ABSTRACT

Research into the presentation of water on the table in the form of etched, formed and raised objects, which originate from fish shapes, fish skin and pandanus fibre. The work explores this concern through a series of vessels in anodised aluminium and a video.

A study taking the form of an exhibition of hollow ware exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from February 26 to March 4, 1999 which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice and other Units, together with the Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.
"The belief is that, if the ghost can abstain for three days from eating either the flesh of this fish or the fruit of Nakaa's tree, and from drinking the water from the well, he'll be free to return to his body in the land of the living."

(Grimble, A. (ed.); The Migrations of a Papuan People, p. 52)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop, in particular, Ragnar Hansen and Roger Hutchinson for their professional and personal support.

Gilbert Riedelbauch and John Reid for their Fieldscreen project and endless technical support and friendship.

Robin White and Mike Fudakowski for their amazing hospitality, care, friendship and invaluable help, without which my research in the field wouldn't have succeeded.

Again special thanks to Robin Murden at the ADFA for still being a magician in highly professional video production within a ridiculous timeframe and for his patience, humor and friendship.

Malcolm Pettigrove for professional advice, friendship and great psychological support in very low times.

John Mills for invaluable support in cases of "computer-emergency".

The staff of the Printmaking Workshop for another year of support and interest.

Barbara McConchie, without whom the 18m long etching wouldn't have ever been realised.

Joy and John Tonkin for their professional work, spirit and friendship.

The ANU Graduate School, in particular, John Hooper for additional financial and personal support.

"Fink & Co" for the anodising.

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Antje Sonntag at the Australian Museum in Sydney for her time, interest and help.

The National Gallery of Australia, in particular, Gyongyi for access to their collections in storage and excellent help.

Art on the Move for providing photographic documentation of the exhibition Women's Work, Land and Spirit.

Mr. William Franken at the Consulate of the Republic of Kiribati for my last-minute- visa to Tarawa, Kiribati.

The Canberra School of Art Gallery and the staff of the Chifley Library for the set-up of their Imaging Lab, in particular Ruth Booth for her support.

Harry and Honour Maude for lovely and highly informative afternoons in preparation for my research in Kiribati.

My friends for their great help, humor and companionship, in particular, James for his help with odds and ends in the workshop, Jeje for his photographs and Marcus for being a fantastic printing assistant.

Thanks to the people of Kiribati.

My parents for their love and faith in me and their financial support, without which this second year of studies wouldn't have been possible.

And last but not least my husband Neil for his love, help and patience.
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INTRODUCTION

This is the second volume of my report, which aims to give the reader an insight into the context, the applied working methods and the background of my work.

I started my studies at the Canberra School of Art as a candidate for the Graduate Diploma of Art in March 1996. My main interest was to aim for a festive presentation of water as a special drink on the table. I was of the opinion that we had forgotten its role in our eating culture to some extent. The fluidity of water and my fascination for stingrays strongly influenced the shapes of my drinking vessels designed to provide water.

Yet, during the course of my studies it became apparent that the technical aspects of my project involved extensive experiments in the field of computer design to create patterns, in printmaking to transfer these to metal and above all in techniques of etching for the final realisation of the design. All these fields were entirely new for me.

However, a research into the fish and water does not only require thorough consideration of the material and the techniques but perhaps even more the awareness of their distinct symbolism throughout history. Both, fish and water have always been universal symbols for life and fertility. Their combination in one piece of work, the vessel, creates a strong link to ceremonial items, chalices.

The nature of my work with its symbolic background and my growing interest in the combination of fibre and metal revealed surprisingly strong links to the marine culture and mythology of the Republic of Kiribati in the Pacific.

I couldn’t ignore these issues, although each taken for itself represented a research undertaking of its own.
The development of my project showed that the theoretical part of the entire work and the related technical fields, such as printmaking were of unexpectedly great importance.

I realised that the research component had to be divided in two parts. The technical paper on etching on one hand and the philosophic-historical part on the other.

I finally concluded that I needed to expand the research in the fields mentioned above.

In March 1997 I changed my Graduate Diploma course into a Master of Arts by Coursework in order to do the work justice.

This is why the first volume of my report (which was originally written as an compendium of my Graduate Diploma work) largely focuses on a detailed description of the working methods.

This years second volume intends to concentrate on a more detailed description of the context my work is bound into.

I will regularly refer to Volume 1 in my text, in particular in the chapter on the working methods. I have applied the same concepts in the technical approaches to my work, although the scale and thus skills involved in my working methods have developed significantly. Therefore the aim of the project itself has remained to be A special presentation of water on the table, with a major research into the links of my work with the culture of the I-Kiribati.

In my workshop I have developed a large centerpiece for the table that is designed to hold the water. It mirrors the visual impact that my fieldwork in Kiribati had on me.

Both volumes of my report include a video, which adds information about the work and its background due to its great visual impact on
the viewer.
With the making of the first video I focused on the origins and the technical development of my metal work: Six drinking vessels in three different metals.

This years video takes the viewer to the Republic of Kiribati, where I undertook my fieldwork.
I was luckily able to use the school’s new facilities, a digital video camera and a labtop computer. That way I was provided with some distance supervision and the technical facilities to shoot my material in the Pacific.
I became the first Fieldscreen user at the Australian National University (ANU), which I will explain more detailed later on.
My 2 year project was focused on the creation of a series of metal vessels for a festive presentation of water as a precious drink on the table. I wanted to enhance the awareness of water as a life-giving and spiritual source with limited resources.

WATER

Water’s magical, life-giving properties used to provoke awe and respect, giving it a natural, important place in all the world’s major religions. Springs and rivers, as well as rain, were regarded as gift from the gods and worshipped like deities. As water was assumed to have the power to heal, to revitalise and even to effect transformation, it was recorded great respect. Images of paradise in cultures and religions across the globe are replete with references to water. Pure springs and swiftly flowing rivers were the most likely to have purifying powers attributed to them and to be considered sacred. In today’s industrialised world this spiritual appreciation of water may now seem alien, but we are by no means immune to its inexplicable, mysterious attractions. Nobody needs an excuse to stand or sit gazing at a lake or watching a river flow by. Even just splashing one’s face with water refreshes in a way that nothing else can imitate. There is only very few things in the world that stimulate all of our senses; water arouses eyes and ears, it excites the nose and the mouth,
animates the skin and effects your equilibrium.
Yet, the modern civilisation made water to H2O and children, who
grow up in cities have hardly any chance to get in touch with real wa-
ter. What they know, is H2O - water isn't part of their experience. It
has become a product of our modern times, a limited resource, which
needs technical care and treatment.
The age of treated drinking water has dawned. But no matter, how
carefully water is purified by technical means, it is never as pure as
unpolluted natural water. Even the most advanced purification meth-
ods are not 100% effective.
Many of the techniques used by so-called 'primitive' peoples,
though, are highly sophisticated and based on experience and wisdom
gathered over hundreds, even thousands of years.
As a result of recent studies researches now believe that water in its
liquid state can retain and even pass on certain properties regardless
of its chemical make-up. When, for example, a series of water dro-
plets hit the surface of a sample of water from a mountain stream,
quite different flow patterns are created from those made by an ident-
tical series of droplets falling into a sample of tap water! Although
chemically identical, the samples appearing to retain some 'memory'
of their different histories... It now is likely, too, that the curative ef-
effect of mineral springs cannot be put down exclusively to the pres-
ence of dissolved salts.
Some water engineers are now beginning to ask whether the techno-
logical strategies of Western water management, which have so far
gone unchallenged, really present such perfect solutions. Larger and
larger amounts of high-quality drinking water are turned straight into
waste water. For many areas of Switzerland, Denmark, Germany and
France, pumping groundwater from deep underground is now the
only way of getting clean water.
We need a new awareness for our de-mystified world and lives. The water goddess Undine\(^1\) leaves. Don't let her go.

**LINKS TO KIRIBATI**

The shape of the first serious of drinking cups derived from the image of stingrays. I was attracted by their effortless and elegant movements, which are reminiscent of flying. Furthermore I found the combination of metal with fibre extremely fascinating. The qualities of these very contradictory materials and their tactile aspects create an exciting tension. Fish and Water have at all times been universal symbols for life and female fertility (see also Volume 1). Their strong symbolism had to be put in context with a particular fibre that would carry the meaning of transition and death.

My first interest in the fibre pandanus stemmed from its visual qualities. Being made from the leaves of the pandanus palm, it offered what I was looking for: a tactile unevenness with a smooth and shiny surface.

By gathering information about the fibre I learned that in one of the oral traditions of the people of Kiribati the first pandanus tree grew out of the remains of their ancestral creator Nei Tituabine, who is a stingray. The fibre is predominantly used to weave sleeping mats, which eventually become the shrouds of their owners upon their death. Wrapped into a pandanus sleeping mat they are prepared for their journey back to their ancestral land.
I couldn’t dismiss these obvious links of my work to the marine culture of the Republic of Kiribati in the Pacific:
The stingray as a female ancestral creator,
the extreme value of fresh water in the middle of a never-ending sea
and last but not least
the woven pandanus mats as a symbol for death and transition.

I finished the first year of this project with 6 drinking cups with etched fish scale patterns and an installation of a seventh cup being suspended from the ceiling above a bed of pandanus. My intention was to combine the effortless flight of the stingray with the special presentation of water in a drinking vessel.
The bed of pandanus underneath created a visual and tactile tension and put the life-giving and spiritual water in context with the earthy and transient fibre that accompanies people back the land of their ancestors.

I felt the need to explore the maritime culture of the I-Kiribati more in depth in order to document present water resources and to examine motifs found in current pandanus fibre weaving’s.
I set out to undertake a fieldwork study in Micronesia, Republic of Kiribati (former Gilbert Islands), Tarawa, in June 1998 - taking advantage of the new FieldScreen facilities of the Canberra School of Art in the ANU Institute of the Arts. I wanted to explore the use of digital audio-visual equipment for distance supervision in an international setting and became the first student at the ANU to use the resources of FieldScreen.
I recorded and researched woven motifs which became the main source for the development of my new etched patterns.
The inspiration for the metal work this year was greatly enhanced by ideas arising from my fieldwork. The vessels are originally cut out of sheet metal in various shapes of flat fish. The external elements carry patterns that derive from woven mats and loose pandanus fibre and dive into each of the vessels. The tactile information of the two materials remains visible and that way fibre and metal are blended together.

Yet another source for my research into the contemporary use of the pandanus fibre became the exhibition *Women's Work, Land and Spirit*, which displayed objects made from pandanus alongside other Pacific works in an international setting. In my essay *Works of Land and Spirit* I review the exhibition and talk about the challenge of exhibiting indigenous work in a Western gallery context. I also discuss the problematic of categorising art and craft in Western frameworks by comparing this exhibition with *Fluent*. Looking into both exhibitions enriched the setting my own work is placed in -

*a crosscultural interpretation of environmental issues through visual art.*
WORKS OF LAND AND SPIRIT
Critical and theoretical frameworks to Women’s Work, Land and Spirit

I listen and hear those words a hundred years away
That is my Grandmother’s Mother’s Country
it seeps down through blood and memory and soaks
into the ground

The exhibition Women’s Work, Land and Spirit was originally curated to be put on view in Beijing during the United Nations Forth World Conference on Women in 1995. It represents craft works by indigenous women from Australia, Torres Strait and seven Pacific Island Countries (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu Kiribati, Tuvalu, Western Samoa and Tonga). In its particular international and political context it sets out to highlight the cultural diversity and the socio-political significance of indigenous women’s craft practices.

Having returned to Australia, the exhibition is presently touring this country. Although its travels through time and places cannot but slightly change and shift its issues - with the specific political background from 1995 starting to form a quality of a rather historical nature - it nonetheless proves potential to gain another, new importance in this different political setting of today.
The opening of Women’s Work, Land and Spirit in Sydney on a pleasantly mild evening of the last day of September 1998 is set in the upstairs gallery space of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative.

The gallery has only just moved from Redfern to its new location in Annandale. The entrance leads into a long, fairly narrow space that is unfortunate in its limitation for display. By looking through the glass front it is hard to dismiss the reminiscence of a souvenir shop with carved and painted artefacts of Australia’s indigenous culture sitting behind the window.

There is no sign or poster to point out that the gallery is about to open a highly significant and stunning exhibition of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific works which had been touring overseas. I feel slightly confused.

Yet, the activities inside speak of excitement and happiness. There is an overwhelming sense of community spirits. The atmosphere inside is inviting, absorbing and fascinating which renders the awkwardness of the interior invisible.

A steep staircase leads into the midst of the upstairs gallery where the space stretches equally to both sides. The exhibition absorbs the visitor without warning. Directly in front and as a funnel or, metaphorically, a passage into the display appears one of Yvonne Koolmatrie’s coiled eel traps. At first sight its circular opening acts like a window for the visitor, who climbs upstairs. With reaching the top of the stairs and gaining a different angle to the object, it fully reveals its elegant and fluent appearance.

On either side along the walls and, were possible, on plinths in the middle of the narrow room unfolds the great diversity of artworks by indigenous women from Australia, Torres Strait and seven Pacific is-
land countries. The materials range from various fibres and bark to earth and clay, wood, textiles, feathers, hair, seeds and shells. One section of the wall displays intricately woven pandanus mats from Vanuatu which feature fine patterns and further along are beautifully designed paintings on silk from Australia.

Woven and coiled containers that explore new forms and meanings - like a pandanus woven briefcase from Kiribati - speak of the skilful application of knowledge: the contemporary form of the briefcase powerfully incorporates the traditional pattern. Other containers are made from clay, which is a non-traditional material that has nevertheless gained great significance in the expression of identity and placement. Women’s Work, Land and Spirit also highlights jewellery made from seeds and shells, beautifully carved eggs and shells, rag dolls, feathered fans, hats, placemats and a seemingly endless variety of other artefacts.

The opening speech was moving and captured the nature of intimate-ness and spirituality of the displayed works. Kerry Thoomey spoke very personal about the significance of a particular artwork to herself and to the Aboriginal artist, who was a relative (she is not named here in respect for her very recent death). In doing so, she encompassed the great significance of the whole display in respect of social and political contexts and symbolically highlighted the spirits of each single work.

The art of indigenous cultures has progressively gained prominence and specific significance within the Western art market, which is causing intense debates. Interpretation and display of the artworks
present the curators with an ongoing challenge, from which struggle is never far removed. Here it is vital to look into the exhibition’s and the gallery’s historical background and the central curatorial premises. Questions arise around theoretical frameworks, such as the following that were recently brought forward by Sylvia Kleinert:
Should indigenous art be treated as a distinctive category or should it be incorporated within the wider frame of Australian art?
Why have indigenous women recently emerged as the first rank of curators?
Is there a gender debate in Aboriginal art?
Do we position craft as a distinctive entity or do we acknowledge how craft categories have emerged historically in and through the construction of the art object?

This paper attempts to develop a critical debate around those issues. However, at this point I like to make the reader aware, that - being a “maker” myself and not trained in critical writing -, this attempt will naturally display its limitations.
I strongly agree with Sue Rowley, who wrote in her essay “Crafts And Critical Practice”:
Further, critical writing is itself a craft. Writers, more so than visual artists, have a very keen respect for the craft of writing, and this sense of craft should inform our writing. I prefer to read writing that conveys the same sense of commitment to its craft as is so widely valued in the crafts. It seems to me to be a contradiction in terms to read craft criticism that implicitly refuses the pleasure of the craft of writing.²
Nevertheless, within my limited expertise, I will try to extend and further explain the points of view that I have applied in my first exhibition review “EMIC and ETIC in Fluent and Women’s Work, Land and Spirit by incorporating the theoretical frameworks mentioned above.
Whilst in the former review I chose to focus on the controversial art/craft debate by using the emic/etic approach discussed by Rex Butler³ as an introduction, it here seems to be essential to start with an outline of the historical significance of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in order to frame and maybe clarify the emic/etic connections that I see in the controversial and somewhat tiresome debate around art and craft.

Perhaps the most exciting initiative to develop during the 1980’s was the formation of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative. Officially formed in 1987, its genesis lay some years earlier in an informal coalition of artists working in and around the Sydney region. A seemingly eclectic group of young Aboriginal people, they were nevertheless united in the political struggle; as both Aboriginal and artists.⁴

The impetus behind the founding of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative was the shared cultural heritage of the ten indigenous artists, their determination for its recognition and their dissatisfaction with the existing Sydney gallery system. They were driven by the dedication to create and exhibit their work on their own terms. Boomalli was originally envisaged as collective studio facilities with a mutually supportive and nurturing environment. However, due to the great success of the early exhibitions and its vastly extending reputation, Boomalli soon grew into an organisation that provided indigenous people with the opportunity to present their art, culture and politics in order to re-write Australia’s history, which was greatly significant in 1988, the two hundredth anniversary of colonising Australia. Still, its significance in today’s political environment 10 years later can’t be overestimated, acting as a predominant force behind the indigenous art movement. Boomalli has grown into an organisation with international standard and worldwide recognition. It was the first urban based arts organisa-
tion to be designated an official arts and craft centre and has become a role model and training centre (in arts administration) for indigenous people. With its purpose of furthering and promoting indigenous culture, it "has been the springboard for a significant number of indigenous artists now recognised as major contributors to the contemporary indigenous art scene flourishing within Australia today." Yet, the funding is undeniably an ongoing struggle, mirroring the present-day politics and policies of our government. Above all, it is only about 8 (!) years ago that the contemporary status of indigenous art has widely been recognised. Prior to that it was seen as 'low art' or just valued for ethnographic records.

Bearing in mind that this is very recent Australian history, the significance of Women's Work, Land and Spirit showing in Boomalli becomes more recognisable; inasmuch as calling for the awareness of the economic, social, political and spiritual aspects of the lives of the artists and their vital role in the cultural maintenance and development of our society, it cannot but also provoke the debate about art and craft practices and gender issues.

The title itself emphasizes that all works on display are exclusively produced by women. The catalogue's introduction by the Aboriginal curator Michelle Broun also focuses on the women's vital role in the cultural maintenance and development of the society. But does the gender issue that is understood as a major one in Western societies, apply in the same way to Indigenous cultures? There are certainly specific activities like weaving, coiling, jewellery making etc. that are dedicated to women and understood as women's practices and expertise. Nevertheless, men are often involved in the
earlier stages of the making, especially in the collecting and preparation of some of the materials. For instance, in order to weave the darker patterns in the I-Kiribati mats (or briefcases etc.), the older, brown pandanus leaves need to be collected from the fully grown tree - men are generally highly skilled climbers - and beaten to be softened; these are processes that women are certainly completely capable of; still, those activities are much less effort for men and therefore quite often left up to them. For the weaving itself, though, it is vital that those processes have been undertaken and completed with the skills and care needed, in order to produce a successful piece of work. A better example still are the bark paintings, painted tapa cloths or silks:

Painting in general was neither entirely men's nor exclusively women's business, but performed by both genders. Only the encouragement and influences from early missionaries established such a division in order to economically manufacture and sell objects based on "traditional" Aboriginal skills for the Western market. Thus, the gender issues in Indigenous cultures don't follow the footsteps of Western societies' history. Indigenous women have always had their very own and exclusive ceremonies, knowledge and rituals that didn't allow for a dominance pattern to settle in. However, in Western societies the awareness and appreciation of the importance of women as social and ceremonial agents in Aboriginal society has also grown dramatically. With their selection of works the curators Michelle Broun and Barbara Rogers succeed to response to the gender debate with such an overwhelming diversity of artefacts - whether painted, woven, carved or created in other ways - that the viewer is left with no doubt about the women's cultural and economic impact.
And yet, being originally curated for the United Nations Forth World Conference on Women, Women’s Work, Land and Spirits is a double-sided sword, in so far as it aims on addressing women’s issues worldwide by highlighting the works of these very specific cultural backgrounds as contemporary craft practices.

The exhibition’s political significance in the context of a conference that develops new policies regarding equal economic rights to health, education, childcare and sexuality issues is immense. Held every ten years only, it attracts thousands of visitors and is the largest international gathering of women held to date in the world.

Apart from the catalogue as the main information source to the exhibition, an additional information sheet explains the importance of craft practices not only for the women’s status, identity and self-determination, but also for their communities heritage and cultural strength.

Crafts reflect upon the human condition so that ‘women and their work continue to secure the fabric of societies knowledge about themselves and their history’.

Indigenous cultural practices within the Pacific region have long been understood and viewed exclusively for their ethnographic values from Western societies. They have been (and still are) seen as ‘folk-art’ and ‘low art’, not being accredited contemporariness. These are the very same connotations that unfortunately are strongly linked with the term craft as much as with women’s practices in general and Indigenous art in particular.

It was those judgements, prejudices and limited Western viewpoints
that the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative set out to fight against.

Again, the terms art/craft have grown out of and been developed within Western language alone and have to be understood as such⁹. *Women’s Work, Land and Spirit*, being curated for a worldwide audience and thus including the Indigenous as much as the Western/Non-indigenous audience, cannot but provoke the controversial art/craft debate with all its implications.

This is not to say that Michelle Broun - being the Aboriginal female curator of this highly significant show - adopted her distinctive approach without the very conscious decision to highlight the work’s relevance for and within the context of the conference that way. Undoubtedly so. Yet, at this point it seems to be appropriate to incorporate, extend and further explain the points of view that I have applied in my first exhibition review “EMIC and ETIC in *Fluent* and *Women’s Work, Land and Spirit*”.

By comparing the two contemporary exhibitions *Fluent* and *Women’s Work, Land and Spirit* I am inevitably invited to engage in the controversial debate around the terms art and craft, as this is the way the two different catalogues introduce the reader to the works on display.

Both exhibitions are curated by Aboriginal women (*Fluent* by Hetti Perkins and Brenda Croft, a former founding member of Boomalli) and both highlight Indigenous women’s works in different international frameworks. Having returned to Australia, they are presently touring this country. *Fluent* with its gala opening at the 47th Venice Biennale in 1997 rep-
resented Australia with recent works by three women artists of different Aboriginal backgrounds: Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Yvonne Koolmatrie and Judy Watson. Naturally, the event of the Venice Biennale, the oldest international art fair, creates a completely different context compared to *Women's Work, Land and Spirit* coinciding with the conference.

Whilst the latter focuses on the issues mentioned above, the former - in its particular international and political context in a euro-central environment - aims on representing a specific national identity. Having chosen three Indigenous women for the country's representation, results in a very strong statement as to the contemporariness of the works.

Above all, the Venice Biennale sets out latest art movements and developments worldwide.

Thus the authors Michael Lynch and Edmund Capon write in the two forewords of *Fluent* 's exhibition catalogue: “I am proud to present such an important exhibition of Australian contemporary art”\(^{10}\) and “It is timely that Aboriginal women should be represented at the Venice Biennale, acknowledging their significant contribution to indigenous art of Australia”\(^{13}\).

In the following essay, named "Fluent", Hetti Perkins introduces the three Aboriginal artists and interprets various possible associations with the title and the artist’s forms of expression:

The currents that flow between the works, the fluidity and fluency in the individual works themselves and their visual affiliation with water.

The introduction to *Women's Work, Land and Spirit* on the other hand highlights - as discussed - the diversity and importance of craft practices for the many-sided indigenous identities.
The catalogue itself is divided into five chapters according to the materials that were viable for the production and creativity and concludes with an essay, that focuses on a broader context by reviewing a few selected objects. It closes with the assertion that "Crafts offer us another way of reflecting upon ourselves and our human condition..."\(^1\)

The overall concentration on materials, stating the close relationship to the land, is mirrored in the quote that I have chosen as an introduction to the topic on the first page:

I listen and hear those words a hundred years away
That is my Grandmother's Mother's Country
it seeps down through blood and memory and soaks
into the ground.

Yet again, this recital seems to be truthfully for the three artists in *Fluent* just the same. Their work, too, 'continues to secure the fabric of societies knowledge about themselves and their histories' (see above) - a statement from the information sheet of *Women's Work, Land and Spirit* as an attempt to define craft.

The search for answers in the art/craft debate is manifested in the many definitions that attempt to draw the (fine) line: craft as being more 'object'-related; craft as the 'traditional' knowledge, handed down from generation to generation; craft as in 'folk'-art etc.

Yvonne Koolmatrie's eel traps, that are present in both exhibitions, show most convincingly how an "art"-work can exist in different environments, being seen through different eyes and yet, being allowed to maintain its floating freedom of being both at ones: an sculptural art object and a functional, spiritual item.

In *Fluent* her eel traps "function" as 'a channel between the works of
Kngwarreye and Watson, expressing their convergence\textsuperscript{1,3}. Yet, being hung from the ceiling in the second room of the Drill Hall Gallery\textsuperscript{1,4}, surrounded by paintings on the wall, it displayed both, its formal-sculptural qualities and its excellence in craftsmanship, spirituality and functionality equally strong - almost due to and because of its "dis-/re-placement" into the gallery, its "museumisation".

In Women’s Work, Land and Spirit Koolmatrie’s eel trap is displayed to reinforce the multi-functionality in indigenous craft, through which the artists can ‘express their views on issues such as environment, land-rights, the removal of children from families, relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and identity’\textsuperscript{1,5}. Yet being placed in its specific location in Boomalli - directly in front and as a funnel or, metaphorically, a passage into the display - it unfolds the very same sculptural, functional and spiritual qualities as it does in its different context in Fluent.

This encounter also shows that the discussion about the different placement of the specific work isn’t necessarily vital to convey a different meaning.

In his introduction to Buyu Djaema. Pandanus Weaving from Arnhem Land Nigel Lendon talks about the symbolic elevation of the woven work from the floor to the wall that forces us to reconsider aesthetic and interpretative assumptions: the craft object can be re-viewed in its new placement as a piece of art in its own.

Whilst this approach is certainly part of the transformation, it is rather the overall context that the work is placed in, which generates this new or different communication.

In the same catalogue Louise Hamby talks about this issue in her essay “From Conical to Flat”:

In the exhibition of Aboriginal Women’s Art at the Art Gallery of New South
Wales in 1992 Hetti Perkins addressed the issue of how Aboriginal art works are often viewed. Realising that fibre works are often not considered in the "art" area and are not viewed as such, she compares a bark painting and a bag: Both have aesthetic appeal, functional purpose, may be produced commercially and have a secret/sacred ceremonial context.

The same argument could be applied to the selected works in Women's Work, Land and Spirit, where paintings on various materials are placed next to a wide range of containers.

However, in engaging with this complex critical debate around seemingly controversial approaches, I wonder whether or not the by Anthropologists designated emic and etic approach doesn’t in fact mirror and imply the attitudes towards craft and art?

In his essay Emily Kame Kngwarreye and the Undestructible Space of Justice Rex Butler summarises the two attitudes that have been designated by Anthropologists:

The emic attempts to see things from the point of view of the tribal participants themselves, to enter as far as possible into their world. The etic acknowledges that we cannot do this, that we are only able to perceive things through our own (European) point of view. Both attitudes, in a way, seek a form of knowledge: the first believes that we can translate tribal experiences into Western terms; the second that, if we cannot do so, we can at least think this. But [...] the two attitudes cannot be separated; this scientific ideal cannot be maintained. The most emic response is revealed as etic, ultimately only a reflection of white preconceptions. And the etic response, the admission that we cannot say anything about the other, only hides the even deeper belief that we can.

Most obviously this point of view has been developed in an European/Western understanding and environment and thus cannot be applied in any respect to exhibitions like Fluent or Women's Work, Land and Spirit, both curated by Indigenous women. Rex Butler explains the emic/etic attitude as a Western interpretation
of Indigenous cultures, which cannot but reinforce the view of a split society. It is the issues, that go along with this point of view, that the curators Brenda Croft, Hetti Perkins and Michelle Broun are concerned with.

According to “Keywords - a vocabulary of culture and society” by R. Williams Anthropology is originally understood as the ‘human sciences’ and modern language has again come to understand this complex term precisely as such. Bearing this in mind I’d like to look at the terms ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ from a more humanitarian point of view. The etic then might be understood a more ‘bookish’ approach (…’if we cannot do so, we can at least think this’...), whereas the emic seems to rather resemble the less removed, ‘insight/insider’ approach (…’to enter as far as possible’...). This then becomes a theory that is applicable in more general terms to the human race and moves away from the classifier of the two societies. The two tendencies are found in every human being and are in fact inseparable (…’the two attitudes cannot be separated’...).

By saying that the emic and etic approach might in fact mirror and imply the attitudes towards craft and art, I’m referring to exactly this understanding of anthropological terms. The interpretation of the works as art is in some respect the more ‘bookish’ approach at first sight, but nevertheless will never disregard the processes and ideologies involved in the making. The interpretation of the works as craft on the other hand can be seen as the viewing of the object firstly with regard to its meaning from the context of its making, yet won’t either disregard its imaginative qualities. The ongoing controversial debates show in fact that neither of the
two approaches can ever be finally done justice. 'For precisely every attempt to actually produce this alternative ends up in self-contradiction' (R. Butler).

Most important is, above all, the awareness of the limitations within displays and of the critical distance upon the individual practices in order to always keep some allowance for the alternative.

1 European mythological figure; lat.: unda=the wave. See also: Bachmann, I.; Undine geht. Das Gebell. Ein Wildermuth. Drei Erzaehlungen; Reclam; Stuttgart, Germany; 1984


3 Butler, R.; “Emily Kame Kngwarreye and the Undestructible Space of Justice”; Eyeline; no 36, autumn/winter 1998, Eyeline Publishing Ltd.; Brisbane, Qld, Australia; pp 24-30

4 Onus, L.; “Southwest, Southeast Australia and Tasmania”; Aratjara - Art of the
Traditional and Contemporary Works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Duesseldorf; Bernhard Luthi and the Aboriginal Arts Unit of the Australia Council; Sydney, 1993; p. 292; sighted in: Croft, B.; From Little Things Big Things Grow. Indigenous artistic, political and cultural development in the New South Wales region from 1984-1994; thesis, Master of Arts Administration; College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, 1994; p. 18


6 See on this: Johnson, V.; “Is There A Gender Issue In Aboriginal Art?”; Art and Australia; Vol. ; No. ; 1997

7 Information sheet to the exhibition Women’s Work, Land and Spirits, for the opening in Beijing in 1995.

8 According to the selection criteria of the two recent Cologne Art Fairs in Germany

9 See on this: Pastor Roces, M.; “The Necessity of the Craft Problematic”; The Necessity of Craft; University of Western Australia Press; Nedlands, WA 1995; pp. 69-83


12 “Women’s Crafts: Continuing, Reviving and Creating Traditions”; Women’s Work, Land and Spirit catalogue; WAPECC (Inc.); Perth, WA, 1997; p. 21


14 The Drill Hall Gallery, ANU, was Fluent’s second show in Australia, touring since January 1998


16 Lendon, N. & Cochrane, S.; Buyu Djaema. Pandanus Weaving from Arnhem Land catalogue; Canberra School of Art, ANU, Australia, 1993
For my research into the combination of fibre and metal, it was of major interest not only to look into the history and contemporary use of the pandanus fibre, but also at the limited water resources on the island of Tarawa, Kiribati.

The water shortage Tarawa is of major concern. Running water is supplied only twice a day for half an hour. Long periods of draughts are not unusual. They naturally affect the fresh water resources on the islands and can even dry out the indigenous trees: Breadfruit, coconut and pandanus.

The main traditional food sources are fish, breadfruit, coconut and pandanus. The pandanus tree itself is a vital source for food, building materials and weaving practices.

I was fortunate enough to witness the collecting and processing of the pandanus leaves which are woven into mats.

Further research revealed some of the history and tradition of pattern making and various uses for the different types of mats (see video for more detailed information).

In my essay *From Thing to Sign* I looked into the history and making of two specific mats, referred to as my *Focus Objects*. Being removed from their original environment they undergo a change in meaning and purpose that goes far beyond a simple change of location from A to B.

The histories of the two mats, their similarities and differences and their original backgrounds gave me a new understanding and way of looking at my own work. The loose fibre images/patterns in my etchings have their origins in my second *Focus Object*. 
By using pandanus fibre in my metal work I have achieved a blending of the symbols of life and death.

FROM THING TO SIGN

Focus Objects:
Pandanus\(^1\) mat garment, Abaiang/ Kiribati\(^2\), Australian Museum, Sydney; Registration No.: E.24743
Pandanus floor mat, Arnhem Land, National Gallery, Canberra, Registration No.: 91.729

In this essay I explore the ways, in which collected objects undergo a change in meaning due to being removed from their original cultural context and placed into a collection as a serial piece.

My Focus Objects are two mats, one of which is a circular Pandanus floor mat from Central Arnhem Land, purchased 1991, now held in the storage of the National Gallery in Canberra. The other one is a rectangular Pandanus garment from Kiribati, purchased 1917, now held in the storage of the Australian Museum in Sydney as part of their Pacific Collection.

My primary interest here is to show, that objects, which have been cut off their context, are no longer predominantly valued for their use or purpose, but for their relation to some other objects and ideas - their status changes from thing to sign.
It is crucial to understand the correlation of the two objects with each other in their old as much as in their new environments. Thus the following two sections will focus on a description of the mats, their provenance and ritual function.

I will then proceed to explain the methodology of my research, the museum's policies and their archival methods in order to sketch out the objects' placement in their new environments.

In my research the following quote\(^3\) struck me as being crucial for my argument:

"Martin Kelner's Theory of the Meaning of Life - 'The Importance of Stuff':

....this theory is all about acquiring STUFF, then acquiring more STUFF, maybe changing your STUFF 'round a little, then acquiring even more STUFF, then getting a bigger place, because there's no room for all your STUFF, getting rid of some STUFF, then getting a smaller place, because you haven't got as much STUFF.

Then you die."

I consider these thoughts towards the attitude of collecting in Western societies as crucial in order to understand better what we look at by gazing at artefacts like the ones I have chosen to focus on.

Subsequently my primary interest in the later sections Storytelling and Fetishism is the fact that in Western societies, collecting is seen as an essential human feature that stems from the desire for definition of subjectivity: "I am what I own!" I will discuss the role of the objects in the collections, which is entangled not only with the museums policies and methods, but also with our passion to collect.

I intend to conclude by reflecting on the influences of colonialism. The aim here is not to diminish museology, but to stress the psychological analysis of collecting.
It is important to understand that Pandanus mats are made for every conceivable use in the indigenous cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands - there are, for example: Sleeping and sitting mats, carry mats, garments (even conical mats for pure decoration), shrouds, etc.

The very fact that I am looking at two different Pandanus mats from very different backgrounds, unavoidably creates two major divisions by form alone:

On the one hand there are the round interlaced floor mats, commonly found in Arnhem Land (in Australia’s Northern Territory) and on the other hand the researcher looks at rectangular plaited floor mats and garments from the Republic of Kiribati (the former Gilbert Island Colony) in the Pacific.

From my examination of many mats each of these two categories may then be broken down into subdivisions: The Australian mats vary in form from circular to oval just as much as the Pacific mats range from narrow rectangular ones to an almost square appearance. Some of the latter are extremely fine and others are much more coarse.

These categories might be broken down even further into subdivisions by colour (natural dyes) and intricate patterns.

My primary interest here is the manifold diversity, which depends on the processes used and the intended purpose:

Sleeping, sitting, carrying, wearing, giving birth or burying...

I will now briefly describe the significance of these fibre works for the marine Micronesian cultures and at the same time outline the history of the making.
Due to the isolated location of the Republic of Kiribati in the Pacific and the fact that the actual landmass is extremely small (the largest island occupies 38km$^2$ only), their inhabitants had to rely on very limited resources for their survival.

One of the most elemental sources, as it provides food, building material and the fibre for cloths and essential utensils in general, was (and still is today) the Pandanus tree.

The collection and treatment of the fibres is labour intensive and time consuming.

In order to weave or plait the palm leaves, women will harvest only the younger leaves from the middle crown of the tree and strip the thorny edges off. The leaves are then soaked/boiled to soften the fibre and dried and bleached in the sun. Eventually they split the leaves lengthwise into the width appropriate for the proposed task; in Kiribati, for example, the fibre required for weaving sleeping mats is much wider than for fine mats.

The strands can than be dyed to include darker patterns into the weaving, which involves various techniques. The dyes are extracted from a variety of native plants.

Techniques differ according to the cultural region and the purpose of the artefact itself:

The floor mats from Central Arnhem land, for example, are interlaced. The dried and dyed Pandanus strands curl up into a finer thread each. The circular and oval mats are always started in the centre and gradually grow: an expanding coil/spiral, making up the surface. There is no distinct back or front.

The result is a loosely woven mat, appro. 2,5m in diameter, with an untrimmed, wide fringe. Colours range from reddish brown to ochre-yellowish and pale olive-green. The colour design depends on the
placement of the dyed pandanus strands and the weaving/interlacing technique:
My Focus Object, for instance, has a very distinct circle design, where the open mesh is filled in with densely woven strands that create a yellow circle.

Mats and garments from Kiribati, on the other hand, are plaited, using the flat strands, which results in a dense and rigid structure. The sizes of the rectangular mats range from 100cm - 200cm in length and 50cm - 100cm in width (mats for babies, children and adults). Zigzag or triangular patterns are most common. These are generally woven into the surface of the finished mat (lace-weaving), which creates a back and a front.

My very finely plaited Focus Object here, the garment, has dark red triangular symmetrically woven into its front. The edges generally have a neat, doubled finish and the leftover piece of strand is plaited back into the "fabric". Dominant colours are earthy reds, dark browns, pale olive-greens and various shades of the natural tone, which is a light eggshell-brown.

It is important to look at these traditional fabricated mats with all the information they provide in order to understand the changes in style and manufacture that have taken place. Many aspects of life have changed for the people in Arnhem Land and Kiribati since the advent of the early explorers and missionaries. Influences from other cultures have manifested themselves in both materials and construction techniques. Often white men's materials in making and especially decorating are now preferred to the "traditional" dyes and ornaments, which raises the question of authenticity. Louise Hamby writes⁴:
“The question of authenticity and traditionalism in Aboriginal art is one that is frequently brought to the forefront of anthropological discourses in contemporary society.” ... 

“In the 1920’s Baldwin Spencer was establishing the concept that for Aboriginal art or artefacts to be good, they must remain authentic, ie. free of white men’s influence. He was making a value judgement [...] based on European standards of evaluation, which assumes that other cultures are inferior to their own. It is improbable for Aboriginal people to live under the dominance of a white culture without making adaptations to the survival of their lifestyle and their art work. The women, who were using [...] pieces of fabric were adapting available materials to perform the same function as natural materials used previously. This is innovation.”

And she quotes Linda Allan:

“Influences that are often seen to break down aspects of many societies can be seen in the instance of fibrecraft to have strengthened, and perhaps to some extent secured, the continuation of fibrecraft tradition.”

Alike Louise, I myself want to stress the fact that we are looking at continuity and change, and not at a loss of culture in general. Introducing new materials is rather a sign of a cultural response to a different situation and opens up new opportunities for an on-going development - a universal and essential factor for survival. Taking an approach from the artist’s point of view, there’s naturally no question that many of the mats from the past and today are works of art in their own right. Above all representation never takes place in isolation; culture, identification and traditions are always bound in an creative, dynamic process of transmission, indissociable from history of encounters.

I will proceed to show that - through response to a changing environment and development in the production -, the significance of the Pandanus mats in the social, cultural and spiritual context hasn’t been lessened.
The ways, in which fabric artefacts are bound up in a cultural system of traditional rank and status, is of great interest here. Mats are still centrally important to contemporary life and it is through women that they appear, in that women weave them and in that over time women have developed new mat types. As woman hold the knowledge of making mats and control their production and trade, the exchange of mats marks all the traditional formal occasions in social life.

"Children are welcomed into the world on a mat, are clothed in mats, their development and rise in status is communicated and publicised by mats, their return to their maker is accompanied by mats for their every conceivable need, wrapped round the corpse in mummified fashion."

(Grace Mera Molisa, 1994)5

Although generally produced as practical items for daily use such as mats for sleeping, these items also posses very significant social, cultural and spiritual meaning for the artist and their communities. Women have a particular body of knowledge related to a sequence of ceremonies that celebrate their skill and effort in producing mats, and through which a woman enhances her rank and status.

On the other hand ‘Mat-Culture’ operates as currency within the traditional gift exchange system. This is why, prior to the introduction of a monetarist system, mats were literally the sign of wealth and social standing.

Nevertheless, it is not only the economic and social status alone that I’m interested in: Mats also represent a connection between the mundane and the spiritual world. They are significant for social identity and, in Micronesia particularly, intertwined with use in ceremonial and ritual events, in which they reinforce spirits.

Some sacred textiles in the Pacific are used to symbolise and confer
status and are understood to be inherently powerful, capable of causing harm to those who mishandle them.

“...sacred textiles continue to have special ceremonial importance as tribute gifts and ultimately as burial shrouds for chiefs and senior men. Until recently they also were used during the ritual inauguration of the island chief. The machiy [burial shroud] would be held outstretched over the head of the incoming chief during an inaugural blessing that invoked the most potent of the island gods. Then the textile would be laid over the chiefs shoulders like a mantle of office. These textiles also served in the initiation of island boys, who wore a machiy during a four-day period of seclusion, at the end of which the boy presented the textile to his ritual sponsor.”

Correspondingly, the act of weaving in East and Central Arnhem Land holds special spiritual significance for woman, as they recreate forms taught to humans by Ancestral Beings during the Dreaming. It is these practices, through which mats can re-affirm traditional associations with the land. Consequently, women - through their craft practices - reinforce a sense of national identity, so difficult to maintain for Pacific countries. Their is a strong link between the status of women, the proper appreciation of their artwork and the maintenance of a rich national heritage.

The significance of the fibre Pandanus for the marine cultures of Micronesia and the Aboriginal cultures of Arnhem Land is also manifested in today’s collections of artefacts from this region. The majority of all collected objects are works made from various fibres, of which Pandanus (as one of the few available materials) occurs to be used in a great range.

I will proceed to show the method of collecting of information that I have employed which is a crucial aspect to the evolution of the work.
The Australian Museum in Sydney, an anthropological/ethnographical institution, has been the primary source for the older material from Kiribati, whereas the National Gallery of Australia, an art gallery, has been my reference for the more recent acquisitions from Arnhem Land.

The examination of the mats is a fairly easy task, but gathering information associated with a particular mat, especially about the collector, if known, can be extremely difficult. For older mats there is very little or no information available other than the fact that they come from the “Gilbert Group” or Australia’s “Northern Territory”. This problem also springs from the fact that it was only in the 1950’s that in Australia indigenous artefacts were seen as being individual pieces of art and it was only then that they were registered under the name of the maker/artist.

Still, examining the museum register is essential and can be extremely beneficial. Items that most researches require include: Date of collection, collector, method of collection, location, person or group from which the item was obtained and name/use in appropriate language.

The register is a good indication of the changing attitude of museum workers in accordance with the latest change of policy.

The National Gallery, for instance, with its proper attitude to contemporary movements, has updated its archive. The catalogue of the archive is now registered in the immaterial memory of the computer. An efficient and contemporary idea, but does it really improve the archive?

The answer is “yes” and “no”: “Yes” insofar, as everyone will now be able to access the archives catalogue via the internet in order to get the required information. This can be very convenient, especially as locating the required information in order to document it, used to be
very laborious and time consuming - of which I learned in the Australian Museum in Sydney. Here the researcher still has to sit down with piles of registration cards and files that date back to the early 19th century. The exercise itself can easily become a separate research project.

Nevertheless I'd like to ask: What is the required information? How is it defined? A question that the archivist is faced with by setting up the stereotype computer catalogue sheets. I doubt that the researcher always knows exactly, what he/she is looking for by starting to unfold the history/story of objects like “my” mats. Still, what one is looking at, is a standardised page that will reveal nothing but standardised information-fragments, cut up in order to suit particular categories that were once defined as being the required and essential ones. And here to me the answer to the question of whether or not one can speak of an improved archive, rather seems to be “no”:

In the Australian Museum the lucky researcher might trace back a handwritten correspondence in several pages, just like my find regarding a purchase of several Pandanus mats from Kiribati: By studying the handwritten documents more closely, I read in the preamble of the donor that he would only part from the objects, if they were exhibited. I also learned about the fact that he had offered them to another collection first. Additional the handwriting itself seems to be another essential narrative in the whole story. Let alone the historical official stamps and Coat of Arms, with which the act of purchase was sealed. They provide an additional piece of information, which might be minimal, but nevertheless helps to produce a clearer image of the social, cultural and economic perspective at the time an individual item was collected.
Looking at the printout of the Catalogue Worksheet from the National Gallery, I wonder were information like this is supposed to go? Maybe under the category Remarks, if the archivist considers it as being required...
The aim here is not to propagate the archive as a nostalgic investment, but to draw the attention to the ..."institutional lines of authority which inevitably operates as parameters of selection and interpretation".8

I also want to stress that it is crucial to obtain a sound understanding of historic mats within public collections in order to be able to construct an informed critical view of the aesthetics and the positioning of contemporary Aboriginal and “I-Kiribati’s” 9 mats in Western culture out of their own context.

The very fact that at present the curious citizen of Canberra, who wants to gain some knowledge about the Micronesian culture, is obliged to go to the Australian Museum in Sydney in order to look at an artefact from Kiribati, raises the question of the Museum’s scholarship and subsequently the structure of their collections. In that particular case I will look at the National Gallery in Canberra in correlation with the Australian Museum in Sydney.
The strength of the collection housed in the National Gallery in Canberra is present in the area of contemporary art. By realising this, one mustn’t forget that the Gallery has been opened as a public collection in the mid-1970’s only!
It is important to bear that in mind in order to understand that the National Gallery, compared to the Australian Museum, obviously has neither had the same length of time for its acquisitions nor was it involved during the same period of time.
This factor, of course, can be quite restrictive, but is also a directive one, as the focus on contemporary objects opens a much broader field for acquisitions.
Hence this forced directionality was transformed into an excellence by becoming one of the best institutions for contemporary art in Australia.
The Australian Museum in Sydney, on the other hand, is well known for its excellence amongst Australia’s anthropological/ethnographical museums.
According to Antje Sommer, who supervises the extensive archive and storage of the Pacific collection, it houses the largest Micronesian collection of any public institution in Australia. As it has early focused on collectables from this region with an anthropological and ethnographical viewpoint, it now operates as a major research source for the public, including people from Micronesia.

Although both institutions are presently strongly interested in acquiring contemporary objects from Micronesia and Polynesia, their intentions are naturally generated by different collecting policies:
Whilst the Australian Museum wishes to present an overview of changes in the making of artefacts and material cultures throughout the centuries, the National Gallery rather focuses on the collected objects as works of art.
We are looking at contrasting modes of interpretation and framing -

an aesthetic appreciation versus a social narrative.

My main point is that one and the same object, no matter whether contemporary or historical (- whether a contemporary Aboriginal mat from Arnhem Land or a historical mat-garment from Kiribati -), can become an object of desire for either institution. There is a very mar-
ginal border which is drawn to determine “what belongs where”, which is eventually defined by the censoring role of the curator.

However, collecting policies are naturally much more complex through other existing powerful factors which influence acquisitions in general:
- The Museums’ policies are affected by
  - the staffing structures (personal interests)
  - the funding (present economy)
  - the politics of the present government (educational issues)
  - social aspects (location)
  - availability (donations, purchasing offers)

The museum staff and especially the curators with their personal interest are certainly very influential through their censoring; the lack of sufficient funding can create major problems, which is closely related to the economy at the time; not to mention the influences from politics of the present government (ie.: Is there an interest in gaining “cultural capital”?); social aspects, as to the location of the museum and the response from the public, are definitely not to be overlooked and last but not least the need for an availability of particular objects through donations or offers from outside is self-explanatory. Therefore all of the issues listed above can to some extent and in time provide the actual reasons for having acquired an extensive collection in one particular field.

I will proceed to argue the changes in meaning that acquired objects undergo. I will stress that it is the removal from their original cultural context and the new role they play within the various distinctive collections, that transfers them from thing to sign.
I now wish to explore the ways, in which the collector or curator, the archives and the objects themselves are narrators in a story. The title for my essay, which I also chose as a subtitle for this section, is an expression that Mieke Bal used in her essay Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting. According to her, by cutting an object off its context, it is no longer predominantly valued for its use or purpose, but for its relation to some other objects or ideas.

Jonathan Bordo in this respect:

"In enunciating the particular and peculiar character of collectable objects, Krzysztof Pomian defined them in terms of the cultic operations that removed them from ordinary utilitarian circulation and within a special confinement exposed them to view."

This removal is an active choice of the collector, respectively the curator, in order to tell a story. In this context, both Storytelling and Collecting are defined as a subjective presentation and communication of a sequence of events. This sequence of events, whether story or collection, does not only shape the collector (storyteller) during the process, but also, and more vigorously, is shaped by the very same.

One example, that might help to clarify in which ways the collection itself tells a particular story which is influenced by the subjective storytelling of the collector, might be Calthorpe’s House. The Calthorpe’s Residence Museum in Mugga Way, Red Hill, Canberra used to be the ordinary residence of the Calthorpe’s, just as the name indicates. Having eventually been turned into a small museum - a story too involved to be included here - it now reveals a short history of living in the town and community of Canberra in the first 20 years after its foundation in 1913. A subject that is displayed in the most fascinating way: Almost every detail, every object is left in its place just as it was at the time. That in itself might not be such a in-
novative idea, but the curator of this “new-born” museum made an important decision in regards to the access of the place: As the numbers of visitors are restricted due to its location in a rural area, every visitor should be able to get as close to the original aura of this place as possible. Thus the fireplace in the kitchen is still lit every morning, the Pianola is not only played but also accompanied by the voice of the museum guide (depending on his or her talent...), in the kitchen the smell of the freshly prepared lunch will invite you to stay, prepared with the appropriate kitchen tools, - and you wouldn’t be in the least surprised, if next you were to witness the ghost of Mrs. Calthorpe senior welcoming her friends for a game of bridge in the dining room.

Not only is the entire interior left untouched (though carefully looked after with the latest conservation technologies - as much as applicable), but also - and most significantly - was it bought by Mrs. Calthorpe as a complete set at one and the same day: From the curtains down to the dessert spoons! To me this manner in itself speaks of an almost obsessive desire to possess every piece of a particular series: the complete collection of objects of desire in the latest design of the time. It is the desire of a subjective representation, the extension of the self, the idea of “I am what I own”, which I will discuss in more detail later on.

Yet, thanks to her attitude, Calthorpe’s House Museum today is able to give us a original picture of the desired lifestyle of the twenties.

Nevertheless, the current curator of Calthorpe’s House is constantly facing a quite problematic question: As she is on the one hand lucky enough to be able to consult the two daughters of old Mrs. Calthorpe, both still alive, for detailed questions about lifestyle and habits at the
time, she’s on the other hand struggling with their own subjective ideas of “What exactly does the story/collection need to include?”. Furthermore:

“Why does this or that object, which might suddenly be discovered by the daughters in their own extensive storage, now seem not relevant or else especially relevant for the museum’s collection?”

“What exactly is the story, she wants to narrate and what exactly is the significance of each individual object for the collection?”

She needs to re-evaluate her own decisions over and over again, being challenged by the daughters’ other, subjective point of view.

By looking at the Calthorpe’s Residence Museum it has become obvious that every single object in a collection is a narrator in a story. Its sequence is shaped by the collector/curator. The story changes slightly through every new decision that is made. The status of objects that become a part of the story/collection as valuable narrators, is shifted from thing (an object for a particular use or purpose) to sign (a serial piece, significant only through its interrelation with other pieces in the collection).

One might ask:
Why this particular example to clarify the theory of Storytelling?
What is the connection to the Focus Objects of this essay?

I simply felt that the interpretation of this rather complex issue was more easily understood through an example that is accessible to everyone. Due to its commonplace nature and liveliness it combines the private and institutional practices and desires of collecting.

However, the change of the object’s status and the curator’s desire to tell a particular story, respectively acquire a particular collection is just the same in the Australian Museum in Sydney and the National
Gallery of Australia in Canberra. The spectator here looks at two different collections that are generated by different motivations: The individual framing of an aesthetic appreciation versus a social narrative.

The National Gallery naturally focuses on the collected objects as works of art (ie. the visual aesthetics of the mat) whereas the Australian Museum looks at their objects of desire from an anthropological and ethnographical point of view (ie. the history of mat-making and the mat's original status). The objects are consequently interpreted and narrated differently, depending on the subjective point of view of the curator and, as explained earlier, the various policies of the institution. In both cases, though, do they now function as serial pieces, valuable for their interrelated nature within the museum context. They have lost their status as a thing and have moved onto being a sign.

With reference to the phenomenon that in Western cultures collecting defines subjectivity in private as much as in institutional practices, I will conclude by suggesting that it is rather for this reason that our (the Western) culture greatly values possessions.

The French word object, according to the Littre' dictionary, means: "Anything which is the cause or subject of passion". Passion, being one of the most elemental human characteristics and supportive in our everyday survival, is a powerful phenomenon that overrides intellect. The desire to collect objects (that cause or are subject to a particular passion) is the corresponding and most natural human attitude.
With the Western understanding that “I am what I own”, the desired object is removed from its context and redefined in terms of the collector, as I have explored earlier on. It is this behaviour, that is commonly understood as the process of fetishism. According to the Angus & and Robertson dictionary, a fetish is “…3. any object, activity, etc., to which one is excessively devoted”. The search for identity and the need to extend the self through objects makes collecting a pure form of fetishism. As to this I’d also like to quote Ghassan Hage (from the talk he gave in the conference Making New Ground from 15 May 1998). He said: “The question is not: ‘To be or not to be?’ - The question is: ‘How much to be?’ We squeeze out objects to accumulate being!”

After all, these quotes bundled together give a picture of our Western society, that is difficult to dismiss: The passion to collect stems from the desire to define subjectivity and to extent the self. The fact that objects have to be cut off their context in order to make them possessible, doesn’t need to be argued in depth.

These are the main reasons why the process of collecting became a crucial feature in the famous late 18th century voyages of exploration. Legitimised through gaining-knowledge-propaganda and under cover of being of scientific importance, substantial collections were acquired, which in actual fact sprang quite directly from passion and private interest. The Gilbert group of 17 Micronesian atolls, for instance, was first sighted by Spanish explorers in the 17th century, but it took another 200 years for Europeans to visit more frequently. These first I-Matang (“white-skinned-spirits”) were whalers in the 1830’s, later followed by traders and British missionaries.
A central subject of literature from the early period (17th century) is “curiosity”, which can be defined as a specific form of intellectual and experimental desire, which is grounded in passion rather than reason:

The first and simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind, is Curiosity. By curiosity, I mean whatever desire we have for, or whatever pleasure we take in novelty. We see children, perpetually running from place to place, to hunt out something new; they catch with great eagerness, and with very little choice, at whatever comes before them; their attention is engaged by every thing, because every thing has, in that stage of life, the charm of novelty to recommend it. But as those things which engage us merely by their novelty, cannot attach us for any length of time, curiosity is the most superficial of all the affections; it changes its object perpetually; it has an appetite which is very sharp, but very easily satisfied; and is has always an appearance of giddiness, restlessness and anxiety.

(extract: opening section of Burke’s Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; orig. 1757)

The passion, enthusiasm and eagerness for curiosities was so extreme that...“everyone catched at everything they saw, it even went so far as to become the ridicule of the Natives by offering pieces of sticks stones and what not to exchange, one waggish Boy took a piece of human excrement on a stick and hild it out to every one of our people he met with”.15

These historical anecdotes are meaningful, in that they can give us an insight into stories, which the artefacts themselves can’t tell and the archives of today don’t reveal. The arrival of Europeans obviously let to a variety of social, cultural and economic changes in the way of life of the people. Both my Focus Objects became available for purchase through the process of
colonising indigenous cultures in the Pacific by Western cultures: Whilst the floor mat from Arnhem Land was purchased in 1991 from a local gallery as a fine example of the visually beautiful mats from Arnhem Land and was initially produced for the Western art market for economic reasons, - the mat garment from Kiribati was purchased in 1917, just a year after the “Gilbert Islands” had become British colony. It is easy to envisage that at this time it was purchased by the museum under the “gaining-knowledge-propaganda”. This is why today this mat is hold in the Pacific section of an anthropological/ethnographical museum like the Australian Museum in Sydney.

Although the idea of the collection/museum as an educational institution evolved even before that time and is common understanding today, I conclude by stressing that, due to the lack of information on the collection as a whole and on the life behind the artefacts themselves, the educational benefits for the public are still questionable.
1 Pandan is a natural fibre that is processed from the leaves of the Pandanus palm.
2 Kiribati (ki:ri:bas)
6 Feldman, J. & Rubinstein, D. H.; The Art of Micronesia; The University of Hawaii Art Gallery; Honolulu, Hawaii, 1986; p. 61
7 The Gilbert Islands are now known as “The Republic of Kiribati”, since they gained their independence in 1979.
8 McQuire, S.; “Unofficial Histories”; in exhibition catalogue Archives and the Everyday; Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 1997
9 The people of Kiribati
10 Interview with Antje Sommer from Thursday, 26 March 1998
11 Elsner, J. & Cardinal, R.; Eds. The Cultures of Collecting; Melbourne University Press; Melbourne, Australia, 1994
13 Nicholas Thomas explores this issue thoroughly in his essay Licensed Curiosity: Cooks Pacific Voyages, in The Cultures of Collecting, 1994
14 Kiribati became British colony almost a century later, in 1916 only, a year before the purchasing date of the Focus Object Mat Garment from Abaiang.
WORKING METHODS

FROM STREET SIGN TO WATER VESSEL

A detailed account of my working methods is provided in Volume 1 of my report.
This year I have applied by and large the same methods, I have developed in 1996/97.
Yet, working in a much larger scale I naturally ran into problems that asked for some adjustments and changes in order to be solved.
One of the major differences with this year’s metal work was most definitely a new approach right at the start.

I designed a centrepiece of the three major vessels to hold water in the center of the table. It is made from aluminium and will be anodised, just as the two aluminium drinking cups from 1997.
Their asymmetrical design and their origin from flat fish keep in line with the shapes I looked at two years ago. The idea for the external bands, which dive into each of the bowls, originally stemmed from the search for a technical solution: How to apply an etched pattern of that kind to the inside of a raised (as compared to press-formed) vessel?
I still wanted the pattern to reflect light from under water - therefore inside the vessel (see also Volume 1).

My decision to work exclusively with aluminium within this second year of my studies derives on the one hand from the wish to introduce colour into my work, which can be realised with that particular material through anodising (anodising see Volume one). On the other
hand this decision evolved from an interest in recycling materials and in keeping the material costs reasonable (as this second year of studies wasn’t financed by scholarships of any kind).

I went for a search in scrap metal places and was lucky straight away: I bought an old set of aluminium drawers (3mm sheet) and a couple of aluminium street signs!

Back home I stripped off the paint with ordinary paint stripper. Most paint strippers contain various amounts of caustic soda, which is an etching agent for aluminium. Therefore they have to be applied with care and the right timing.

However, working with scrap metals always requires a great deal of cleaning surfaces from scratches and dents, therefore I didn’t need to worry about the stripping too much.

And indeed, I spent hours and hours - a couple of days, in fact - sanding both sides of the long narrow shapes I had cut out of the former street signs.

I had started with those, which were to become the external etched elements, because I wanted to focus on the pattern making first and get the etching out of the way.

The size of these ribbons (1,45 in the flat) was determined by the length of each part of the sign and by the largest available size of the etching bath.

Their flat shapes are reminiscent of historical canoes, which were used as a main transport in the Pacific. I created six (as to three bowls) for the user to play with different patterns and colours in the final set-up.

Applying the techniques I had developed two years before, didn’t necessarily guarantee success without unforeseen technical difficulties by working in such dimensions.
I designed six continuos patterns, none of which is repeated at any point within the entire length. I put the use the computer skills that I had acquired in 1996 and scanned fibre and samples, parts of which were multiplied and pasted to create the 1,50m long patterns. Printed out in A4 format, I assembled them on a light table and created two halves of each pattern in order to fit it on the printing screen (Screenprinting see Volume I).

The patterns don’t cover the entire surface of the ribbons, but flow in a wave movement.

The oiled computer prints were translucent enough to make a screen. I printed white enamel paint directly onto the clean and finely sanded aluminium, which was ready to be etched after having the paint drying over night.

I immersed three ribbons at the time in the etching solution. They were etched for 20 minutes only, as the amount of metal surface results in a very vigorous reaction (Etching see research paper Volume I).

The cleaning of the etched plates is time consuming and needs great care in order to get rid of any residues in the material which might cause on-going etching beneath the surface.

The cleaning agents I used were Arco and Ajax powder. The aluminium needs to be free from any grease or water resistant coating for the anodising.

Eventually the etched patterns were hand polished with Brasso and metholytic spirits.

Now the vessels, that I had started parallel, had to be brought close to a final stage in order to form the movement of the ribbons accordingly.
The vessels are originally cut out of sheet metal in various shapes of flat fish. Again the final size was determined by the size of the scrap metal I had got hold of. However, I was knew that this old set of aluminium drawers (shelves?) would provide me with enough material to meet the needed proportions.

For the cutting of both, the sheet metal for the vessels and especially the street signs I had to get a hand due to its size; the material had to be hold up on the far side of the bandsaw while cutting.

Firstly I raised three smaller sized vessel from thinner scrap aluminium in order to decide on form and proportion - just as I did with the 6 small copper mock-ups for the final design of the drinking cups in 1996.

The raising (Raising see Glossary) of the actual vessels became a major task that didn’t allow for any experimentation. They were raised on wooden stumps by using stakes in place of hammers to get enough weight and force behind the punches. The next step was the raising on wooden stakes (Stakes see Glossary) using proper hammers.

Eventually they reached a state that was close enough to start the planishing, which is the final hammer work before the cleaning of the surface. Thus the entire form in all its dimension must be brought to a finish by hammering alone!

Working in 3mm sheet and overall dimensions of up to 75 cm x 50cm requires not only two hands, but also an additional knee and body weight to balance the piece and move it effectively over the stakes while hammering.

Once the three vessels were ready to be cleaned up, I went back to the flat “ribbon-canoes”.

Once the three vessels were ready to be cleaned up, I went back to the flat “ribbon-canoes”.
PRINTMAKING

The continuity of my working methods is also mirrored in the application of my etched plates. This year I have again used the plates for printing.
I produced an 18m long etching (Etching see Glossary) that was originally made from two 10m long Chinese mulberry bark paper pieces.
This particular paper, called "skin paper", is extremely durable in spite of its thin and translucent properties and thus can be printed dry instead of damp.
This was vital for my project, as I couldn’t have wetted 10 meters of paper without damaging it. The facilities in the Printmaking workshop of the Canberra School of Arts aren’t particularly designed for prints that size.
Thus a intricate and complex system had to be worked out in order to succeed.
Again, it proved to be impossible to create such a piece by myself; not only for my limited knowledge of printmaking, but also for the need of four hands instead of two.
I got fantastic help from Barb as a co-ordinator and Marcus as an assistant and the two paper rolls were initially printed separately, using an old army blanket.
The order of things was as following:

1. Ink up all plates

2. Set press (table centred) with paper and double-folded army blanket; apply pressure.
3. Run table to far end, reverse end of blanket and paper over the upper set of rollers.
4. Put down plates, place and align with set square.
5. Re-place paper and blanket.
6. Run press to far end.
7. Reverse blanket and carefully lift paper.
8. Remove plates.
9. Wipe table (still lifting paper).
10. Put down paper and blanket, run table back to centre.
12. Carefully remove blanket while holding paper in place.
13. Run table another couple of inches forward.
14. Lift paper on the other side and wipe table again.
15. Pull paper through and adjust positioning.
17. Set blanket while holding paper in place.

Repeatedly following this method that Barb had developed, we slowly created two growing “paper snakes” which emerged meter by meter out of one side of the press. The finished 10m pieces were then joined and the final etching in its entire length printed a second time in order to vary the placement of the plates. This way they could be printed in the middle of two previous plates.

The work moved backwards and forwards to the will of the pressing table and eventually made its way down the corridor, suspended as a huge wave over strings and wire below the ceiling.

Having the ribbons printed, they were now ready for forming. I cleaned the ink off with turpentine and hand polished the patterns with Brasso.
I had also made mock-ups for the ribbons in order to play around with curves and balance. It was a real challenge to get the two elements to work with each other; the bands had to form a unit with the bowls, with the pattern showing on the inside of the bowl, partially under water.

I realised that I had to use the same size and thickness of material for the mock-ups as anything different wouldn't provide me with a realistic impression, in particular, the balance. Each ribbon is free standing and doesn't touch the bowl at any point.

Thus I made another 3 bands by rolling some of the original material down to the thickness of the etched bands. Putting 1.5m through the set of rollers is an exercise by itself.

The final ribbons were all shaped by hand, which involved bending and twisting over stakes and in the air. I used the real size mock-ups as templates.

**VIDEO PRODUCTION**

I won't go into great detail with the technical side of the video production - the post-production. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that the lack of experience in the editing suite results in a very different approach towards the filming itself - compared to the approach of a video producer.

I had filmed 6 hours of all kinds of impressions, interviews, landscape and the weaving and water supplies. In order to get myself familiar with every minute of this material, I did a couple paper edits first, which helps to sift through it.
In a paper edit every minute, every smallest sequence and the various layers of text, images and music have to be defined. Only then was I able to look at frames, in- and out-points for useful clips and the overall story with this (still) rough structure.

I recorded the main voice-over back here in the workshop. I prepared what was possibly to be prepared at home without specific facilities and yet, spent approximately an additional 60 hours in the editing suite at night. The details of cutting and pasting 27 minutes real time video would involve a description of a particular computer software, which I will refrain from.

Above all, the ratio of making actual film is about 100min work to 1min real time video....that is, in the post production.

In retrospective, I realised that one single Fieldwork unit is hardly sufficient for a project like that. However, the excitement and final product are most valuable.
I had first used the natural fibre Pandanus in context with metal in February/March last year; I found it to be a fascinating combination, which I wanted to apply in further experiments.
The inspiration for the shapes of my metal work (water vessels) had previously been drawn from marine forms (eg., the stingrays) and was further enhanced by ideas arising from the documentation of contemporary Kiribati motifs, especially with regard to the combination of fibre and metal.
The fish is a universal symbol for life, and so is water. Both symbols repeatedly occur in religious contexts in many cultures throughout the centuries.
In the mythology of the Gilbertese the death of the spiritual father of all fish (a stingray) created the fibre Pandanus, which is still be used in burial ceremonies today.
This particular context and the history and contemporary use of the fibre was of major interest for my research into the combination of fibre and metal, blending the symbols for life and death.

I was predominantly interested in documenting water resources and examining motifs found in current pandanus fibre weaving’s in Kiribati.
A digital video camera and a labtop computer allowed recorded images in their unedited state to be transmitted back to the ANU, where the relevant supervisors could then discuss the work in progress.
The recorded material is edited to a video which focuses on visual images from the maritime life and culture of the Gilbertese.
The value of the exchange of visual materials with a panel of interdisciplinary experts while in the field, shouldn’t be underestimated. It also enabled me to spend a longer period of time in a remote setting overseas without foregoing direct psychological support. The video camera functions admirably as an audio-visual diary. The video film made from the material collected in Kiribati is the primary medium for the presentation of my research into contemporary Kiribati motifs and mythology.

John Reid and Gilbert Riedelbauch have been extremely interested, enthusiastic and vital in their tutoring. With their innovative practices they have achieved an improvement in the quality of teaching and the student’s work in the field, as the student’s creativity can be stimulated through the live correspondence and direct supervision. I’m convinced that further trials will eventually thrive on a collaborative teaching input and that it will undoubtedly result in educational benefits.

The inspiration for the metal work this year was greatly enhanced by ideas arising from my fieldwork. I am very glad, in particular, to have had the opportunity to study under Ragnar Hansen for another year. His knowledge and skills and his approach to Silversmithing most definitely have left their mark on my own practice, beginning with my interpretation and translation of the images I brought back from Kiribati. My vessels speak of an influence that I couldn’t have encountered anywhere but in Australia and this particular workshop.

Above all, the interdisciplinary practices that I was able to explore and compose to a diverse visual practice gave my work a new direction.
GLOSSARY OF ITEMS

**Alloy**
Two or more metals are combined to make a compound or alloy. This is done to change visual properties such as colour, of working properties such as increasing hardness, density, corrosion resistance or to lower the melting point of a base metal in an alloy.

**Anneal**
Heat treating a metal to a temperature below its critical range, mainly to relieve residual stresses and also to render the metal soft for further cold working.

**Anodise**
To coat a metal, such as aluminium, with a protective oxide film by electrolysis.

**Bevel**
A surface that meets another at an angle other than a right angle.

**Emboss**
To mould a form on a surface so that it is raised above the surface in low relief.

**Etch**
To cut or corrode a design on a metal or other printing plate by the action of acids on parts not covered by wax or other acid-resistant coating. Etching comprises a heterogeneous chemical reaction in which liquid reacts with a solid substrate and oxidises it to produce a soluble reaction product.

**Etching**
A print on paper using etched metal plates.
Pickle
An acid solution used for the removal of oxides from metal surfaces, usually after soldering.

Planishing
To smoothen and form a hollow metal object by hammering over a mould.

Pressforming
To make objects from (soft) material by pressing with a mould etc. using a machine that exerts pressure to form or shape.

Raising
To raise a metal form from a two-dimensional shape of sheet-metal into a three-dimensional object by hammering.

Sandblasting/ beadblasting
Abrasive grain particles are blown against a surface by compressed air through a nozzle. When used on metal this gives an even finish.

Silk-screen printing
A method of printing using a fine mesh of silk, nylon etc. treated with an impermeable coating except in the areas through which ink is subsequently forced onto the paper (etc.) behind.

Stake
A mould, on which a hollow metal object is planished.
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APPENDIX 1.1 - STUDIO PRACTICE PROPOSAL

Name: Johanna Zellmer
Date: 23 March 1998
Number of Units: 3

1. Aims of the Project Outline

* I wish to complete my series of metal water vessels in order to accomplish the festive presentation of water as a precious drink on the table. Their appearance derives from marine forms (stingrays) and is reminiscent of ceremonial items, chalices.

* Applying the research I undertook in 1996/97, I now intend to create a series of larger vessels to form a centerpiece. In February/March last year I have first used the natural fibre Pandanus in context with the metal: A fascinating combination, which I will apply with further experiments for my final exhibition.

* These outlined aims of my project are also closely linked to a Fieldwork Unit, that will take place in the Republic of Kiribati, most probably in between the 1st and 2nd semester.

* I intend to apply etching technologies in combination with printmaking methods and computer design as in the research I undertook in 1996/97. This year, though, the metal dealt with will be aluminium exclusively.

* The objects should be raised (as compared to pressed), which requires a development of special skills for aluminium in particular (different from those for more traditional materials). The specific resources needed will include screenprinting, Infini-D & Photoshop, anodising and specific etching facilities. Within the semester-break, Audio-visual digital equipment for distance supervision to record visual images from the maritime life and culture of the Gilbertese will be needed.
3. **Context**

* Fish is a universal symbol for life and so is water, both symbols repeatedly occur in religious contexts in all cultures throughout the centuries. According to the mythology of the I-Kiribati, the death of the goddess Nei Tituabine, a stingray, created the fibre Pandanus, which is still used in burial ceremonies today. Now Nei Tituabine is the guardian at the gate to their ancestral land. This context makes this particular fibre (as a distinct symbol for death and transition) most suitable for my research into the combination of fibre and metal, amalgamating the symbols for life and death, passing from one to the other. It is my intention to undertake a research into the culture of the I-Kiribati.

* Reference material: Please refer to Bibliography

4. **Anticipated Outcomes**

I plan to complete my Study Program with the presentation of various computer generated, printed and etched patterns, translated directly from organic material, as well as a series of water vessels to form a centrepiece.
APPENDIX 1.2 - FIELDWORK PROPOSAL

Name: Johanna Zelhner

Date: 27 April 1998

1. Aims of the Project Outline
*The general aim of the fieldwork plan is to produce a video from material recorded in the Gilbert Islands using a digital camera as a audio-visual diary and as a tool to communicate my research into contemporary Kiribati motifs and mythology.
*I finished my Graduate Diploma with a video documentary of my work in 1997.
*The inspiration for my metal vessel shapes has been drawn from marine forms (eg the stingrays) and will be further enhanced by ideas arising from the documentation of contemporary Kiribati motifs, especially in regards to the combination of fibre and metal. Furthermore I am currently discussing plaited Pandanus mats from Kiribati with woven Pandanus mats from Arnhem Land in the Core Unit 1 “Arguing Objects”.
*I have been granted permission to carry out my filming/research in Kiribati from the Ministry of Environment and Social Development. I still need to obtain a visa. I AM ALSO IN DESPERATE NEED FOR SUPPORT TO MEET THE COSTS INVOLVED IN THE DISTANCE SUPERVISION AND GENERAL USE OF THE EQUIPMENT (E.G SPARE BATTERIES ETC.)

2. Methods and resources
*I wish to undertake my fieldwork study in Micronesia, Republic of Kiribati (former Gilbert Islands), Tarawa in June ‘98. I intend to test modern audio-visual digital equipment for distance supervision in an international setting. The recorded material will later be edited to a video.
*In order to record visual images from the maritime life and culture of the Gilbertese and document motifs found in current pandanus fibre weavings from Kiribati I will trial the new FieldScreen facilities of the Canberra School of Art, ANU. These include a digital video camera and a computer in order to send visual images in their unedited stage back to the ANU, which will enable the relevant supervisors to discuss the work in progress. Specific resources needed will include equipment for editing the recorded material from the maritime life and culture of the I-Kiribati.
3. **Context**

*In February/March last year I have first used the natural fibre Pandanus in context with the metal: A fascinating combination, which I wish to apply in further experiments:*

Fish is a universal symbol for life and so is water, both symbols repeatedly occur in religious contexts in all cultures throughout the centuries. In the mythology of the Gilbertesque (according to Arthur Grimble…), the death of the spiritual father of all fish (a stingray) created the fibre Pandanus, which might still be used in burial ceremonies today. I would love to learn more about this context and the history and contemporary use of this particular fibre for my research into the combination of fibre and metal, amalgamating the symbols for life and death.

*Reference material: see bibliography

4. **Anticipated Outcomes**

*As an outcome of my fieldwork I will present a video for examination; this video will also be part of my final exhibition.*
APPENDIX 3 - CURRICULUM VITAE

Johanna Zeilmer

1968 Born in Friedberg/Hessen, Germany

Education
1996-99 Candidate Master of Arts (Visual Arts)
Gold and Silversmithing Workshop
Canberra School of Art, Institute of the Arts, ANU, Australia

1987-91 Apprenticeship, Goldsmith,
(Additional courses in turning, enamelling and silversmithing)
Berufsbildungszentrum Frankfurt/Main in collaboration with
Staatliche Zeichenakademie Hanau, Germany

1990 Welding Certificate, Berufsbildungszentrum Frankfurt/Main, Germany
1989 Blacksmithing Certificate, Schniedefachschule Bad Homburg, Germany

Group Exhibitions
1998-99 12. Europäische Silbertriennale, Goldschmiedehaus Hanau, Germany
1997 The 1997 Visual Arts Graduate Program Exhibition,
Canberra School of Art Gallery, Institute of the Arts, ANU, Australia
1997 Moving forward, Gallery Ottenleuebad, Sangernboden/Bern, Switzerland
1996 BUDA, Historic Home, Castlemaine, Victoria, Australia
1989 9. Europäische Silbertriennale, Goldschmiedehaus Hanau, Germany

Awards
1995 Scholarship by Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft e.V., Cologne, Germany (sponsored by the German Ministry of Education and Science) to study at the Canberra School of Art, Australia
1988 Belobigung in wall-design competition by DEGUSSA AG, Research Department “Chemie Polymer”, Hanau, Germany
Professional Experience

1997
- Gold and Silversmithing Workshop MADE IN HANAU, Germany
- Guest Speaker at Staatliche Zeichenakademie Hanau, Germany

1996
- Enamelling Workshop Helen Aitken-Kuhnen, Michelago, NSW, Australia

1995
- Silversmithing Workshop Peter Woods, Auckland, New Zealand

1994
- Silversmithing Workshop Hendrik Forster, Metung, VIC, Australia
- Goldsmithing Workshop Richard Ivey, Laura, SA, Australia
- Goldsmithing Workshop David Hargreaves, Arrowtown, New Zealand
- Carving Workshop Alec Nathan, Waipoua Forest, New Zealand
- Silversmithing Workshop Peter Woods, Auckland, New Zealand

1992-93
- Weaving Workshop I.Y. Snalding, Auckland, New Zealand
- Drawing, Painting and Sculpture under Ms U. Blomeier-Zillich and Mr. A. Zeccha, Konstanz, Germany

1992
- Assistant Co-ordinator for annual Schmuck-Symposium (Jewellery Conference) at Haldenhof, Wissgoldingen, Germany

1991-92
- Silversmithing Workshop Stefan Epp, Insel Reichenau, Germany

Publications

1999

1997

1989
Planishing