

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly out-of-focus image of crumpled, light-colored paper. In the upper right corner, a small portion of a map is visible, showing green landmasses and blue water, with a red line indicating a boundary or path.

# **[Liminal Space]**

**An investigation of material and immaterial boundaries  
and their space in between**

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**A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Art & Design (MA&D)**

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## **Attestation of authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Eimke', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andrea Eimke

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## **Abstract**

This visual arts project investigates notions of liminality and hybridity regarding the ambiguity of the interstitial position of the migrant. An examination of the migrant's perspective and perception of cultural identity and the sense of home and belonging also underpins these studies. The project examines how the space between two cultures is experienced, and explores ways in which this might be visually expressed through the construction of fibre and textile art works. The researcher's personal experience, as a German national now resident in the Cook Islands, provides the basis for reflections on cultural liminality and the ambivalence of feelings towards inclusion and exclusion. Material elements from European and Polynesian cultures such as cloth, fibres, and thread, and non-material elements like concepts and rituals are investigated for their potential to transcend the boundaries of their original culture to reveal the liminal space as source of energy and change.

The 80% practice based work is accompanied by a 20% written exegesis

## Positioning Statement

During the first nine years of my life, my parents and I lived in a war-damaged house in Düsseldorf (Germany). My mother had been a master dress designer. Then she sewed clothes for me, herself and some of her friends. There were always fabrics around us. I loved their smell, touch, sound and movement. Mum's world was the world of texture, colour and light.

My father was a photographer. His first "Atelier" (studio) was located in a former bunker. I loved descending into the underworld of his studio. I spent time with him in the dark room. I watched the miracle of negatives turning positive. See-through became opaque. Images rose out of nothingness in the chemical baths. His world was the shadow world of black and white (fig. 1.1).

At the age of six, my parents took me along on a holiday to the Mediterranean island of Ibiza. The exposure at such a young age to a foreign culture was an important experience. It would set the course for the rest of my life. For the ensuing two years I claimed that I myself was Spanish. I had fallen in love with the idea of "the other". I had begun to question my identity.

In high school I entertained a multitude of international pen friendships. An amazing job offer at the Spanish Consulate General in Düsseldorf prematurely ended my university studies as an interpreter. Instead, interpreting became part of my profession. While working as secretary to the Consul General, most of my friends were colleagues and other Spanish immigrants living in Germany. Observing their special situation as so called "guest workers" (migrants) in a foreign environment gave me an outsider's insight into the peculiar position between cultures.



Figure 1.1 - Eimke, R. (photographer). (1955).  
*Shadows and reflections captured by cameras.*

I was especially fascinated by the case of one of my colleagues, the German-born daughter of Spanish immigrants from Catalonia. Although speaking accent-free German, her dark features betrayed her as southern European. In General Franco's Spain she was forbidden to speak her Catalan mother tongue. Her looks were common in Spain, however her slight accent betrayed her as non-native there. She did not feel completely at home in either country, yet was loyal to both in her own way. Bhabha (1997, para. 12) explains this paradox:

"Hybridity is a gesture of translation that keeps open the question of what it is to be Indian in Britain or a gay British artist in California - not open in the facile sense of there being "no closure" but in the revisionary sense that these questions of home, identity, belonging are always open to negotiation, to be posed again from elsewhere, to become iterative, interrogative processes rather than imperative, identitarian designations."

Various other employments took me to Spain, to Saudi Arabia, and to Nigeria. I met my second husband. For the first time I experienced what it felt like to be an expatriate. Now I had an inside view regarding the position between cultures. When the political situation in Nigeria made it increasingly dangerous to live there, my husband and I returned to Germany.

I had spent all these years as interpreter translating someone else's original thoughts into another language. I therefore decided that it was time to find a medium to express my own thoughts. After a two-year apprenticeship I passed my journey(wo)man's<sup>1</sup> exam as embroiderer. The time was right for a career change for both my husband and me. It went along with a change in residence. In 1983, we moved to the small island of Atiu in the Cook Islands.

The Cook Islands women are exquisite embroiderers and have a centuries-old textile tradition of creating ceremonial cloths. Three years after my arrival some of my local friends and I founded a textile art studio. For many years I worked together with four of these skilled women. They generously shared their traditional Polynesian knowledge with me. I enjoyed sharing my European knowledge with them. I became especially interested in bark cloth which I had never heard of before. In the early years of our studio's operation we dedicated much time to extensive studies of the various ways of traditional *tapa* production. Eventually, my friends and fellow shareholders became too old for this strenuous task. As we had been unable to interest young women in this ancient craft, our company re-directed its focus to sewing and embroidery traditions, which our employees considered a more acceptable alternative. The connection between *tapa* and



*tivaivai*, the Cook Islands' ceremonial cloths, eventually became evident when I engaged in writing a book about *tivaivai*, together with anthropologist Dr. Susanne Küchler. The book *Tivaivai - The Social Fabric of the Cook Islands* (Eimke & Küchler) was published in 2009 by the British Museum Press.

The many years of living and working with women from such a different cultural environment to my own, while residing on their remote, isolated home island have allowed me a unique insider view. As women, we share many similarities despite the geographical polarity of our origins. Many cultural aspects, which seemed strange to me at the beginning, such as the raising of feeding children<sup>2</sup>, the community-orientated Polynesian way, and the living in the present moment have gradually started to make sense and enriched my life. In turn much of what once felt natural to me in my own culture, like the nuclear family and individualism, has become questionable because of exposure to an alternative. I feel able to see with two different sets of eyes at the same time.

Today, my country of origin is still considered home, yet it has become a strange place to be; my island of residence is home now and some of it still feels "unhomely". Looking at a poem by Toni Morrison<sup>3</sup>, Homi Bhabha (1997, p. 11) describes this confusion:

"What does it mean to be at home in the world? Home may not be where the heart is, nor even the hearth. Home may be a place of estrangement that becomes the necessary space of engagement; it may represent a desire for accommodation marked by an attitude of deep ambivalence toward one's location. Home may be a mode of living made into a metaphor of survival."

I often remember my former Spanish colleague who belonged neither in her birth country (Germany) nor in that of her forefathers (Spain) and yet was a citizen of both. We now have an alternative in common. We live in a third space embraced by the parentheses of the two "others". Their cultural patterns cast their shadows on us and our situation in-between affects those patterns with an imprint.

1 Formal apprenticeships in Germany lead to a journeyman's degree. (see glossary).

2 It is a Polynesian custom that grandparents adopt and raise the first-born grandchild. These so-called feeding children (*anau angai*) can be seen as equivalent to the Western old-age pension: They are fed and reared while little by their elders, so that they may feed and care for their elders when those become too old to do so.

3 "Whose House is this", 1992

# Introduction

As a European permanent resident on a remote island in Polynesia, my situation between countries and cultures of origin and residence provides the framework for this thesis. In the context of this research, the migrant's position is also the researcher/practitioner's position. It refers to voluntary migration. The practical and theoretical research process unfolds in the space between antipodial cultures. However, for me as expatriate/resident, their clear boundaries have blurred over time. Thus the explorations of these boundaries and their liminal space in between became the focus of this project and provided its title. The practical works constitute 80% of this thesis. Its 20% written exegesis helps to place these in perspective.

The positioning statement reveals my personal circumstances. It shows how introduction to textiles and photography at a young age guided my artistic and practical development. Early exposure to foreign cultures and prolonged residence in various countries have formed a conceptual background for this research project.

The overarching concepts which underpin the final body of work and indicate the position I have arrived at in my investigations are discussed in the first chapter. I examine a migrant's altered perception of home and belonging. I investigate the idea of the in-between as a liminal place of transformation of a migrant's sense of national and cultural identity. Ultimately I explore the hybridity of this "third space" (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1990) as a result of the negotiation of positions.

The second chapter describes the methodology used during the development of the project, observations made, conclusions reached and the practical outcome of these investigations. It introduces the material elements on which the explorations are based and their technical and formal potential within this project. It discusses the material and non-material elements' historical and cultural significance within this project's framework. Studies of other artist's works that guided my orientation are interwoven in the chapter. Numerous marginal investigations were excluded from this discussion to accentuate those that are relevant to the final works.

# Chapter 1 The in-between: A shared space

## 1.1 Emotional space: Belonging and comfort zone

While essentialist writers' studies of identity, home, and belonging focus on ethnic roots and attribute a sense of duality to the migrant, with loyalties split between one's place of origin and one's place of residence, Gorashi argues that identities can no longer be seen as static, but must be considered as being in constant flow and alteration, "dynamic, complex, and hybrid" (2004, p.330).

Taking up residence in a foreign country results in adding a new understanding to the concept of home. "Home" is now divided into the place of origin and that of residence. However, the notion of home describes more than just a place, it describes a comfort zone, it implies familiarity. Home can also mean feeling enveloped in a familiar environment, where one can make sense of things. Yet it "is impossible to return to a place that was lived as home, precisely because the home is not exterior to a self, but implicated in it" (Ahmed, 2003, p. 343). The home of origin lives on as the home of memories; through memory, the past becomes part of the present. The home of one's residence is where actual life happens.

Emerging from the embrace of (the original) home, the migrant becomes vulnerable, faced with the uncertainty of a new destination, an unknown destiny. Making sense of this unknown environment, which may eventually be considered as one's home, is possible only through getting involved, becoming a participant, partaking in a group of people, community, or family. This active belonging affects the group as it affects the participant. It is emotional, it moves, it alters.

This active belonging, the stage of transformation, is a migrant's liminal position. Here s/he can re-design her/his identity, celebrating the changed feeling of a new self while at the same time reconsidering the old (Hollinshead, 1998). For the migrant, the in-between can be a space of negotiation between borders of "home", the home left behind and the place now called home. The migrant's liminal space can be found on the bridge between the memory of belonging and the longing to belong.

## 1.2 The Migrant's identity: A "work in progress"

For the indigenous citizen, the question of national identity only arises and is felt in relation to the foreign immigrant, as Balibar states: "the racial/cultural identity of 'true nationals' remains invisible but is inferred [sic] from...the quasi-hallucinatory visibility of the 'false nationals' [sic]" (Bhabha, 1993, p. 4). The role reversal from national (indigenous citizen) to expatriate as the result of migration can have major consequences for the migrant's perception of identity.

"While living in a foreign place disrupt[s] the foundations of cultural authority, it also provoke[s] a rethinking as to the inherent superiority of different value systems, and of potential forms for their coexistence. Migration irretrievably alter[s] the idea of home and nation" (Papastergiadis, 2005, p. 17).

It is possible that with the role reversal also the cultural identity becomes questionable. The exposure not only to a new cultural environment, but also to other cultures along the way, and the memories of past aspects of identity may gradually shape a new sense of identity. "The importance of such retroaction lies in its ability to reinscribe the past, reactivate it, relocate it, resignify it" (Bhabha, 1993, p. 7). Past identities can eventually be seen from an altered viewpoint altogether when learning how to assume another position and to 'look through another culture's eyes'. The migrant may thus successively reassess her/his sense of cultural identity. This can be compared to a continuous work in progress.

### 1.3 Liminality: The ambiguous space

Positioned between cultures, the reassessment of identity takes place in a liminal space. The term *liminality* is derived from the Latin word *limen* which means threshold (The Free Dictionary, n.d.). According to Schechter (2006), it was first used by Arnold von Gennep in his anthropological studies *Les rites de passage*. The Scottish anthropologist Victor Turner later extended the concept to the studies of social processes of large-scale societies. Most importantly, Turner showed that the liminal position was not characterized by the dichotomy of either/or, but could be described by neither/nor and both/and in the sense of Western ambiguity.

Thus liminality can be defined as a transient state (Stanford Friedman, 2002; The Free Dictionary, n.d.). Being the alterant position between one state and another, liminality can be conceived in ways that are not mutually exclusive. We are in transition while passing over a threshold, or while situated in the geographical no-man's land between borders. The interstice can be considered as divisive between polar entities; a separation. *Limen* may be considered as a source of resistance to the other. Yet it is also a source of energy for - or through – the possibility of change. The threshold is the place of action, where the outside is turned into the inside. It acts like a filter which transforms the foreign while retaining traces of its own. (Lotman, 2001). The navigation of change is a process of transit which also transforms the transient.

For many expatriates, the liminal space may become a permanent location. They may never completely lose all traces of their original culture, neither will they be able to totally assimilate the new culture. Instead, the position in-between can be considered the connective tissue between two entities, not denying their difference, but making possible a dialogue between them. Dividing boundaries become transparent thresholds, separation and connection at the same time, parentheses enclosing “a third space” (Bhabha, 1993; Schechter, 2006).

## 1.4 The “third space”: A synthesis of elements

Homi Bhabha describes liminality as the potential of a third space, that “fantastic location of cultural difference where new expressive cultural identities continually open out performatively to realign the boundaries of class, of gender, [...] contingent upon the stubborn chunks of the incommensurable elements of past, totalized identity” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219, as cited in Hollinshead, 1989). The in-between can be seen as a place whose liminality creates a mixture of elements, hybridity, a fusion, a synthesis. Liminality and hybridity can be regarded as complementary concepts, considering that a hybrid, “something of mixed origin or composition” (hybridity, n.d.), can only be created by negotiating the limitations of its components (Schechter, 2006). Something new is generated when the elements of one object are restructured according to the laws of another, which can be seen, for example, in creole or pidgin languages. (Lotman, 2001).

Being exposed to the alternative perspective of another culture can shake the stability of one’s sense of identity and release energy, enabling new ways of dialoguing to move beyond former boundaries into the third space. Instead of suffering the conflict of split loyalties to the original past and adopted present cultural and geographic environments, as a foreign resident the migrant may experience double-ness, a “multiple sense of self” (Schechter, 2006), “sameness and difference simultaneously” (Gorashi, 2004), a kind of hybridity comparable with multilingualism. Elements of both cultures are interwoven or experienced parallel. Instead of dwelling in the divisive perpetuation of the polarity of difference, the “third space” can be perceived as an opportunity to embrace both extremes as a dual possibility.

Thus the third space can become a position for people to “elude the politics of polarity and emerge (i.e., [sic] to begin to re-envisage themselves) as the others of their selves” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38, in Hollinshead, 1989). It is here, where belonging does not refer to the enclosed exclusivity of opposing sides. Instead it relates to the sharing of each other’s different ways of thinking, of feeling, of being. Here migrants and indigenous citizens can “inhabit each other’s hospitality” (Pallí, 2006, p. 12).

## Chapter 2 The twists and turns in the fabric of progress

At the beginning of the project, I investigated old and new elements of European and Polynesian cultures. I explored their cultural and conceptual dualities through materials, techniques, and form. As outlined in the positioning statement, my art practice engages with textiles and fibres. It involves a variety of techniques including sewing, lace and tapa making. As a textile artist, I firstly examined the suitability of my medium as a means of investigating notions of in-betweenness. Both in Europe and Polynesia, cloth and fibre based materials, woven and non-woven, have been used to accentuate distinction in people, objects or places during stages of passage and change. The liminal state during ritual stages of passage contributes to change and identity formation. As such it can be compared to the migrant's liminal position in between cultures which results in transformation of identity perception and growth.

I began my research by studying the veil as a European form of ceremonial cloth and the Polynesian *tapa* and its substitute *tivaivai* as status and stage markers to investigate whether and how their materials and form could contribute to the exploration of this project's underpinning concepts. Though the veil is used in clothing, to conceal and reveal objects of value (e.g. the unveiling of artworks) or in Christian liturgy (veil, 2009), I chose to focus on its use as Lenten Veil as an example for its spatial, visual and temporal application. In early Christianity it was employed to screen off access to the choir area of churches, blocking from view the activities occurring at the altar during the fasting time of Lent. Interrupting the habitual look of the church, it invited alternative possibilities of seeing. Covering and uncovering accentuated both the visible and the invisible. The veil intensified the perception of the image behind the altar, which evolved from seeing to contemplation (Moss-Brochhagen, 2006). The forty-day period of fasting before Easter, in which the Lenten Veil was up, can be compared to the transformative period during a rite of passage, to a period of liminality.



Figure 2.1 - Brockpähler, D. (photographer). (2004). *Lenten Veil Convent Marienfeld*. Embroidered linen. 3,000 mm X 6,800 mm



Many Lenten Veils were intricately embroidered, often using lace techniques which made them semi-transparent (fig. 2.1, p. 13), emphasizing their double function of concealing the visible and highlighting the invisible. In medieval times lace was so precious that it was used as important political tool and for diplomatic gifts between the European ruling families and countries (Palliser, 1922) operating as a link between cultures.

The use of lace in medieval times bore striking similarity to the large quantities of fine, white *tapa* (bark cloth) that were exchanged as peace and other offerings between Polynesian tribes and islands before European contact (Savage, 1962, 1980; Thomas, 1995). Lengths of *tapa* were integral to ceremonies of pre-missionary religious rites and traditional custom (fig. 2.2) to invest a person, object, or place with a special status (*tapu*) or to protect persons/objects/places from the contamination with the *tapu* (sacredness) of someone or some-



Figure 2.2 - G.Tobin (artist). (1792). The Body of Mow-Oroah an Otahytean Chief. Mitchell Library, ZPX A563, Australia: Sydney

thing. Wanting to explore the potential of *tapa* as this project's Polynesian element, it was important to correctly interpret its traditional and contemporary use to employ the material in a culturally respectful way. I therefore studied texts about manufacture, tradition, and usage of *tapa* in ancient Polynesia (Babadzan, 1995; Buck, 1944; Henry, 1928, 1971; Kooijman, 1972, Neich & Pendergast, 1997). The fact that *tapa* was offered to envelop and thus involve the outsider in a community (Tcherkézoff, 2003), made it an appropriate material to use in the context of this project to explore the migrant's place and also to implicate the relationships that structure the social fabric of a Polynesian village community.

Today, the post-European-contact substitutes for large sheets of bark cloth are called *tivaivai*. They are patchwork covers that can be considered in some of their applications as the contem-



porary Polynesian equivalent to the European veil. Though technically *tivaivai* originated as a result of Christian missionary teachings, both Küchler (2003) and Thomas (1995) argue that the use of woven cloth did not replace traditional pre-missionary custom, but was instead either added to or absorbed in existing cloth usage. They are still employed in liminal, life-changing situations, such as a boy's haircutting ceremony (fig. 2.3), a wedding or a death (Eimke & Küchler, 2009). They are also presented to departing family members when travelling to a distant home in another country to serve as a material token for the bond of relationship.



Figure 2.3 - Eimke, A. (photographer). ( 2007).  
*Tivaivai at haircutting ceremony.*

## 2.1 Early explorations

As the project investigated a position between two cultures, I examined possible choices of materials for their appropriateness, potential, similarities and differences (fig. 2.4, p. 16). The archaic *tapa* (bark cloth) was once common throughout Polynesia. In its use, it can be seen as pre-contact equivalent to European woven cloth. Being non-woven, its felted fibres can also be likened to the bonded synthetic fibres of interfacing. *Kiriau* (bark fibres) can be compared with thread. Because of availability constraints on our remote island, cotton-polyester thread, itself a hybrid of natural and man-made materials, was my choice to link the different components. While my Cook Islands friends and I processed many of the natural materials, the Paper Mulberry *tapa* had to be imported from Samoa and Tonga, because of the plant's near extinction in the Cook Islands. The European materials were sourced in New Zealand.

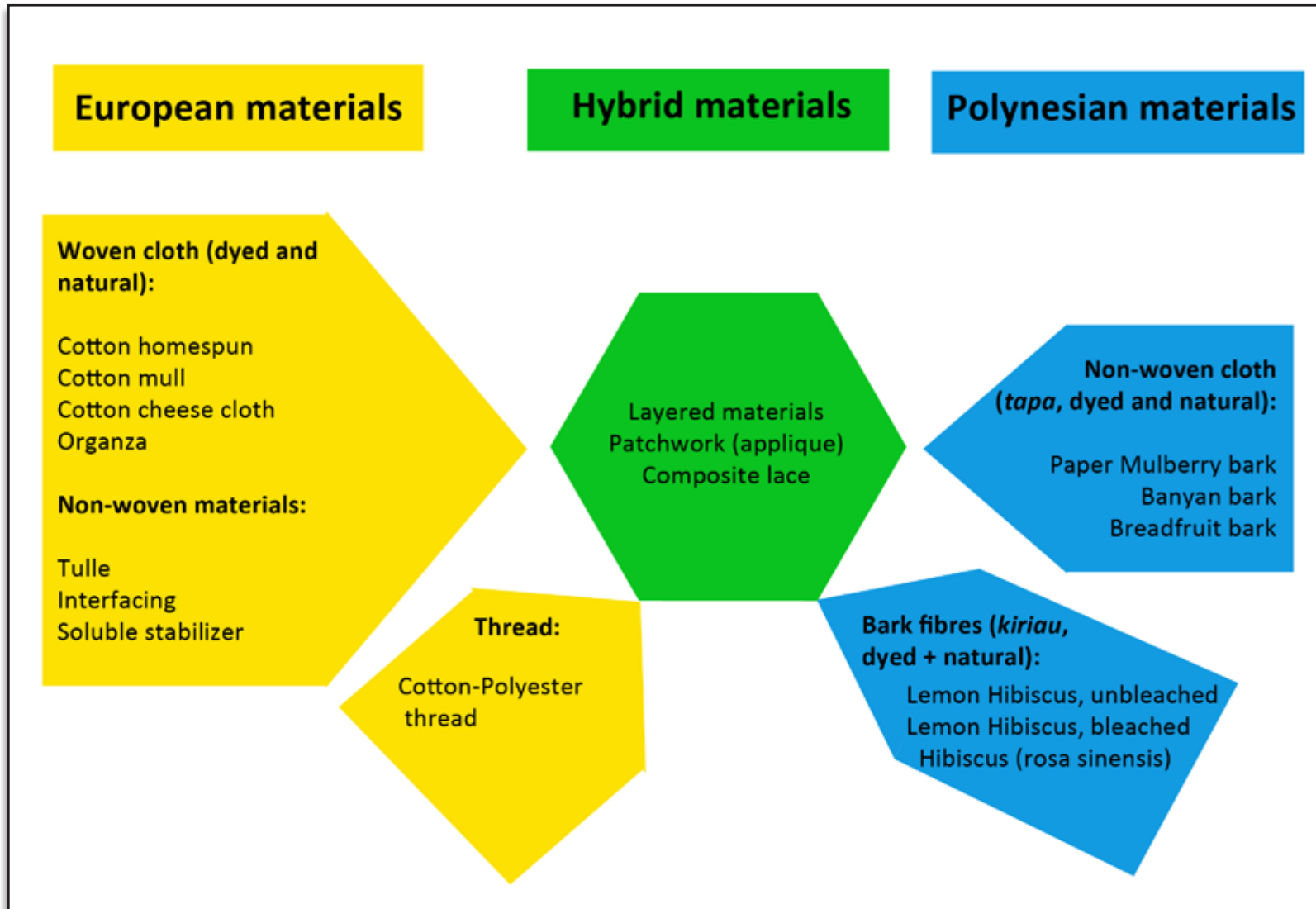


Figure 2.4 - Eimke, A. (March 2008) *Mapping material choices*. Digital graphic

The first work investigated technical and material possibilities of combining *tapa* and fabric. Pieces of *tapa* (fig. 2.5) were sandwiched between a layer each of black tulle and organza and fixed by free-form machine sewing (fig. 2.6), keeping them visible from both sides while protecting their fragility. *Veil for Vanity* explored the dual concepts of concealment and revelation. It was displayed hanging against a window (fig. 2.7) emphasising the veil's spatial use and its part-transparency.



Figure 2.7 - Eimke, A. (March 2008). *Veil for Vanity*. Hung against window. Black organza, tulle, dyed Paper Mulberry tapa, free-form machine sewing. 575 mm X 310 mm

This work's delicacy stimulated the exploration of other material possibilities to achieve a similar effect. I made a triangular piece of lace by sandwiching *tapa* and *kiriau* between two layers of soluble stabilizer, connecting the layers by random machine sewing, and dissolving the stabilizer in water (see figs 2.13 - 2.15, p. 20). Soluble interfacing serves both as the base on which to construct something new and to add stability to the resulting composite. The liminal qualities of soluble stabilizer could be likened to the transformative process that affects a migrant's sense of identity when becoming part of a new cultural environment. Only after several more trials could I appreciate the importance of this aspect to the project. The resulting composite lace served as analogy to the sensitivity with which an intercultural position needs to be addressed.



Figure 2.5 - Eimke, A. (photographer). (March 2008). *Tapa remnants*.

Figure 2.6 - Eimke, A. (photographer). (March 2008) *Tapa trapped between fabrics*.





Figure 2.8 - Eimke, A. (April 2008). *Fit for a Princess*. Cotton fabric, Paper Mulberry tapa, kiriau, Polyester thread, bone, pearl, shell, machine-sewn lace and free-form machine sewing. 1,590 mm X 630 mm.

*Fit for a princess* (fig. 2.8) was the first work that investigated the notion of the in-between space. I realized the importance of this concept to the further development of the research in retrospect. British textile artist Cas Holmes' arrangements of long narrow panels (fig. 2.9) were an incentive to explore spatial issues through an increase in scale. I envisioned the shape of a human-size spiralled maze whose outside becomes its inside as one enters (fig. 2.10). Molding a layered strip of interfacing and *kiriau* into a spiral, I made a maquette to explore the potential of this sculptural object as a spatial installation (fig. 2.11, p. 19). The work was intended to en-

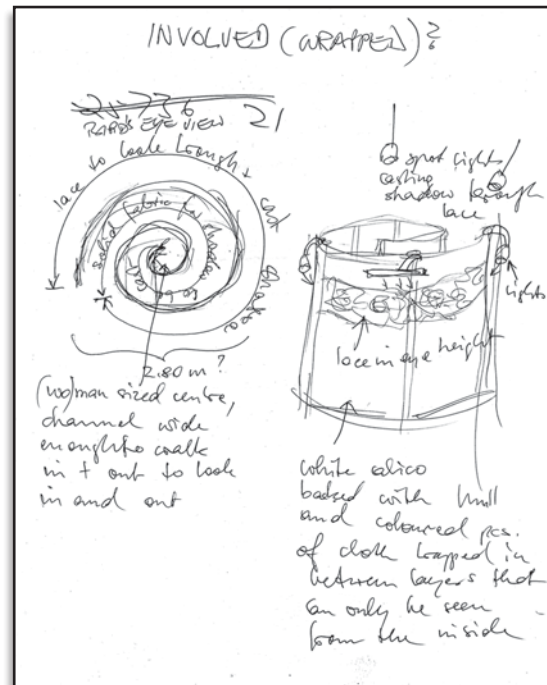


Figure 2.10 - Eimke, A. (2008). *Work sketch for a walk-in spiral*.



Figure 2.9 - Holmes, C. (artist, photographer). (n.d.). *Counting Crows*. Teabag paper, found fabric, buried fabric. Machine and hand stitch, print, dye, ink and paste. Bicycle spokes. 14 panels each 2,400 mm X 300 mm.

able viewers to experience from within the feeling of being enclosed but not excluded.

I wanted to achieve a semi-transparency

that would provide the opportunity of looking out of and into the space to maintain a connection to the "other side".

My research now focussed on the investigation of the inner space. Here a migrant's frustrations resulting from misconceptions, feelings of marginalization and isolation could be negotiated with insight, tolerance, and acceptance, as the space in



which to create a hybrid, integrated cultural identity. The felted fibres of natural (*tapa*) and synthetic (*interfacing, soluble stabilizer*) bonded materials, the crossings and ties of natural fibres (*kiriau*) and threads, and the exploration of their material qualities through manipulation, distressing, fragmentation, and fusion served to exploit their potential as components of a hybrid fabric that could lace together, shield, and address the elements of a migrant's existence beyond boundaries.

The layering technique employed in this trial was not successful. The 'stacking' of unrelated materials like man-made, synthetic, bonded interfacing and natural fibres hinted at a hierarchical structure rather than creating a material that would overcome the limits of its component's materiality and extend beyond the potential of the individual substances. Due to time constraints at that stage in the project, it became impossible to make a full-scale version.

## 2.2 Conceptual Considerations



Figure 2.12 - Nimkulrat, N. (artist) (© 2006). Julnipitawong, P. (photographer). *The Coffee Cup*. Paper string. Knotting. 150 mm X 150 mm X 70 mm.

The practice evolved to the creation of delicately structured, skin-like materials to become boundaries between inside and outside addressing questions of migrant identity. These materials could be described by the German term *Hülle*. The one word comprises English translations such as shell, skin, cover, façade or cocoon (Casells Wörterbuch Deutsch-English / Englisch-Deutsch, 1957, 1980). Focussing on technical aspects of sculptural lace objects, I studied the works of Finnish artist Nithikul Nimkulrat (fig. 2.12). Nimkulrat creates three dimensional paper string sculptures that are constructed in her own lace technique (Nimkulrat, 2006).



Figure 2.11 - Eimke, A. (August 2008). *Maquette for a walk-in spiral* (above and below).



Building on previous discoveries, I investigated the possibilities that composite lace might offer in the creation of a sculptural object. The breaking up of *tapa* and *kiriau* (fig. 2.13) is a pre-requisite for their merging with other elements such as thread and soluble stabilizer to create a new 'hybrid' shell or *Hülle*. To create a three-dimensional shape, strips of deconstructed Paper Mulberry *tapa* and *kiriau* were sewn on to a moulded stabilizer base (fig. 2.14). The stabilizer was washed out (fig. 2.15) and the lace was dried over a mould, in this case a dressmaker's dummy (fig. 2.16).



Figure 2.13 - (top left) Eimke, A. (2008). *Peeled-back layers of Paper Mulberry tapa.*

Figure 2.14 - (bottom left) Eimke, A. (2008). *Tapa and kiriau sewn on to stabilizer base.*

Figure 2.15 - (centre) Eimke, A. (2008). *Washing out stabilizer.*

Figure 2.16 - (right) Eimke, A. (2008). *Drying lace over mould.*



For an investigation of migrant identity, the body and its surface served as useful analogies. Skin is a liminal space, the barrier between the individual and the other that functions as the 'meeting place' of both in touch. The encounter between self and other can transform both and inscribe their bodies' surfaces with new messages, like blushing, or paleness, and goose bumps. Feelings of cultural alienation and the insecurity about one's identity following migration are often expressed in art with the body image (Ireland 1998). Physical difference is sometimes emphasized in protest against discrimination in an attempt to regain and ensure self confidence. However standing out because of one's physical difference can also induce the wish to hide this difference, to blend in and thus become invisible. The torso's missing arms and hollowness (nobody) (fig. 2.17), and its open bottom insinuate that the liminal space of migration offers the migrant no place to establish roots.

The absence of arms and hands of *Home* prompted me to investigate the hand (fig. 2.18, p. 22) and its role in maintaining and building relationships as a bridge to a new culture. Language and touch can be seen as related and are vital for establishing and handling relationships. Experiences made in connection with touch can result in associations that shape memory and perceptions. These, in turn, shape social relationships and interaction. (DeLong, Wu, and Bao, 2007; Pajackowska, 2005).

Figure 2.17 - Eimke, A. (September 2008). *Home*. Tapa, kiria, thread, soluble stabilizer, wire. Machine sewn lace. 680 mm X 390 mm X 300 mm





“Remembering [...] is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dis-membered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha, H. 1994, p. 63 as cited by Ireland, 1998, p. 466).



Figure 2.18 - Eimke, A. (September 2008). *Fence* - detail. Paper Mulberry tapa, kiriau, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. 220 mm X 190 mm X 70 mm.

This investigation's outcome was *Fence* (fig. 2.19), nine lace hands that formed letters in American Sign Language. Their message 'don't touch' could be interpreted both from outside and inside the barrier. The silent message of *Fence* signalled the boundaries that embrace the migrant's liminal experience of questioning identity. The relationship between the worlds on either side of the boundary is interactive and mutually affective. The boundary is a place of continuous dialogue and exchange (Lotman, 2000).



Figure 2.19 - Eimke, A. (September 2008). *Fence*. Paper Mulberry tapa, kiriau, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. Nine pieces, each 220 mm X 190 mm X 70 mm.





Figure 2.20 - (top left) Eimke, A. (April 2009). *Emergence*. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer, fern stems. 200 mm X 250 mm X 200 mm.

Figure 2.21 - (centre) Eimke, A. (May 2009). *Feet*. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. 150 mm X 100 mm X 250 mm each.

Figure 2.22 - (bottom left) Eimke, A. (April 2009) *Vessel*. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer, copper wire. Machine sewing. 200 mm X 400 mm X 150 mm.



I tested the potential of differently shaped sculptural objects for the exploration of a migrant's negotiation of boundaries (figs. 2.20 and 2.21). With the vessel shape I studied movement as the temporal element of the transient state of liminality (fig. 2.22). I investigated scale by making multiple small objects which I arranged to fill a larger space (figs. 2.23 and 2.24), to experience their spatial relationship and tension. The exploration of space called for a large scale installation that could provide the viewer with a sensory experience beyond vision.



Figure 2.23 - (top right) Eimke, A. (May 2009). *Barrier*. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer, tree branch. Free-form machine sewing. Nine lace hands, each 220 mm X 190 mm X 70 mm and one piece 400 mm X 200 mm X 100 mm.



Figure 2.24 - (bottom right) Eimke, A. (May 2009). *Hanging cones. (detail)*. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. Ten pieces, each 100 mm X 200 mm X 70 mm.



Figure 2.25 - Takaki, K. (artist). (2001). Toshiharu Kawabe (photographer). *Ma*. Exhibition Textural Space. Water soluble film, Polypropylene, linen, thread + steel, 2100 mm X 700 mm X 700 mm.

## 2.3 Contextual Contemplations

Studying the ambiguity and tension of the liminal space, I looked at the transparent textile panels of Japanese artist Koji Takaki's work *Ma* (fig. 2.25). Pilgrim describes *ma* as "a place that stands "betwixt and between" all two-ness; a place emptied of distinctions, locations, and orders, yet a liberating [...] place to be" (pp. 272 - 273). As such it resembles the liminal space which is the focus of this project. Matthias Thibaut (as cited in Yeh, 2003, p. 3) writes that Takaki's "textile spaces ... create strange in-between worlds of subdued light and mysterious shadow, where one layer reveals a sight of another layer, neither interior nor exterior." The lace-like panels of Takaki's works achieve the effect of semi-transparency by using a technique similar to mine.

Korean artist Do-ho Suh's textile installation *Staircase V* (de zeen, 2008) (fig. 2.26) conveys his experiences of life between two homes, a migrant's experience. It is a replica of the staircase in Do-ho Suh's landlord's house. The staircase, connection between two floors, is a liminal space. The artist refers to this work as "a spacial [sic] manifestation of the human relationship and of the ambiguous boundaries between people and public space" (David Winton Bell Gallery, 2003). Suh's delicate work provided me with useful information regarding the hanging options of an installation of textiles in a gallery space.



Figure 2.26 - Do-Ho Suh (artist). (2003). White, S. (© photographer) *Staircase*. Polyester and stainless steel tube. Lehmann Maupin Gallery, New York.

*The Gates* in New York's Central Park (figure 2.27) was created by the artist couple Christo and Jeanne-Claude. They adapted the work's textiles and supports to the environment of their installation to create a passage of thousands of gates as thresholds. The work's scale can only be fully appreciated once the viewer becomes part of the work and experiences her/his own physicality in relation to the work's scale. This alerted me to the importance of relationships and interaction between work, space and viewer that I would have to consider in my own works.



Figure 2.27 - Christo and Jeanne-Claude (artists). (© 2005). Volz, W. (photographer). (© 2005). *The Gates*, Central Park, New York City, 1979-2005.



## 2.4 Finale

In order to emphasize the potential of my composite textiles as objects, I created several panels to test their installation in a confined space and beyond (fig. 2.28). I revised my lace technique to incorporate larger pieces of materials as composites of multiple elements and their connecting spaces in between. Shadows cast through the panel's open areas (fig. 2.29) led me to consider an investigation of light and shadow as part of the liminal space.

Cornelia Parker's "Cold Dark Matter" (fig. 2.30) shows remnants of a garden shed, symbolic for



Figure 2.28 - Eimke, A. ( May 2009) *Tivaivai Lace II*. Cotton fabric, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. 2,000 mm X 375 mm.



Figure 2.29 - Eimke, A. (May 2009). *Tivaivai Lace I* - detail, with shadow.



Figure 2.30 - Parker, C. (artist).(1991) © Tate, London 2008. *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*. Installation, mixed media, 4000 mm x 5000 mm x 5000 mm.

memories safely stored away, after an explosion has cracked open its walls and forced out into view its hidden contents. The explosion can be regarded as translation of the altering energy that is freed in liminal space, the explosion's impact as destructive of a past, contained state, affording change. The shadow cast by the explosion's shattered remnants resembles the far-reaching effect a radical alteration, such as migration or other major changes in life can have.

I studied how my composite lace panels as boundaries might visually affect their space in-between with the help of light. Light could traverse their open spaces, their solid areas casting a shadow on the space in between. Here the shadows might be able to mingle and strengthen each other. I examined possibilities of creating a third space, that could be filled with the interaction of light and shadow, of its borders and its occupants. The panels seemed to embrace the space in their midst like brackets enclose supplementary information in a sentence. This analogy provided the title [Liminal space].

After a computer sketch (fig. 2.31) I created a maquette (fig. 2.32) with two deliberately dissimilar panels analogous of the liminal space's boundaries. The contrast of shapes was clearly reflected in the shadow. However, the work lacked balance, because the colouring detracted from the shadow's effect. Light and shadow had evolved into important elements that demanded equal attention as part of the work.

Sorenson (2008) observes that it is the object's back surface that blocks the light which

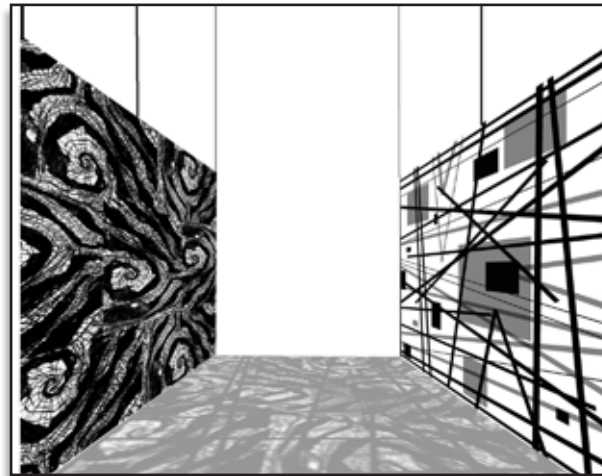


Figure 2.31 - Eimke, A. (2009). *Computer sketch for work trials with shadows.*

Figure 2.32 - Eimke, A. (June 2009). *Shadow play.* Fabric, dyed tapa, Polyester thread, ribbons, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. 2 panels of each 375 mm X 400 mm. 2 light sources.



casts the shadow (fig. 2.33), implicating all sides. Piaget sees shadow as representation of otherness in the complementary sense of Gestalt psychology (Turner, 2006), according to which one always sees a perceptual whole and not only isolated parts (Behrens, 1998). I like to regard the use of shadow



Figure 2.34 - Eimke, A. (July 2009). *Shadow passage* - detail. Cotton fabric, Paper Mulberry and Banyan tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine sewing. 2 panels of each 375 mm X 700 mm, 2 light sources.

in my work as an opportunity to embrace two extremes as a dual possibility.

My new maquette used colour sparingly, emphasizing the natural colouring of its component materials. The shadows cast through both sides were layered, they merged and inter-



Figure 2.35 - Eimke, A. (July 2009). *Shadow passage* - object.



Figure 2.33 - Eimke, A. (August 2009). *Shadow: the object's back* - detail. Tapa, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer, freeform machine-sewing, light source. 400 mm X 700 mm.

sected (fig. 2.34). I began to further explore this shady place's potential, inserting objects (fig. 2.35) or animating the space with three humanoid shapes (fig. 3.36, p.29), inserting narrow panels to make viewers stop and take detours, moving the panels by the airflow of their passing (fig. 2.37, p. 29).





Figure 2.36 - Eimke, A. (July 2009). *Shadow passage* - detail with humanoid figures. Tapa, cotton fabric, Polyester thread, soluble stabilizer, wood, Light, 400 mm X 250 mm X 700 mm.



Figure 2.37 - Eimke, A. (August, 2009). *Shadow passage* - panels.

## 2.5 [Third Space] - the final exhibition

The John Williams room in the Takamoa Theological College's Mission House on Rarotonga (fig. 2.38) became the venue for this project's final exhibition. The Mission House was the first stone building on Rarotonga constructed in the 1840s with the island's materials (limestone, timber), employing local hands and skills, and European technical knowledge. The British missionaries designed this hybrid structure as a place of study

and education. With its three and a half metres high, centuries-old hardwood ceiling and six metres long whitewashed limestone walls, the square room proved a historically significant environment for the

installation. A wall plaque in the room depicting the ships that brought the missionaries to the Pacific (fig. 2.39) raised relevant reference to the project's central issue of migration. Through two French doors came a constant breeze, and natural daylight entered the room in contrast to the rather dim artificial lighting. The exposed rough-hewn beams of the ceiling balanced the smooth, reflective surface of the grey floor tiles.



Figure 2.38 - Eimke, A. Photographer. (2009). *Takamoa Theological College, Rarotonga, Cook Islands*.



Figure 2.39 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space] - detail, in front of wall plaque*. Bonded polyester interfacing, paper mulberry tapa, cotton-polyester thread, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing. 2,500 mm X 800 mm.





Figure 2.40 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail. Paper mulberry tapa, interfacing, cotton-polyester thread, cotton gauze, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing.



Figure 2.41 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton-polyester thread, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing.

Figure 2.42 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton-polyester thread, cotton gauze, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing.



The final installation incorporated 22 composite textile panels of varying lengths and widths. Paper Mulberry bark (*tapa*) was either used in its naturally off-white state or bleached to match or contrast with coffee-dyed cotton gauze, and with the synthetic white of bonded interfacing (fig. 2.40). The materials were cut, ripped, overlapped, or juxtaposed. Mixed-material panels were built up from fragments netted together with polyester cotton thread (fig. 2.41). Lacier layers of tapa were separated and joined to frayed fringes of delicate cotton gauze (fig. 2.42). The natural openings and irregularities of the long bark-cloth strips were filled in with machine sewn lace inspired by or contrasting the fibres' flow (fig. 2.43). Narrow, brown fern



Figure 2.43 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton-polyester thread, cotton gauze, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing.

stems were inserted into small tubes in the top part of the panels as support for hanging and, where possible, the ragged endings of the panels extended upwards beyond their support (fig. 2.44).



Figure 2.45 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail view. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton gauze, interfacing, cotton-polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine-sewing. Panels ranging from 3,500 mm X 400 mm to 2,500 X 800 mm

Figure 2.46 - Eimke, A. (January - February, 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail, panels flying in the wind.



The room's specifics such as wooden ceiling, contrast of artificial and natural light (fig. 2.45), spatial dimensions, openings, and previously unobserved bonuses like wind (fig. 2.46) and reflecting floor tiles, were seen in association with the diversity of material, shape, texture, and lengths of the panels. I sought both balance and tension in the relationship between the individual panels and their spatial installation echoing the migrant's continually changing interaction with a new environment.



Figure 2.44 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton-polyester thread, soluble interfacing. Free-form machine-sewing.

Filling four fifth of the room, the elements were freely suspended from the wooden ceiling with cotton threads that had been coloured to blend into the brown background (fig. 2.44).





Figure 2.47 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space]* - detail, panels pivoting around their central axes. Paper Mulberry tapa, soluble stabilizer, cotton-polyester thread, free-form machine sewing.

Some could pivot from swivels around their central axes (fig. 2.47), others, tied to eyelets, swung backwards and forwards in the constant breeze that entered through the room's open doorways. Their gentle movement caused alterations in natural and artificial light and shadows that embraced and intersected the space. The rough adze marks of the side entrance's exposed ancient hard-wood lintel connected with the panels' design in material contrast and visual similarity (fig. 2.48).



Figure 2.48 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space]* - detail view side entrance. Cotton gauze, polyester- cotton thread, soluble stabilizer, free-form machine sewing. 800 mm X 800 mm.

The panels' mobility suggested the potential of change in the migrant's identity. Their graceful movements were mirrored in the reflective surface of the room's floor tiles (fig. 2.49), their harmonious flow inviting meditation, and submersion into an altered state of mind akin to the alternative mind set of the migrant's relative position. The rigid geometry of the



Figure 2.49 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space]* - detail, reflecting in the floor tiles of the exhibition space.



Figure 2.50 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space] - detail*. Cotton gauze, tapa, polyester cotton thread, free-form machine sewing. 2,500 mm X 800 mm.



Figure 2.51 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space] - detail*. Paper mulberry tapa, polyester-cotton thread, free-form machine sewing. 2,500 mm X 750 mm.

Figure 2.52 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). *[Third Space] - detail view front entrance from inside*. Various panels of cotton gauze, paper mulberry tapa, interfacing, polyester-cotton thread, free-form machine sewing, ranging from 6,000 mm X 200 mm to 2,500 mm X 900 mm.

room's entrances were softened by the panels' ragged edges (fig. 2.50). Their transparent materiality superimposed patterns on architectural features such as the French doors' glass arches (fig. 2.51), as if echoing the exchange of cultural impact. Relative to the viewpoint, the elements' placement and incessant movement both veiled and welcomed the perception of the exterior world (fig. 2.52).





Figure 2.53 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail view front entrance. Paper mulberry tapa, cotton gauze, interfacing, cotton-polyester thread, soluble stabilizer. Free-form machine-sewing. Panels ranging from 6,000 mm X 400 mm to 2,500 X 800 mm.

Figure 2.54 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail view with viewers. Various panels of cotton gauze, paper mulberry tapa, interfacing, polyester-cotton thread, free-form machine sewing, between 6,000 mm X 200 mm and 2,500 mm X 900 mm.



Entry into the room (fig. 2.53) meant stepping into the installation. It incorporated the viewers into the space (fig. 2.54), offering room for their own sensory perception. Respecting their individual differences, they were given the choice of meandering through the installation's elements or of remaining at the periphery in an empty area towards the back of the room. Standing away, they could take in most of the installation from



a distance. They could experience the inside and outside tensions and relationships - a potential experience of liminal space. Embraced by my textile responses to issues of identity, belonging, and relationship, they could become part of the interstitial space, react to, and interact with the installation's elements. Completing this third space with their presence and interest, in both a literal and figurative sense, viewers could reciprocate with the space the agency of change.



Figure 2.55 - Eimke, A. (January - February 2009). [*Third Space*] - detail view. Various panels of paper mulberry tapa, cotton gauze, interfacing, polyester-cotton thread, free-form machine sewing, ranging from 6,000 mm X 200 mm to 2,500 mm X 900 mm.

## Conclusion

[Liminal Space] was an investigative journey that began with the examination of duality, negotiation of boundaries, and questioning of differences between the European and Polynesian cultures. Navigating through this research, I disclosed their complementary coexistence, connecting bridges, surmountable thresholds and similarities. These provided the conceptual background for the final work.

With the research from which the final work evolved, I provided an insight into the project's framework of historical and social contexts. Revealing the liminal process of transformation as a result of the migrant's changing perception of home and belonging, I facilitated the understanding of the migrant's ambiguous position between cultures. Accepting and addressing my permanence in the third space of cultural liminality, I uncovered its potential for growth gained from energy born of destruction and renewal, interaction and change. It offered me the opportunity to celebrate difference as a basis for innovation.

Cloth, fibres and techniques from Europe and Polynesia were employed to serve as this project's physical realisation of material and visual alternatives to their customary implementation in rites of passage. Ritual and ceremonial aspects and the use of textiles in both cultures inspired my fabrications' form. In their non-traditional use, tapa, fibres, fabric and lace eventually overcame the limitations of their traditional application as ceremonial cloths. The result was a complex combination of concepts and aspects from different cultures, a composition of uncommon textiles, of space, light and shadow that created an interactive zone for artist, objects and viewers.

The final work was produced with the awareness that the liminal space between cultures is filled with an exciting wealth of possibilities, alternatives, and choices making way for journeys that negotiate the challenges of ongoing change. It provides room for the viewers' passage through my fabrication to fill its spaces with their own agency, enhancing it with their reflections and leaving it with new experiences and questions. These could prepare the way for further explorations of the unlimited potential of [liminal space].

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## Glossary

Anau angai	see feeding child
Cloth	Fabric; artefact made by weaving , felting , knitting, crocheting or otherwise combining natural or synthetic fibres
Feeding child	It is a Polynesian custom that the first-born child can be adopted and raised by the grandparents. These so-called feeding children (anau angai) can be seen as an equivalent to the Western old-age pension: They are fed while little and looked after by their elders while they cannot do so themselves, so that they may feed and look after them when they become too old to do so.
Geselle (m), Gesellin (f)	German for journeyman/journey(wo)man
Gestalt	German for form, configuration, pattern or appearance, designates a whole that recognizably has parts, but can only be experienced as an indivisible unity (rather than synthesized through a prior analysis of its parts). Gestalt psychology was developed in Germany. It affirms that all experience consists of Gestalten, and that the response of an organism to a situation is a complete and unanalyzable whole rather than a sum of the responses to specific elements in the situation .
Journeyman, journey(wo)man	Professional qualification reached in some European countries after an apprenticeship in a trade or craft which enables the trades- or craftsperson to take up employment. Unlike in English, the German term for journeyman has a male form, Geselle, and a female form, Gesellin. I have amended the English term journeyman to a female version, journey(wo)man
Kiriau	Kiri is the Cook Islands Maori word for skin or bark. Au is the word for Lemon Hibiscus (hibiscus tiliaceus). Squeezed or retted and bleached fibres of the inner bark (bast) of the Lemon Hibiscus tree are used in traditional Polynesian art and craft as an equivalent for thread and rope. Today it is commonly used in the Cook Islands for making dancing costumes.
Lace	A delicate fabric made of thread or yarn in a web-like manner. Lace can be sewn, knotted, twisted (bobbin lace), crocheted, knitted, hand or machine made.
Lent	A 40-day fasting period in Christian Religion from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. The time of Lent can be seen as a time of introspection, penitence, and restraint remembering Jesus' 40-days fast before his crucifixion. It ends on Holy Thursday, though fasting is continued until Saturday before celebrating Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Lenten Veil	Religious cloths which were once used to shroud the altar rooms in Christian churches during the period of Lent before Easter.
Limen	Latin for 'threshold'
Ma	Japanese for gap, opening, the space, interval, or time between things or events (Pilgrim, 1986).  Cook Islands Maori for 'and'; purity; adj. pure, clean (Savage, 1962, 1980, p.125)
Soluble stabilizer	A non-woven material that serves as foundation and stabilizer in the manufacture of composite cloth. It dissolves when in contact with water.
Tapa	Bark cloth. The inner bark of certain tree species can be beaten into cloth. Though each Polynesian island country has its own indigenous name, sometimes varying according to the form and raw material, the term <i>tapa</i> , which originally describes the border of large sheets of bark cloth, has become the universally accepted term to use for bark cloth.
Tivaivai	Tivaivai can be translated with patchwork. Tivaivai resembles a patchwork coverlet and is used in Cook Island custom as a ceremonial cloth during celebrations of life-changing events such as a son's hair cutting ceremony, a wedding, a 21 <sup>st</sup> birthday which is still considered a coming of age, death and the unveiling of one's tomb stone. Tivaivai are used as wall, floor, chair, bed, coffin, and body covers in those celebrations.