that by Attfield's definition are things in the 'lower case'. Samuel (1994, p. 114) suggests that retrochic has 'prepared the way for a

whole new family of alternative histories, which take as their starting point the bric-a-brac of material culture, the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life'.

Double-dipping: conceptual recycling

Conceptual recycling refers to the use of existing archetypes, ideas or traditional techniques or materials in a new manner or new context – things that have a previous life with meaning, memories and stories attached (Williams, 2004). Designs that employ conceptual recycling, such as Jurgen Bey's 1999 *Light Shade Shade* (found old lamps encased in new two-way mirror lightshades) and Tejo Remy's 1991 chest of drawers (found discarded drawers encased in new timber shells, strapped precariously together) for Dutch design and marketing company Droog Design, heighten or challenge our appreciation or perception of these existing objects, techniques or materials (Williams, 2004). This connection and familiarity attracts the viewer, often acting as a trigger for their own memories, in the same way that McTaggart talks of songs triggering personal nostalgic memories, yet simultaneously – and therefore – collectively (C. Bell, 2004).

Gareth Williams (2004, p. 28) talks about this conceptual recycling of ideas, materials and archetypes for its 'nostalgic resonance' as opposed to environmental or sustainability reasons and how this has the potential to increase an object's longevity. He sees reusing actual components in appropriation terms as an 'honest' approach, recognising and acknowledging that the 'borrowed' component cannot be improved on (Williams, 2004, p. 26).

Luke Wood (2005, p. 67), a 'self-diagnosed nostalgic', questions the trend of drawing from the past for new ideas, a trend that is current throughout popular culture, from music to graphics, fashion, advertising and film. Nostalgia – in this instance the use of existing ideas and forms – is often used negatively, implying appropriation and an absence of innovation and original thought, and involving an undesirable 'sentimental attachment to the past'; 'recycling', 'historic sampling', 'plundering' and 'retrievalism' are some of the terms referred to by Wood (2005, p. 67). However, Wood (2005, p. 68) goes on to discuss an interesting idea of Jan Michl's, that 'design' should simply be referred to as 'redesign' – that within a new combination of existing ideas, lies the closest we will ever come to creating something 'new'. According to Renny Ramakers (2002, p. 136) of Droog Design, so long as it involves evolution, copying can be justified – comparing it to science, 'where drawing on knowledge of one's fellows is quite essential'. A lot of Droog Design work, elevates, celebrates and heightens the viewer's awareness of the everyday, the banal, the ordinary and the unseen through this conceptual recycling (especially in their early years). Droog takes things from what Attfield terms the 'lower case' and makes them 'things with attitude' that strongly communicate the designer's intent.

Practical Context

The following section discusses a selection of artists' and designers' work that share underlying concepts with this project, including both commercial and conceptual propositions, to provide an overview of the current practical

context for my work within New Zealand.

In Winter 2006 Karen Walker launched her first collection for Swannndri, a brand famous in New Zealand for the now iconic checked bush shirt.³ The aim was not to create high fashion, nor designs for its existing rural customers, but to reinterpret the design and aim it at a high street market (Simpson, 2005). Swannndri by Karen Walker is 'inspired by Swannndri's place in New Zealand history' with Swannndri chief executive Julian Bowden saying it is 'making Swannndri and its brand values more relevant to New Zealanders' (*Swannndri by Karen Walker*, 2006).

Playing on nostalgia, identity, belonging, and Kiwiana, Swannndri by Karen Walker takes an existing brand and in particular its iconic checked bush shirt, reinterprets it and places it in a new context, aimed at a new audience. The Swannndri brand and iconic check pattern have a previous – and still existing – life, loaded with meaning and associations (the great outdoors, Kiwi ingenuity, 'man alone', quality and so forth). The range employs nostalgia through the recycling of existing patterns and fabrics and – in the case of the winter 2007 range – actual styles, to connect with the viewer. Artists have also been employed to create new takes on this old favourite: John Reynolds designed

³ The Swannndri checked bush shirt – popular with farmers – remains unchanged since its creation in 1913, and although a Twentieth Century garment, is strongly connected with New Zealand's pioneering history.

a collection of surface patterns based on the checked pattern that is applied to garments and accessories. The contemporary shift allows a new urban audience to buy into this new brand; an audience that appreciates the references and identifies with the familiar product, but possibly never owned (nor needed) an original Swannndri. Swannndri by Karen Walker also includes new 'accessories' such as teddy bears – the large one retails for \$125 – both a product and a price that would surely have traditional Swannndri customers baffled.

Auckland-based men's clothing label Little Brother employs nostalgia through conceptual recycling in their T-shirt designs, primarily through a shift in context and towards a new audience – in some cases those who have not experienced the referenced event or motif. In 2005 the label released T-shirts featuring the 1970s *Keep New Zealand Beautiful* litter campaign and another sporting the 1974 Commonwealth Games logo, a logo that had lain dormant for years after becoming quickly uncool after the actual event (Boyd, 2005). More recent T-shirts feature tourism posters from the 1920s and 30s, a plan drawing of the Trekka⁴ and local Auckland venue, The Schooner Tavern. This approach to national identity T-shirts begins to draw on less obvious and un-elevated elements of New Zealand's culture and history, things often overlooked and tucked away in archives – things in the 'lower case' and requiring slightly more 'knowing' to appreciate.

Areta Wilkinson's 2006 exhibition *journey-work* at Fingers gallery in Auckland included a range of *Blanket Brooches* – old New Zealand woollen blanket

labels (Kaiapoi, Mosgiel, Onehunga Woollen Mills, and Canterbury) removed from their original blankets and made into brooches with silver and gold backings and pins. This work employs nostalgia through conceptual recycling – these labels come with a previous life attached, attracting the viewer through familiarity, providing, as Wilkinson says, 'a vehicle to dip in and out of memories and experiences' (Scott, 2007). These labels speak of the good old days, of family road trips, picnics, comfort and warmth. They also speak of history, heritage and quality – made in New Zealand from 100% pure wool. As a product, these blankets are commonly found in op-shops – discarded and abandoned, replaced by duvets, cheaper and often novelty-based imported alternatives, and better home heating. *journey-work* takes these labels from their previously permanently affixed positioning in the 'lower case' – mundane, familiar, everyday, overlooked – and elevates them through a simple shift to a new, precious, detachable and portable jewellery-based context. This new positioning challenges the viewers' appreciation and perception of these artefacts.

Independently, local jewellers Georgina Baker and James McCarty both created jewellery involving souvenir teaspoons around the same time in 2006 (McCarty produced rings and cufflinks, Baker made necklaces, earrings and pins). These pieces involve conceptual recycling of familiar and slightly kitsch souvenir teaspoons depicting both popular and more obscure New Zealand

4. The Trekka is the only vehicle to be designed and mass-produced in New Zealand.

locales, counting on viewer recognition not only of the teaspoons themselves, but also the places they depict (and the nostalgic and stylised way in which these places are represented). They reclaim the souvenir teaspoon, directed more towards foreign tourists, through the creation of new pieces of jewellery, directed towards New Zealanders. They take a more obscure, 'lower case' and provincial approach to national identity, from a previously untapped source. These pieces are localised and explore identity, place and belonging. Retailing for up to \$350 in high-end stores such as World, these pieces are a far cry from the humble and kitsch beginnings of the original souvenir.

The Swannndri by Karen Walker approach to brand make-over supports the first scenario being explored in my work: 'classic' motifs are still relevant to New Zealanders if used in new ways. In this first scenario however, my work employs nostalgia through the conceptual recycling of 'classic' motifs, whilst critiquing their use in goods directed at both locals and foreigners. Although directed at a similar urban-based, 'knowing' New Zealand audience, new materials and objects are created with greater distance from their origins.

Little Brother's approach to national identity T-shirts, although very much skimming the surface, supports the second scenario being explored within my work: the conceptual recycling of more obscure, everyday, overlooked things in the 'lower case' to create resonating identity-based New Zealand design. Although my work also relies on the recognition of the conceptually recycled artefact or motifs, it has not involved the simple archival selection

and reproduction of an image, nor is it simply a commercial proposition. My work also explores other formats, moving beyond reliance on the financially, physically and conceptually accessible T-shirt, and explores and critiques, through design, the loss of the original artefacts and associated experiences from today's society.

Although Areta Wilkinson's *Blanket Brooches* and Baker and McCarty's work involve conceptual recycling, nostalgia, and the elevation of 'lower case' things to the exotic – further supporting my second scenario – my work involves more of an intervention, creating more distance, through design, between the original artefact or experience and the new product. It requires the viewer to take a bigger conceptual leap to connect with the original motif and offers a critique of the fast-becoming-lost experiences associated with the original artefact, as discussed above.

In Baker and McCarty's work there is also a form of physical recycling that in the process is considerably altering the original objects, which are subsequently lost as teaspoons. This creates something of a dilemma: simultaneously preserving and destroying a piece of history by elevating it to the exotic, instilling it with 'attitude' and directing it towards a new audience. Within my new range of souvenirs, the original artefacts (when employed) remain in their complete state, other than the addition of print to the *Dead Set* wallpaper.

These examples of relevant contemporary practice are by no means exhaustive, rather they serve as an overview of the current state of play in relation to this project. Their employment of nostalgia through conceptual recycling in the creation of products for New Zealanders is similar to my approach. Their choice of subject matter – from ‘classic’ motifs to the more obscure, everyday and ‘lower case’ – supports my two chosen scenarios as relevant pools from which to create a new range of souvenirs for New Zealanders.

Chapter 2

Wish you were here: design development

A consideration of the relevant literature and contemporary practice led me to choose two scenarios for this research project, which contemplates where New Zealanders will turn to in the future for resonating identity-based design. In order to investigate these questions, things had to be made to test the scenarios, and they needed to be exhibited to elicit feedback.

Methodology – research through design

Peter Downton (2003) describes research through or by design as a method of enquiry that extends personal knowing and contributes to a wider collective and disciplinary body of knowledge.

Broadly, research is undertaken to test existing knowledge, and to produce and increase knowledge; design uses knowledge from design and elsewhere and produces new knowledge, while both research and design, like any activities involving the application of skills, require knowing and knowledge to enable their conduct.

(Downton, 2003, p.57)

The body of work I have developed builds on my existing personal skills and knowing through the extension of materials and processes. Like other skills – Downton's (2003) example being driving or dancing – it is easier to show this more convincingly through the act of it, rather than talking or writing about it.

Through the public dissemination of the objects and exegesis, these approaches and knowing will be tested, and subsequently contribute to the production of knowledge in this area.

An iterative, discovery-led exploration of traditional techniques and materials, and new technologies, was undertaken. This was framed by the project questions, aims and selected scenarios, and guided by the ideas behind the individual artefacts and experiences. In contrast to the *mindthatbogan* T-shirts, the choice of materials – leather, silk, silver etc. – largely reflects the intended 'high-end' positioning of the final souvenir products in the market, communicating a sense of luxury and quality, as well as being materials that feature prominently in my previous practice, and from which I can increase my existing knowledge.

As well as numerous informal and impromptu showings of work to my peers, a selection of prototyped objects was shown to a range of people representing a cross-section of my target market in a neutral and informal setting, both to gain feedback and individual responses, as well as to support my selection of scenarios and motifs (artefacts and experiences). This feedback and the responses were tape-recorded, transcribed and evaluated in relation to the project's questions and aims, and utilised to further inform the design process: in some cases the product itself, in others the articulation of underlying ideas.

It also highlighted the importance of the context of the work in the final exhibition.

Research findings were publicly presented in the form of an exhibition of this new range of souvenirs, entitled *Wish you were here*, in a vacant retail space in Wellington, allowing the work to be tested on a larger scale and the public's response to be reflected upon. This reaction was then evaluated in relation to the original research question, and included in this exegesis, through fully documenting the project, its exhibition and its findings. The public dissemination of this project contributes to the wider collective body of knowledge in this area. The exhibition and its findings are discussed in the third and final chapter in this exegesis.

Obviously the potential range of 'classic' motifs, artefacts and customs in this area is vast. My selection reflects my own experiences and the need to keep this project manageable. This allows me to keep this work 'authentic' within a souvenir context, to produce 'work that speaks about who we are as a culture and who we are as individuals in that culture' (S. Coupland as cited in Spratt, 2007, p. 15). The sheepskin, an encounter with a fantail, and the customary scenic summer holiday at the beach, were chosen to serve as examples of 'old favourites', generally represented quite traditionally in the souvenir industry. For the overlooked things in the 'lower case' scenario, the selection was also determined by personal relevance and nostalgic resonance, resulting in the humble milk and cream bottle, the functional milk crate, and

the 'domestic offerings' created in woodwork as part of technicraft or manual classes at school in the 1980s.

As one of the aims of this project is to create a new range of souvenir products, it has been important to try to maintain a balance between the conceptual and 'actual' in the products. Unlike a gallery experience, where viewers are happy to be moved but generally less likely to take a disturbing or challenging piece home, these products need to resonate without explanation on a certain level – or to appeal purely aesthetically, to make the viewer want to purchase them (Anonymous, personal communication, November 8, 2006).

As the primary audience for this project is New Zealanders, and the format is less about communicating identity to others than connecting and resonating with the viewer themselves, less stereotyping and less simplification is needed. Based on the theory that my own experiences are part of a wider collective pool, the ideas explored and the way in which they are communicated can be more sophisticated, requiring more 'knowingness' to understand.

Throughout my different souvenir ranges, the use of all-over patterns and their wallpaper application is in response to the way motifs and products are used within the tourist souvenir industry and national identity products. The creation of repeating pattern in itself facilitates the abstraction of these motifs, creating distance through design, rather than geographical removal, in the making of the souvenir. It requires a certain 'knowingness' from the viewer

to understand the work and its original reference. It removes the need to be literal and obvious in the use of motifs, and also opens up the product application considerably, removing the central focal point (and the need for products to have a front or back).

Wallpaper as a souvenir plays with the cropped and framed postcard image as discussed by Bell (1996) and Taylor (1998) – not privy to the rubbish, low tide or throng of tourists just outside the frame. The surface pattern takes this perfect frame, and repeats it endlessly, and when applied to wallpaper, the viewer can surround themselves with this unblemished, unpolluted and uncrowded experience, reliving it in the comfort and convenience of their own home – perhaps becoming the ultimate substitute for the real thing.

The individual objects throughout my new range of souvenirs respond to the original artefacts both on a personal and broader cultural level, as well as their use in industry. It is through the removal, by design as opposed to a geographical removal, of the created artefact from its origin that it becomes a souvenir, acquiring value, representing the exotic (although still familiar) as opposed to being mundane or even kitsch within its local environment (Stewart, 1993; Taylor, 1998). Where appropriate, products are produced in multiples, both to incorporate different colourways (colour combinations) of the surface pattern (and therefore broadening the market appeal – preliminary reviews indicated individuals connected more strongly to particular colourways), and to further communicate the commercial souvenir premise to the viewer.

A range of traditional and newer technology-based processes have been employed to produce these objects – from traditional repeat design, sewing and silversmithing techniques, to digital fabric printing, laser-engraving leather, and laser-cutting cloth. Craft practitioners have a long history of engaging with technology (since the availability of hand power tools), and within this project, technology is used to enhance and supplement hand-processes, rather than to exclude them (Attfield, 2000; Fariello & Owen, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2002).

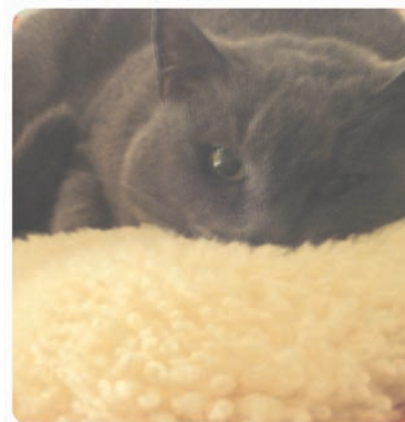


Figure 5. Family photographs.

Scenario One: reclaiming old favourites

This section discusses the ideas and processes behind the artefacts and experiences explored in the first scenario of reclaiming 'classic' motifs.

Flock: sheepskin

Sheep have long played a part in New Zealand's economy – in fact wool was one of New Zealand's first exports (Wolfe, 2006). Numbers peaked in the 1980s at 70.3 million (over 20 sheep per capita) at a time when I was travelling in Europe, much to the amusement of Germans I met who romantically envisioned 20 pet sheep in every Kiwi back garden (Wolfe, 2006). Sheepskin featured in abundance in Kiwi lives: sheepskin rugs, soft toys (sometimes just a piece that when stroked came to life), slippers, gloves, covered stools, sheepskin car seat and steering wheel covers, to name a few (Figure 5).

As children, we had a pet lamb named Cinnamon (its siblings were Sugar and Spice) in the back yard, who we fed daily with warm milk in a bottle with a teat and who eventually – and for a nine year old, unexpectedly – ended up on the dinner table one Sunday lunch (Figure 5). We were not alone, with many of my friends also having pet lambs which met similar fates (G. Mahs, personal communication, August 6, 2006; A. Packer, personal communication, June 8, 2006).

Perhaps it is the fact that sheep are everywhere in New Zealand, their produce deeply engrained in our daily lives, that has contributed to us becoming almost oblivious, or desensitised, to them. Of his work *Matthew 12:12* featured as part of the *Telecom Prospects 2007* show, Slovenian artist Gregor Kregar (Andrew, 2007; Kregar, 2006), a resident of New Zealand for the past ten years, talks of sheep being 'aesthetically invisible' to New Zealanders, despite the important part they have played in shaping New Zealand's economic and cultural identity. According to Richard Wolfe (2006), sheep are generally taken for granted by New Zealanders and we are amused that they have become such a tourist attraction. Sheep experiences, sheep motifs and sheepskin have all long been used in the tourist souvenir industry with sheepskin products including ugg boots, slippers, hats, scarves, bags, ambiguous animal soft toys and rugs themselves, being some of the standard fare available at any souvenir shop. It is possible that this prolific use of sheep and sheepskin aimed at foreigners has also contributed to the loss of impact or power that sheep in general, and sheepskin products in particular, have on New Zealanders (C. Bell, 1996; Taylor, 1998).

The *Flock* range centres round an all-over sheepskin pattern that has then been applied to a number of traditional souvenir products either through digital print or laser-engraving, extending the ideas explored in the surface pattern (Figures 6-13). The pattern is a tight repeat, simultaneously drawing attention





to its faux nature in a non-deceiving, unpretentious, retrochic manner, and referencing more traditionally structured textile repeat patterns: a 'full-drop' on cloth and a diagonal repeat on the wall.

Flock is retrochic in its whimsical and tongue-in-cheek take on the classic sheepskin and associated products. It is not accurate, nor is that its intention; reinventing, rather than imitating, poking fun and creating ironic distance from its origin in the process (Samuel, 1994). *Flock* questions taste and tackiness – as is often the case in the way national icons are represented in souvenirs marketed at foreign tourists – further contributing to the loss of relevance or power of the original artefact with locals. Think paua shell: a beautiful shell used prolifically in souvenirs predominantly coupled with cheap materials in a tacky manner aimed at foreigners (C. Bell, 1996; Taylor, 1998). The *Flock* pattern is ambiguous, bordering on floral in some instances, and requires a certain cultural capital to fully understand. The design is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive – working on multiple levels from purely aesthetic (pattern and/or products) through to resonating with the viewer through 'knowingness', (possibly having shared similar experiences) and therefore appreciating the irony.

The application of the pattern to other surfaces, and cowhide in particular, explores how one animal skin is often applied to another animal with little regard for authenticity within the tourist souvenir industry, such as stuffed kiwis made of possum fur. The laser-engraving of the sheepskin pattern onto

cowhide, is similar to branding of both skin and nation – leaving a permanent mark of identity (C. Bell, 1996). The pattern has been created in two colourways – white sheep and black sheep. Black sheep – 'a throwback to the domesticated animal's feral ancestors' – are traditionally considered less valuable, as their black wool cannot be dyed any other colour, unlike the wool from white sheep (Wolfe, 2006, p. 95). The colloquial expression 'black sheep' refers to an outsider or one who is different from the others in the group or family; a member who does not belong (Wolfe, 2006, p. 95). The combination of the two colourways explores ideas of belonging, acceptance and identity – ideas which are further extended in the slippers, purses and *Sunday Roast* oven mitts, with the interior of the products sporting the alternative colourway (Figure 11). This also alludes to the colloquial expression 'wolf in sheep's clothing' as 'an enemy disguised as a friend' – being one thing on the inside, yet publicly presenting another (Wolfe, 2006, p. 16).

The overall selection of products within the *Flock* range draws primarily from traditional sheepskin souvenirs and serves to further communicate and play on the ideas explored through the pattern (Figures 10, 11, 13). The distance created by design heightens the sense of removal and distance between the origin and the end product in souvenirs – in this case the real New Zealand experience of sheep and sheepskin, and the end use in souvenirs for foreign tourists.



Figure 10. Flock leggings (above), digital print on polyester, and Flock scarves (right), digital print on silk.





Figure 12 (previous inset). Flock laser-engraved cowhide.
 Figure 13 (above). Flock stool and rug, laser-engraved cowhide.

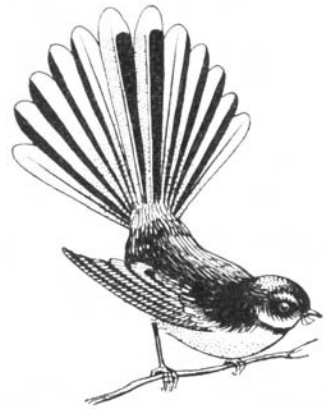


Figure 14. From top left: Auckland Museum Handbook of Zoology; Bycroft biscuit tin; Croxley playing cards; souvenir scarves; souvenir tea towel; Upper Hutt City street signs; old NZ\$1 note.

Aerial Antics: a fantail encounter

The *Aerial Antics* range is a response to the ongoing, predominantly static portrayal of the pied fantail (piwakawaka) in souvenirs and products, directed at both New Zealanders and foreigners. It is also a response to a personal experience that contradicts this rife portrayal, and sets out to create a souvenir that acts as a substitute for the experience. The fantail, depicted perched on a branch at a 45 degree angle with tail splayed, has featured on postage stamps, the now obsolete NZ\$1 note, local album covers (Fly My Pretties) and artists' works (Jeff Thomson, Richard Killeen, Bob Steiner, Leanne Culy for Esther Diamond cushions, and Shane Cotton – to name a few) and an abundance of souvenirs (tea towels, coasters, tablecloths, placemats, napkins, cushion covers, jewellery, playing cards, and of course, T-shirts) (Figure 14). It even adorns all of Upper Hutt City's street signs (Figure 14).

The common fantail was voted New Zealand's favourite bird in the Forest and Bird's 2006 Bird of the Year poll, and like local cook and food writer Lois Daish, the fantail was the first bird that I was able to identify as a child (*And they're off!*, 2006a; *Bird of the Year*, 2006b). Despite its generally static, isolated and rather flat depiction, the real encounter with a fantail is anything but. Known for its 'cheeky antics and agile aerial manoeuvres', it is a lively, unpredictable and captivating bird (*Bird of the Year*, 2006b). A fantail encounter is often intimate, as they commonly follow or play with people, leaving us searching for a glimpse through trees as they dart about (Figure 15).

The intention of the repeating surface pattern design is to capture the unpredictable, darting and playful nature of the fantail. The tail (as its defining feature – especially for me as a child) has been abstracted, stylised and put into a scattered life-size repeat – the overall result leading the eye around the surface in a seemingly random, unpredictable and dancing manner.

Within this range, the surface pattern is applied to black surfaces, allowing the work to become more about texture, light play, pattern and subtlety – requiring closer inspection with the intention of creating a level of intimacy and delight with the viewer upon discovery. With the laser-cut Planosol pieces (an acrylic awning fabric used for the blind, light shades and eye masks) the black also hides the discolouration of the process on the fabric and, until the addition of a light source, hides the pattern itself (Figures 18-20).

The *Aerial Antics* pattern intends to evoke the experience of catching a glimpse of a fantail in amongst light whilst looking up through trees: straining to distinguish bird from bush, complicated by looking into light, and the cheeky, relentless darting of the fantail. In the *Aerial Antics* blind, light shades and eye masks, the pattern has been reduced to an outline, further broken into 1mm circles, and laser-cut into black Planosol. The resulting effect is barely visible, until a light source is introduced, and the mesh-like fabric is revealed (Figures 18-19). For the blind, the viewer is presented by a lifeless, black drop, until hung over a window either during daylight, or with other forms of light outside. The introduction of light creates an unexpected surprise – a lively, playful and



unpredictable pattern, dictated by the intensity and consistency of the light source and movement beyond the viewer's control. This works equally for passers-by, catching a pleasant and unexpected play when viewing the blind against a lit, and possibly, inhabited room. Likewise with the lampshade: without an internal light source the fabric remains dormant and lifeless. Once the light is turned on, the pattern is brought to life – with interaction from the viewer further enhancing this experience (Figures 16, 18, 20).

The same fabric has been made into eye masks – a light-hearted play on the portable souvenir, and taking the experience with you (Figures 18, 20). Largely functionless as an eye mask, when worn the wearer's eyes involuntarily dance around to make sense of what lies behind the mask – mimicking the viewing of the darting aerial antics of the fantail.

The surface pattern, in its *Lasting Impression* hand-embossed wallpaper application, is intended to evoke the subtle, yet lasting impression of the fantail encounter (Figures 16-17). The black semi-gloss finish results in the viewer catching a glimpse, yet requiring further investigation to appreciate the pattern. A sense of movement is created within the pattern, as the light catches the raised surface areas, which differs depending on the lighting and viewpoint.

Glimpse, the sterling silver fantail ring, continues the exploration of the flat, static portrayal of the fantail, versus the playful, often fleeting, glimpses of an actual encounter. The fantail has been reduced to two elements: the actual

ring, with the addition of the silhouette of a fantail head; and the splayed tail feathers, suspended perpendicularly through the opened ring, in place of the traditional precious stone. When worn, the beak sits nestled under the neighbouring finger, acting as an anchor to the movement of the tail – which is uncontrolled and unpredictable (Figure 21). It is a game of hide and seek and frozen action: when lying flat the fantail origin is not obvious; when worn a glimpse of the splayed tail may be caught, hinting at the origin, yet the body of the fantail is hidden. The resulting ring is an unpredictable, portable and precious captured moment preserved in silver – intimate in proximity of ring format and through hand-crafting. A sophisticated takeaway representation of an intimate and personal experience (C. Bell, 1996).





Figures 17 and 18 (previous insets). *Lasting Impression* wallpaper, hand-embossed and painted duplex paper, and *Aerial Antics*, laser-cut Planosol.
Figure 19 (above). *Aerial Antics blind*, laser-cut Planosol.



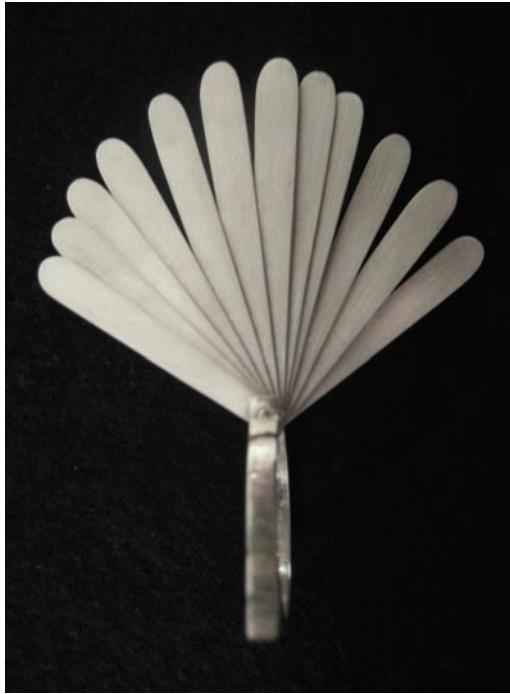


Figure 21. Glimpse ring, sterling silver.



The Grass Was Greener: customary summer coastal holidays

The Grass Was Greener range explores what is generally considered to be a customary right of all New Zealanders – the annual waterfront summer holiday – and considering the farthest you can be from the coast in New Zealand is 130km, these assumed rights are of little surprise (Barnett & Wolfe, 1989). In particular, it explores the increasing distance between this perceived traditional right that has been largely taken for granted in previous generations, and what is today becoming ‘an increasingly unaffordable dream’ (Page, 2006). In a recent newspaper article, journalist Emma Page compares the cost of renting a bach over Christmas in Northland New Zealand, with a family of four staying in a serviced apartment on the Gold Coast of Australia – the latter being a cheaper option. Whereas for previous generations, owning a holiday house by the sea was almost an ‘institution’, according to Wolfe and Barnett (1989, p. 143), ‘with the effects of inflation from the late 1960s, however, the bach has become an unaffordable luxury for the average worker’. Now rather than owning a bach, renting is becoming part of our heritage, according to Mark Greening of *Baches and Holiday Homes to Rent*, and even that is becoming increasingly prohibitive (Page, 2006). Even the camping holiday is coming to an end at many popular coastal sites – 190 camping grounds are reported to have closed ‘at the hand of investors’ in the last 15 years (Katterns, 2007).

The Grass Was Greener range intends to capture the increasing distance – physical, nostalgic and financial – and resulting removal and sense of loss of the traditional Kiwi summer holiday, experiences and waterfront access.

Running alongside this is the perpetuated, nostalgic myth of clean, green, accessible, perfect, unspoilt New Zealand – a utopian paradise of constructed landscapes, idealised motifs and unhindered access for its people (C. Bell, 1996, 2004; Taylor, 1998).

The Grass Was Greener pattern employs iconic scenic motifs commonly used in tourism advertising aimed at both locals and foreigners, yet motifs that are also personally relevant from my own summer holiday experiences (Figures 22-23). These motifs are condensed, stereotyped and simplified representations, yet they are complicated and obscured through their joining together, creating an endless and potentially ambiguous repeating pattern of silhouettes (Figure 25). The pattern becomes a play with positive and negative space and comparative scale, intending to create a sense of loss and unease through the removal of detail; simultaneously drawing the viewer in through recognition of elements, whilst creating distance through the lack of recognition of others. While the individual motifs are largely iconic New Zealand imagery (pohutukawa, cabbage trees, fantails, tui, kereru, sheep etc.) and serve to evoke rural, idyllic paradise, the joining begins to hint at a ‘dystopian’ unease. The icons become somewhat less obvious, leaving viewers searching to make sense as not all of the information is immediately discernable; aiming to challenge the viewer and these perpetuated images of national paradise.

The pattern is produced in several colourways, each with the silhouettes in black (removal) and the background in a range of romantic lights associated

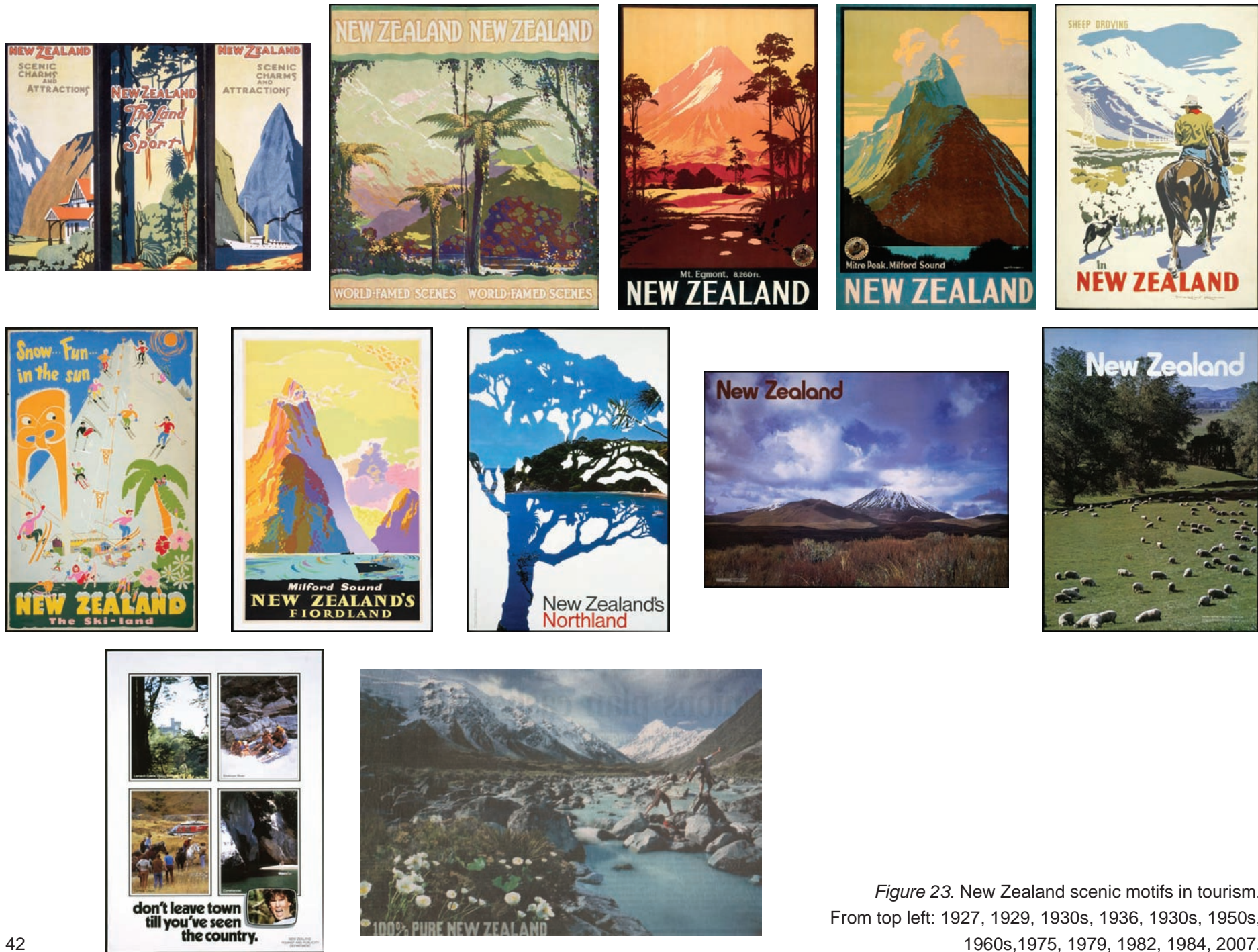


Figure 23. New Zealand scenic motifs in tourism.
From top left: 1927, 1929, 1930s, 1936, 1930s, 1950s,
1960s, 1975, 1979, 1982, 1984, 2007.

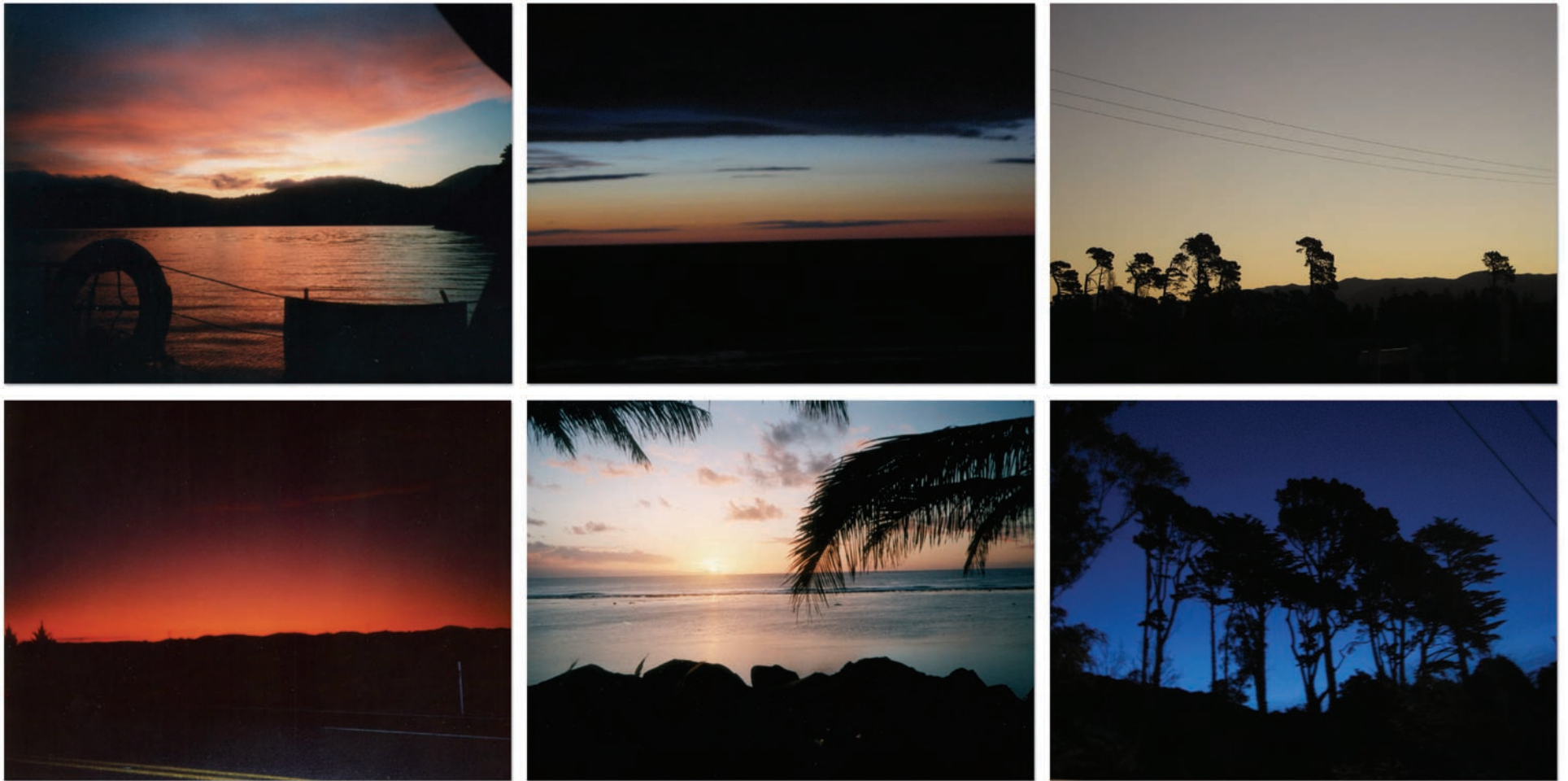
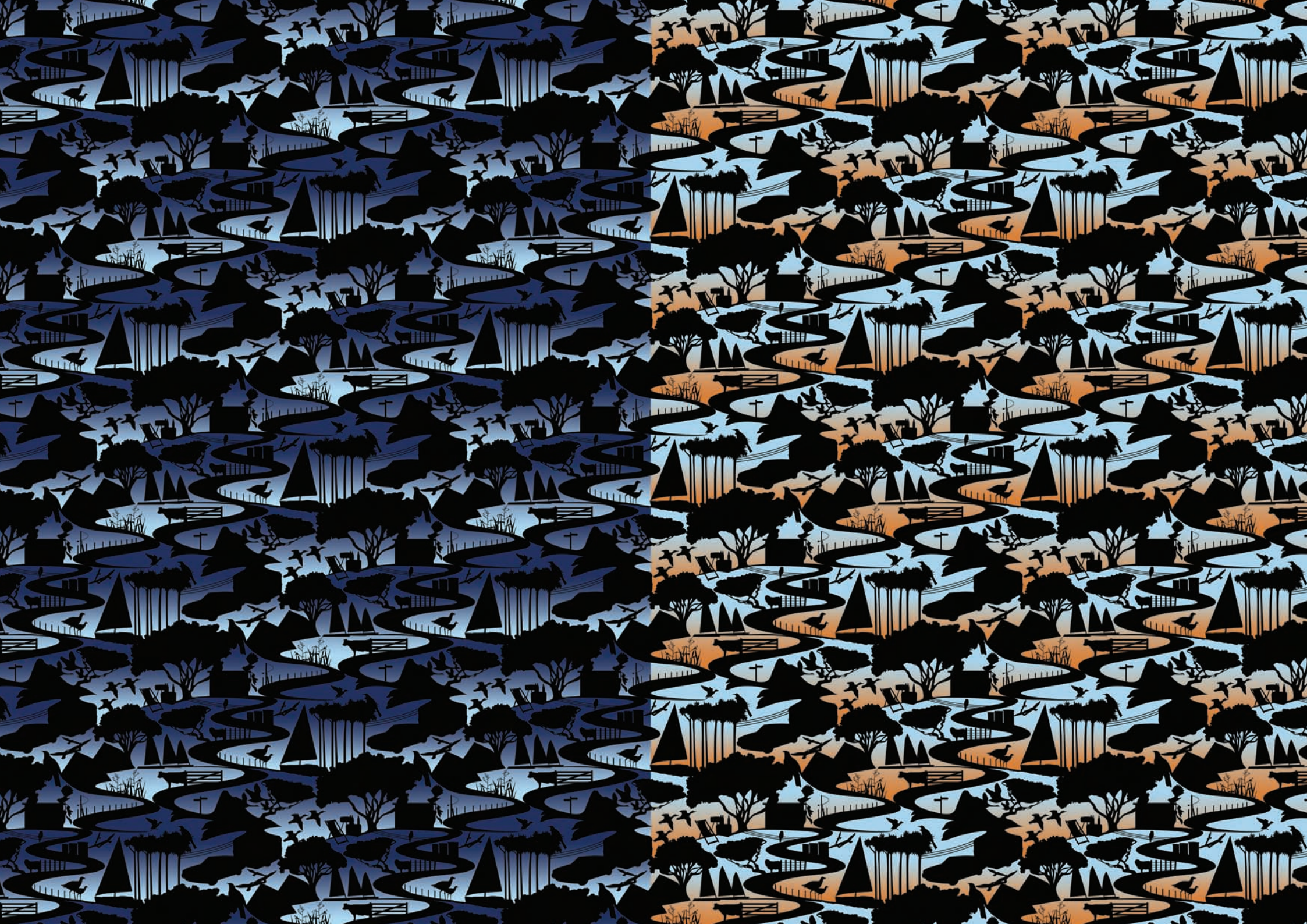


Figure 24. Holiday sunset photographs.



with tourist images in exotic locations: sunrise, sunset, dusk, moonlight etc. (Figure 24). On a personal level, the silhouettes and colour talk about travelling long distances by car – from Wellington 12 hours, often overnight – to reach the Bay of Islands for sailing holidays. Watching the landscape pass by out the car window as an endless stream of scenery silhouetted against the setting sun, followed by the moonlit night. The airbrushed-style gradients themselves speak of the sublime and the other-worldly, referencing clean commercial art, and techniques used to cover mistakes and make things perfect – more often than not, done digitally nowadays. Recent images used in Tourism New Zealand's 100% Pure New Zealand campaign ironically attest to the digital altering of scenic shots to create the perfect promotional image – due to budgetary and time constraints, some images used in the campaign are compiled from multiple frames (Grunwell, 2007) (Figure 23). The end result of *The Grass Was Greener* pattern is simultaneously a little commercial, a little too perfect and therefore slightly uneasy, romanticised and bordering on tacky; the summer holiday immortalised. The pattern is devoid of people, yet evidence of habitation (back in 'the good old days') exists: a deck chair, chilly bin, BBQ, swing ball, beer bottles etc. sit abandoned.

The Grass Was Greener fabric has also been produced in multiple colourways to further communicate the nostalgic and romantic element and to broaden its audience appeal and extend the souvenir idea through multiples. The digitally printed silk, cotton drill and cotton knit, have been applied to T-shirts, bags and scarves, simultaneously referencing traditional souvenir products

and simple forms, and challenging their predominant use of isolated motifs (Figures 26, 29-32). Applied to the smaller surface area of these products, yet at the same scale as the wallpaper, the substantial cropping of the pattern's repeat further echoes the intended sense of distance between the traditional Kiwi summer holiday, and the viewer. It is a smaller, bite-size, portable representation of the good old days (C. Bell, 1996).

The sterling silver *Utopia* rings pull individual, simplified, recognised and traditionally 'celebrated' motifs from the surface pattern to create a series of interchangeable souvenirs (Figure 33). Wearers can mix and match the rings in a number of combinations to create their own nostalgic scenes reflecting their personal memories and experiences. The down-sizing of the simplified and silhouetted motifs could have belittled them, yet the hand-crafted, polished sterling silver ring format elevates them with the motifs sitting in place of the traditional precious stone. They are an uncontentious and decorative celebration of these icons and associated experiences, and the clean, green, accessible New Zealand summer holiday myth. Although these rings are not too dissimilar to the existing use of motifs in both New Zealand national identity design and the tourist industry, they are used here to provide a 'way in' for the audience to better understand the *Dystopia* pattern and rings (see below) and further articulate the distance between the myth and the increasingly removed reality.

The *Dystopia* rings involve combined and further 'removed' motifs from the surface pattern (Figure 34). Rather than wearing these rings layered on a



single finger like the *Utopia* series, these joined motifs are placed across three rings combined, creating a knuckle duster effect.⁵ The *Dystopia* knuckle dusters are aggressive pieces, hand-cut from a single piece of 2mm thick sterling silver plate. The format itself talks about forced distance, as it becomes further removed from conventional everyday rings, and therefore less accessible to a large number of viewers as a wearable jewellery piece. The joined motifs echo the removal and distance versus recognition explored in the surface pattern – providing sufficient recognisable elements to draw the viewer in, in search of others. The *Dystopia* rings intend to evoke a sense of aggression and defiance – creating a personal weapon of defence against changing times.

Unlike the polished *Utopia* series, the *Dystopia* rings are blackened – a process traditionally used to ‘antique’ jewellery – and the surface is then further distressed. Here it serves to remove the immediate connection to silver, and intends to further enhance the sense of distance between the rings and their experiences, and the average New Zealander wearing them.

⁵. The knuckle duster is a hand-to-hand combat weapon, involving multiple rings joined together to fit over the fingers and around the knuckles, creating a more concentrated delivery of force, and therefore more impact in a punch (*Brass Knuckles*, 2007) .

Figure 26 (opposite). The Grass Was Greener t-shirts, scarves and wallpaper.

Figures 27 and 28 (overleaf). The Grass Was Greener pattern in Moonlight and Sunset colourways (actual size).







Figure 29 (above). *The Grass Was Greener* bags, digital print on cotton drill.
 Figures 30 and 31 (following insets). *The Grass Was Greener*, digital print on cotton drill and silk.



Figure 32. *The Grass Was Greener* scarves, digital print on silk.





Figure 34. *Dystopia rings*, blackened sterling silver.



Scenario Two: things in the 'lower case'

The artefacts explored in the second scenario were selected after trawling through op-shops, second-hand and dump shops, and on the internet auction site TradeMe, observing the overlooked, mundane and everyday objects being discarded. Milk and cream bottles, milk crates and a wide range of 'domestic offerings' created in school woodwork classes (especially coffee cup trees) quickly became apparent examples of 'lower case' things, with their personal relevance and nostalgic resonance making them perfect candidates for this scenario.

Full Cream: glass milk and cream bottles

The *Full Cream* range is a simple twist on a now obsolete range of objects: the humble 600ml milk and 150ml and 300ml cream bottles (Figure 35). At the end of 2005 New Zealand's last glass milk-bottling plant closed and the remaining glass milk bottles were sent to a glass recycling station; the once common milk bottles are now superseded by tetra-paks and plastic milk bottles ("Shattering blow," 2005).

Milk and cream bottles have not fallen entirely from grace, but rather appear to have become quite a collectable piece of our history. It is not uncommon to find them in op-shops for nominal amounts, in second-hand or antique shops for slightly more, and at any given time multiple listings exist on the internet auction site TradeMe with starting bids ranging from \$1 for four 600ml

milk bottles in a crate, to \$125 for five 600ml milk bottles. In some cases, postage costs more than the purchase, and sellers often mis-judge their worth (\$125 for five milk bottles?) resulting in re-listing at a lowered price and so on. Te Papa and many regional museums hold examples in their collections (C. Ardern, personal communication, May 2, 2007; S. Brosnahan, personal communication, April 16, 2007; S. Gibson, personal communication, June 26, 2006; A. Moffat, personal communication, April 18, 2007; P. McKenzie, personal communication, April 13, 2007; P. Read, personal communication, April 24, 2007; G. Simms, personal communication, April 10, 2007; S. Snelling, personal communication, April 16, 2007). One museum notes 'with the recent demise of the home delivered glass milk bottle in Dunedin it was felt important that we retain an example of the latest style of glass bottle and the familiar wire crate that they were carried in' (P. Read, personal communication, April 24, 2007).

The *Full Cream* range explores changing etiquette and social rituals surrounding this domestic object. In many a household when I was growing up, and for previous generations, milk and cream bottles were considered too unsightly to leave the kitchen; milk and cream were poured into a jug first, especially when entertaining guests (Anonymous, personal communication, November 8, 2006). Nowadays, we think little of their disposable replacements making it out of the kitchen onto the table. Milk and cream bottles are associated with



many changing domestic and social rituals: guests for morning and afternoon teas; hot milk before bed; the luxury of cream on deserts; and family breakfasts where the full cream in our family (silver-topped bottles with an inch or two of cream on the top) was a case of 'first up, first in', so long as there was sufficient for Dad's Weet-bix. Nowadays many of these social rituals are replaced by ones less centred on the home or dinner table – sit down breakfasts are replaced by liquid breakfasts on the run and morning and afternoon teas become takeaway lattes or café get-togethers – a lifestyle reflected in the rise of food service outlets in Wellington alone.⁶ The full cream silver top bottle is no longer represented in its contemporary plastic or carton substitute.

The *Full Cream Beak* is a simple twist on this object – attempting to instill a new lease of life by anointing it with the luxury status that it, and these fading rituals, deserve. The cast sterling silver spout attaches to, without altering or interfering with, all sizes (150, 300 and 600ml) of the original metric bottles (Figure 36). The appropriation of the actual bottle recognizes and acknowledges that the 'borrowed' component cannot be improved on (Williams, 2004, p. 26). The sterling silver references the original silver foil tops of the full cream milk, and intends to evoke a sense of preciousness through its material alone. The beak nature of the spout has been likened to experiences of birds breaking through milk tops whilst on camping trips (Anonymous, personal communication, November 8, 2006). The spout addition also references the plastic pouring aids that became commercially available during the glass bottles' lifespan (Figure 35). The stainless steel latch mechanism is akin to that on domestic

jars, commonly used for storing dry goods in the kitchen.

Similar to Jurgen Bey's use of conceptual recycling in *Light Shade Shade*, the *Full Cream Beak* does not damage or destroy the original artefact, but rather uses its familiarity to attract and connect with the viewer. The simple addition of the *Full Cream Beak* intends to challenge the viewer's perception of the original bottle, associated rituals and contemporary plastic replacements, and elevate it to an exotic and new status, as a thing with 'attitude' (Attfield, 2000).

The cast glass *Etiquette Jug* series largely echoes the same sentiments – injecting the deserved respect back into these objects and associated social rituals (Figure 37). They rely largely on the conceptual recycling of the original artefact for their resonance, with the added spout and colour giving them a contemporary and unexpected twist. Some surface information and form distortion occurs between the original bottles and the finished jugs, and some inconsistencies across the series are evident, due to the hand-crafted nature of the glass casting process.

The *Etiquette Jugs* have been made in a limited range of colours (selected from the limited range of glass casting colours available in New Zealand): *trim milk*, both hinting at traces of milk in a translucent, frosty bottle and

⁶ The number of food outlets in Wellington has risen from 87 in the late 1950s to 1206 now (Johns, 2007).



referencing today's plastic substitutes; *rhubarb*, referencing the treat association – rhubarb crumble and cream; *blue lagoon*, with the appearance of enough milk or cream left for one cup of tea; and *opaque black*, the 'anti'-milk/cream bottle.



Empty Crate: the domestic wire milk crate

The *Empty Crate* range draws from the common, domestic plastic-coated wire-framed crate that was used to carry milk bottles to and from the letterbox or local shop during my childhood through to the recent demise of the glass bottle (Figure 38). They came in two, four, six and eight compartments, and were most commonly white. They seem to have suffered a fate worse than the milk and cream bottles; they have little function beyond their connection to the bottles and are largely overlooked by both sellers and collectors.⁷ They feature in fewer of the regional museum collections contacted, and Te Papa has not collected them to date (C. Arden, personal communication, May 2, 2007; S. Brosnahan, personal communication, April 16, 2007; S. Gibson, personal communication, June 26, 2006; A. Moffat, personal communication, April 18, 2007; P. McKenzie, personal communication, April 13, 2007; P. Read, personal communication, April 24, 2007; G. Simms, personal communication, April 10, 2007; S. Snelling, personal communication, April 16, 2007).

The *Empty Crate* range celebrates the minimal, no-fuss design and the awkward, gangly, architectural structure of the milk crate. It explores its single function and the curious play that exists between two- and three-dimensionality. It examines the absence: of solidity; of milk bottles; from its once daily routine; of its intended function; and its general absence from museum collections.

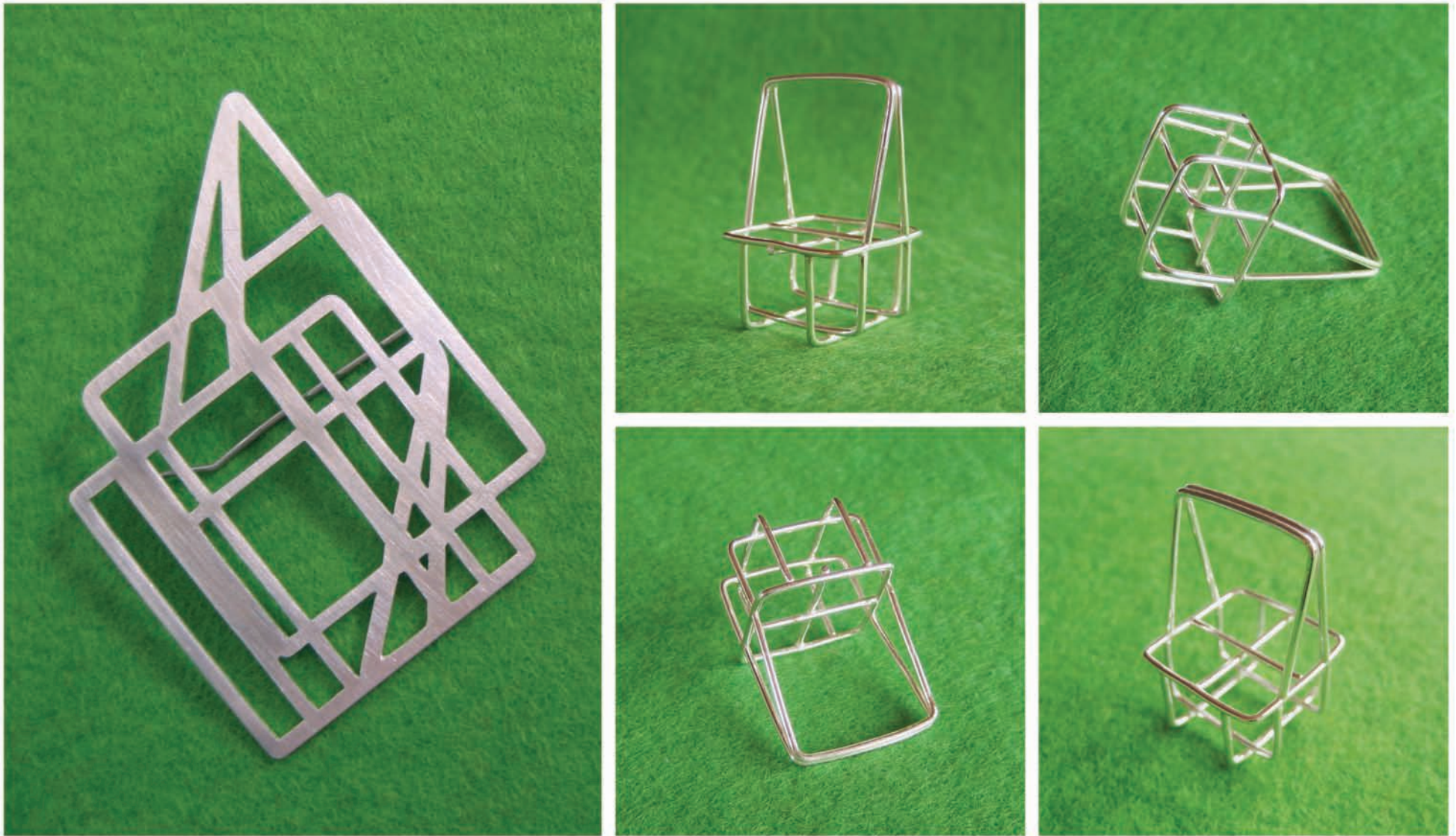
The *Empty Crate* surface pattern is an all-over repeat of the life-size shadow of a four-bottle milk crate, rotated in a structural, grid-like pattern (Figures

39-40). The removal of the crate altogether leaves a graveyard of distorted, discarded and ambiguous objects – in shape, function and future. Although flattened, the crates maintain their structure, and at certain angles appear quite three-dimensional. When applied as a screen print to fabric, the background is printed, creating the pattern itself through absence (Figure 43).

The colour palette for the *Empty Crate* range is intentionally nostalgic – muted hues of blue, green and beige reminiscent of the 1950s, combined with the stronger, yet slightly dirty, magenta and mustard. This palette also serves to complement the structured, graphic, and contemporary surface design (and the original predominantly white artefact), providing an accessible and slightly nostalgic route in for the viewer.

The *Empty Crate* sterling silver brooch and ring extend the ideas explored in the surface pattern into the portable, precious and personal format of jewellery (Figure 41). The most common examples of the crate are used, with the reduction in size and use of silver intending to add value to, and heighten the viewer's/wearer's awareness of, the original object. A comparison has been drawn with champagne bottle wire cork baskets – which quickly become functionless and disposable once separated from the bottle. Perhaps their

⁷ Domestic milk crates are still used to a much lesser extent in other situations such as housing paint etc. in school rooms and back sheds, and are apparently enjoying a resurgence on school sports fields for players' water bottles (T. Moss, personal communication, November 26, 2007).



one saving grace is the tiddly relative at social gatherings who turns them into (folk) art – chairs, figures, bikes etc. – to keep the children entertained. The brooch focuses on the play between the two- and three-dimensions of the crate, and its current disposable predicament. The absence explored through the *Empty Crate* range is captured in the ring by the absence of the traditional precious stone in the cage that is created by the crate's base when worn (Figure 41). One becomes aware of the *Empty Crate ring's* structure and bordering fragility – a simultaneously precious and disposable, portable souvenir of an obsolete domestic object.

As a child it was a chore to put the milk bottles out at the gate and to bring them in, and we always seemed to live down long driveways that amplified this task; although it was even worse to miss the delivery altogether. Carrying a milk crate, especially the six or eight bottle ones when full, was awkward as a child. It bumped against the knees painfully and required a certain technique to avoid this. The crate was a bit of a tease for a girl who loved handbags and dressing up – here was this carrying device that simply refused to be anything other than what it was – awkward and singularly functional. These days, that door-to-door service and convenience is a sadly-missed thing of the past, as is the milk bottle and milk crate.

The *Four Pints bag* pays homage to an almost obsolete item, which was an excellent way of carrying bottles (Figures 42, 44). This is explored through contradiction, whilst aiming to remain honest to the no-fuss, functional and

protective wire milk crate design. The bag takes the dimensions and quarterly divisions of the four-bottle crate and plays with the three-dimensional solid structure with an unexpected, collapsible, two-dimensional element. It takes the unitary function of the crate, and creates a versatile, multifunction object, releasing it from one specific use and removing any indication of its intended contents. It overcomes the awkward, chunky and hard to carry aspect – providing options for the user. The actual crate has been removed from the design, yet the bag when constructed, holds the memory of the crate in its shape. The shape and folding nature of the bag also reference disposable brown paper bags and the milk-bottle's tetra-pak replacement.

The application of the *Empty Crate* pattern hints at its inspiration, and references the discarded crate whilst aesthetically serving to break up the otherwise flat, solid surface. The surface pattern itself, as mentioned earlier, further echoes the absence concept: the background is printed, the pattern created through absence (Figure 43). The fabric is cotton drill – a functional, utilitarian, durable and no-fuss, honest cloth. Pieces of polypropylene are compartmentally sewn between two layers of fabric – reminiscent of quilting – to give the necessary solidity and rigidity to the surface. The folded bag is secured by two straps coming from the side seams at the base of the bag, which are threaded through corresponding fabric loops on the sides of the bag, and fastened with purely functional Velcro. When unfolded, the straps can be left to hang, or secured through the fabric loops – either way, this visible method of attachment is in keeping with the honesty of the original milk crate.



Figure 42. Four Pints bag, screen-printed cotton drill.
Figure 43 (following inset). Empty Crate, screen-printed cotton drill.



Figure 44. Four Pints bag, screen-printed cotton drill.



Dead Set: 'domestic offerings' from 1980s technicraft classes

The *Dead Set* wallpaper explores the changing times, ideals and ways of communicating 'craft' skills in school. 'Workshop craft', 'technicraft' or 'manual' classes of the 1970s and 1980s were replaced in the 1990s by 'technology'. This new curriculum brought a shift in focus from that of skills (experienced by me and earlier generations) to a focus on research, creative problem solving, risk-taking and teamwork across all areas of technology in society. According to the Ministry of Education's curriculum statement, technology education 'seeks to empower students to make informed choices in the use of technology and in their responses to technological change' (Ministry of Education, 1995, p.5).

The *Dead Set* wallpaper focuses on objects created in woodwork (as part of over-riding manual or technicraft skills – which included cooking, sewing and metalwork) over three consecutive years from age 11-13 in the mid 1980s. Although the *Technicraft Projects: Working Set* manual provided by the then Department of Education around this time provided over 100 possible projects that were 'intended to provide an idea for the student and teacher to develop' and that 'the range of practical work must not be limited by this publication', discussions with peers suggest the selection of products and adherence to the projects and their actual specifications was mostly favoured (Boag, [1972]). The products made (during my time, and my peers' and siblings') seemed to be 'domestic offerings' for the parents and the home, rather than objects directed at the students themselves, with common wooden examples including: coffee cup trees, trays, key ring holders, note houses (with hot poker inscription),

spatulas and wooden spoons, breadboards, paper towel and/or gladwrap and foil dispensers, spice racks etc. (L. Baldock, personal communication, August 23, 2006; C. Bath, personal communication, August 28, 2006; C. Burchell, personal communication, August 24, 2006; J. Caird, personal communication, August 24, 2006; S. Clover, personal communication, August 23, 2006; V. Crowe, personal communication, August 24, 2006; J. Dennison, personal communication, August 24, 2006; P. Freer, personal communication, August 8, 2006; T. Mackenzie, personal communication, August 24, 2006; J. Maguire, personal communication, August 24, 2006; . Marriott, personal communication, August 23, 2006; M. Packer, personal communication, August 27, 2006; P. Wellington, personal communication, August 23, 2006; L. Williams, personal communication, August 25, 2006) (Figure 45). These outputs seem to be more about gift-giving, and ensuring that the parents were aware of their children's school achievements, than inspiring the student or encouraging individual creativity.

Some parents felt a mixture of pride, and later, obligation to use and keep these often crude and awkward objects, regardless of their imposition on the domestic interior's aesthetic (Anonymous, personal communication, November 8, 2006; S. Halliday, personal communication, May 22, 2007; A. Packer, personal communication, August 23, 2006). Many of these objects have been kept well past their use, tucked away somewhere, their owners unable to part with them, possibly out of guilt, a sense of duty or preservation, attachment and/or nostalgia (Anonymous, personal communication, November 8, 2006; S. Halliday, personal communication, May 22, 2007; A. Packer, personal communication, August 23,

2006). My own examples were borrowed from my mother under the strict proviso that they were returned, unharmed, at the end of this project (Figure 45).

The objects are common at op-shops, the coffee cup trees in particular – discarded and awkward (Figure 45). These domestic offerings fall into Attfield's discussion of 'wild things' – starting off exotic, new, the other (and handmade too), then fading into the daily routine, the everyday, the mundane. Regional museums have a few examples in their collections – the most common woodwork example being the bed tray – a wooden tray with folding legs, but Te Papa has not collected any examples to date (S. Gibson, personal communication, August 23, 2006; A. Moffat, personal communication, April 18, 2007; P. Read, personal communication, April 24, 2007).

The *Dead Set wallpaper* explores the value once placed on these skills. The pattern is created from a collection of the most common objects produced in woodwork at this time and is arranged as though a mother's collection of her children's handmade domestic offerings once hung on the wall – removed from their mundane and everyday use and giving permanence to her relationships with and providing connections to her now-grown offspring (Figure 46-47). The *Dead Set* design speaks of the personal and ahistorical collecting by women of items representing kinship and having intrinsic value. The pattern suggests a dispersed or discarded collection (not too dissimilar from that of plates, photographs and trophies) hung for so long, that the remainder of the wallpaper has faded and the absence of these objects (and

these skills) has created a permanent, visible memory of their existence – a ghostly shadow of their former glory.

The *Dead Set* pattern stretches vertically just over a metre, sitting at collection height, rather than as an all-over pattern (Figures 46-47). Although life size, the objects look strangely larger-than-life in their silhouetted form. The repeat alludes not only to the sheer quantity, but also the generic nature of the objects produced – all almost exactly to specifications in the Education Department's manual.

The pattern is digitally printed onto discarded, previously unused wallpaper purchased for nominal amounts at op-shops, the dump shop and on the internet auction site TradeMe (Figures 46-48). The existing wallpaper patterns chosen reflect my memories of common domestic wallpaper at this time, and it is anticipated therefore that they will also contain nostalgic references for others – Dutch designer Hella Jongerius talks about the patterns in our life lingering in our memory in a way that form does not (Ramakers, 2004). In a similar way to Gijs Bakker's *Peepshow Wallpaper*⁸ and Front's *Rat Wallpaper*,⁹

8. Gijs Bakker's *Peepshow Wallpaper* extends the life of existing wallpaper, by placing plain paper with cut out circles directly on top, creating a new pattern that both allows and relies on the conceptual recycling of the existing wallpaper for its past memories and nostalgia and new random pattern.

9. Swedish design group Front's *Rat Wallpaper* is developed by placing rolls of plain wallpaper in cages of rats, the gnawing of which produces a random pattern, that when applied over existing wallpaper, creates a new look – evoking nostalgia through conceptual recycling.

the conceptual and physical recycling of the wallpaper, by the addition of the print, gives it a new lease of life – elevating it, and these domestic offerings to the exotic, the new – instilling it with ‘attitude’ and creating a customisable souvenir in the process.



Figure 46. Dead Set wallpaper.

Conclusion

Wish you were here: exhibition and responses

Context and design

A contemporary 'high-end' souvenir shop context was chosen for the exhibition, placing the work within a commercial setting to support and extend the ideas being explored in the project, to test the scenarios on a wider public audience, and to explore whether the souvenir can be a substitute for the actual experience.

An appropriate empty retail space in central Wellington was rented for a month – convincing in nature and location, and in good company next to two respectable dealer galleries. The wallpaper was used as a backdrop for each range, with the two scenarios occupying opposing walls (Figures 49, 53, 54). Three 1940s retail counters were used to display the work and extend the commercial context in an appropriately nostalgic, stylish and sophisticated manner (Figures 49-50). The counters were set out from the walls, facing into the space – suggestive of a public/staff divide, whilst still allowing thoroughfare. The contents of the display counters were framed by their corresponding wallpaper, with colourways of textile products hanging from the wall, encouraging viewer engagement and further extending the commercial premise. A white plinth was employed to elevate the *Flock* rug and stool to ensure they were viewed as part of the work (Figures 49, 51, 53).

The exhibition title, *Wish you were here*, was intentionally borrowed from old postcards for its nostalgic resonance – speaking of holidays and time out from the ordinary, distance and souvenirs. Exhibition text included an overview of the project, communicating the overriding ideas behind the body of work. Swing tags placed next to or attached to each souvenir were used to carry basic individual range and souvenir information, whilst also extending the retail context.

The postcard-style flier for the exhibition was embossed with the *Aerial Antics* pattern; the opening invitation version was mailed as a postcard to guests as an enticing, tactile and personal (pre-) souvenir of the exhibition (Figure 52). The connection between the flier and the *Lasting Impression* wallpaper was made immediately upon arrival by the majority of exhibition visitors.





Figure 50. *Wish you were here* exhibition.





Figure 52. Wish you were here exhibition.



Responses

Visitors to the exhibition genuinely thought it was a retail store, and were visibly disappointed when they could not purchase the products. Even those who knew it was an exhibition were initially somewhat thrown.

Response to the work at the exhibition was gauged through informal observation and in some cases, discussions/reminiscing with viewers – of which notes were made. Visitors were quick to connect with the artefacts and experiences being explored, the work clearly resonating with them in both content and aesthetic, prompting vocal reminiscing. Viewers required no encouragement to share their stories, memories and experiences, either with one another, or with me. There was an excitement and sense of validation in doing so, when they realised their stories were part of a larger collective of experiences.

Numerous viewers commented on the familiarity of the work, yet its difference to what they had seen before or what was already readily available as products. 'Familiar, yet unexpected. And so different from other takes on Kiwiana – classy and sophisticated, and not a buzzy bee in sight!' (Anonymous, personal communication, November 3, 2007). Viewers also commented on a sense of comfort – 'it's like being at home!' and 'I feel like I'm in a bach', indicating they felt included, rather than excluded, in the work (Anonymous, personal communication, November 2, 2007).

Common responses to individual ranges and souvenirs included comments along the lines of: 'That makes me think of summers spent at the beach'; 'It's all there! Right down to the swing ball. Let's bring swing ball back this summer!'; 'We used to have pet lambs, they were called Lamborgini and The Lambinator'; 'I remember full cream – we had to leave that for mum and dad, then we got the rest.'; 'In the olden days, milk used to come in bottles like this' (mother to young child); 'Remember when we used to put about an inch of water in the milk bottles at the gate so when the milk boy emptied the tokens into his pocket he wet himself...' (brothers to one another); 'We used to have a six bottle crate and they were so difficult to carry as a child, banging against your legs.'; 'I made a key holder, spatula and spice rack.'; 'My mum still has my bird.'; 'I still have my daughter's coffee cup tree, somewhere'; 'Reminds me of the shadow-board in my dad's workshop.'; 'Oh my God, I had this wallpaper in my room, and my sister had this one!'; 'We still get cheeky fantails visiting, even up in Brooklyn.' It was clear that my research aims had been realised and the work was successful in answering my central questions.

Viewer response to the exhibition demonstrated that I achieved my goal of conceptual recycling from my own biography, in order to connect with viewers through personal recognition located within their own biography, and that the two chosen scenarios are relevant and fertile ground to explore. The 'classic' motif ranges proved that these images and experiences are still relevant and



still resonate with New Zealanders – their different usage and application was acknowledged and appreciated by viewers, with many taking a keen interest in the processes involved in the objects' production. The things in the 'lower case' ranges proved that there is scope for the conceptual recycling of overlooked, domestic, everyday objects in the creation of new souvenirs for New Zealanders. A level of 'knowingness' can be counted on, allowing both the ideas and subsequent souvenirs to be more obscure: for example the majority of viewers were quick to pick up on the irony of the *Flock* pattern and application.

As anticipated, the work functioned on multiple levels. Firstly, on an aesthetic level to those outside my primary target audience (the *Wish you were here* sandwich board enticed in several random groups of overseas tourists) and multiple jewellery pieces have been picked up on the internet by international 'trend-hunting' and zine sites, further supporting this (*Empty crate*, 2007; *Glimpse*, 2007; *A new ring*, 2007; *Stackable rings*, 2007; *Stackable rings*, 2007; *Utopia & Dystopia*, 2007). Secondly, the work also connected on a deeper, 'knowing' level with locals, proving that my personal experiences are indeed part of a larger collective story, and can be used to create resonating, identity-based design for other New Zealanders.

Is the souvenir a substitute for the experience? Souvenir shopping seems to rank as an activity on its own, and in some cases appears to be of as much importance as the actual experience (Robert F Kelly as cited in Belk, 1995;

Colmar Brunton, 2003). Whether or not the souvenir can be a substitute for the experience, within this project, I have created a range of souvenirs of experiences and artefacts from my past, potentially giving the viewer the chance to acquire souvenirs of their own similar past experiences, possibly as a form of self-completion (Belk, 1995). These souvenirs however, have also transcended the need to have experienced the original inspiration, standing as products in their own right, and therefore outside of the souvenir context.

The successful public dissemination of the project proved that it is possible to craft nostalgic resonance through conceptual recycling, and that this approach could be extended to both a wider range of original artefacts and experiences, and a wider range of souvenir products in the future.

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Figure 3. from top left: 1-4. & 6-12. www.sweet-as.co.nz; 5. www.fourfontaine.co.nz; 13. www.nomd.co.nz; 14. www.madefromnewzealand.com.

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Figure 4. from top left: 1-2. www.bronz.co.nz; 3-11. www.mrvintage.co.nz; 12-15. www.littlebrother.co.nz.

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Figure 35. top left (full cream silver foil lid) Hawke's Bay Museum & Art Gallery, Napier, New Zealand.