SOUTH SIDE PRIDE

SHARING THE STORIES OF SOUTH AUCKLAND
THROUGH INTERACTIVE TEXTILES AND TECHNOLOGY

STACY BRETT

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Creative Technology (CoLab)

Stacy Brett - July 29th, 2016

Abstract

Using contemporary and traditional forms of technology and textiles, this project aims to give the South Auckland community a voice, and to share the community's unique nature. Within a participatory design approach and an action research framework, South Auckland residents contributed stories, thoughts and perspectives of their community through creative and expressive storytelling activities. These storytelling activities informed the creation of a contemporary textile work that was inspired by traditional Pasifika storytelling textiles such as tapa and tivaivai, which also have a strong connection with the South Auckland community.

This contemporary textile work represents the stories and voices of the South Auckland community, using contemporary and traditional forms of technology and textiles as tools of interaction. This work invites physical interaction where the audience is encouraged to explore the textile and space, which reveals additional elements. The final work offers the opportunity to engage and understand the struggles, pride and identity of the South Auckland community.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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Stacy Brett
July 29th 2016

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Stacy Brett
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Introduction

Growing up in South Auckland I have found that there is often a negative association with the community and this does not sit well with me. South Auckland is frequently represented in the media in a pessimistic light, yet despite the negative reputation, stereotypes and perceptions of South Auckland, I am still proud of my community. I am New Zealand born and of Cook Island, Tahitian and Pakeha decent. I have lived in South Auckland my entire life and will always consider this my home, I believe it has a unique character and is a place of beauty. This practice-based project does not shy away from South Auckland's struggles but aims to share the community's unique nature through creative and interactive storytelling using traditional and contemporary forms of technology and textiles as tools that invite the audience to engage and interact with the work.

Initially this project was intended to be objective and impartial, but I soon realised that through this process the project became a personal journey for myself, I became immersed within the practice, the stories shared and the community sharing them. My position shifted from a researcher/ observer to a curator/ narrator where it was my privilege to share the stories, themes, knowledge and perspective of the community. This project doesn't intend to speak on behalf of all of South Auckland but offers a glimpse into the unique perspectives of some of the residents of the community.

As a young Pasifika Textile designer, I have used both my inherent knowledge in textile design and my cultural upbringing within the South Auckland community as a platform to engage with the community through a series of storytelling activities. Through a series of activities held within South Auckland, participants are asked to share their stories through creative expression. A qualitative approach was then used to collect and collate the stories shared, using the stories, knowledge and insights gained as inspiration to create a contemporary interactive wall hanging. This work represents the participants involved within this project and gives them the opportunity to speak up and speak out about their community, to share their unique stories both as individuals and as a collective.

This research draws strength from several methodologies. The primary methodology is Action Research as the main focus of the research is to advance knowledge through practice.

This methodology is appropriate as the South Auckland community's input and knowledge is vital to how this research is shaped and the final outcome. This enquiry is supported by other methods such as qualitative data analysis, storytelling, participatory design, community engagement, co-creation and collaboration.

This research is presented in three chapters: Research Context, Methodology and Creative Practice. Chapter One, Research Context, proposes a critical contextual framework using a review of literature, and a discussion of relevant theoretical, historical and critical contexts. This provides a foundation for the research, highlights its relevance and offers a perspective as to where this research is positioned within this area of study. Chapter Two, Methodology, explains the methodological framing of the project and justifies the methods used both throughout the data collection from the community and the analysis of this data. The final chapter, Creative Practice, focuses on using the common ideas that emerged throughout the previous chapter and explores the ways in which these where used as inspiration for the final artefact.

The final artefact is a contemporary wall hanging that aims to share the stories, experiences and perspective of the South Auckland participants. The bright, bold visual aesthetics of the textile are inspired by Pasifika textiles such as tapa and tivaivai, using textile techniques and technology to encourage the audiences to explore the textile using bodily sense such as sight, touch and smell.

CHAPTER ONE:
RESEACH CONTEXT

Chapter One: Research Context

Representations and Perceptions of South Auckland

'South Auckland' is an imprecisely defined area of Auckland that is often stereotyped as sociologically disadvantaged and referred to as an "urban wasteland" (Ringer, 2008). The representation of this community as being associated with negative connotations such as crime, deprivation and violence, have resulted in South Auckland gaining a negative reputation which Allen (2015) refers to as "rough" (p. 90). This can be seen in figure 1 & 2. In addition, she explains it is this frame that is most widely understood and is the popular culture context most often portrayed through the media. Ringer's news article "Give South Auckland a little respect" highlights how the media consistently portray the South Auckland community negatively. He explains "the phrase South Auckland frequently appears in the media … usually in association with some act of violence or criminality. The juxtaposition is so common that the phrase itself has become a term of pity or abuse" (Ringer, 2012). In addition, Allen (2015) explains, "the news media hold a position of power that allows them to legitimise and naturalise images and text that reinforce the reconstruction of particular realities" (p. 6). This approach of the news media has been a contributing factor to the stigma that the South Auckland community has suffered. This position allows the media to "project its own definition of reality in a widespread way" (Allen, 2015, p. 36). Perhaps this negative coverage is due to ratings based decisions of what consumer's desire as reportage from media outlets.

Trio arrested over South Auckland robbery spree

One dead in explosion in south Auckland

Left to right:

Figure 1: Dorday, J. (2015). Police cordons were in place after a contractor has died after a "huge" explosion in south Auckland.

Figure 2: Counties Manukau Police (2016). Police released CCTV images of the men in the hopes of tracking them down

The label of being "brown, dumb, uneducated and unemployed" (Allen, 2015, p. 88) is not how Pasifika youth view themselves. Nahkid (2009) suggests the youth in her study were, "realistic and honest about their community" (p. 19). Allen's study supports this stating that "people living in South Auckland identified many positives to living in the South Auckland community; they spoke of a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of safety" (Allen, 2015, p. 76). In addition, "South Auckland youth are proud of who they are and their culture" and "position themselves as insiders of the community due to their sense of belonging" (Allen, 2015, p. 76). This provides tangible evidence that the South Auckland community view themselves in a very different way than they are perceived. The nature of Nahkid & Allen's studies was to give the community a voice and to counter the dominant narratives of the media. Understanding insider's thoughts about their community is critical to this project and presents an opportunity to develop a new narrative that is co-created by community and practitioner.

Artist representations of South Auckland

A contextual review of three contemporary artists is used to explore practice as a method of creating a new dialogue for the South Auckland community, challenging existing perceptions and creating change. It examines the work of choreographer and dancer Parris Goebel, photographer Craig Horn, and artist and photographer Iefata Tuali, to better understand, as artists, how they represent South Auckland. Goebel draws inspiration from her cultural upbringing and community, which she expresses using costume, embodiment and movement. Horn explores the culture and whakapono (faith) within Otahuhu through his collection 'Keeping the Faith' (refer to figure 3). The images captured from outside his window capture the spiritual boundaries of the community that tell a story. Tuali explores his own perceptions of the South Auckland community by capturing raw moments in still images (refer to figure 4). He explores the cultural elements, landscape, street art and neighbourhood activities; the photos capture the community in ways that are only seen and possibly understood by the community. The common notion across all of these artists is self-expression; they all share a part of who they are through their creative work, using their creative practice to explore a narrative for South Auckland that challenges perceptions and works to create change. This demonstrates using self-expression as a creative practitioner has the potential to convey a new narrative and create change. This notion informed the tools and techniques I used in storytelling activities with participants. In addition, it assists in establishing where my work fits in relation to other artists working within this area.

Figure 3: Brett, S (2016). Craig Horn – Keeping the faith. [Photograph].

Figure 4: Tuialii, F (2016). [Photograph].

Creating Change through Storytelling

A key objective of this project is to use storytelling to create change, to expand the narrative of the South Auckland community, to acknowledge the downfalls of the community but also share its beautiful and unique nature through co-created storytelling. The aim of the project is to take the raw and honest stories of the people of South Auckland and give 'outsiders' a new perspective into the community, one that does not shy away from the negative connotations, but looks to expand the views on the South Auckland community that are often overshadowed.

Storytelling is a "tool that has the power to create significant change personally, locally and globally, storytelling has been said to be one of the world's powerful tools for achieving astonishing results". (Ulrich, 2015, p. 327). As described by Fynboh (2014) "organizers and leaders of social movements have used the power of story for centuries to create support for their political agendas and inspire fellowship" (p. 47). As this research looks to create change for the South Auckland community, storytelling is a valuable tool of empowerment that has been used to develop this project.

Stories can help us understand complexity, enhance or change perceptions, imagine new perspectives, engage our feelings, pass along values and principles, provide continuity, bring people together, share our heritage, communicate change and stimulate innovation.

- Ulrich, 2015, p. 327

Engaging with the community through storytelling gives the community an opportunity to speak up and speak out about their community, to express and share their stories both individually and collectively. It is a way of shedding new light on the community instead of the typical stereotypes and perceptions such as "Urban wasteland" and references such as "poverty, crime and deprivation" (Ringer, 2012).

Although there are many benefits to the use of storytelling and co-creation there some issues that I had to consider. My position as a researcher coupled with my history and upbringing within the South Auckland community, could mean I am considered an 'insider' within the research, which had potential to cause some challenges and issues. Blythe (2012) explores possible challenges that may arise for an insider researcher such as, "assuming understanding, ensuring analytical objectivity, dealing with your emotions and managing the participant's expectations" (p. 10). As these issues could be problematic, I applied strategies such as on-going reflection, peer-review, and documentation of process, identifying risks, debriefing and focusing on the aims of the project to overcome the challenges.

Being an insider has some advantages as you often share similar experiences and can relate to the participants. Blythe (2012) explains that "an insider researcher is often viewed on more equal footing which can minimize the power differential between researcher and participants but also participants are more likely to engage in open dialogue, resulting in the generation of greater depth of data" (p. 9). Throughout this project, I used my position as an 'insider' to my advantage to form a relationship with the participants so they felt comfortable, which resulted in participants being more open and honest throughout the storytelling activities (data collection). I also found I had a lot in common with participants, which created a continuous dialogue between participants and myself.

Through the creative practice stage it was difficult and challenging to use participant's stories as inspiration for my own creative practice; as a designer I did not want to misinterpret participant's stories. This insight led me to acknowledge the importance of engagement with participants individually, to understand their stories, perspectives and ideas. This project received ethics approval from the AUT Ethics Committee and all participants gave consent and were aware of the nature of the project and its possible outputs.

Taking into account both the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher/practitioner I created and ran my community activities with these issues in mind, using reflection as a key tool to ensure activities were run ethically and without bias. Reflection was consistent throughout the entire process as was peer review and supervision meetings as a forum to discuss possible issues or challenges as they arose.

Interaction through Textiles and Technology

This section explores textiles and technology as tools for interaction, using the unique qualities that each possesses as a means of communication.

> *Textiles are saturated with narrative, from the chain of events that led to their creation, and the choice of materials used, to the stories told by the pieces themselves and finally to the accounts shared by those who have experienced an emotional reaction to these artworks.*

- Prian, 2004, p. 9

Using textiles and technology to communicate and interact with the viewer is important, as the objective of this project is to share the stories, perspectives and thoughts of the South Auckland community using creative means.

Textiles are often thought of as soft material such as fabric. This common misconception is understandable as the word 'textile' is defined as "a type of cloth or woven fabric" (Oxford, n.d). This project intends to explore textiles beyond their common definition and use this exploration to question the nature of textile design. In addition, the definition of technology

is often misunderstood also as technology is commonly associated with a digital element but the word technology derives from the Greek words techne "science of craft" and logia "art skill cunning of hands" (Liddell, George & Scott, 1980). In my view, this definition shows that textiles could be seen as a form of technology also.

> *Textiles are around us all the time. We are intimately connected to clothe a dress-up costume, a first sewing project, a bed sheet. Textile practices are typically labour intensive, fastidious and repetitive. The intimate nature of such hard work creates a deep connect between the artwork and its maker and ultimately the viewer. Textiles can be a medium through which I can get closer to you.*

- Prian, 2004, p. 9

Textiles and technology are a part of our everyday life and they are something everyone can relate to. A creative work that has influenced my project is '*The talking quilt*' by Active Art (refer to figure 5-7), which is an interactive quilt that uses the core aspects of community, storytelling, engagement, textiles and technology that I have aimed to incorporate into the final work.

'*The talking quilt*' is a collaborative project that created a traditional textile quilt that reflected collective meaning-making. Using a special glove, the audience could interact with the quilt and could listen to audio playback of interviews with people involved within the project. Art Active (2011) **"**explored how new technology can augment everyday domestic objects, bring them to life and create an enjoyable and reflective engagement without changing their qualities as visual, tactile and hand-made artefacts**".**

Figure 5: Heitlinger, S. (2012). The talking quilt.

Figure 6: Active Art. (2011). The talking quilt.

Figure 7: Active Art. (2011). The talking quilt.

Integrating textiles and technology as a tool for communication is one of the aims of this project that allows both the textiles and technology to complement one another. Sally Fort's *'QR-3D Project'* examines the integration of matrix bar codes into textiles. Fort's intentions were to combine "high tech with artisanal craft" (Martin, 2006) (refer to figure 8-10). Fort's work pushes the boundaries of textiles as QR codes are commonly found in magazines or advertisements. Her work has informed my project, as it explores not just a means of integrating textiles and technology, but also a tool to provide the viewer with extra information.

From left to right:

Figure 8: Martin, R. (2011). An example of QR code textile art from the QR-3D Flickr pool.

Figure 9: Fort, S. (2011). Sally Fort QR-3D

Figure 10: Fort, S. (2011). QR-3D

Malin Bobeck's (2015) work '*Those who affected me*' is an interactive light installation that also utilises both textiles and technology (refer to figure 11). The installation consists of weaving glowing fabrics with optical fibres. The installation is made up 500 programmable LEDs that light up the textile, which is responsive to visitors' touch. The textile sculpture has been referred to as "bringing light and life to textiles" (Burney, 2016). Bobeck's textile sculpture is intended to be 'hands on' for visitors to interact and engage with the work, the 'hands on' nature and the reaction the installation elicits is what interest me and I have aimed to incorporate the principles in my work.
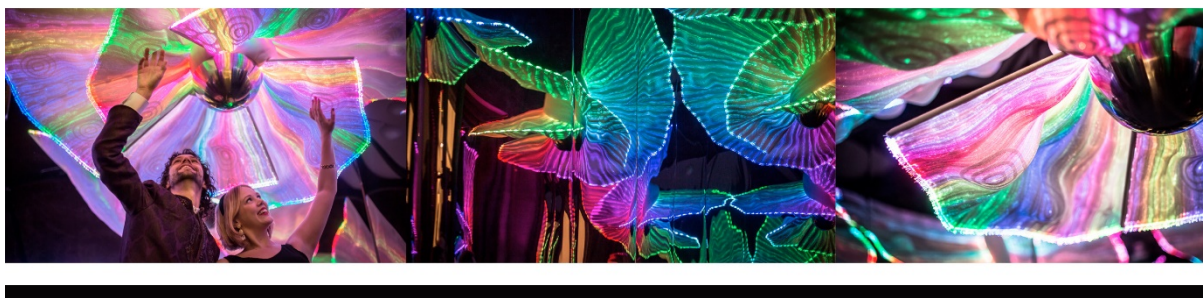
Figure 11: Andersen, Y. (2016).

Traditional textiles have also inspired my journey, in particular Tivaivai and Tapa, which are strong storytelling textiles of the Pacific. These forms of textiles are also commonly seen and practiced within the South Auckland community. Tivaivai is a form of patchwork that originated in the Cook Islands and has been associated with the qualities of warmth and nurture. Tivaivai can be either hand stitched or machine sewn and is a way to "make tangible the once forgotten, make the past equal to the present and revive memories" (Kuchler & Eimike, 2009, p. 1). Tivaivai is usually a community-centred activity that represents identity and a way of thinking (refer to figure 12-15). The social and storytelling aspects of Tivaivai are what interest me and I want to apply these principles to my project, creating a contemporary textile work that represents the identity of the South Auckland community.

From left to right:

Figure 12: David-Tahiri, H. (2012). Traditional Cook Island Tivaivai embroidery - sewn by Mr Rahui Tepapa Mairi David for his granddaughters' wedding gift.

Figure 13: Avery, C. (2016).

Figure 14: Turor, M. (2015). Tivaivai is the art of quilting in the Cook Islands.

Tapa cloth is another Pasifika textile that is commonly used to share narrative. "Tapa is one of the most distinctive products and cultures of the Pacific Islands and is considered to be a symbol of Pacific identity". (Neich & Pendergrast, 1997, p. 11). Tapa is a well-known textile that is used to share knowledge and stories of the Pacific, it is the aspect of sharing narrative through textiles is what I have drawn inspiration from and have applied to my own practice. Figures 16-17 (below) are examples of the use of repetitive motifs, intricate patterning and use of colour that have influenced my own design aesthetic.
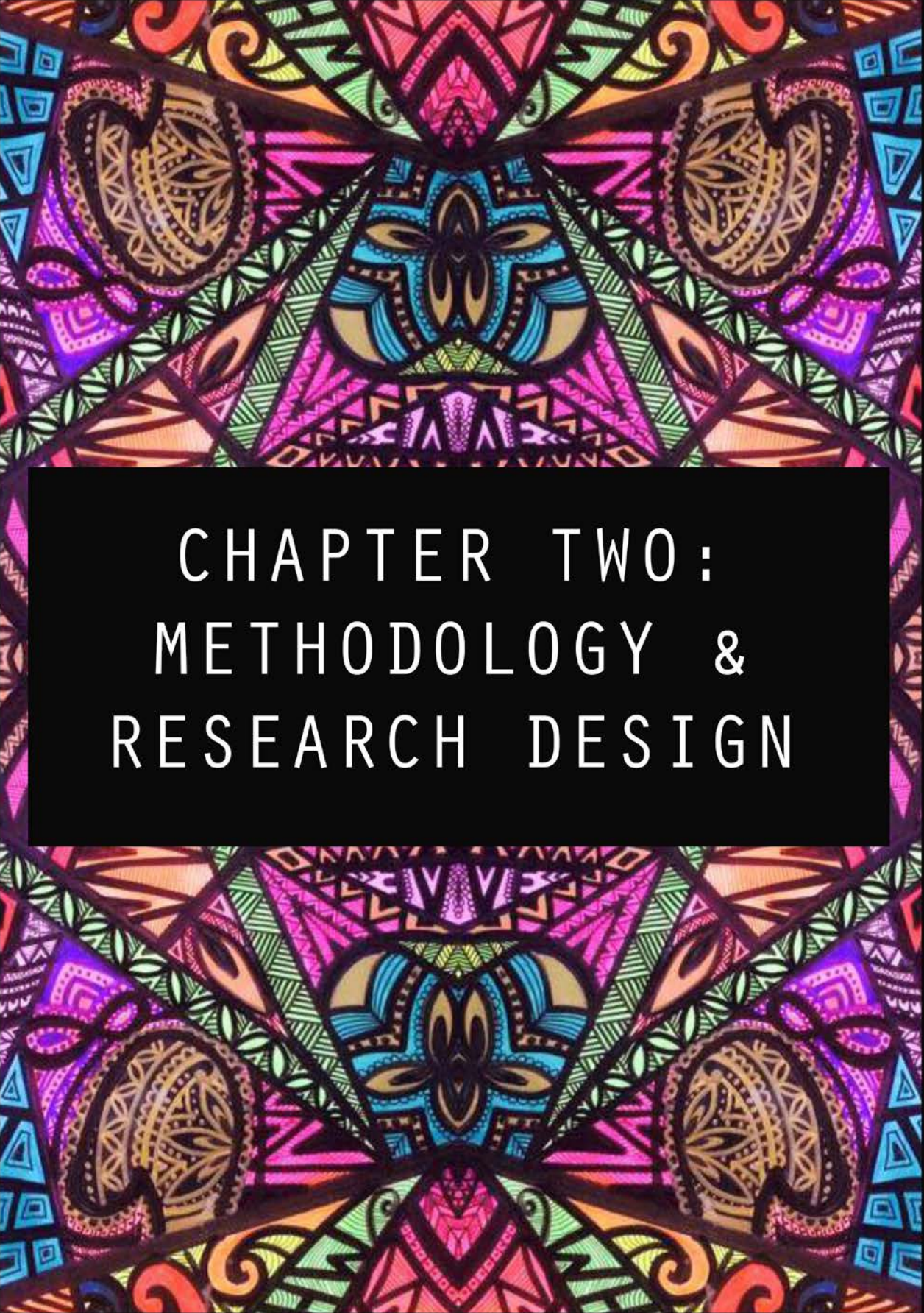
From left to right:
Figure 15: Samoan Tapa (N.D).
Figure 16: Frysinger, G. (2010). Tapa: Handmade Cloth Made From the Bark of A Mulberry Tree.
Figure 17: Beautiful New Zealand (2005).
Figure 18: Fijian Tapa Cloth, handmade by the steeping & pounding of the inner bark of Mulberry tree.

Tapa is traditionally referred to as a traditional textile, the EOTC case study '*E Tu – Using tapa cloth to show who we are"* conducted at Brandon Intermediate, used the principles of tapa to encourage new forms of learning and sharing (refer to figure 18). This case study was based around the "broad theme of E Tu - meaning standing tall and focussed the learning program around what tapa means for the people of the Pacific and how tapa items can reflect your cultural identity" (EOTC, 2010). This case study uses traditional textiles core principles as a basis for learning, sharing and understanding a culture or community and it is these core principles I have explored and integrated into my project.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter Two: Methodology and Research Design:

Methodology and Research Design:

This research used a mixed method approach to address the challenge: How can traditional and contemporary forms of technology and textiles be used as a tool for interaction that shares the South Auckland community's stories and perspectives. Crouch & Pearce (2012) explain, "Action Research exemplifies the importance of allowing the research question to drive the research process" (p. 144). This is important, as the primary object of this research project is to create change through storytelling, specifically through the community sharing personal stories, knowledge and perspectives, giving the community an opportunity to speak up and speak out about our South Auckland.

Under the paradigm of Action Research which in its simplest form is "learning by doing" (O'Brien, 2001, p. 1), the research is complemented by a practice-led approach which is "concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge within practice" (Creative & Cognition Studios. n.d.). This enquiry is supported by other research methods of community engagement, participatory design, co-creation, qualitative data collection/ analysis, reflective practice, principles of art and design, tacit knowledge and intuition. Crouch and Pearce (2012) also state that Action Research "for designers can be a powerful tool for initiating change, and provides structure for design researchers to engage in a dynamic process of problem framing and solution finding" (p. 143).

> *"Action Research is a collaborative approach to research that provides people with the means to take systematic action in an effort to resolve specific problems. This approach endorses consensual, democratic and participatory strategies to encourage people to examine reflectively their problems or practical issues affecting them or their community"*

> -Berg, 2004, p. 197

Berg states that Action Research focuses on methods and techniques of investigation that take into account the study population's history, culture, interactive activities and emotional lives. By using an Action Research framework in this way, I have planned and conducted the research using suitable approaches and methods that assisted in engaging the South Auckland community to share their unique stories and perspectives.

This mixed method approach was an appropriate framework for my project because the nature of this methodology is to learn throughout the process and make adjustments upon critical reflection. The process for Action Research is "typically cyclical or iterative in nature, beginning with the process of reflection and identification of the problem" (Crouch & Pearce, 2012, p. 144). The stages of Action Research have informed and guided my project and as the research project developed, I was able to see the progression of the process changing, due to the fluid nature of this framework.
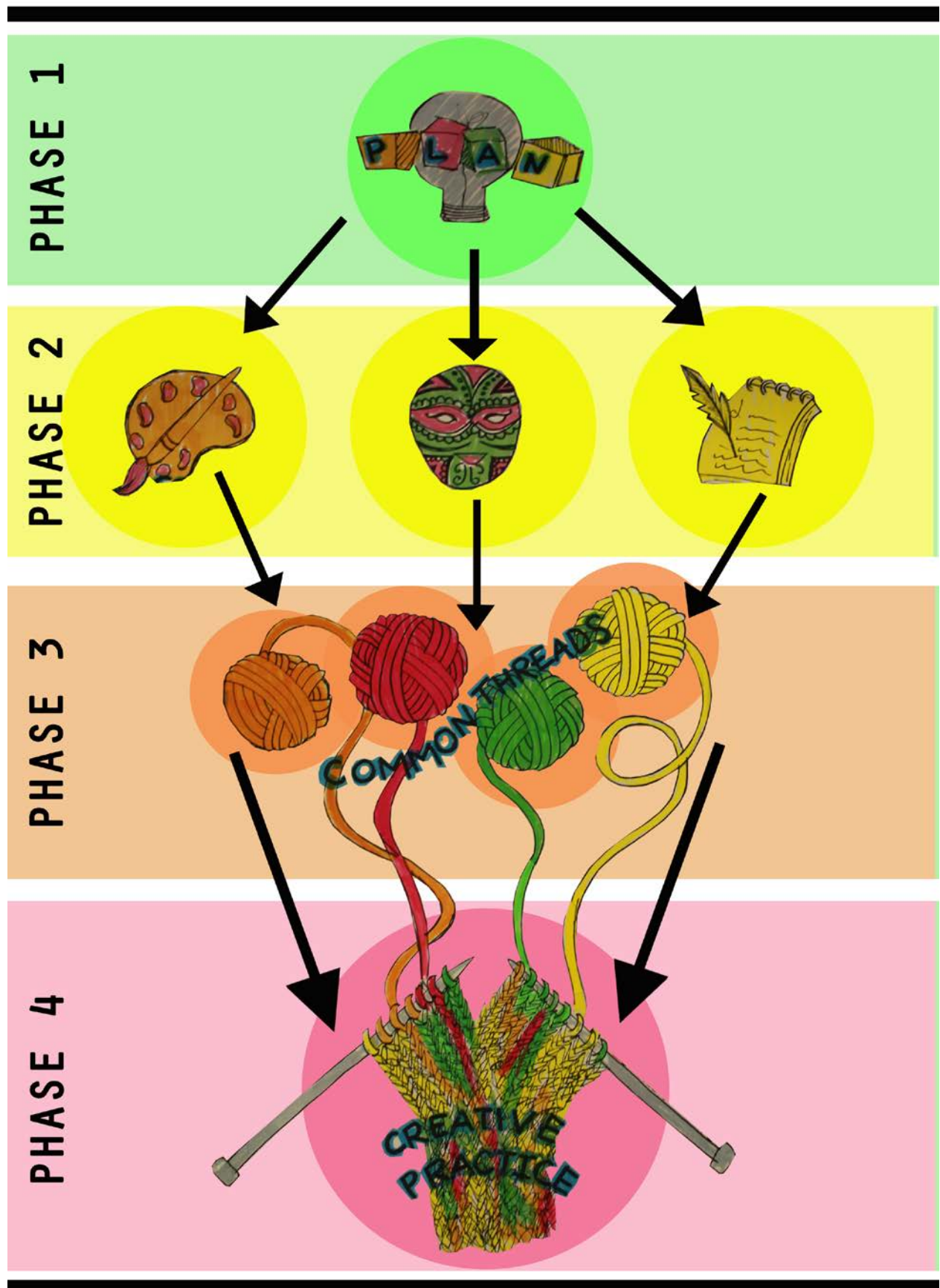
Figure 19: Brett, S (2016). Practice Outline Diagram

The research design and practice of this project has been broken down into four phases. Each phase informs and feeds into one another (refer to figure 19).

Practice Outline:

Phase 1: Community Engagement Planning - Used methods of community engagement, participatory design and co-design to plan the community storytelling activities. Using these methods in conjunction with application for ethics ensured ethical practices were applied through the community storytelling activities.

Phase 2: Community Storytelling Activities (Data Collection) – Applied the knowledge and methods developed within the planning phase to this collection of community stories.

Phase 3: Common Themes/Threads (Data Analysis) – Observed and analysed the outcomes, dynamics and common themes/threads that emerged throughout the storytelling activities.

Phase 4: Creative Practice – Applying my experience as a designer, I used various materials, textiles and technology to portray the common themes and threads that emerged from the data analysis phase.

Phase 1: Community Engagement Planning

Community engagement plays a key role in setting the tone for this research and can be defined as "a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation or identity to address issues affecting their well-being" (The State of Victoria - Department of Environment and Primary Industries, 2016). Community engagement is a significant and influential factor within this research where the objective is to create change through storytelling.

Community engagement did present limitations, potential barriers and design issues to consider, such as; the ability to have a wide range of participants, gaps in information, making information accessible to all, finding techniques and engagement methods to be used and accessible venues. Using the Community Toolkit (2014) as a guide I used the technique 'art and creativity' as a means to engage and collect stories from the South Auckland community. Using my connections within the community I found suitable locations/venues such as community festivals to hold the activities, to attract a diverse range of participants. Having open communication with the participants was key, which meant there needed to be flexibility within the process, to adapt the dynamics of the project as necessary.

Phase 2: Community Storytelling Activities (Data Collection)

This phase of qualitative research engaged with the community through a series of storytelling activities. This project was based around how residents of South Auckland interpret and perceive their community. It was therefore significant to identify, acknowledge and understand key themes and explore them through creative practice.

Rather than traditional methods used within qualitative methodologies such as interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, I chose to use a more creative and tactile process. Using co-design, community engagement and participatory design tools, participants shared their stories and perspectives through creative expression. The storytelling activities involved a diverse range of participants, from gender, age, culture, religion and beliefs, which captured stories from a wide range of people from different walks of life.

I organised three community storytelling activities within the South Auckland community. During each activity participants were invited to share their stories, knowledge and perspectives on South Auckland. Although the instructions provided were the same, the dynamics, location and materials provided where significantly different which impacted on how participants approached these activities.

- Activity 1 -Mangere East Festival – Participants used paint, markers and foam shapes to share their stories on a square canvas.

- Activity 2 - Otara - Participants painted a white mask that represented their impression of the 'face of South Auckland'.

- Activity 3 – Manukau – Participants used creative writing as a tool to express their stories and perspectives of South Auckland.

After each storytelling activity, I reflected on the issues and challenges raised and which aspects were successful. As a result, I then planned how could I adapt the following activities to address these issues or challenges and how could I nurture the aspects that were successful. The following section discusses these issues and challenges in detail.

Participation

The first community storytelling activity was held at the Mangere East Festival where there many people were interested and excited about the project and what I was trying to achieve (refer to figure 20). Despite the large interest in the project, I noted that many adults were not willing to participate, even with encouragement. The lack of adult participants was disappointing. Although most adults were reluctant to participate, many were happy to share their thoughts and ideas using post-it notes, leaving some detailed and unexpected ideas.

Critically reflecting on the outcomes of the first storytelling activity, possible barriers for participation may have been the activity's layout, atmosphere, and materials provided. It could also be that the adults were self-conscious about their creative and artistic abilities. It became clear that the location, materials and participant selection became a very important dynamics that influenced the outcomes of each activity.

Upon critical reflection and observation I found that the materials provided had a significant impact on how each participant approached the activity and also the stories produced. This became clear with the children's stories as they were instinctively drawn to the dinosaur and heart foam shapes, although these materials were highly appealing to a younger audience which was the intent, they don't have much or any significance to South Auckland. Moving forward I had to be more conscious of the materials provided to participants, as they can be suggestive. With the second activity held in Otara I purposefully choose a suggestive material for the participants to work with, a white mask. The objective of this was for participants to express what they think "the face of South Auckland" is, and to question, from an insiders perspective, who represents South Auckland.

Moving forward, I decided to purposefully only recruit adult participants and specifically design the following creative storytelling activities to better suit them. It was at this point the project changed were it was a public project and became more of a private and personal journey as I only recruited people within my circle of family, friends and colleagues. Also the amount of participants in each activity reduced to make the experience more personal and intimate.

The next two creative storytelling activities had some success with the recruitment of only adult participants' the level of communication between participants increased and the work produced at the end of each activity had some eye-opening and contrasting results.

Figure 20: Brett, S (2016). Mangere East Festival – Storytelling Activity

Engagement between Researcher and Participants

During my first community storytelling activity at the Mangere East Festival, another issue was my lack of contact and engagement with participants within the activities. Although I was present throughout the entire period, due to the large number of participants (30-40) I did not get to spend as much time as I would have liked to connect with participants. This was a major issue for me; as I wanted to engage and be immersed in this journey with all the participants, to share their stories, gain knowledge and insight between each other and me (refer to figure 21). It became clear that this issue needed to be rectified, and the following two activities had significantly fewer participants. The storytelling activity held at Otara had a total of eight and the Manukau storytelling activity only consisted of three participants. This subtle shift in dynamics was extremely beneficial for the project as it allowed me to immerse myself in the creative storytelling journey with each participant. It was also beneficial for the participants involved, as they seemed to be more comfortable and conversational with one another, sharing stories and experiences, laughing and chatting, which I feel affected the work they produced as they inspired and encouraged one another.

Figure 21: Brett, S (2016). Researcher and Participant Engagement.

Self - Confidence of Participants

As previously mentioned, one of the possible reasons for the initial lack of adult participants could be self-confidence. The Community Planning Toolkit (2014) states that a weakness of using art and creative tools as a means to collect data can result or be affected by participant's confidence in their creative skills. Although I was aware of this issue, I accepted the risks involved and planned accordingly. I adapted and used tools and techniques where appropriate to assist in creating an environment where participants could openly share their stories with one another without being self-conscious.

For the second community storytelling activity held in Otara, I adapted the dynamics of the activity to try resolving the issue of being self- conscious, by recruiting participants that I knew personally such as family and friends. Although some participants did not know each other directly, they felt comfortable because the researcher became a common denominator, which helped create a safe environment. Participants were able to have an open dialogue and discussed what they were making; defusing anxieties of 'making' or 'creating' and everyone encouraged each other.

The openness within conversations between participants led to the verbal sharing of ideas, stories and perspectives, which from my view as a researcher seemed to have depth, but this observation was challenged after the workshop had finished. One of the participants contacted the researcher after the workshop and described in great depth what the motifs and visual representations meant within her mask. They had shared some of these details with the

group but this correspondence was on a more emotional and personal level that she had not shared with the group.

Although there was still tension in the second workshop, the atmosphere overall was consistently more open and engaging. Participants still seemed to be 'self-conscious' about sharing all their thoughts even in a safe and open environment. In an attempt to counter this in the final activity, I selectively chose creative writing as a means for participants to share their stories. This was done purposefully to try to lessen the feeling of self-consciousness as the participants selected already excelled in or enjoyed expressive and creative writing. The researcher met with three participants, giving them the same instructions as those from the previous storytelling activities. Participants discussed and brainstormed ideas and completed some creative writing together, but all participants took the work home to complete over a set period of time, and the stories were then collected later.

The creative writing exercise had its merits with interesting outcomes. Participants said they worked on their creative pieces on and off over time. This inspired new ideas with everyday experiences triggering new thoughts, such as images, smells, food, helping to inspire them, which could not have been achieved within the timeframe of the originally set activity.

Another beneficial aspect of this activity was using participants who were already comfortable or specialised in certain creative or artistic areas because they had the skills to achieve an output, reducing self-consciousness as well as being able to relate to and give a unique outlook.

The series of community storytelling through creative expression was only a glimpse at what the community has to express and share about South Auckland. As there were concerns that this research representing all of South Auckland, I want to make it clear that these stories only reflect a small proportion of the South Auckland community but gives a snapshot of South Auckland's unique nature, as individuals and as a collective (refer to figure 22).

Figure 22: Brett, S (2015-2016). Participants' Creative Expression.

Phase 3: Common Threads and Themes

This stage took a creative approach to qualitative data analysis, examining the stories and artwork collected for each activity. From this point onwards the project was no less co-created and more self-directed, as I used my experience as a designer to become a curator/narrator to analyse and share the stories of the participant's involved. Using visual mapping as a tool I laid out the post-it notes and creative stories and analysed and grouped data into common themes, motifs, words and phrases. (Refer to figure 23).

Figure 23: Brett, S (2015-2016). Data Analysis Process

There were many themes and ideas that surfaced throughout this process of analysis and realistically not all of these ideas can be incorporated into the final artefact. As a researcher and designer I had to question which of these themes and ideas where dominant but also which will assist in meeting the projects objectives, which are to use storytelling as a tool to share the identity, struggles and pride of the South Auckland community. I identified five main themes that were dominant throughout each activity.

- Diversity
- Family / 'Aiga / Whānau
- Perspective
- Community
- Home

Diversity:

Diversity was the most frequently used word; its essence was continuously woven and embedded throughout each community activity. This was also seen in the participants involved in each activity, with a diverse range of cultures, genders, ages, religions and beliefs (refer to figure 24).

Figure 24: Brett, S (2015-2016). Cultural Diversity of South Auckland

There was a big emphasis on culture as participant's creative stories expressed different forms of culture and religion by using familiar motifs in Pacific Island and Māori patterns; taniwha, henna patterns, hibiscus flowers, the holy cross and flower leis (refer to figure 24). These common motifs were used throughout the creative practice as inspiration for the final work. It is clear that the community themselves see South Auckland as rich in culture, as referred to by one participant in the Mangere East activity.

> *"South Auckland is full of Pasifika culture, which is now embracing Asians and Indians etc. There is respect between these races that is vital in creating a community that value each other and is united in doing what is best for everyone".*

Although diversity was a strong theme throughout all activities, there was also a strong reference of 'brown' or being of 'brown skin colour', such as Pacific Islander or Māori identity.

Jene Allen's (2015) exegesis "*Who represents the South Side?*" also shows that her participants identified 'brownness' (brown skin) as an identifier of belonging to South Auckland. Other participants within Allen's research added, "South Auckland, initially I would think that they are brown and Pacific Islander" and also "I think all brown people come from South Auckland" (p. 57).

In the Manukau storytelling activity, one participant expressed "the South is brown, rich Samoan koko, a smell that dominates a Samoan home on a cold night" and goes on to reference "crunchy brown hiapo, that line the walls of Tongan homes. Beautiful and brown Cook Island hair that frames a lovely tan face in the summer. Brown, Māori tiki". This reference to brown 'Samoan koko' that is commonly used with Pacific Island cultures for cooking and has a distinctive smell. Although South Auckland is referred to as culturally diverse, it is also considered predominantly 'brown' by its own community members.

Perspective

I found this to be the most honest, raw and thought-provoking theme that came out of the community activities, as participants were honest and open about the negative aspects of South Auckland, but also expressed that South Auckland is about pride, belonging and identity.

Figure 25: Brett, S (2016). Storytelling Activity – Otara Creative Stories (Masks).

The outcome from the Otara activities was a collection of stories (masks) that expressed a diverse, bright and colourful nature (refer to figure 25). While the participants explained their stories and perception of their community, a common theme became evident: that there are two sides to the community. These findings show a common artistic approach to the mask's layout, which was division; one side representing the negative connotations such as crime, gangs and violence, and the other side, positive aspects such as diversity, rich culture and religion.
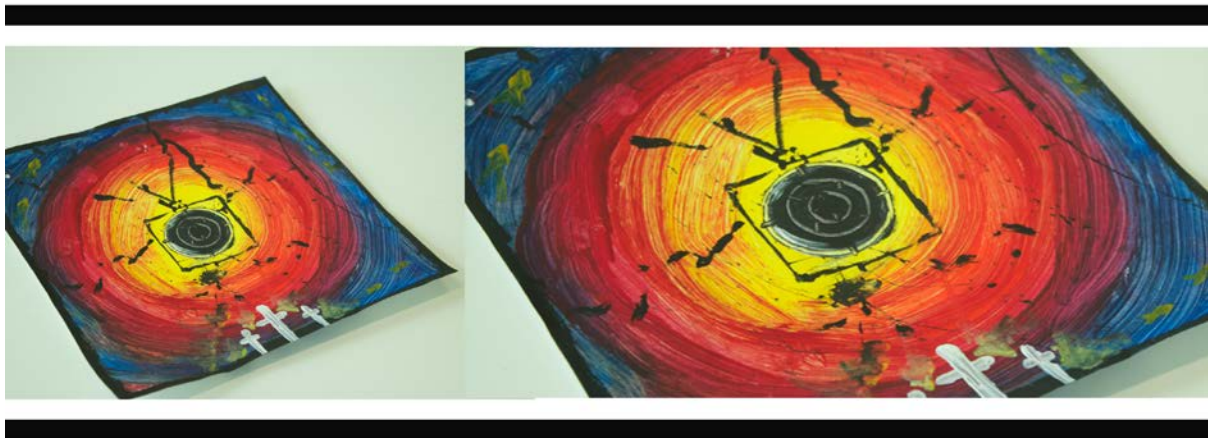

Figure 26: Brett, S (2016). Storytelling Activity – Mangere East Festival, Participants Creative Story.

One creative work produced during the Mangere East activity was a painting that represented how the media portray South Auckland (refer to figure 26). It is a series of circles, the centre being black with a black box around it - which the participant explained represents how the media portray only portray the dark and negative aspects of South Auckland such as crime. On the outside of the black box the circle becomes more vibrant with colours of yellow, orange, red and blue which represent the bright, vibrant and colourful nature of South Auckland that is often overshadowed. This painting has a cross motif which the participant explains represents "Christian religion which is common within the community".

Family / 'Aiga / Whānau

Family was a strong theme that surfaced throughout the community storytelling activities and through different forms of language such as Whānau (Māori) and 'Aiga (Samoan). The word 'family' came up multiple times in the post-it activity and a large proportion of artwork

produced by the younger audience at the Mangere East activity had people in them as representations of family. It was fascinating to see even from a young age, children have associated family with South Auckland.

Community

South Auckland has a strong sense of community and belonging, and it is fascinating to see this idea come through in participant's work both in writing and creative expression. This was clearly demonstrated during the post-it activity held at Mangere East where 'community' was a common word used. For example, one participant's work from the Manukau activity described South Auckland as "community, free youth events, whānau nights, raising awareness". There is a strong connection between family and community and this has become an important theme in the final artefact.

Home

A vast majority of the participants across all activities considered South Auckland to be their 'home' and are proud of where they are from. One participant from the Manukau activity mentioned home several times throughout her creative writing, expressing

> *"South of the border is a place I call home…my home is more than a place, I make my home where my heart is less weary…A space between hearts, unmarked boundaries of limitless potential"*

She continues to say

> *"This is where you are always safe, that place of renewal and quiet strength. That place that always recognises me. What I am worth. When I've forgotten everything that I might be and would never trust without knowledge. That I was loved first. That I was loved here and here is South. This is home."*

These words resonate with me personally as I have grown up in South Auckland, which is thought provoking as the participant who wrote this has only lived in New Zealand, specifically South Auckland, for just over one year. It was interesting to note that someone quite new to the South Auckland region feels and sees the community in this light.

Figure 27: Brett, S (2016). Participants' Creative Stories – Reflect Landscape and Home.

The younger audience in the Mangere East activity also made references to home, drawing landscapes, families and homes stating that their "community is home and it is special and beautiful" (refer to figure 27). The intriguing part for me is that throughout all the community activities there seemed to be a strong bond between the following three themes: family, community and home.

The five main themes of Diversity, Perspective, Family, Community and Home were themes that weaved in and out of each community activity, and suggested a strong connection between each is ingrained into South Auckland's nature.

CHAPTER THREE: CREATIVE PRACTICE

Chapter Three: Creative Practice - Design and Experimental Practice

This chapter outlines the experimental practice and final artefact. It discusses creative practice and uses the common themes, ideas and motifs that developed during the community storytelling activities as inspiration. The goal of the project was to use art and design practices, tacit knowledge, intuition and reflective practice as tools to find physical and tangible ways to reflect on the emerging themes of the research. The objective of this chapter is to explore the themes of diversity, family, home, community and perspective through the lens of a creative practitioner. This phase is highly explorative and experimental in nature; it integrates textiles, textile techniques and technology to invite the audience to interact with the work.

My background as a textile designer has led me to use my skills, tacit knowledge and intuition to guide this phase of exploration and experimentation. Polanyi (1966) describes tacit knowledge as "intangible knowledge that is typically intuitive and difficult to record, in other words it's knowledge that is in your head, or experience that you don't consciously know is there, but are able to use when solving problems". As a creative practitioner, I find I often unconsciously draw on tacit knowledge and intuition to make decisions throughout the creative process.

To integrate interactivity within the work I explored textiles, textile techniques, materials, technology, their qualities and their possible applications. As proposed earlier, when this research refers to 'technology' it is not just in the typical sense such as a digital element. I am referring to it from its definition that "derives from the Greek words techne "science of craft" and logia "art skill cunning of hands" (Liddell, George & Scott, 1980). The technology that is incorporated into each work reflects both modern and contemporary forms and is used either as an extra layer of information or a tool to get the viewer to physically or mentally interact with the artefact.

Polanyi (1966) also states that tacit knowledge is "typically intuitive and difficult to record". I recognise this issue and have used methods such as visual diaries and mood boards to document and reflect on my process. Jones (2011) explains "the design journal can be a tool

that weaves throughout the process, it operates in both interior and exterior stage of the design journey and may be seen as a weft that draws the process of thinking together" (p. 63). Rigorous documentation of the creative practice is vital as it allows me to critically reflect on my practice and visualise my process as a whole; it also gives viewers insight into the making and thought process of the final artefact (refer to figure 28).
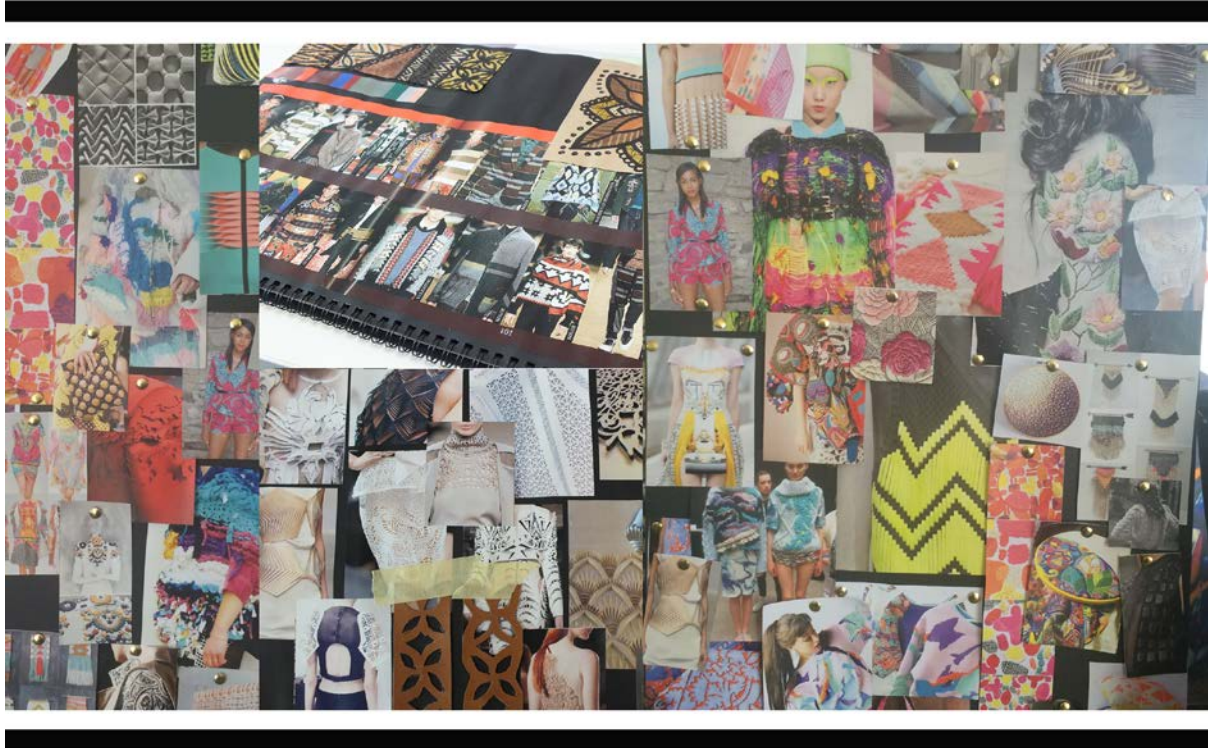

Figure 28: Brett, S (2016). Documentation Process – Mood Boards and Visual Diary.

Creative Practice – Development Samples

This section is broken down into the five themes: diversity, perspective family, community and home, it documents how these themes were explored and experimented with through motifs, textiles, technology and interaction.

Diversity

Diversity was the strongest theme as it was present throughout all storytelling activities, it can be seen in the creative stories and the diverse range of participants involved. Participants drew inspiration from the cultures of the South Auckland community and represented them through motifs such as taniwha, brown, hibiscus flowers, henna and Pasifika and Māori patterns. I have experimented with materials, textiles, motifs and technology to represent and showcase South Auckland's diverse nature (refer to figure 29).

Figure 29: Brett, S (2016). Creative Practice Exploring Cultural Motifs and Materials

The use of colour, patterns and motifs have been utilized to illustrate South Auckland's diverse range of cultures, drawing inspiration from the use of motifs within tapa design and the bright colours of tivaivai. According to the museum of Brisbane (2016) "tapa decorations include plant and animal motifs, clan and family patterning and representations of important contemporary and historical events". Using these traditional textiles as a reference I have hand drawn patterns and motifs that reflect the multi-cultural nature of South Auckland that have been incorporated into a series of contemporary and experimental textiles (refer to figure 30).

Figure 30: Brett, S (2016). Creative Practice Exploring Cultural Motifs.

One of the hand-drawn pieces created was manipulated into a digital printed textile that incorporates the use of Augmented Reality (AR), which is used on this printed textile as a form of interaction and an extra layer of information. Augmented Reality (AR) is described as "the integration of digital information with the user's environment in real time" (Rouse, 2016). The use of AR overlaid information, which reveals pictures of the activities and gives the viewer a glimpse into what happened, who was involved and the worked produced inspired the creation of this work (refer to figure 31). Moving forward, the final work integrates the hand drawn motifs with AR, the AR overlay creates movement and extension of the motifs, this symbolically represents the cultural growth of the South Auckland community.
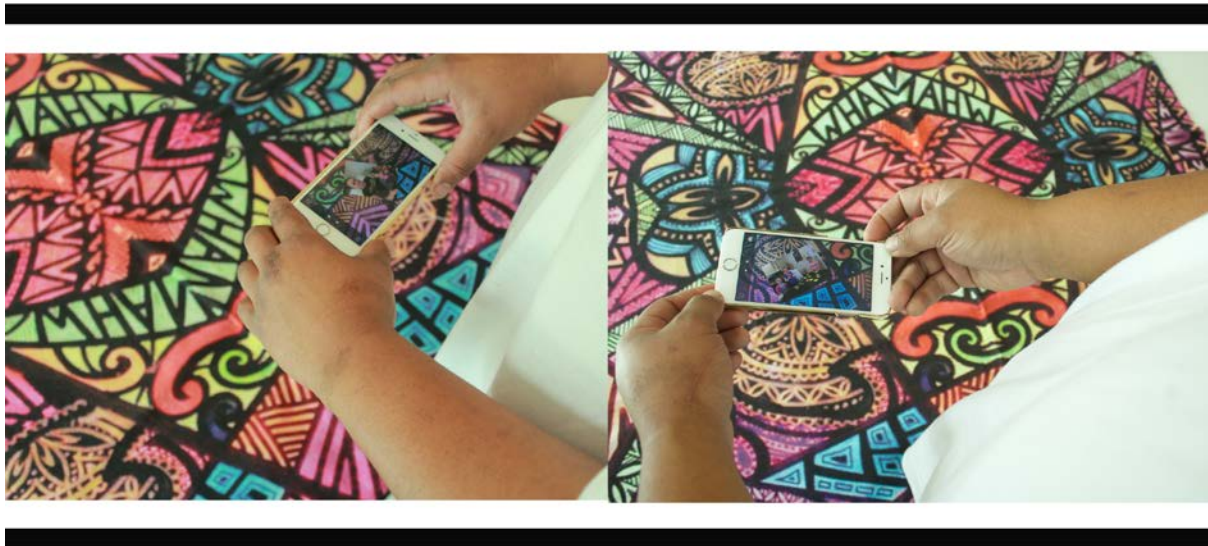

Figure 31: Brett, S (2016). Digital Print with Augmented Reality Overlay.

Although South Auckland has been labelled as culturally diverse by participants this was also challenged as South Auckland was also described as predominately brown (having brown skin). Focusing on the notion of brownness I purposefully chose materials, textiles and motifs that were associated with Pasifika or Māori culture such as flax, weaving, feathers, koko and Pasifika and Māori patterns (refer to figure 32).

The textiles created during this stage of experimentation all had unique tactile qualities that encourage the viewer to physically touch the work, but I wanted to incorporate an additional bodily sense – smell. Koko is a cooking ingredient that is used with Pasifika cultures and is commonly associated with South Auckland, using latex I created a textile that captures this

smell and if rubbed or interacted with the smell intensifies. Upon reflection, I decided the final work would incorporate Pasifika and Māori motifs, patterns and textiles in a traditional tactile sense and also use contemporary digital elements to distort images, which reflects this tension of South Auckland being both culturally diverse and predominantly brown.
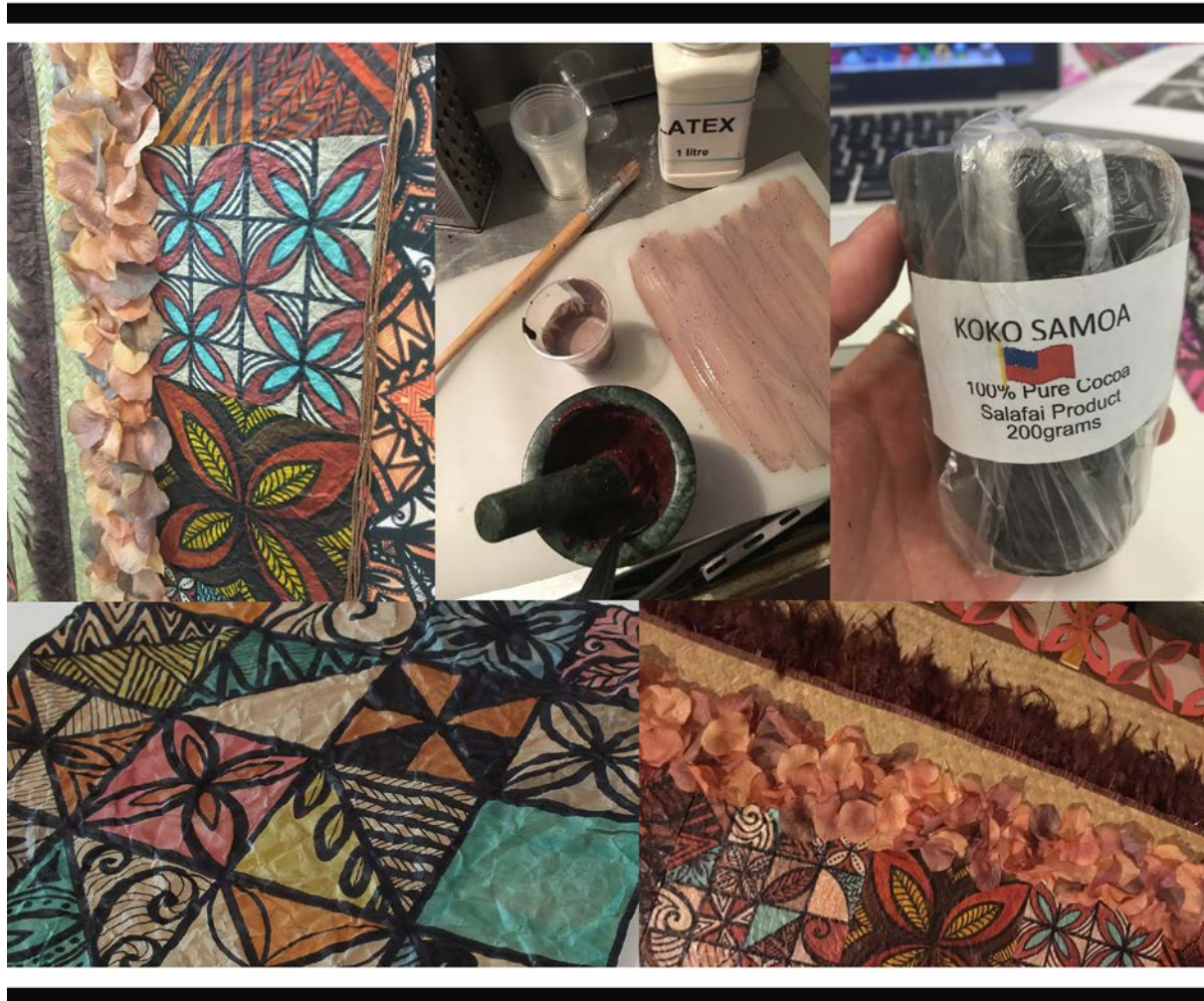

Figure 32: Brett, S (2016). Experimenting with "Brown" Pasifika and Māori Materials and Textiles.

Perspective

The theme perspective explored ways of altering imagery, which is how South Auckland often presented in the media. I used paper-folding techniques, similar to origami, which distorted the image when folded and revealed once paper was stretched out. The nature of this textile technique gave the audience multiple views of the image (refer to figure 33) and is inspired by how South Auckland has many perspectives but can often be misleading and only seen from one perspective. The way this textile technique distorts, hides and reveals certain aspects is what interests me but the physical movement of the textile could prove difficult. Drawing from this experiment the final work uses digital manipulation to create a print that plays on the notions of perspective and distortion and hide and reveal.

Figure 33: Brett, S (2016). Experimenting with Perspective through Origami Folding Technique.

As South Auckland is often viewed in a negative way and residents are labelled and stereotyped, this work explores these common stereotypes and labels associated with the South Auckland community. This work is a mirror that has the common stereotypes of South Auckland (gangster, Pacific Islander and Māori) painted on them so the viewer would look into the mirror and the reflection would be them wearing these stereotypes (refer to figure 34). The work does not shy away from the harsh realities of the South Auckland community and gets the viewer to step inside these stereotypes and understand and feel what these labels do to our community. After supervision meetings and peer-critique I found this work was too literal, the idea needed refining to become cohesive. The final work has incorporated reflective materials that are used to communicate these ideas of stereotypes combined with the hide and reveal aspects.
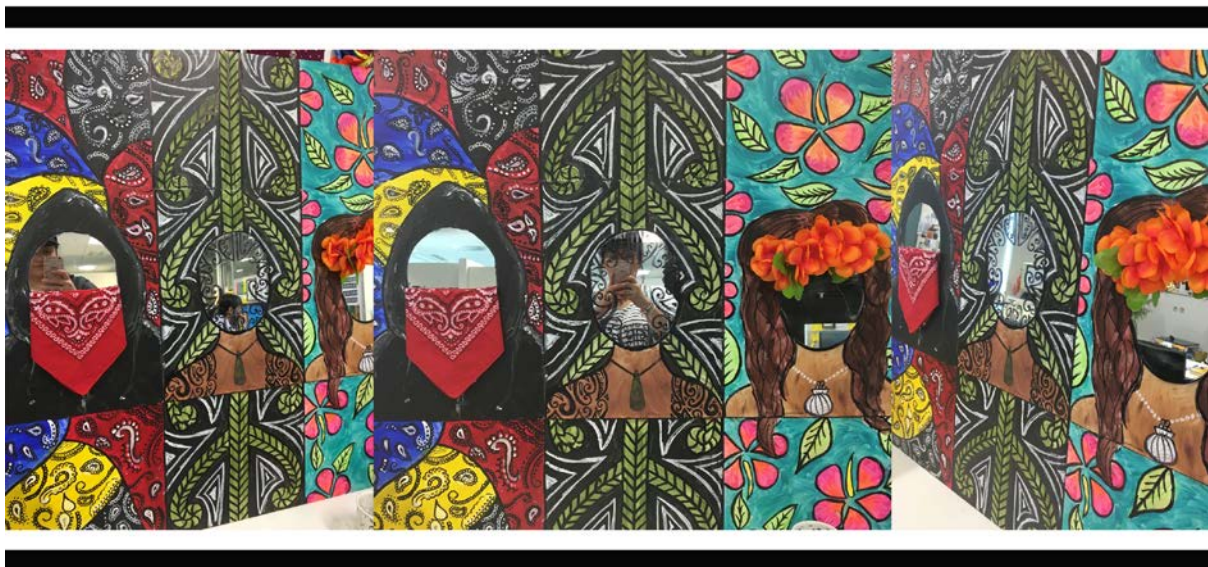

Figure 34: Brett, S (2016). Experimenting with Perspective through Mirrored Stereotypes.

Family / Community / Home

Through the community engagement, it was evident there was a strong connection between the themes of family, community and home. These themes are often signals of belonging, identity and coming together, important aspects to take forward into my creative practice. To reflect these ideas, I used motifs of the landscape and the words family, whānau and ʻAiga and digitally stitched them together into a printed fabric. I also explored the technique of weaving using multiple types of fabric, textiles that represented our family, our home and our

community coming together as one to share our stories of South Auckland (refer to figure 35).

Figure 35: Brett, S (2016). Experimentation of Weaving.

Through the creative process I came to the decision that the final work should be a singular textile work that incorporates all five themes. Although each participant shared their own individual stories, knowledge and perspective the aim of this project was to share the community's stories, knowledge and perspective as a collective. This physical idea of coming together relates back to my traditional textile inspiration tivaivai, which is well known as a community centred activity that also represents identity and a way of thinking. I have incorporated tivaivai techniques such as applique and embroidery as a means of communication and expression of the ideas discussed above. Having a singular textile work would allow it to be easily transported and displayed both in and out of South Auckland for people to interact and engage with.

Creative Practice – Final Artefact

The final artefact had an interesting process that drew inspiration from the themes shaped by the community storytelling activities. The design aesthetics were inspired by Pasifika textiles, the bold outline were based on a modern version of a tapa cloth and the bright colours were stimulated by Cook Island tivaivai (Refer figure 36). An important aspect of this project was to give the South Auckland community a voice; through the creative process I became the narrator and used my knowledge and experience as a designer to curate the themes and stories into the final textile.
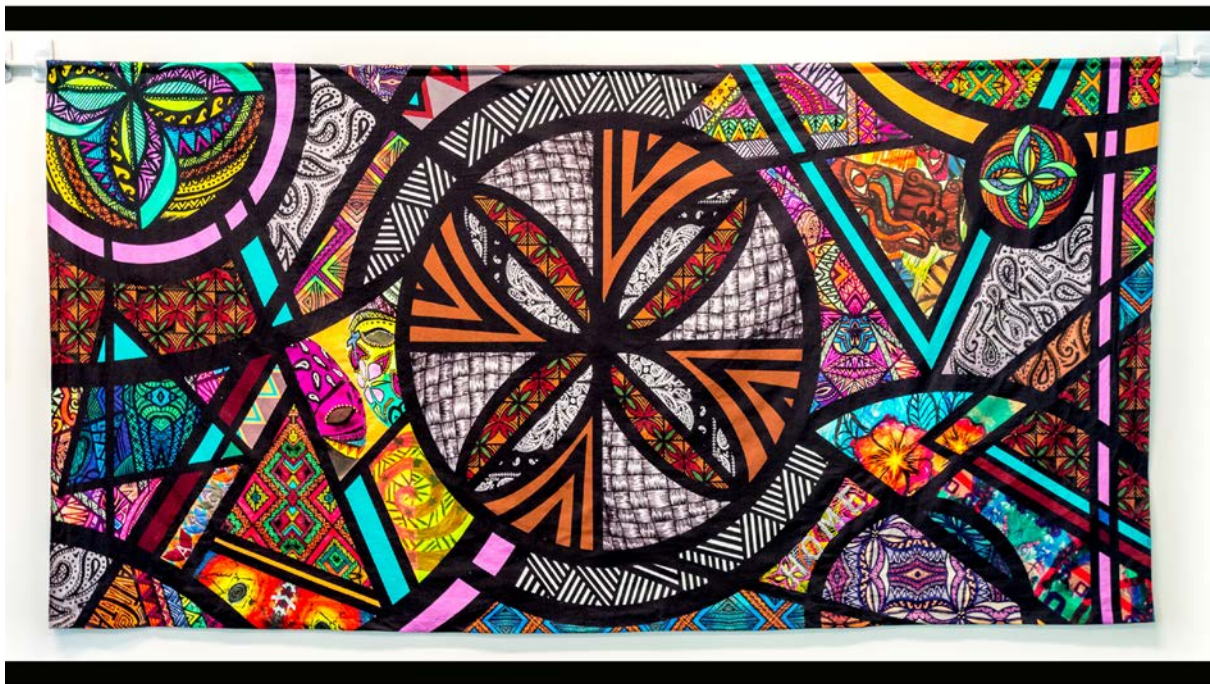

Figure 36: Marks, S (2016). South Side Pride Final Textile Wall Hanging.

The final textile was created digitally by incorporating hand drawn artwork created by myself and also participant's work created during the community activities. The artwork selected for the final artefact from both the participants work and myself was carefully selected to represent the 5 dominant themes discussed. This was a time consuming process as the textile was built digitally layer by layer, with a total of over 80 layers (refer to figure 37).
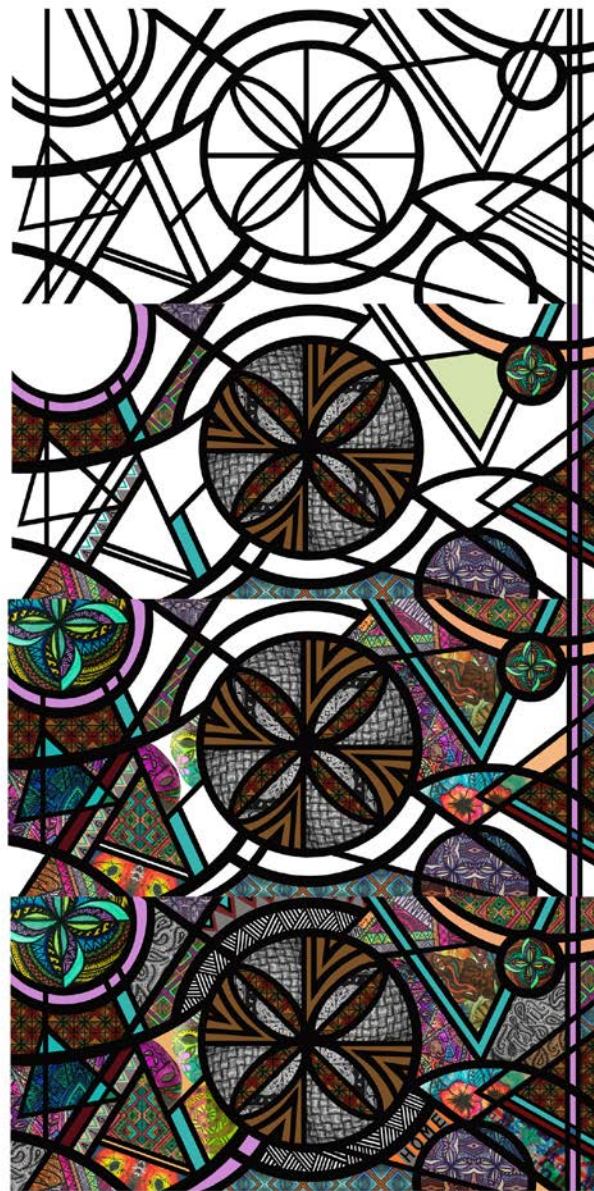
Figure 37: Brett, S (2016). Process of Digital Creation.

Once the digital design was completed it was then digitally printed onto artist cotton canvas as this material provided the stiffness and colour saturation to be visually striking but also easily transportable and physically interactive. The next step was to use the textile techniques and technology explored throughout the development section as tools to invite and trigger interaction of the audience.

Incorporating forms of technology and textile techniques were employed to encourage interaction and also a means to adding hiding and revealing additional themes and stories from the community activities. This can be seen with the stitching completed with reflective yarn, where images or words are revealed when you take a photo with the camera flash on (Refer to figure 38)This metaphorically symbolises the theme "perspective" that often these great characteristics of South Auckland can often go unseen, that if you take the time to look a little closer interesting aspects may reveal themselves. Embroidery and beading were also applied to the wall hanging to add a 3D element that encourages the viewer to touch, feel and experience the work on a tactile level. (Refer to figure 39).
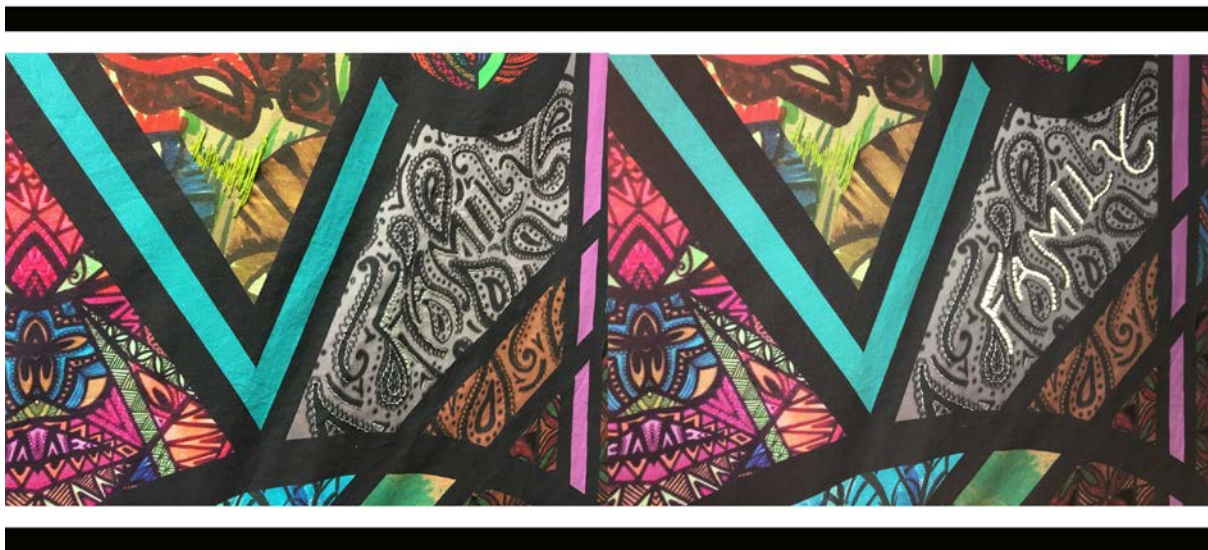

Figure 38: Brett, S (2016). Reflective Yarn both with and without camera flash on.
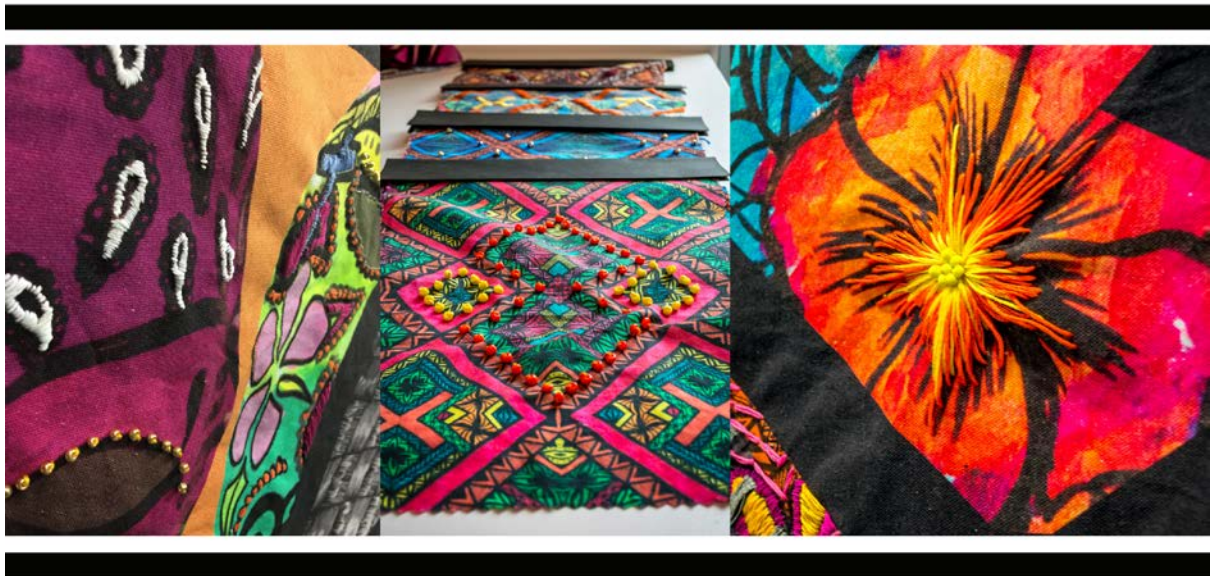
Figure 39: Marks, S (2016). Embroidery and Beading.

During the development stage of the creative process a sample of koko latex was developed that held the smell of koko and when rubbed the smell would increase. This sample was also incorporated into the final wall hanging as it was a familiar smell associated with the cultural demographic of the community and offered an interesting mode of interaction through smell. (Refer to figure 40).

Figure 40: Marks, S (2016). Latex Koko Samples.

Augmented Reality has been applied to the final wall hanging as a tool to get the audience to explore the work. With the use of the I-pad or smart phone hovered over the textile certain areas have markers that have additional stories embedded into them that can only be seen and experienced through the use of the I-pad or smart phone. The markers embedded into the physical textile are both small and large which encourages the audience to explore the space and the textile. (Refer to figure 41). This stage within the practice I found quite difficult as the software, techniques and applications used I was not familiar with, although this process was challenging and wasn't able to achieve every aspect I wanted due to financial and time restraints I was extremely pleased with the outcome. Using augmented reality as a tool to communicate with the audience is great as it is often technology that most people are unfamiliar with that gives the advantage of gaining the interest of the audience.
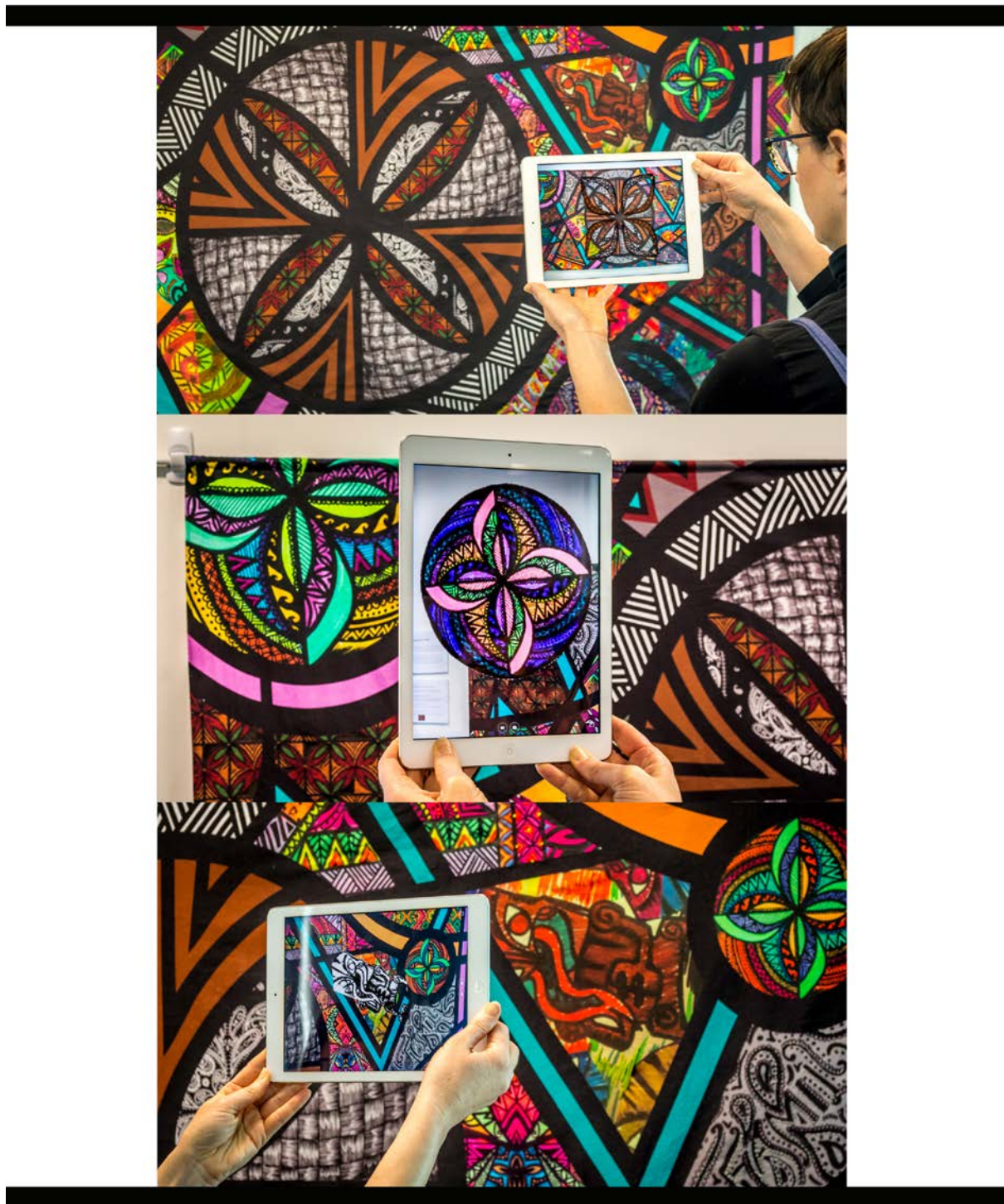
Figure 41: Marks, S (2016). Audience Interacting using Augmented Reality.

The main purpose of the final artefact was to share the stories and themes of the South Auckland community. I feel the use of the textile techniques and technology assisted and encouraged the audience to explore and experience the stories and journey of this project. Although not all the initial interactive elements were applied, this project has great potential for further development. In the future I would like to hold further workshops where the final

wall hanging is taken back into South Auckland and the community is invited to add and share their stories through stitching and augmented reality. I feel this is a great opportunity to give back to my community. These workshops will be designed so that I can share my knowledge and skillset to teach the community how to use and create images for augmented reality and embroidery.

Conclusion

This project has aimed to share the stories and perspectives of the South Auckland community using traditional and contemporary forms of textiles and technology. A key objective has been the practice of creating a contemporary textile work as a platform to give the South Auckland community a voice and to share its unique nature.

Using an Action Research framework has allowed the project to grow and mature through practice. This approach gave me the opportunity to analyse and reflect on successes, issues and challenges, and enabled me to adapt the project to address these. This can clearly be seen through the engagement with the community through the storytelling activities, as the dynamics of these activities were adapted according to the development of both the research and practice elements of the project. Using this framework created an equal partnership between myself and the South Auckland community, letting the participant's experiences, stories and perspectives guide each phase of the research process.

The process and outcomes of the phases of the project indicate the importance of building awareness and understanding around the South Auckland community, to showcase and share our community's unique nature. The perspectives of the participants involved gives the viewer a snapshot of South Auckland's identity, both as individuals and as a collective. It captures the core principles of South Auckland's identity: diversity, perspective, family, community and home. It is imperative to share these principles of South Auckland and showcase them, as they are often overshadowed by negative perceptions. I aim to present the final work in multiple locations both in South Auckland and in the wider Auckland area in the later part of 2016.

Using storytelling as a foundation has opened up my practice to endless means of collecting and representing stories. Although this project is based around South Auckland, it can be used as a platform for future practice, where the framework and methods applied can be adapted and used for any community-based project. The significance of using community storytelling within my creative practice is that it has given the South Auckland community a voice, which provides an opportunity to create change. This research does not shy away from South Auckland's struggles but embraces them as part of its unique nature.

Although the research elements applied were the foundation of this project, it was through practice that the work developed, changed and evolved. This collaborative and practice-led approach has allowed the stories of the South Auckland community guide my creative practice.

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