

*Interwoven Dress Cultures  
of Aotearoa*

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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 written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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## ***Abstract***

The aim of this thesis is to analyse, design and produce a trans-seasonal<sup>1</sup> daywear collection of women's contemporary fashion garments that reflect aspects of Aotearoa<sup>2</sup>. Specific influence has been drawn from an investigation of wahine in relation to their acceptance and subsequent adaptation of European dress, during the transitional period<sup>3</sup> of 1800-1900 in Aotearoa.

Interwoven within the contextual framework, this exegesis supports the creative body of work by exploring two main aspects. Firstly there are the theoretical, historical and cultural issues surrounding the relationship of dress and social belonging together with the association of adornment and Maori identity. Secondly there is the notion of accessing and using the community as research and knowledge sources, material suppliers and as individual collaborative contributors to the project. The project sits within the paradigm of creative research and not only encompasses heuristic methodology within the studio environment, but leading up to that stage of the project, utilises resources from within the community as a framework for research enquiry.

Identifying the potential for dress with a fusion of ideas and cross-cultural exchange, between Victorian European and Maori dress, a range of key design criteria relating to the inspired innovative designs has been identified. This has provided the opportunity for an eclectic mix of contemporary materials and fibres, to be used to design and create a trans-seasonal garment collection, informed by the resulting analysis of the interwoven issues explored in the exegesis.

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<sup>1</sup>'Trans-seasonal' is a term describing a collection that blurs into another season. This term is commonly used in collections aimed at a more global fashion community.

<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa: Land of the long white cloud. The English translation of all subsequent Maori words appear in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> For convenience, historians have divided the period into three stages

Classical Maori period – 1650 to 1800

Transitional period 1800 – 1900

Modern Maori period – 1900 to present day (Mead, H. M. 1999. p. 34)

## Introduction



Figure 1: Portrait of sisters Agnes and Laura dressed in Victorian dress circa 1886  
From artists private collection

The photograph of my great-great Aunts Agnes and Laura (fig.1) is captivating, as it exposes elements of the bi-cultural society as it was for Maori woman in the late 1800s. Although their mother was from Ngati Tuwharetoa<sup>4</sup> iwi and their father, an English immigrant, these women were given English names at birth, signifying a willingness by the family to merge into European society.

The photograph portrays the subjects clothed in classic Victorian dress, typically complexly structured, with high collared blouses and elements of lace. Their hair is styled accordingly to suit the European style of the times, and the adornment consists of Victorian jewellery in the form of gold brooches worn at the neck and finger rings. It is not only their facial features and thick black hair that signify their Maori heritage, but also the glimpse of a kiwi feather cloak on the arm of the chair, an indication of their Maori identity. I have no way of knowing the circumstances relating to the placement of the cloak. We can only assume that the cloak was either placed purposely by the subjects or the photographer.

As a starting point for my project, it was significantly appropriate to access such a thought

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<sup>4</sup> The Ngati Tuwharetoa region extends from Te Awa o te Atua (Tarawera River) at Matata across the central plateau of the North Island to the lands around Mount Tongariro and Lake Taupo.

provoking photograph from my own personal family album. The story of my tupuna awakened images of transformation of dress, and I saw this as not only being historically significant in the history of dress in Aotearoa, but also in terms of this project, a catalyst for a personally creative journey of visual and functional explorations, leading on to historical and culturally inspired design insights.

If we were to fast forward from the 1800s to the present - the global success of Aotearoa high fashion in the last 12 years has been a surprise to the international fashion community (Molloy, 2004). Molloy<sup>5</sup> states that Aotearoa is seen globally as having a contemporary image, and an ability to approach design that challenges the conventional trends that are forecast quarterly to international fashion markets.

Molloy investigates the image of Aotearoa fashion as seen by a more global community and questions the contradiction of “*how a tiny country, more noted for its spectacular scenery and numerous sheep, could produce ‘from nowhere’ a cutting-edge fashion industry* (Molloy, 2004).”

While some international critics may see this as a paradox, the term ‘*from nowhere*’ has little substance when viewed from an Aotearoa perspective. Artists, film-makers and writers, of both European and Maori cultural descent, draw inspiration from our rich history interwoven with cultural fusion and diversity, making this apparent paradox surely incorrect.

My personal involvement with the fashion industry has revealed factors that support Molloy’s findings. Within our fashion industry, our designers are influenced by European fashion to some extent because we are one season behind northern hemisphere fashion centres in terms of collection releases. This fashion ‘forecast’ assists designers to observe trends, silhouettes and styling prior to seasonal range development here. Another factor is that as an island nation, with a strong Pacific cultural influence, artists and designers are influenced by their relationship with land and sea, flora and fauna. I have also observed that because our climate is cool in comparison to that of Australia, our designers exhibit strong winter collections with high wool content comparable to the high-end winter collections seen on the catwalks of Europe.

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<sup>5</sup>At the time the article was written Maureen Molloy was Professor of Women’s Studies at the University of Auckland. She was co-director of “the Fashion Project” a multidisciplinary study of the New Zealand Fashion Industry.

Reflecting on my childhood in the fifties, I recall using a black Singer sewing-machine to create my own garments. To buy ready-made was a financial impossibility for most working-class families, hence a high level of sewing and knitting skills prevailed within most homes during the decades prior to the availability of cheaper clothing here post 1980. The high level of skills passed on through generations prior to the availability of cheaper clothing imports, I consider to be a major contributor to our positioning within the international fashion community. Government initiatives for creative industries and designer innovation have also contributed to the success and sustainability of our fashion industry.

There is no doubt that there has been remarkable success and growth within our high-end fashion industry. Molloy's research into the collections of 1997-2001 however points towards an absence of traditional design motifs of indigenous people of Aotearoa, "*instead they exhibited a cosmopolitan pastiche that was deeply marked by both irony and nostalgia for a European past.*" In the past eight years however there has been some acknowledgement from an inspired fashion community to support and encourage designers to apply historically, culturally and ecologically inspired elements from Aotearoa, into their creations. Recognised for showcasing Aotearoa's raw and indigenous fashion style, Westfield Style Pasifika, an annual competition for emerging designers is one of the few national events which create a platform for not only edgy contemporary fashion design, but also translations of our bi-cultural history.

This project therefore, was to research, analyse and experiment with design that could not only reflect on our European past, but also embrace the richness of our Maori cultural heritage. A challenging aspect of the project was to ensure that the resulting collection of garments could sit well within a contemporary context.

The research, being practice-based, encompasses both systematic and reflective processes, culminating in the production of the main body of work. The supporting text not only examines contextual issues relating to the design influences surrounding the project, but also draws attention to the sensitivity and sustainability of culture and identity of Aotearoa.

In Chapter 1, which is a review of visual and literature resources, I discuss my involvement with the Whanganui Regional Museum. Using the museum as a key research resource, I examine Victorian dress and analyse the artefacts, discuss influences affecting wahine and their acceptance of European dress. Historical photographs of wahine, obtained from the museum collections, are studied with further discussion on dress adaptation and adornment.

The findings of my investigation of Maori cloaks at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington and the Whanganui Regional Museum are discussed. Throughout the chapter I have explored cultural and social issues affecting wahine during the transitional period of the 1800s. The conclusion of the chapter exposes the design criteria which have been formulated from key elements selected from the critical analysis of the artefacts and surrounding issues that have been explored.

The garment range developmental plan is explained at the beginning of Chapter 2. The methods of accumulation of materials gathered from mainly regional and other suppliers are outlined and the individual fabrics examined. Accessories to be displayed with the garments such as belts, accessories and fastenings are included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 explores the methodologies applied to the project defined by an analogy, creative research and practice, concluding with the production of the collection.

Chapter 4 examines the studio production of the garments. Earlier works are included and analysed. Experimentation and final production of the different types of garments are examined. Evaluations of different stages of studio practice, where applicable, together with critical outcomes, are presented.

Chapter 5, the conclusion of the thesis, summarizes the progress which has been made in achieving the aims of the research. New discoveries relating to the project outcomes are presented.

## Chapter 1: Review of Visual and Literature Resources

### *European and Traditional Maori Dress*

This chapter is an investigation of visual and literature resources. The purpose of this chapter is to explore and analyse contexts surrounding early European and traditional Maori dress. The information researched was used to identify key design elements, materials and processes for the development of the collection.

The thesis makes reference to ‘Victorian’ and ‘European’ fashion depending on the context. The Victorian era extended from 1837 to 1901. The Edwardian period merges into this era, with the timeline being classified as 1895 to 1914 (Thomas, P.W). Where I have made reference to European clothing or influence, I am acknowledging that immigrants also arrived in Aotearoa from other parts of the world and therefore were not necessarily influenced by British Victorian societal values. The term ‘Victorian’ has been used where I feel that these values have had bearing on the context of the topic being explored, or as a description of the classification of dress.

In Valerie Steele's <sup>6</sup> article aptly named “A museum of fashion is more than a clothes bag”, she discusses her belief in the benefits of material culture methodologies in regard to fashion research. Steele further suggests that “*of all the methodologies used to study fashion history, one of the most valuable is the interpretation of objects which provides unique insights into the historic and aesthetic development of fashion*” (Steele, 1998. p.327). I have discussed this further in Prown’s analysis in Chapter 3.

It was therefore, the Victorian garments stored in the textile section of the Whanganui Museum<sup>7</sup> that were of most value to my research because I was able to handle the garments rather than being restricted to observation from a distance. With assistance from the curator, Michelle Horwood, I was permitted to photograph the inside of the garments and record details of interest that would be relevant to the design process of my project.

I examined components of two-piece outfits (fig.1.1, fig.1.2, fig.1.3 and fig.1.4), consisting of

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<sup>6</sup> At the time that this article was written (1998), Steele was the chief curator of The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, USA, and Editor of *Fashion Theory*.

<sup>7</sup> The Whanganui Regional Museum, founded in 1892, has extensive collections of human and natural history with a distinct regional emphasis. It is renowned for its outstanding collection of Maori taonga and Lindauer portraits.

a bodice and matching skirt, which were typical of mid to late 19th century Victorian gowns. They were considered to be 'special occasion' outfits and according to the curator, possibly wedding dresses. The garments were carefully held open to enable me to view and photograph the '*soul*' or the interior surfaces of the garments. This double sided view of the garments revealed practical construction considerations such as wide seam allowances which were to allow room for alteration and an indication that the garments would possibly have extended use. Impractical elements were exposed in others, such as restrictive structure and complex fastenings. Beneath the outer dress one could imagine a more layered arrangement of undergarments, corsetry and petticoats.



Figure 1.1: Inside view of a Victorian bodice, showing hand tacking and machined stitching. An internal belt with a London label, wide seam allowances. Fabric is silk.



Figure 1.2: Shaped bodice with pleated panel detail, on either sides of centre front fastenings. Covered buttons (hook behind) and hand-stitched eyelets on left-hand side for fastening. Fabric is silk.



Figure 1.3: Centre front fastenings of concealed hooks on inside beneath buttons covered with the outer fabric. This garment is lined with a finer silk with an internal waist tie caught into the side seam. There is a significant play on the striped silk fabric. The direction of the stripe has been altered for added effect through the panels.



Figure 1.4: Pleat detail on heavy silk skirt. The skirt is tiered and the pleats are deep making the skirt very heavy. There is significant fading to the outer surface of the skirt. There is no way of knowing the original depth of colour.

My research has been targeted towards gaining insights around the study of women's dress

worn in Aotearoa by European and introduced in part to Maori women in the 1800s. These gowns were special occasion garments and if worn by wahine, would have been for special occasions or photographic portraits. These garments have lasted because they are made of heavy silk. Imported cottons that were starting to filter in from 1850 onwards were probably more commonly used by Maori for structured garments. Cotton fibre, unfortunately breaks down in a relatively short time in comparison to heavy silk, therefore it is unlikely that any such garments are in existence today. Although my research has been targeted towards gaining insights into dress worn by wahine in Aotearoa during the 1800s, the exploration of Victorian dress is relevant to the surrounding issues examined in this chapter.

Tranberg Hansen<sup>8</sup> (2004) explores the notion of the dressed body as being

*“a site of convergence for translational, global, urban and local forces. The subjective and social experiences of dress are not always mutually supportive but may contradict one another or collide. Dress readily becomes a flashpoint of conflicting values, fuelling contests in historical encounters, in interactions across class, between genders and generations”* (Tranberg Hansen, 2004, p. 3).

She refers to dress as having a dual quality because it both touches the body and faces outward, thus inviting exploration between these two experiences of dress. Using the Victorian gown as an example, one could critically analyse the ‘*duality*’ of the garments. Facing outward, the gown, once donned, tied, applied and fastened would appear to signify a sense of completion, and thus display the outward serenity as would be the demeanour of a Victorian lady. If one were to examine the inward facing layer, however, between gown and skin would be layers of undergarments, petticoats, a corset and bustle. Contradictory to the genteel Victorian lady facing outward is the turmoil created from the complexity of the restricted structural garments beneath or facing inwards. I have discussed this notion further in Chapter 3, the methodology discussion of object analysis.

From my examination of the Victorian garments, I was influenced by the interior and exterior surfaces and structures within the garments. The silhouette of the ‘fashion’ era was considered. The following features were noted for re-interpretation and transformation into the contemporary garments to be exhibited:

Various silks, exposed seams, hand stitching, covered buttons, pleating (crisp and soft), high necklines, linings, cloth belts and plays on stripe direction.

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<sup>8</sup> At the time that this article was written (2004), Karen Tranberg Hansen was affiliated to the Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Illinois.



## *Historical Photographs of Wahine*

One of the more interesting areas of exploration within this thesis was the critical analysis of European garments and their subsequent adaptation to meet the needs of Maori women, which I will refer to as wahine, immersed within the colonial society of Aotearoa.

Photographs of wahine, taken from the end of the 1800's to the early 1900's, show the subjects dressed in combinations of both European and Maori clothing and adornment reflective of both cultures. There is a rich body of visual evidence of this cultural interweaving, available to the public through the museums and galleries of Aotearoa.

Although restricted in the material that I could reference in this thesis, due to iwi protocol and ownership issues, I was given permission to select from individual photographs that were held in the photographic collections of the Whanganui Regional Museum.

Collectively the photographs of wahine fall into one of three categories:

- Formal studio portraits for family or group purposes
- Studio portraits for 'postcard' imagery
- Candid photographs

The photographs presented in this thesis fall into one of the above categories and for purposes of my research analysis, I have identified the genre in order to relate to the different social contexts that may be relevant to the design analysis.

During the years of colonization, there evolved an international curiosity in Aotearoa. There was not only an influx of tourists in the late 19th century, but it was also a time when photographic and painted portraits of Maori were in demand by both the artists and the subjects themselves. These were the formative years of tourism when there was a curiosity about the new colony of Aotearoa, resulting in images of wahine being circulated around the world. This is further discussed at beginning of the 'Kākahu' section, on page 16.

The photographs (fig.1.5 & fig.1.6) appear to be *formal studio portraits* taken for family purposes. The European influence is obvious in one image given her surname (fig.1.6), indicating the presence of a European father and Maori mother. Both subjects are dressed in typically Victorian garments, full skirts and long sleeved upper garments. Around their necks are scarves, knotted or held with a brooch, a feature of Maori dress that still remains today and more commonly worn by kuia (Maori women, elders) during formal occasions.



Figure 1.5: Young Maori woman in European dress with huia feather in her hair circa 1890 M/P/W/97  
Photographer unknown



Figure 1.6: Portrait of Miss Jury circa 1890 M/P/W/47  
Photographer unknown

In the following images, I have added enlarged details of the above photographs. The adornment appears to be a combination of both European and Maori identity. The huia feather (fig. 1.7), the neck-tie (fig.1.8), a pounamu brooch and tiki (fig.1.8 and fig1.9) attached to neck-tie and worn at waist. There is also Victorian jewellery visible in these images, a brooch at the neck and a gold waist belt (fig.1.9).



Figure 1.7: huia feather in hair



Figure 1.8: gold brooch at neck, Victorian fashioned pounamu and gold brooch holding scarf in place



Figure 1.9: Victorian gold belt, pounamu tiki worn at waist

These images, therefore, reveal a consistency for wahine at that time to retain a signal of their cultural identity although fully clothed in European dress. During the research process I examined many formal studio portraits and photographs of wahine displayed at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, the Whanganui Regional Museum and via internet sources. While the subjects were clothed in European dress, there was always the signal of Maori identity visible in the form of a cloak, pounamu, or feathers. In museum-based research, these items are categorised as artefacts. When worn in the context of accessorising European dress, these items become an integral part of the identity of the subjects.

In the studio group photograph (fig. 1.10) believed to be taken in a local Whanganui studio, the young men and women are totally clothed from neck to ankle. The women are wearing woven piupiu over Victorian petticoats. They are adorned with huia and other feathers in their hair. Below this image I have included enlarged areas of detail.



Figure 1.10: Whanganui poi team circa 1900 M/P/G/36 Photographer unknown



Figure 1.11: Flax piupiu worn over cotton lace petticoat



Figure 1.12: Victorian blouse, gathered toward neck, lace ruffle detail



Figure 1.13: Victorian blouse, Buttoned detail

These images reveal the strong influence that the new moral society had on these young Maori people. Although we have no way of knowing the circumstances surrounding this powerful photograph (fig. 1.10), there appears a sense of disquiet and control amongst the subjects. One can only speculate that the photographer, the studio situation, the clothing or possibly a Christian teacher may have influenced their anxiety.

Christian thinking created a direct link between clothing the body and re-educating the mind (Cory-Pearce, 2005), in this case the minds of Maori. Cory-Pearce discusses the notion that the covering up of skin in restrictive garments, controlling posture and limiting movement could have been seen as *“body modification that inculcated certain Christian ideals of bodily concealment and psychological and sexual inhibition, in line with understandings of moral righteousness and purity”* (Cory-Pearce: 2005 pp.75&76).

Mead's<sup>12</sup> (1999) analysis of the integration of Maori into the European system, suggests adjustments and adaptations being made by Maori, to changes in their institutions of economics, politics, education, law and religion. He suggests that as early as 1769 with the arrival of whalers, sealers, traders, convicts, to be followed by missionaries and permanent settlers, Maori traditional dress changed rapidly. He suggests that Maori exhibited a curiosity of garments being worn in a different way, *“.....where Maori clothes were wrapped around the body, European clothes were designed to be climbed into”* (Mead:1999 p.43) .

Blankets began to be used as substitutes for cloaks, until gradually the European clothing choices, dominated Maori dress. Woollen blankets were far more functional as far as protecting the body, of satisfying the new moral code and were an item that would substitute for a coat (Mead, 1999). Meads discussion in relation to blankets as clothing was an area worthy of exploration. This took into consideration garments without fastenings, envelopment of the body, functionality and adaptability of the garment affecting the way it was to be worn.

Other aspects affecting Maori dress and associated skills were the adaptation to new cloth, the establishing of settlements, growing economies and the different domestic needs. The importation of fabrics from London and Manchester, to be followed by

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<sup>12</sup> Dr Hirini Moko Mead, of Ngati Awa, Tuwharetoa and Tuhourangi tribal descent, is an international leader in Oceanic art. He was foundation professor of Maori Studies at Victoria University and is a prominent writer and commentator.

fabrics from China and India, was evolving from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Related to the availability of cloth were the skills such as needlework and embroidery being introduced to young Maori women throughout the mission schools (Cory-Pearce, 2005).

Apart from the influence of missionaries strengthening the dress transition, my investigation supported other factors contributing to Maori acceptance of European cloth. A factor that bore relevance to changes in dress, apart from missionary intervention, was the continual integration and intermarriage between Maori and European cultures. If one was to examine historic documentation and the whakapapa of certain groups, for example, whalers, there is clear evidence of the high incidence of intermarriage. An example of this pattern of ancestry has been an obvious trait in my own family. The dominance of European male dominated families, positions the influence of societal change and European dress back beyond 1840. Therefore the missionary movement was further fortifying social values that had already been established in some groups. One of the more interesting areas of exploration within this thesis was the critical analysis of the use of European garments and cloth and their adaptation to meet the needs of the women of the Maori society as witnessed in historical photographs from the Whanganui Regional Museum.

The *candid* photograph (fig. 1.14), was influential in shaping the mood and design direction of the collection. Unlike the formal poses of studio portraits examined previously (fig. 1.5, fig 1.6 & fig 1.10), these subjects appear to be clothed informally, comfortably and enjoying the moment. The Victorian influence, in regard to materials is apparent with the group of Maori women, but the application of dress is notably less restricting than actual Victorian dresses examined from the Whanganui Regional Museum collections. The skirts (fig. 1.15 & fig 1.16) are simply cut and gathered, possibly from recycled garments or created from imported cottons.

There is clearly the presence of layered embellishment from the waist, possibly as a representation of piupiu or feathers on the first skirt (fig.1.15). The fabric itself either carries a feather pattern or is actually embellished with feathers, possibly an indication of prestige or rank. The second skirt (fig1.16) is made from different panels of fabrics suggesting modification or recycling of existing garments. The bodice (fig.1.17) is a loosely fitting long-sleeved Victorian blouse (bears a strong resemblance to a man's shirt) worn with a neck scarf.





Figure 1.14: Group of Maori women In European dress circa 1900s M/P/G26 Photographer unknown

The circumstances surrounding this happy group of women, caught so candidly on camera, remains a mystery, however I would like to suggest that as the transformation of dress evolved, there remained a sense of fashioned individuality and creativity amongst Maori. Importantly this presence of artistic imaginativeness was also apparent in the cloaks that I examined and proceed to explore in the following section.



Figure 1.15: gathered skirt, with feather embellishment



Figure 1.16: gathered skirt made of various fabrics, possibly recycled from different garments



Figure 1.17: Victorian shirt (possibly mens) worn with neck scarf

The following photograph (fig.1.18) shows a group of wahine practicing the poi in Ruatoki.

Waist wrapping , which was and still is today, significant to ceremonial activities, has

been applied by three of the subjects. From my observations and study of similar historic photographs, there appeared to be a strong sense of using the new cloths and interpretations of dress in a way that still retained their cultural practices.



Figure 1.18: Group of women practicing the poi in Ruatoki during the visit of Lord Ranfurly and party. At the right a man is accompanying them on concertina. Date March 1904. PA1-q-634-37 Photographer Malcom Ross.

Colchester (2003) examines multiple histories of cloth and clothing in the Pacific region during the years of colonization. She explores the impact on the indigenous societies, of the introduction and adaptability of foreign cloth, and examines cloth as being central to the transmission of identity as well as a vehicle for associative thinking. Colchester examines the emergence of Pacific fashion stylists and cloth manufacturers who, in the last three decades, like anthropologists, have had an awareness of the impact of globalization on identity.

Another example of the interplay of European and local dress could be applied to the modern day kimono as cited by Tranberg Hansen in Dalby's study (1993) where she explores the geometrically cut kimono competing with the western influence of tailored and stitched garments, until gradually giving way to western styles after the 1860s. After examining the researched texts and historical photographs featured in this section of the chapter, I have selected areas of interest that will strengthen and inform the

concept of the project. A selection of wovens and knits, will be used to retain a sense of versatility and comfort within the collection. The ‘mix and match’ collection is to be made up of upper and lower garments. Trousers have been included to emphasise the change of garments being “*climbed into rather than wrapped around the body*” (Mead: 1999 p.43). Although the garments are constructed to a highly technical standard, hand stitching is purposely visible. The altering of fabric directions on panels has created aspects of imperfection within garment structures. Wool knitted garments have been created to not only represent the historic use of blankets as garments but also to emphasise knit blends that form unique components to garment production in Aotearoa.

### *Kākahu (Maori Cloaks)*

The previous sections in this chapter have examined some aspects of European dress introduced to wahine during the transitional years. Issues have been examined which may have influenced this change, adaptation and acceptance of dress. The kākahu is the most significant item of Maori traditional dress and was therefore considered an important artefact to research. It was not possible for me to photograph cloaks retained in the museums of Aotearoa (Te Papa and the Whanganu Regional Museum) as they are considered taonga (treasures) and are the property of Maori iwi. I have therefore written verbal descriptions of observations made at these museums.

The following photograph (fig.1.19) could possibly be classified as *postcard photography* which I have referred to at the beginning of the chapter (p. 9).



Figure1.19: Portrait of Maori woman in cloak circa 1890 M/P/W/60. Iles Photographer Auckland



Cory-Pearce (2005) suggests that this particular photographer, Arthur Iles, produced a series, *'In Maiden Meditation'*, which were romantic portraits of Maori women.

Typically in these photographs, the subjects were directed by the photographer to pose with deliberate averted gaze to suggest the romance and nostalgia of *"pre-civilised natural nudity beneath the cloak."* (pp. 77 & 78).

Because the studio portrait (fig. 1.19) reveals a clear example of a finely woven kahu huruhuru (feather) cloak, made of harekeke (flax fibre) with interwoven feathers, I have included the photo in this chapter. Although it is impossible to be certain of feather identification, the body of the cloak is possibly interwoven with kiwi feathers and the longer feathers on the front borders, likely to be pheasant. The neck border carries rolled tags called karure which are incorporated into the finishing braid. The following historical photographs are further examples of the subjects wearing flax woven cloaks. In the studio setting (fig.1.20), beneath the traditional feather cloak, the young woman is dressed in Victorian dress. The group photograph (fig 1.21) shows the subjects draped in both blankets and korowai.



Figure 1.20: Daughter of a Maori chief wearing a kahu huruhuru (traditional Maori feather cloak) circa 1910 F-56532-1/2 Photographer unknown



Figure 1.21: Chief Te Taupua and Moturoa (his wife?) with a group of unidentified people circa 1900 F-113796-1/2 Photographer unknown

The exploration of Maori cloaks became an integral part of my creative practice based research. I viewed the cloak collection at the Kahu Room at Te Papa. The collection, exhibited individually in horizontal drawers, is not open to public viewing and consists of about four hundred cloaks. The curator Awhina Tamarapa, shared her knowledge of

materials and techniques with me and because of the number of cloaks, I limited my investigation to cloaks made with the addition of introduced 'European' materials as this related to my project.

I observed ten to twelve cloaks that were embellished with wool and dated back to 1830. They had bright coloured yarns, a predominance of red, interwoven into the tāniko borders and motifs displayed on the body of the cloak. Apart from wearing European garments there appeared to be a willingness to integrate introduced fibres such as wool and cotton into their traditional woven cloaks. Although it is impossible to trace the origins of these fibres specific to these particular cloaks, the using of wool yarns has been documented;

*In the late 1820s, imported knitted Scotch and worsted caps were popular purchases from James Kemp's store, both as headgear and also to provide attractive new materials for Maori weavers. Once unpicked, the recycled yarn was woven into fine tāniko borders of high-quality kaitaka (flax coats) worn by Maori chiefs, while the red touries from the caps provided additional decoration.* (Nicholson, 1998, p. 26).

I was able to further observe similar examples when during March of 2006, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to closely examine cloaks when I was asked by the Whanganui Regional Museum to assist in the "Maori Cloak Documentation and Re-housing Project 2006<sup>13</sup>". I was invited to assist a group of local kuia and weavers to relocate the entire cloak collection to another part of the museum. They had acquired new cabinets containing horizontal drawers, in which to store the cloaks, thus providing a healthier environment and enabling the public better access for viewing the artefacts.

The collection in its entirety consisted of about one hundred cloaks from the transitional period (1800 – 1900). To accurately date the cloaks was impossible as they had been presented to the museum with little documentation of origin. Possibly the oldest cloak in the collection was a kahu kuri (dogskin cloak) which was woven with muka and interwoven with rawhide dog skin. The kahu kuri were classed as warrior cloaks and worn by men of the highest rank. Other cloaks in the collection were rain capes, pukupuku (war cloaks), kaitaka (finely woven flax with taniko borders), korowai (decorated on its main surface with black hanging cords) and various kahu kuruhuru (feather cloaks). I examined the cloaks and discussed details of materials, construction

and design with the weavers. Additional weaving techniques were explained such as aho poka, which has the same purpose as a dart, consisting of a short weft or a group of wefts, which shapes the cloak to sit over the shoulders and around the body.

Documentation, such as the condition, the fibres used, the weaving techniques and a profile of the possible owner were documented. Commentaries from weavers were recorded for museum records with the use of a dictaphone (refer Appendix C).

The cloaks were not objects as such, but referred to by the weavers as taonga (treasures), as sacred and collective history. They re-iterated that the cloak is considered to be associated with mana (authority, prestige). They shelter, envelop and gain value through different associations and ownership. Cloaks therefore have always carried a spiritual significance within Maori culture. The cloak itself becomes empowered by the status of the wearer resulting in the mana of the cloak being increased when worn.

While not focussing directly on the cloaks as Maori traditional ‘costume’, there are significant interwoven issues surrounding these artefacts. The kahu retain historical, spiritual and cultural significance. For example, embroidered motifs and woven tāniko patterns tell stories and act as passages for ancestral presences.

One of the more challenging aspects encountered in this project was not the lack of historical and visual resources available, such as the museums, but rather, in what way this information was used as inspirational catalysts. I created the design criteria, therefore, by separating the specific physical attributes pertaining to the dress of each culture, and by linking in the social issues affecting wahine during the transition of the 1800s, forming a collaboration of design features.

### *The Design Criteria*

Considerations for the design criteria were formalised and from the following three categories, key elements were selected to be used to design and create the garment collection, informed by the resulting analysis of the interwoven issues explored in past chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> Refer appendix C

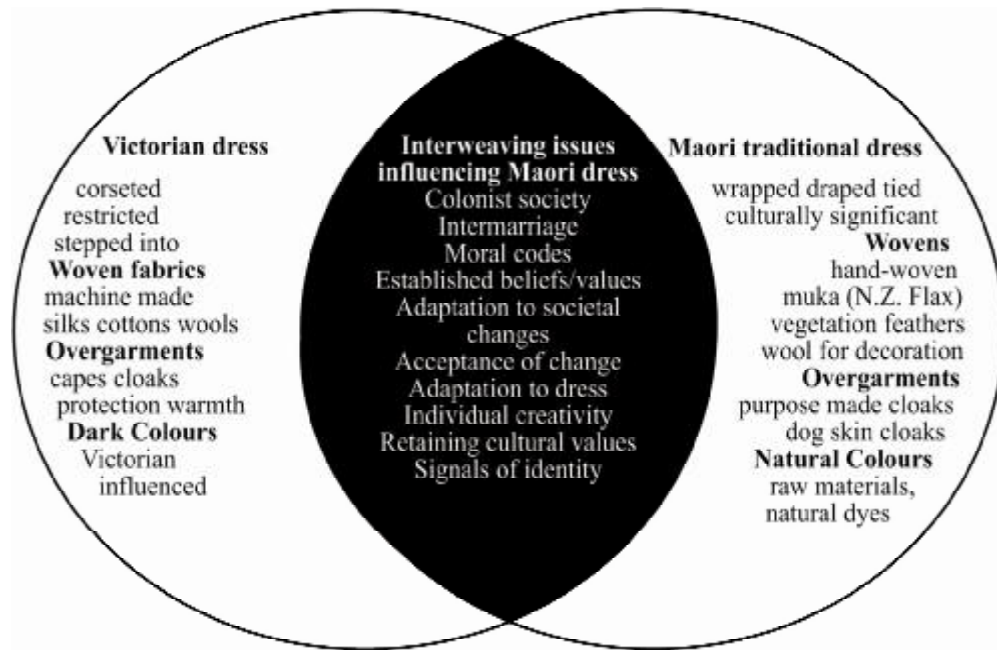


Table1: Interweaving Issues Influencing Maori Dress

From the perspective of cloth and clothing, the merging of the two cultures, Maori and European, exposes cultural negotiations of identity and divergence. In this chapter I have selected social issues surrounding the interplay of dress, the visible connection to European cloth and clothing and the subsequent reshaping and being of indigenous women. Undoubtedly, as revealed in the historic photographs in this chapter, colonial intervention and missionary activity inspired creativity amongst wahine. Within my design criteria I have endeavoured to translate a material afterlife that is intimately connected to this fusion of dress and reflects the innovation, artistry and practical skills that wahine possessed. From the research undertaken in this chapter the design criteria is formalised

- **Natural woven fibres:** silks, cotton and wool blends - the collection is aimed at high-end fashion therefore, where possible, the fabric choice supports the target market.
- **An eclectic mix of earth-tone colours and textures:** the garments reflect colours of wool and feathers that are seen on historic Maori cloaks and living harekeke (flax). The colour story therefore represents flora and fauna of Aotearoa. The fabrics are selected for quality, weave and behaviour. Considerations for fabric manipulation to enhance textures and panels are made.

- **Victorian dress elements:** glimpses of detail eg. pleats, high necklines, full skirt silhouettes. Many historic photographic portraits of wahine (displayed at museums), reveal glimpses of Victorian collar details beneath the splendour of a Maori cloak. This is a very significant aspect of this fusion of dress that strongly emphasised the retaining of Maori identity.
- **Combinations of machine stitching and hand tacking detail:** the translation of hand-made construction from historical garments combined with technical elements of contemporary fashioned garments.
- **Machine-made knits using luxurious merino/possum blended wool:** an interpretation of blankets as clothing. Practical simplistic use of knit panels, wrapping around the body, garments made without side-seams, a sense of comfort.
- **Woollen hand knitted and crochet accessories:** extending the concept of hand crafted pieces, similar to the weaving of flax, styling the knits into accessories that would transform into cloaks or wraps, symbolic of Maori and Victorian dress.
- **Possum fur accessories:** a choice of fibre present in some of the knitwear, which I feel should be seen in its more original form. The use of pelts relates to kahu kuri (warrior cloaks) and Maori philosophy relating to the environment<sup>14</sup>.
- **Signals of identity:** Ornamental adornment in the way of pounamu and ornamental carved bone 'spears' will be used to secure some of the hand knitted wraps at the centre front.

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<sup>14</sup> Refer Appendix B

## Chapter 2 – Materials

The chapter explores the fabrics and fibres used for the final production of the collection. In addition to textile data and supplier details, I have examined historic and philosophical issues relating to the fabrics and fibres of Aotearoa origin.

### *The Collection – a Plan of Action*

Within any fashion collection there needs to be a plan put into place to co-ordinate timing regarding material delivery, production dead-lines and exhibition dates. It was necessary therefore to structure the collection, consisting of 16-20 garments, prior to accumulating fabrics. Scheduling needed to be considered because of the labour-intensiveness of hand-knits and the considerations given to the manufacturer for pre-order machined knitted panels.

The garments collectively would become an eclectic mix of earth colours combined with a combination of textures of cloth, thus reflecting the points of reference outlined in the design criteria. The colour story therefore came together as a gradual process rather than ‘short term’ decision. The wools, hand-knitted yarns and machined panels, once selected, formed the foundation of the colour story from which the balance of the fabrics once introduced, accented and enhanced the base colours. The ‘range plan’ was based around ten total outfits, the components of which would be interchangeable for exhibition versatility. The garments are separates rather than one piece dresses as keeping with the daywear ‘mix and match’ presentation of garments.

	<b>Woven fabrics</b>	<b>Machine knits</b>	<b>Hand knits</b>	<b>Fur pelts</b>
<b>Shirts</b>	<i>2 x silk 1 x cotton</i>			
<b>Lower body (skirts &amp; trousers)</b>	<i>7 x wool/silk cotton blend</i>	<i>1 x</i>		
<b>Knit tops</b>		<i>2 x</i>		
<b>Knit skirt</b>		<i>2 x</i>		
<b>Knit capes</b>		<i>2 x</i>	<i>3 x</i>	
<b>Dress</b>		<i>1 x</i>		
<b>Fur accessories</b>				<i>2 x</i>

Table 2: Range Plan

<b>Stage 1 Initial design development Research</b>	<b>Stage 2 Continuation of design development Research</b>	<b>Stage 3 Continuation of design development Research</b>	<b>Stage 4 Testing, trialling toiles</b>	<b>Stage 5 Final production of garments</b>
Research Design sketches Collection structure	Hand-knit colour/yarn selection	<b>Continuation of building on Stage2 colour story</b>  Silk shirting Cotton shirting Wool wovens linings		Studio practice Analysis Fine-tuning
	Machine-knit panel colour consideration			Accessories
	Fur pelt Selection			<b>Exhibition</b>
	<b>Colour story formalised</b>			

Table 3: Developmental stages and material accumulation

## *Natural Fibres of Aotearoa Relating to Collection*

### *Wool*

#### *Beginning the wool industry*

The beginning of the wool industry in Aotearoa dates back to 1834 when John Bell Wright imported 105 merinos from Australia, and landed them on Mana Island near Wellington. The following year bags of wool were sent to Sydney for sale, thus marking the beginning of the wool industry in this country.

(<http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/W/WoolProduction/WoolProduction/en>)

#### *Wool as an essential commodity within the community*

Reference was made to the unravelling of knitted caps to use as embellishment on the flax woven Maori cloaks in the previous chapter. Historically, hand-knitting in Aotearoa links back to the arrival of Europeans who brought their knowledge of needlework skills with them and proceeded to share these skills throughout the Maori society. (Refer p.17)

Although there is little written on the subject, 'Kiwicraft' was developed by a

collaboration of missionaries and wahine. This was a form of knitting that used smooth sticks for needles and staples of wool pulled straight from the shearing shed floor. The raw fleece was then rolled lightly on the knee and knitted into a garment.

Prior to the availability of machine knitted garments, I can recall as a child in the 50s, sitting amongst the family group with my grandmother, mother and aunties all knitting garments for their families. This was simply an accepted practice for women of all ages and a significant life-skill within Aotearoa society. These were influential gatherings for the sharing of skills, using relaxation as an economic exercise, a time for drinking tea, sharing stories and satisfying a creative need.

Forty to fifty years on we are seeing hand-knitted garments in our contemporary designer collections on national and international cat-walks. While seeing first-hand the winter collections in London and Paris for Winter 2006, and observing national and international contemporary collections, my research has revealed an emphasis on chunkier textures and a return to the nostalgia of hand-knitted garments.



Figure 2.1: Alexander McQueen  
Fall/Winter 2006



Figure 2.2: Ghost  
Fall/Winter 2006



## *Wool yarns for hand-knitting*

The yarns for the hand-knitted accessories were sourced within the local region, from the ‘Little Wool Company’, a boutique mill and farm, situated in Waituna West, near Fielding. I chose this outlet because as a supplier to many fibre artists, this company produces a vibrant mix of home grown wools processed into a vast selection of multi-coloured and textured blends of wool yarns.



Figure 2.3: Hanks of wool from Little Wool Co., Waituna West (2005)

## *Machine-knitted panels*

### *Connecting with industry*

The collection intentionally featured a high content of wool knits, therefore it was necessary for me to obtain quality panels to work with. Manawatu Knitting Mills, situated in Palmerston North, is one of the largest knitwear manufacturers in Aotearoa. Merino/possum blended knitwear contributes to a high percentage of their production output which extends from contemporary seasonal ranges to tourist markets. Possum fibre has been blended with merino successfully since the early 1990s and is proving to be an ethical success internationally. The fur has a long staple and hollow fibre, making it extremely warm and breathable. The garments are luxurious to wear, appeal to local and tourist markets and from an environmental aspect, utilise the fibre from one the most invasive pests threatening our fragile eco-system.

During a visit to the plant I was shown the latest Japanese Shima<sup>15</sup> machinery acquired

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<sup>15</sup> Shima Seiki knitting machine manufacturer founded by Masashiro Shima, Wakayama, Japan, 1962. With a company philosophy of ‘ever onward’ Shima Seiki has become a leading exponent of integrated systems of computer-controlled flat knitting machines. The business was founded on the success of the first fully automated glove knitting machine and continues to technically advance knitting technology.

by the company in 2004/2005. These machines were highly technical three dimensional computer design systems. The glove machine is programmed to create seamless fitted gloves sculptured to fit the left and right hands. Another machine produces multi-coloured scarves adding fringing without the bulkiness of a seam. Thirdly, the company's latest acquisition is the machine that knits an entire seamless garment. Apart from milling<sup>16</sup>, these garments require virtually no finishing. These products are now available from some retail outlets in Aotearoa, indicating the future direction, globally, of commercially produced knit garments.

Manawatu Knitting Mills continues to support innovation and design development relating to knitwear. After an initial meeting with Managing Director John Hughes, he agreed to endorse my project and supply machine knitted panels knitted to my specifications. Wool samples were set out on cards from which I would select five shades to further enhance the colour story developing from the selections of hand-knits and fur pelts that I had previously considered.



Figure 2.4: wool colour swatch cards from Manawatu Knitting Mills. These were early considerations for the wool colours (2006)

## *Possum Fur Pelts*

### *Background*

From an historical reflection, fur accessories were very much in vogue in Europe at the time of the colonisation of Aotearoa, thus possums were introduced to New Zealand in 1837 in a deliberate attempt to establish a fur trade and ‘enrich’ the local fauna. Through man’s error of judgement, the possum has been made to pay for the damage it has inflicted on the environment. However knitwear manufacturers are again using the fibre

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<sup>16</sup> This is the washing process following the knitting process to relax the knit in order to release strains and tensions imposed during spinning and knitting processes. It also assists in minimising further

in the way that it was purposely introduced for, to contribute to an apparel industry.

### *Contemporary use of fur*

At the commencement of the project, I had no intention of using fur in the pelt form as I was concerned about negative reaction from the critics who considered the use of animal fur to be unethical. As the project developed, however, and I observed first-hand the openly casual attitude to the use of fur in London and Paris, I felt comfortable about including the fibre in its more original form. The newly released 2006 Winter Collections from abroad all featured fur (mink, beaver and rabbit) in accessories and jackets. The fur was used in a very casual sense, typically as an accessory to daywear in much the same way as we would use a neck scarf.



Figure 2.5: Costume National  
Fall/Winter 2006



Figure 2.6: Robert Cavalli  
Fall/Winter 2006

### *Sourcing the possum pelts*

The fur pelts used for the project were obtained in Woodville, again in the region, a short distance through the Manawatu Gorge from Palmerston North. The choice of colours was impressive and I could see no problem with selecting two or three colours that would work well with the wool knits that I had previously selected. As a novice furrier, I was faced with the daunting task of examining and selecting pelts to purchase. It was also difficult to locate an actual furrier working on contoured garments such as

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shrinkage from subsequent domestic laundering

jackets, because the industry no longer exists in this country. The Woodville tannery, however, manufactures possum fur products such as bed throws, cushion covers and hand-puppets for the tourist market. The workroom is run with the guidance of a furrier and an associate machinist. While purchasing pelts, I was invited into the workroom to observe methods of cutting the pelts and sewing panels. This was my one and only lesson on how to cut and sew fur. I experimented with joining panels with a standard straight sewing-machine, which proved fruitless. It was necessary therefore for me to purchase a cup-seamer machine<sup>17</sup>.



Figure 2.7: Tanned, dyed possum pelts (2005)



Figure 2.8: Sewing panels using a cup-seamer machine (2005)

The use of possum fur as primary natural fibre has associations with tangata whenua philosophies<sup>18</sup> that relate to the land. This is a significant side-issue that I have examined further in my research.

## *The Balance of Fabrics - Wovens*

### *Wool-blends, Silks, Cottons and Linings*

The remainder of the fabrics, as explained in the chapter introduction (refer pp. 19 & 20) were accumulated over a longer period of time. I took opportunities to visit fabric retailers not only within the local area, but also in Wellington and Auckland. Silk for two of the shirts was purchased in Hongkong on my return from London.

These fabrics, apart from the three shirts were to be made into lower body garments, consisting of lined skirts.

## *Accessories*

Some of the garments I felt could be enhanced by including simple belts. In the example

<sup>17</sup> Cup-seamer – grips fabric vertically between two feeder wheels and produces a two-thread lock stitch

<sup>18</sup> Refer to Appendix B



below (fig. 2.9), I have used a grosgrain ribbon (a trim commonly used since the 1800s) to make simple belts, in a similar form to the internal belts in the Victorian bodices. I have dyed the ribbon to match colours and frayed ends to give the belt an aged appearance. Button holes have been added for adjustable fastening options. Some of the knitted wraps were to be simply fastened by skewering an object through the knit. In keeping with the theme of using the local community as a major contributor and collaborator, I asked personal friend and local carver, Julian Bailey, to carve these ‘fasteners’ out of bone (fig. 2.10). These objects would represent signals of identity. The artist was given size specifications only and has used his artistic intuition in designing and manufacturing the ‘spears’.



Figure 2.9: Work in progress, grosgrain ribbon belt (2006)



Figure 2.10: Carved whale-bone fastenings for knitted cloaks (Bailey, 2006)

The experimentation for fur accessories (fig. 2.11 & 2.12) was carried out using standard rather than specialised machinery (refer p.25). My aim with these pieces was to achieve completion with totally enclosed lining. Fastening consisted of loops of fur with the remainder of the wrap threaded through to achieve closure.



Figure 2.11: Fur accessory ‘kakapo wrap’ experimentation with lined accessories (2005)



Figure 2.12: Fur accessory ‘kura wrap’ experimentation with lined accessory (2005)

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

The research methodologies utilised in this project, whilst being positioned within the paradigm of creative research, are greatly influenced by cross cultural issues. This research project has taken me into areas of personal enquiry, my ancestral beginnings, and an awakening of my cultural identity.

### *An Analogy*

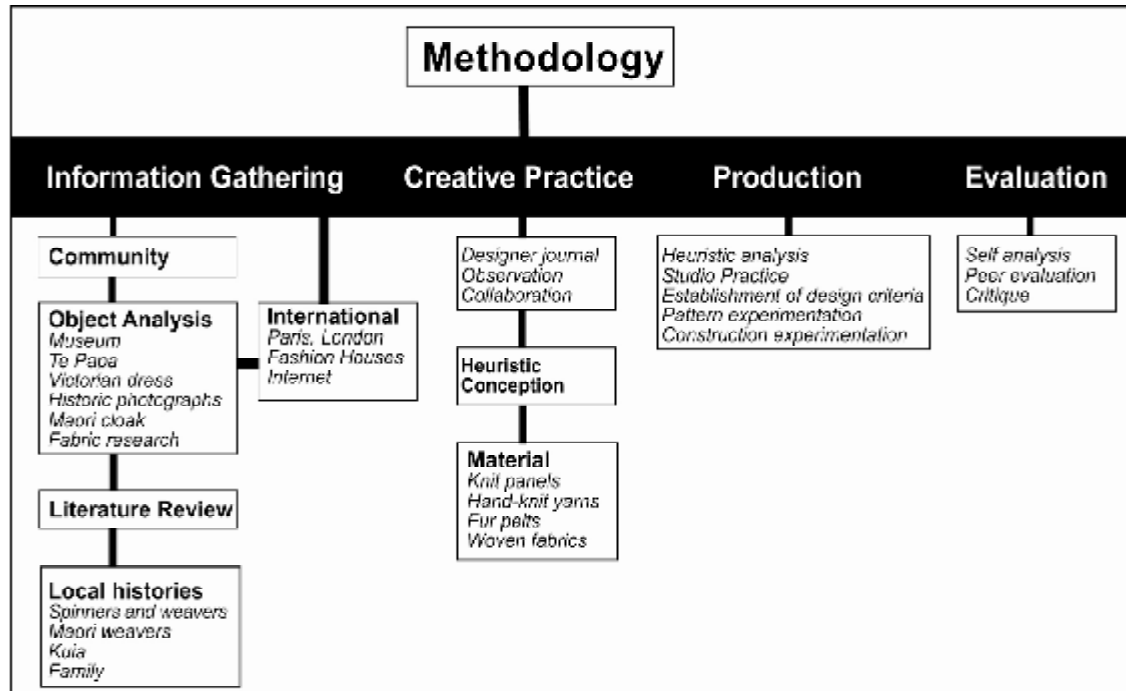


Figure 3.1: flax woven kete

If I were to use a simple analogy to describe the theoretical framework employed to reach the conclusions required for the methodological enquiry, I would compare this journey to a woven kete (fig. 3.1). To analyse the methodical process of making the kete, there is the order of gathering, preparation, making, sharing and reciprocity within the community. Initially there is the gathering of materials within the realm of defined protocols. This is a process that acknowledges tangata whenua, sustainability and nurturing of the plant, without harming the survival of the flax or its environment. After cutting away the hard stalk, which runs end to end of the flax strand, the waste is mulched and returned to the base of the flax bush ensuring survival of the plant and its surroundings. This ‘waste’ is also retrieved, recycled and used for specialised hand-made paper production in some communities. The flax is processed, cut to even widths, stripped and softened to ensure a perfect weaving technique. Finally there evolves the making process where the weaver works the warp and weft strands of fibre to create the kete. The weaver’s philosophy is to strive for perfection throughout the entire process to ensure a successful outcome.

Similarly, within the process of this project, creative research is refined to expose essential criteria, experimental processes are put in place, materials are gathered and worked, entwining the exegesis into refined cohesion.

To use the analogy of the ‘*interweaving of the strands of fibre*’, the process of refining this project led me to identify with, and combine fundamental Maori concepts with Western academic tradition, exposing different ways of enriching the final product.



## *Creative Research*

Similarly to the ‘kete analogy’, the major proportion of my research took place in the local community.

### *The Whanganui Regional Museum*

Whanganui is situated on the west coast of the North Island at the mouth of the Whanganui River. It is an area that is rich in colonial history dating back to the arrival of the first European settlers in 1831. The town therefore offers a wealth of history and resources, some of which are held at the Whanganui Regional Museum. This research undertaken at the museum was critical to establishing the methodological framework for the thesis. As discussed in a previous chapter I was permitted to photograph Victorian clothing, access historical photographs and work with artefacts from the museum collections.

## *Object Analysis*

The method of object analysis as outlined by Prown (1982), relates specifically to material culture. Object analysis “*is the study through artefacts of the beliefs – values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time*” (p. 1).

The model uses three main rationale to analyse objects: description, deduction and speculation. Prown explores the notion that “*material culture offers a scholarly approach that is more specific and trustworthy than simple awareness. The study of systems of belief through an analysis of artefacts offers opportunities to circumvent the investigator’s own cultural perspective.*” (Prown, 1982 p. 4). I have applied this analysis to the information gained from the research processes undertaken at the London museums, Te Papa and the Whanganui Regional Museum.

### *Stage one - description*

The Victorian gowns that I discussed in Chapter One, although mute objects from a museum collection, are observed both from the interior and exterior surfaces. The fabric is identified and technical aspects such as fabric identification, patterning, construction, linings and fastenings are noted. Features such as discreetly hidden pockets are revealed. Aspects that would be applicable to my design direction are recorded. Historical photographs of wahine are studied. Details are enlarged for more accurate analysis (refer pp. 11, 12 & 14). Historical cloaks, unable to be photographed, have been examined, details noted as a formal documentation (refer Appendix C)

### *Stage two – deduction*

Through sensory engagement, the interaction between the object and the analyst is formalised. Comparisons are made between the past and present relationship with dress. Complex constructions made from cold, rigid and unyielding cloth are compared to today’s technical fabric innovation, colour versatility, sculptural comfort and breathable qualities. Curiosity arises on the practicality, wearability and function of such restrictive attire. The Victorian gowns are heavy, physically demanding for tiny women to wear. Examples are examined, observations continue beneath the cloth, morals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society and the modesty of the wearers is considered. From an observer’s perspective, photographs of wahine dressed in imported cloth raises curiosity relating to social and cultural issues. Comparisons are made between the three genres of



photographs (refer p. 9). The cloaks position themselves as cultural treasures of Aotearoa and are overwhelming in their technical design and construction.

### *Stage three – speculation*

Hypothesising on the reactions experienced from the *deduction* – Thoughts not only linger on aspects of discomfort of the Victorian garments, but also those of rigid societal values and women's oppression. The candidly shot historical photograph (refer p.14) captures a different society of women. They appear comfortable and unrestrained, almost defiant of Victorian influenced values. Cultural perspectives and reactions within the two societies are hypothesised. What has been learned from the internal evidence and how can that evidence be channelled into the creative outcome of the exegesis?

The notion of Maori women and their adjustment to this contradiction in dress styles, from loose, comfortable wrapping to restrictive total body covering, suggests the *turmoil* of cloth between the dress and body. Speculation therefore introduces feelings, emotional adjustment, and possible compromise in terms of the change in dress.

### *Local Histories*

Closely associated with the observational investigation of artefacts are the personal encounters made throughout the investigation. Upon sharing the aims and outcomes of the project with the local Spinners and Weavers Guild, I was given supplier information to assist with the gathering of materials and fibres from the region.

Oral histories are related from curators, weavers and kuia. Stories are shared from weaving circles, techniques discussed and recollections from growing up on the marae, are made. Significant events and personal histories have been retold to generations, by our tupuna. Within my family, my whakapapa is revisited, allowing a reflection of my own heritage.

## *Creative Practice*

### *Designer Journals*

Maintaining designer journals allows me to record all information relevant to stages of concept development and areas of research. Newbury (2001) discusses “*the role the*

*diary can play as a coherent central record of project ideas, information and activities, and its use as a stimulus for creative thinking”* (Newbury. D, 2001, p. 7).

Newbury states that there are no rules over the content or order of a research diary but goes on to suggest subjects that may be considered. His list includes “*thoughts and reflections, a record of reading, a record of phone calls and meetings, methodology notes, observations, unresolved problems, issues or questions, plans for action, keywords and visual material*” ( Newbury, D, 2001, p.8) .

In the role of a clothing design researcher, I am in the habit of retaining sketches, colour ideas and fabric swatches amongst the categories, within the research journal. My journal development falls into an order of time sequence rather than subject categories. This method of gathering the information for me is the most efficient way to reflect and retrieve information from the diary. Spiral bound A4 journals crammed with everything from contact lists to inspirational images allowed me to have easily accessible information. By the end of the design research process, one journal has grown to six, easily identifiable by a numbered sequence, containing blended information in the order that it was retrieved.

To assist with design development the studio wall becomes an extension of the journal forming a ‘mood board<sup>19</sup>’ for the garment collection. Inspirational images are displayed and added to. Fabrics and fibres are displayed as if to constantly remind the researcher of concept and direction.

Journals are added to, moodboard contents are interchanged and a more orderly series of folders are retained to hold documentation relating to the writing. These include various articles, published papers and internet downloads relating to the context of the thesis.

Below is a selection of sketches mixed with images from my designer journals. The images displayed on the studio wall formed the interplay of designer furs, works from Maori artists and my own attempts at flax weaving.

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<sup>19</sup> Moodboard: in the context of fashion design, a series of inspired images grouped together to convey theme and concept



Figure 3.2: design sketches from journal (2005)



Figure 3.3: design sketches from journal (2005)



Figure 3.4: design sketches from journal (2005)



Figure 3.5: line-up of wool accessories (2005)



Figure 3.6: images to support concept on studio wall (2005)

## *Studio Production*

The methodology used within the studio practice in this thesis is positioned within the paradigm of heuristics. In this project the researcher is not only using skills using knowledge gained by experience, but is also carrying out experimentation within different facets of the process. Examples are trialling patterns and re-working mock-up garments to test construction methods.

Kleining and Witt (2000) define heuristics as a qualitative method of solving a problem for which no formula exists and further define the methodology as one involving trial and error, testing and if necessary, reworking a body of work. They further explore the notion applying four basic rules to optimise the chance for discovery.

As the designer/practitioner, some of the materials selected are not familiar to me. Therefore, arriving at the practical component of thesis, the experimental process would enable me to work through difficulties encountered. The most difficult material to be working with is the fur pelt component of the project.

*The researcher is open to new concepts:*

From the initial stages of the design developmental sketches, patterning and trialling, photographs of panels, stitch and construction details and fastening options are conveniently and visually available for reflective analysis. Using the digital camera, I am able to have visual access to toile development, the moving around of panels, and garment perspectives from different angles. This experimentation runs relatively smoothly with familiar fabrics when compared to working with totally ‘foreign’ materials, such as fur pelts. Studio practice became total experimentation because of my lack of experience within this specialised construction area. My design process for these components therefore has limitations in terms of complexity. I need to retain the balance of a professional finish combined with simplicity of design in order to gain a satisfactory result.

*The topic of research is preliminary and may change during the research process:*

From the design concept - to the pattern - to the trial garment - to the final outcome: the garment in some cases will have been altered slightly to adapt to an improvement that

has been revealed during the process. Design and creation of a garment can often become a learning experience, such as an inspired feature or a different way of fastening. Although I keep to a basic plan, I am always open to a variation to improve the outcome.

*Data should be collected under the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives:*

In terms of this project, structurally the collection changed from the initial perception. Choices of fabrics, development of garments, the shaping of the finished garments altered my perceptions on the outcome of the collection. I was therefore open to adaptation of design with the balance of garments. Having worked in the area of clothing design, fabrics selected can often influence subtle change. The material at times can dictate areas of design because of the behavioural properties of the fabric. Examples of this can be the way in which the stripes react if altered or the deliberate exposure of a selvedge<sup>20</sup>. Knit fabric produced on a circular knit machine, in the form of a tube, opened up possibilities of creating seamless garments. This element was not considered at the design stage, until I saw the possibilities of working with this form of knit in a way that would fit well within the concept of '*blankets worn as clothing*'. The subsequent design outcomes therefore may have been altered in some cases to suit the fabrics, but the design research outcomes still maintain relevance to the project concepts.

*The analysis is directed toward discovery of similarities:*

The resulting analysis informs the interwoven issues explored in the thesis. Supporting text is clearly relative to the practice-based component of the project.

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<sup>20</sup> Selvedge: Machined edge running in the warp direction of fabric length.

## Chapter 4

### Design and development

#### *Stage 1 - Hand-knits*

Although I was involved with ongoing design development, these early works were intended to be finished works, from which to 'build on'. As discussed in Chapter 2, it was necessary for me to decide on colours for hand worked components at the earliest possible stage. Having purchased three colours of fur and various wool yarns, I created visual boards to assist with my design direction (refer fig. 4.1 & 4.2).



Figure 4.1: design development with fur samples, considerations for design development (2005)



Figure 4.2: design development using hand knitting. Capes and wraps were under consideration for the design direction (2005)

I began to work with wool yarns (fig.4.3 & 4.4) as I found the combination of 'hand-made' and 'machine-made' knits related to my design criteria. Texture was also a consideration when experimenting in these mediums. I wanted to not only experiment with the two mediums as separate garments, but also as a combination in a single garment. My initial experimentation began by simply knitting up (by hand) panels using variations of colour and stitch formation, and draping the pieces over a mannequin<sup>21</sup>.



Figure 4.3: experimenting with variegated colours (2005)



Figure 4.4: experimentation with stitch formation resembling weave (2005)

These experiments reaffirmed my decision to incorporate the handmade elements into the collection. My intention was to use these wools and furs (fig. 4.1 & fig 4.2) into garments that would make up some of the cape, cloak and wrap components in the range. I will refer to these overgarments as wraps. They would take on more of the role of an accessory to be worn over other garments. The first complete wraps were purely experimentation, keeping in mind that they would possibly become part of the final presentation.

I enlisted the assistance of my mother, realising that the workload would be excessive if executed alone. Working in collaboration with family, the person responsible for teaching me knitting and crochet skills, was very relevant to my project if compared to the collaboration of Maori weavers.

Apart from one knit, that was adapted from a fifties pattern, all of these accessory wrap and cloak forms, were all put together by intuition. In much the same way that the Maori cloaks had been woven to sit over the shoulders, shaping to the knit cloaks was

<sup>21</sup> A stock size calico covered dressmaker's form, enabling draping and experimentation during design and production process



incorporated in a similar fashion. The wraps below were the first hand knits to be completed. Although experimental, I considered these first knitted wraps be successful because they revealed aspects of versatility in the way that they could be adapted to suit the wearer.



Figure 4.5: hand-knit – Storm wrap (2005)



Figure 4.6: hand-knit – Sunset cape (2005)

The ‘Storm’ wrap, without seams, can be worn in different ways and because of the open knit is fastened by skewering an object through the layers. The ‘Sunset’ cape fits over the head, and wraps entirely around the body and is finished with a crochet edge. These pieces related to the design criteria, translated from blankets, enveloping, wrapping and functional.

The hand-knitting continued to evolve. With the next knits, I experimented with Victorian styling, in terms of collars (fig. 4.7) and an added lower edge (fig. 4.8). Both of these capes have elements of crochet applied to them. The crochet detail (fig. 4.8) is my interpretation of ‘karure’ or ‘thrums’ which is twisted flax cord that feature on Maori cloaks.



Figure 4.7: Hand-knitted body with crochet collar (2006)



Figure 4.8: Hand knitted body with crochet lower edge (2006)



The wrap below (fig. 4.9) is an adaptation of a 1950s pattern. I have used this pattern to support the concept of blankets used by wahine for carrying babies.



Figure 4.9: hand-knitted wrap, rear view hood at rear (2006)



Figure 4.10: crochet edge detail from cape (4.8) (2006)

## *Stage 2*

### *Early experimentation for machine-knits*

The patterns for these garments were to be flat pattern cut. The draft of pattern components is planned in two dimensional form (on paper or card) prior to transferring to fabric for construction

It was necessary therefore to establish a reliable block for a knit form. Machined wool panels from Manawatu Knitting Mills were used to finalise this form.

Using cotton knit, I experimented with various toiles<sup>22</sup>, incorporating detail from historical garments researched. The ideas of a cloak fastenings and feather detail informed the styling on the experimental garments below (fig. 4.11& 4.12).



Figure 4.11: cotton knit experimental toile – cloak concept (2005)



Figure 4.12: cotton knit experimental toile – feather concept (2005)

I decided to explore the fusion of two opposite fabrics; wool knit being the main fabric and inserted bias cut<sup>23</sup> strips put into the seams. The wool knit that I used was superfine merino except for (fig. 4.14) which was a blend of wool and possum.



Figure 4.13: fine merino, silk insert in shoulder (2005)



Figure 4.14: wool/possum blend, bias cut raw edged trims (2005)



Figure 4.15: fine merino, silk inserts (2005)

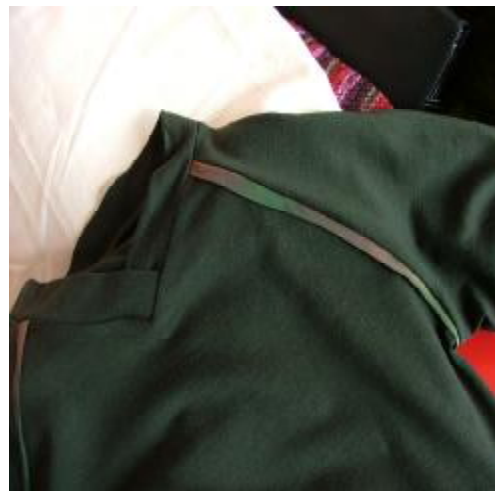


Figure 4.16: raglan cut, silk organza insert (2005)

### *Evaluation of early experimental garments*

I have included these images of earlier experimentation because the technical aspects are relevant to the current collection. From an experimental construction aspect, the silk worked well as inserts. The weights of silk varied from heavy Dupion<sup>24</sup> to fine Georgette<sup>25</sup>. Bias cut trim (dupion) left unfinished proved to be a workable trim (fig. 4.14).

<sup>23</sup> Bias cut: Fabric cut at 45degrees to the straight grain of the weave.

<sup>24</sup> Dupion: Coarse silk

<sup>25</sup> Georgette: Fine silk

### *Stage 3 - Machine Knits*

#### *Experimentation for Final Exhibition*

The nature of the garments, being wrapped around, tied and draped over shoulders, enabled experimentation to be carried out by draping around a mannequin. Other factors affecting the possible production variants of these garments were the way in which the material was supplied. Some of the fabric had been knitted on circular knit machines and was supplied in tubular lengths. This enabled me to experiment with the concept of seamless garments (fig. 4.17 & 4.18).



Figure 4.17: experimental seamless skirt (2006).



Figure 4.18: side view of seamless tunic (2006)

Blankets as garments evolving into garments that could be stepped into was how I could see this form of knit being used. The pattern process therefore was carried out on the mannequin with a moulage<sup>26</sup> process. The skirt (fig. 4.17) was an early experiment with the circular knit fabric. Side seams were cumbersome and did not sit well; therefore by attaching ties, the excess could be manipulated in different ways. This ‘bustle’ effect was quite accidental and not very flattering. The seamless tunic (fig. 4.18) was developed on the mannequin and completed as a finished garment.

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<sup>26</sup> Moulage: process of pattern design when the fabric is draped on a calico mannequin and worked in a 3D form to resolve pattern

## *Machine knit - Finished Garments*

Finer machine knitted panels were made to order. I was supplied with panels to fit the pattern lengths, calculated by pre-drafted patterns. These blank rectangular panels had been knitted to include lower hem edges, therefore I was able to trace around a pre-drafted pattern and cut out the components prior to construction (fig. 4.20).



Figure 4.19 Knit panels, hem included. Rectangular length with hem included (2006)



Figure 4.20: Prepared pattern laid out ready for cutting (2006)



Figure 4.21: blanket tunic development with covered button detail (2006)



Figure 4.22: seamless tunic, hand stitching detail on neckband (2006)

Experimentation surrounding the seamless concept brought another dimension to some of the garments. By eliminating vertical seams, the garments retained a simpler construction, lighter weight and draped well on the body. The dress (fig. 4.23 & 4.24) is made up of a complete 'tube' of wool/possum knit, bust shaping has been formed by hand-tacked stitches going into the neck, shoulder seam shaped, allowance made for sleeve and finally sleeve is inserted. Hand tacking was a feature translated from historical Victorian garments examined at the Whanganui Regional Museum (refer p.6), thus being identified as part of my design criteria.





Figure 4.23: Seamless garment worked with hand stitching detail



Figure 4.24: Shoulder seam sewn, sleeve inserted (2006)

The same method of working seamless was applied to the skirt (fig. 4.25). The yoke (panel from hips to waist) is made from ribbed collars, supplied as extras for experimentation (the collar panels are also used as sleeves in fig. 4.24). Part of the design criteria was comfort and practicality, thus using collar panels for other parts of the garments was appropriate.



Figure 4.25: seamless yoked skirt (2006)

### *Machine and Hand-knits: a combination of textures*

When I first began examining the knit concept, my early experimentation (refer p. 36) involved combining hand and machine knitted panels on a single garment. This was my method of linking texture and embellishment from Maori cloaks into contemporary knit garments. The most difficult problem to overcome was merging the two knits together, one finely and the other loosely woven. The body of cloak, in one piece, (fig. 4.26) was pleated and held in place by machining a cotton tape to the top edge. The knitted collar was positioned correctly and machine sewn in place. Ties, embellishment and hem were

added. The cloak (fig. 4.27) is shaped, in three panels, machine sewn, hand-tacking is added for detail and front edge embroidered as if to represent a cloak border. The collar is attached by machine and crochet 'karure' detail made separately and attached by hand.



Figure 4.26: hand-knitted collar merged onto machine-knit body, work in progress (2006)



Figure 4.27: hand-crochet detail attached to machine-knit body, Work in progress (2006)

## *Stage 4 – Woven fabrics to garments*

The final stage of the studio practice involved the production of the remaining garments that were made of woven fabrics consisting of pure wools, wool blends, silks, cottons and polyester linings.

### *Shirts*

From design to pattern to toile to final garment follows the same process for each garment. There are times when the toile stage can be omitted, if designer/pattern maker is confident of intended outcome. To avoid outlining a similar process for the remaining garments, I have described the production sequence of a garment, using a shirt, with a Victorian themed collar, as an example. Design is formalised followed by the pattern draft, consisting of front and back panels (fig. 4.28). Facings are formed, bias strips are cut for tacking detail. The pattern is cut out of calico and sewn in the correct order, bias strips and bead embellishment applied (fig. 4.29). When the toile is satisfactorily resolved, the final silk garment is cut and sewn.



Figure 4.28: pattern draft, front panels, back panels, facings (2006)



Figure 4.29: made up into 3,D form using calico, pleat detail trialled (2006)



Figure 4.30: final garment made in Chinese silk, bias cut strips hand tacked over machined seams (2006)

Following through with the Victorian theme the second silk shirt took on a similar formula. The neck details were important to link back to the idea of Victorian morals, covering the entire body, while being an area for added contours, embellishment or jewellery. On the shirt (fig. 4.31), I purposely used crisp pleats to highlight neck detail, to give a point of difference while still keeping to a common theme. My decision to create the shirts as sleeveless garments fits well with the ‘trans-seasonal’ genre of the collection.



Figure 4.31: Silk shirt, pleat detail at collar and over shoulder (2006)



Figure 4.32: Embroidered cotton shirt (2006)

The third shirt in this trilogy is made of embroidered cotton (fig. 4.32), reminiscent of Victorian undergarments and petticoats (refer p.12). The pattern itself is very simple as I did not want to include any fastenings that would jeopardise the outcome of this simple, uncluttered design. The bust shaping is directed toward the neck, short pleats maintain the shape and the high neck sits forward away from the body slightly.

The garment is loose, longer than the other two, and drawn in with a belt. Keeping with the simplicity of the garment, there are no hems, instead the fabric has been cut around the edge of the embroidery.

Before cutting, the silk was put through a standard wash process to soften and ‘age’ the fabric. Because of the stable quality of the weave, it was very easy to work with. There were technical issues to work around such as finishing at neck and armhole. For the first shirt (fig. 4.30) a neck facing only was applied. Armholes were finished simply with an overlocked stitch, bias cut strips were inserted and tacked into position, to complete the construction process. For the second silk shirt (fig. 4.31), a decision to insert the pleated collar was decided not only because the fabric held the pleats well, but also because the feature related well to garments viewed at the museums. The cotton shirt (fig. 4.32), although complex in material structure, is deliberately made very simply, therefore avoiding interference with the aesthetics of the fabric. The bust shaping is directed towards the neck and the garment is without fastenings or closures. On the body, the garment is drawn into the waist with a belt.



## Skirts

The fabric for this skirt (fig. 4.33) is herringbone weave, a feature that allowed the fabric to be manipulated to enhance the design. Although the skirt has four panels, by stabilising the fabric with fusible interfusing<sup>27</sup>, I was able to change weft and warp direction. Adding to this ‘play’ with fabric, I have turned the band at the top to a 45 degree angle. The centre front and centre back seams expose a selvedge. Based on wahine skirts, variations in panels (refer p.15) and my design criteria, I have also applied similar variation of fabric direction to the wool blend skirt (p. 4.34) with the addition of pleating.



Figure 4.33: Raw silk, herring bone weave. Fabric directions changed, selvedge exposed (2006)



Figure 4.34: Wool blended skirt. Soft pleats, fabric variation in direction on panels (2006)

This skirt (fig. 4.35) has an elasticised yoke. Unlike other fabrics in the collection, it has high man-made fibre content, however I selected the fabric because of colour, appearance (similar to stripe detail from Victorian textiles), texture and the behavioural qualities within the drape of the material. The design criteria allowed for silhouettes to be varied and the drape of this fabric suited a circular drape, allowing chevron patterns to form at the side seams. The wool skirt (fig. 4.36) is inspired by the bustle formation at the back, although appearing to be a straight skirt from the front.

<sup>27</sup> Fusible interfacing: Gives strength and stability to fabrics. Commonly glued on one side, they are applied by heat and pressure.



Figure 4.35: semi-circular skirt



Figure 4.36: wool skirt, Victorian bustle detail

### *Wrap wool skirt*

This skirt (fig. 4.37) is made of 100% wool. The top right panel is turned to a 45 degree angle and retained the machined edge as a feature. Apart from the weave being emphasised by this change of direction, the skirt envelops the body in the same way as a blanket would.



Figure 4.37: Selvedge used on diagonal to create detailed edge

## Chapter 5 - Evaluation of Studio Practice

### *Hand Knitted Wraps/Cloaks*

The hand knitted accessories evolved by intuitive knowledge rather than by sticking to a planned design. The main shape was formed and collars and lower borders were considered at the next stage. Some of these methods were extracted from old 1960s knitting and crochet patterns (refer fig. 4.7 & 4.10). Collectively the hand knits were a challenge and I was pleased with outcome of including this ‘hand made’ dimension throughout the collection. My main reservation was the variety of colours that appeared to emerge from the finished garments (less distinct in the balls of yarn) and how these would work with the earthy colours from the remaining balance of fabrics.

### *Machine Knitted Garments*

#### *Wool/possum/nylon blend – tubular machine knitted fabric*

The sculptural behaviour of most of the wools gave me the ability to control the fabric, thus based on sketches, and working the fabric on a mannequin, I was able to work the fabric to reach a desirable conclusion. To eliminate seams was an advantage from the point of view of practicability whilst adding aesthetic value to the garment outcome. The addition of colourful yarns, not only lifted the blandness of a single colour, but also connected the garments to hand knitted components. The outcome therefore was successful and opened up possibilities for further experimentation.

#### *Merino/possum blend – machine knitted panels*

Of the two garments produced using panels, one proved to be troublesome in regard to construction (fig. 4.21). I would have preferred a second chance at creating this garment if I had extra fabric available. Lack of correct machinery and appropriate trims added to the difficulty of producing this ‘blanket tunic’ to a professional standard. It is my opinion that the concept, silhouette and colour however, strengthens the collection and therefore should be exhibited as part of the presentation.

#### *Machine and hand knits combined (refer p. 45)*

Although the construction process for the long cloak (fig. 4.26) proved to be a

challenge, the outcome is pleasing. Being the only long cloak in the collection gives the garment status amongst the other knits. I did this intentionally mainly to create diversity within the overgarment presentation. Grouped together collectively with the hand knits (pp.39 & 40), as previously noted, are concerns relating to the many colours emerging within the range of garments.

## *Woven Fabrics to Garments*

### *Shirts*

Collectively, there emerged areas of contradiction such as high quality fabrics openly revealing hand tacking. The construction of the three shirts was trouble free because I had trialled the garments in calico to reveal any unseen problems. Collectively as a trio, I was of the opinion that the shirts blended successfully together and sat well into both a Victorian and contemporary context.

### *Lower Garments – Skirts and Trousers*

The range of lower garments consists of remaining skirts and two pairs of trousers. Fabrics were selected for their attributes of quality, distinction of weave, diversity and colours. Silhouette was considered when designing these garments, as they had to position well with the wool knits whilst allowing the mix and match elements to work. There were no problems associated with the production of these garments. Developmental trialling in calico ensured a successful outcome. The photo-shoot will allow me to establish the final garment combinations for exhibition. The experimentation therefore continues until garments are on bodies and /or mannequins.

## Chapter 6 – the Exhibition

The exhibition consisted of ten complete outfits consisting of an upper and lower garment with an accessory in the form of a cape or wrap. They were dressed on calico mannequins apart from two wool cloaks displayed separately. As part of the exhibition, photographs of the garments worn on models together with historic images of wahine, were displayed on a monitor. These images represent in part the gallery presentation. Refer to Appendix D for garments worn on models.



Figure 6.1: chevron stripe skirt, hooded wrap (2006)



Figure 6.2: seamless tunic, wool blend skirt (2006)



Figure 6.3: merino possum seamless dress (2006)



Figure 6.4: silk top, wool pencil skirt (2006)



Figure 6.5: silk top, wool trousers, fur wrap (2006)



Figure 6.6: merino possum wool cloak (2006)



Figure 6.7: merino possum wool cloak (2006)



Figure 6.8: wool silk blend hand-knitted cape (2006)



Figure 6.9: hand knitted hooded wrap, whale bone fastening (2006)

## Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The trans-seasonal collection of garments presented as part of this thesis was intentionally designed and produced to reflect aspects of Aotearoa during the 1800s. The interwoven social issues surrounding this transitional period, influenced and informed the design direction of the collection. The notion of wahine merging into a Victorian dominated society proved to be a challenging muse from which to draw inspiration. The indigenous people's acceptance and adaptation of imported cloth was explored in depth and research findings channelled into a range of key design criteria.

### *Historical Research*

The research carried out to explore theoretical, historical and cultural issues surrounding the relationship of dress and social belonging was enriching and thought provoking. On a personal level, being of Te Atiawa and Ngati Tuwharetoa descent, this explorative journey strengthened my connection to this significant 'recent' era of dress fusion in Aotearoa. The involvement with museums, especially the Whanganui Regional Museum proved to be an enlightening research resource for extracting information relative to the project. The research carried out amongst the cloak collections was an inspirational journey, not only in relation to my own heritage, but also because of skills and artistry displayed in these taonga (treasures).

Prown's analysis (refer pp. 31 & 32) therefore allowed me to examine and speculate on mute objects. I do have doubts with this process of object analysis for the following reasons.

- With speculation comes a chance of error or misinterpretation
- Within both cultures (Maori and Pakeha) different classes of society exist, therefore critical analysis of artefacts can become blurred or unclear.

To use an example, it is impossible to know the circumstances of origins of some of the Victorian garments. Are they stained because of wear and tear by the original owner, or prior to being cared for by the museum, has staining occurred by improper storage? These are analyses that a textile conservator may be able to resolve but I can only speculate on. Another example of doubt relates to the analysis of historic photographs of wahine. If we were to consider the photographs 1.6 and 1.14, it could be speculated that the photograph of Miss Jury (refer p.10), wearing quality garments and gold jewellery, indicates that she is from a higher class in society than the candid photograph taken of the group of women (refer p.14). There are circumstances that

may have affected this analysis. The jewellery may have belonged to the photographer and possibly ‘borrowed’ for the purpose of the photograph.

It was from this research that I proceeded to select my design criteria which proved to be challenging for the following reasons.

- Translating this historical period of dress, made from cloth that was unforgiving and structured, into garments, which were in the soft and sculptural form of wool knits.
- Reproduction of a fusion of historical dress style elements into contemporary garments, bringing together ‘then’ and ‘now’ with a sense of contemporary fashion as opposed to costume history.

To overcome these challenges, the garments were designed and created to question the relationship of dress within the bi-cultural society. They represent a translation of wahine de-constructing the ‘turmoil’ within the restrictions of 19<sup>th</sup> century European dress.

### *Fabric Selection*

Fabrics for the collection, predominantly of natural fibres, were selected for their properties and relationship to the context. Using wools, I was able to relate the garments to the wearing of blankets. Wools were also chosen because of the significant link to our cultural and social co-existence since the beginning of the wool industry. The knits proved to be sculptural to work with, allowing me to easily mould and drape material around a mannequin while technical applications were considered. Seamless garments were not originally intended in early design concepts, but because of the presentation of the knit in the formation of ‘tubes’, and subsequent experimentation, I found the construction and garments sat well within the design criteria. To wear a seamless garment is satisfying for the comfort and drape factors. The rigidity and darkness of the Victorian capes were re-defined as hand-knitted, gently contoured and colourful contradictions of their former representations.

Fur is *concealed* as fibre in some of the knit, and *revealed* as fur pelts in accessories. I have used the fibre not only because of its luxurious quality, but also because of my feelings towards environmental responsibility. The use of fur within a fashion context can encourage debate and emotion. As a designer from Aotearoa, I welcome these

reactions from observers.

Some garments were problematic, an example being the blanket wrap (fig 4.22). Lack of proper machinery, and appropriate trims meant that adaptations were made to complete the garment. In this case, I would have preferred to remake another version but material availability was an issue. Working with fur pelts tested my furrier skills. There are limitations to working in an area that is totally out of the comfort zone of the designer. These outcomes relied on observations, associated skills learnt, intuitive experimentation and large amounts of luck. To obtain a cup-seamer machine (refer p.27) was crucial to the development of fur accessories, if they were to be presented to a professional standard.

The silks and cottons were used to not only introduce the Victorian elements, but also enable a successful outcome of the designs. The lower body garments are predominantly made of woven wools, silk and wool blends. They have been selected for their quality, colour and weave detail. Selvedges have been exposed and hand tacking added for detail. Cloth directions have been altered to create subtle inferences of adaptation of cloth by wahine.

### *Signals of identity*

Ornamentation was an important aspect of the presentation in relation to retaining signals of identity. Bone was selected as a medium not only because of historical significance, but also its profile alongside pounamu in the historic and contemporary jewellery collections of Aotearoa. I am of the opinion that the huia feathers, pounamu and cloaks enriched the mana of wahine in the historic photographs (refer pp. 1, 10, 11 & 14), as have the contemporary bone carvings exhibited with this collection.

### *The Subsequent Garment Collection*

As a fashion collection there were many factors to consider when considering design elements. Combining accumulated research, technical skills and my understanding of fabric limitations, I conceived a range plan that included categories of garments that collectively would be representative of the design criteria (refer pp. 19 & 20).

There were areas of self doubt, such as bringing together such an eclectic mix of fabrics and textures. Was there too much going on and did the variety of fabrics detract



from the garments forming a ‘collection’? I do not believe that it did for the following reasons. Firstly my research into historical dress worn by wahine revealed creativity, function and variety. The target market, of high-end daywear, allowed the variety of upper and lower garments to blend and intermix whilst retaining a similar silhouette to the historical garments. The extremes of Victorian rigid construction and hand stitched deconstruction were juxtaposed as features on many of the garments.

### *Opportunities for Further Research*

This investigative research journey exposed many areas of further exploration.

1. Ongoing research surrounding the issues of cloth, the subsequent adaptation of dress by wahine and their involvement with establishing dressmaking as an industry.
2. Examinations of existing photographs, stored privately or within the many museums of Aotearoa, in particular, candid photographs revealing accurate insights into dress of the ‘working class’ wahine
3. The relationship of Maori and the wool industry has been investigated to some extent, but through my research, the discovery of wahine in relation to ‘Kiwicraft’ (refer pp. 22 & 23) warrants further investigation.
4. The variety of Maori cloaks stored in the museums of Aotearoa (and internationally) is immense. The historic cloaks using features of imported cloth, wool and cotton, as early as 1830, justifies further exploration.
5. By using industry links within the region, the notion of producing high-end fashion components has been proven to be possible. Commonly Auckland is considered to be the ‘fashion’ capital, but in all aspects, it would have been very difficult to complete this thesis without the community, local and regional resources available to me. Therefore there are many opportunities for designers to explore these regional industries and endorse the concept of the label “New Zealand Made”.

## *Appendices*

## ***Appendix A***

### ***Glossary of Maori Terminology***

**Aotearoa:** Maori name for New Zealand (as a whole), more traditionally the name given to the North Island of New Zealand (Te Waipounamu being the name of the South Island) ([www.gw.govt.nz/section937.cfm](http://www.gw.govt.nz/section937.cfm) retrieved 30th August 2006)

**Aho:** a weft of thread in the weaving of flax cloaks

**Harakeke :** *Phormium tenax* Aotearoa flax, the leaves of which provide the fibre of most Maori cloaks

**Huia :** native bird to New Zealand. Huia tail feathers were a traditional Maori symbol of authority. The Prince of York followed the old custom of wearing huia feathers in headdress, by placing the feather in his hat. This set off a world fashion trend that was devastating for huia birds made virtually extinct by 1907

**Kakahu:** cloaks woven by Maori of New Zealand (general term)

**Kaitaka:** Maori garment, large and draped around body with woven border.

**Kahu kuri:** woven cloak of flax fibre with the surface covered with narrow strips of dog-skin

**Kuia:** elderly women of a family or tribe.

**Mana:** power, authority, prestige

**Piupiu:** traditional flax woven garment worn as skirts

**Pounamu:** New Zealand greenstone/jade

**Puka:** dart shaping integrated into the weft weave to create shaping over the shoulders and buttocks

**Tangata whenua:** people of the land

**Taniko:** woven decoration around sides and lower borders of 'kaitaka' using dyes and wools

**Taonga:** refers to all dimensions of a tribal group's estate, material and non-material heirlooms and wahi tapu (sacred places), ancestral lore and whakapapa (genealogies).

**Tupuna:** ancestors

**Whakapapa:** genealogical descent of all living things from the gods to the present time.

## ***Appendix B***

### ***Related Issues – using possum fibre***

#### ***Tangata whenua philosophy***

Interwoven with my decision to use possum fibre, both as a fibre *concealed* in a merino blend and *revealed* as the fur pelt, were side issues relating to tangata whenua, based on traditional Maori philosophies.

Hutia te rito o te pu harakeke

Kei whea te korimako e ko?

From where

Will the bellbird sing?

*Old Maori proverb*

The environmental philosophy of the Maori remains as a significant part of their culture and they see themselves as ‘*tangata whenua*’, people of the land. This signifies a special relationship between mankind and the earth, the source of food and clothing, and an awareness of respect for the environment.

*A native snail has standing in a New Zealand rain forest, in which the species has evolved, and to which it makes its small but significant contribution. An Australian possum does not so obviously have standing in a New Zealand forest. There is a sense in which the possum is out of place. While the possum might be happy enough in its new niche, the forest does not do so well, given that it has never had to evolve defences against grazing. Right now it looks as if the possums may well exterminate at least one of the species of forest trees, the rata, whose name commemorates the hero of the story of rata and his canoe. When we stand the possum alongside the rata tree, there seems to be a sense in which the rata belongs in New Zealand rainforest while the possum does not.*

(Patterson, J. 2001. p.61)

Both Maori and Pakeha may see the use of this fibre as an example of utu or reciprocity, meaning a mutual action, a practice of give and take.

## ***Appendix C***

### ***Maori Cloak Storage Facility Upgrade Project 2005-2006***

*The following excerpts are taken from a report written on the outcomes of the project.*

*Permission for publication of this documentation has been given by the Whanganui Regional Museum.*

The cloak documentation and re-housing project was undertaken by a team comprising of Museum staff, weavers from the Whanganui community, tangata e tiaki (caretakers), descendants of donors and a staff member from the Whanganui UCOL Fashion School. Once the new storage units were in place, the cloak project was undertaken over a week in late February 2006. Between twelve and eighteen participants plus staff worked on the project on any one day.

The Whanganui Regional Museum's cloak collection of 103 cloaks was fully documented, photographed, condition reported, vacuum cleaned and relocated during the week. Cloaks were re-housed either in new cloak units or individually in existing units to retain their physical safety.

Participants from the community learnt new skills regarding handling, care and storage of heritage textiles and the documentation procedure regarding description and condition of the artefacts. The skills learnt were to be shared amongst the wider community, at whanau, hapu, iwi level, through UCOL Fashion School, and by way of a wananga. The weavers involved intended developing a skill base to continue sharing the knowledge. Project participants increased their knowledge base with regard to the range of materials, methods of weaving and categories of garments examined during the course of the project.

The museum obtained a considerable amount of further information about cloak types, uses, construction methods and decorative patterns which greatly enhanced the collection as a research tool. Additionally the Whanganui names for some of the cloaks, which differ from those used elsewhere in the country, were identified.

Community awareness of the significance of the Maori cloak collection was enlightened by this project, and the use of the collection for research purposes, was greatly enhanced.

*The following data is an example of the information recorded for each cloak.*

*Permission for publication of this documentation has been given by the Whanganui Regional Museum. For ownership reasons, it is not possible to include the photograph of the cloak.*

**Accession No 1802.19**

**Name Title** KAHU HURUHURU: CLOAK

**Brief Description** Kahu huruhuru, cloak; muka (processed flax fibre) , kereru, kaka, kiwi feathers. The selvedge commencement at the bottom edge is whatu aho rua (double-pair twining) as is the body of the cloak. The kaupapa is coarse (undressed/not beaten) muka, horizontal weave, central and lower puka (darts, elliptical inserts). Good feather work, side and lower border of kiwi feathers, inner side and lower border of green kereru feathers with single under kaka feathers at regular intervals, second inner lower border of alternating squares of white ?kereru and orange underwing kaka feathers. Upper border tui feathers, below this strip of kiwi, then strip of underwing kaka and kereru feathers. This is followed by a 70mm row of kiwi feathers, 100mm underwing kaka feathers in blocks separated vertically by white ?kereru feathers, below this is a row of blocks of white ?kereru feathers in an upside down triangular shape surrounded by orange kaka, white ?kereru, below this is main section of kiwi feathers with fine white diamond pattern made of ?kereru feathers in lower half of section.

**Department:** Maori

**Other Id:** T826, Kahu I, B1

**Classification :** Clothing-Outerwear/Clothing/Personal Artefacts/Nomenclature

**Date Catalogued:** 20 Feb 2004, 25 Sept 2001

**Media Materials:** Muka/flax/harakeke, Kereru/Feather, Kaka/Feather

**Measurement reading:** 72 x 115cm

**Primary Prod date:** Circa 1900

**Acquisition Method:** Unknown

**Condition Keyword** Very Good, Good

**Condition Date:** 20 Feb 2006, 03 July 2003

**Researcher comments:** Recent work due to the quality of weaving, especially the coarseness of muka, the joins showing and the feathers coming through onto the back; possibly made by a learner.

## *Appendix D*

### *Photographic Presentation of Garments*



Figure D.1: hand knitted hooded wrap;  
chevron stripe skirt



Figure D.2: rear view hooded wrap



Figure D.3: merino/possum blend  
seamless dress, hand stitching detail



Figure D.4: merino/possum blend dress



Figure D.5: silk blouse,pleated neck detail, bustle skirt; merino/possum tunic, wool blend soft pleated skirt



Figure D.6: silk blouse, possum pelt wrap, merino/possum blend seamless skirt



Figure D.7: cotton blouse



Figure D.8: Rear view, herring-bone silk skirt, pleat detail





Figure D.9: possum pelt wrap, wool blend trousers



Figure D.10: merino/possum/silk blended blanket wrap tunic



Figure D.11: blanket wrap tunic, woven wool pencil skirt



Figure D.12: possum pelt wrap



Figure D.13: hand knitted cape, crochet fringe detail



Figure D.14: merino/possum knit cloak, crochet detail



Figure D.15: hand knitted wool/silk cape, beaded fastening detail



Figure D.16: hand knitted cloak





Figure D.17: whale-bone 'spears' used as fastenings for wraps



Figure D.18: possum fur used for accessories



Figure D.19: crochet detail on cloak



Figure D.20: hand-knitted cape, merino/possum long cloak, hand knitted/crochet cape

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