The fabric of art:

Investigating the relationships of power between fabric & fine art through Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* (1958-1960).

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ABSTRACT

There are two inter-related parts to the hypothesis explored in this research. The first is that it is significant to employ fabric as a medium in a fine art context, and the second aspect argues that female artists who choose fabric as their medium should be recognised as 'artists' rather than as crafts practitioners. I propose that in choosing fabric as a medium and sewing as my method of making art, I am working within the framework of contemporary fine art practice.

In his essay *To Cut is to Think* Germano Celant succinctly described the 'cut' made by artists who choose cutting as their process:

> The cut of the scissor is like the click of a camera or the whirr of a movie camera, like a stroke of the pencil or paintbrush: all these acts decisively isolate a form or representation, marking a surface that generates a reality. The cut puts an end to the traditional representation of the image, dissolving it and then restoring it as a testimony to the artist's vision and understanding. In this light, the cut confers meaning, and its use unites artists, photographers, designers and tailors, who cut their visions from the magma of their materials, whether these be colour or bronze, fabric or film, metal or wool, wood or canvas (1996, p. 31).

My own use of the cut, as the bespoke tailor, reinterpreted fabric as paint and utilized pinstriped fabric as a visual metaphor for relationships of power, pink satin as a symbol of the female inclusion and Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* as a tool to position my work. Therefore, I would claim that I am working towards a conceptual repositioning of fabric as a medium in fine art.

Acknowledging the kind help and supervision of:

Associate Professor Dr. Pat Hoffie,

Mrs Bonnie English and Mr Keith Bradbury.

'This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the exegesis itself.'

Signed jewel mackenzie ..jewel mackenzie

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

The fabric of art is the title of both my exegesis and my final exhibition of work. They are the culmination of three and a half years' of research and three exhibitions, which together have been pivotal in positioning my art practice and projecting its future direction.

Chapter One, **Why fabric?** places this research in a disciplinary context and argues the significance of this undertaking through an investigation of examples where fabric has been used as a viable medium for artistic practice. Beginning with artists who (like me) had a background in clothing manufacture, and through a comparison of their artworks with those examples by artists who didn't have that experience, I realised that my interest was in fabric rather than in fashion or clothing. This investigation shifted slightly to highlight the many ways artists use fabric.

Chapter Two, **What fabrics and what methods?** researches the social and cultural meanings associated with pinstriped suiting fabric, Belgian linen and pink satin fabric. My utilisation of bespoke tailoring as a method of production required that I understood the social and cultural connotations of adopting a predominantly male occupational practice. Other techniques discussed such as embroidery and machine stitching are more closely related to craft practices.

Chapter Three, **The relevance of Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* (1958-1960)** outlines my interest in Frank Stella's art practice and life around the time that he

was painting his *Black Paintings*. I chose to review that time in his career when he had just left university and was positioning his art practice in New York. I did this firstly, to learn how he had done that, and secondly, to use his practice as a tool through which I might position my own art practice.

Chapter Four, **Relationships of power** began with an investigation of a note in Anna Chave's essay 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power' pointing out the 'old boy's network' that operated around Stella early in his art career. Issues of power relationships were explored through Holiday T. Day's essay 'The nature of power' and the artworks of twenty seven artists in Day's curated exhibition titled *Power: its Myths and Mores in American art 1961-1991*. Day used Stella's *Black Paintings* as an example of the power invested in icons and the suit as an example of tying rituals and their regalia to nature in order to enhance their power. The latter is demonstrated through advertising practices. Day's recognition that power was embedded 'within' society rather than something 'wielded' drew from Michael Foucault's thesis that 'individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application' (1977, p. 98).

Chapter Five, **Craft and textiles** focussed on the implicit relationships between fine art and craft. I began with the various descriptions of contemporary craft practices by UNESCO and Australian art organisations. I investigated the differences in how artists and craftspersons approached their materials and methods of making through contemporary craft theory. In so doing I identified the processes I used in working with craft techniques and described why I chose to use those processes. I chose to define my practice as 'in-between' fine art and

craft. The term 'in-between' was a term used by artist and writer Julian Ruesga Bono who describes it as a position from which to '[rethink] culture and its relation to power and hierarchy' (1999, p. 95).

Chapter Six, **Research methodology and positioning my art practice** is in two parts. The first part is a discussion on the action-research-reflective methodology used in this project. The second part defines the positioning of my art practice as one which is not fixed. I chose to work 'in-between' the painted stripes of Frank Stella's paintings. I positioned my work 'in-between' the powered position of the gallery system and the non-powered position of the emerging artist (see Chapter Seven *Back door project)*. By presenting craft practices as fine art practices I operated 'in-between' fine art and craft (see Chapter Five craft and textiles and Chapter Eight *Gemini paintings)*. My 'in-between-ness' is a site which can be located at the intersection of painting or sculpture or as 'in-between' the hierarchical structures of our society.

Chapter Seven, **Exhibition 1. *Back door project*** underlined the relationships of power within the gallery system. Through invitations to galleries in Brisbane and Sydney to participate in a project requiring their response through written correspondence, I was able to expose the relationships of power that existed between galleries and emerging artists. This project was invaluable in gaining personal knowledge of the art system.

Chapter Eight, **Exhibition 2. *Gemini painting*** extended my research into Frank Stella's art practice through an emulation of his painting practices. Concentrating

on Stella's works and his negation of the pinstripe, this exhibition highlighted the fine art and craft elements in my work that were a part of this research and became integral to the way I view my practice.

Chapter Nine, **Exhibition 3. *The fabric of art*** is the culminating exhibition of this research project to be held at Soapbox Gallery in Brisbane. That space has three separate galleries and I use each gallery to focus on one area of this research project. In the first gallery *My Trojan* addressed the role of fabric and sewing within contemporary fine art practice. In the second gallery the artwork *A woman around at the time* addresses a Stella throw-away line and the lack of female participation in the minimalist art movement. In the third gallery *Drawing on Stella* addresses my 'in-between' position through the reproduction of the seventeen Stella *Black Series I* and *Black Series II* prints reworked through the manipulation of the fine woven pinstripe thread situated 'in-between' his black stripes.

Chapter Ten, **Conclusion,** begins with a critical reflection of the first two exhibitions: the *Back door project* and *Gemini paintings* through an analysis of critical reviews received from artists, academics and printed in art journals. I conclude this project with a discussion of my research findings and a proposition about possibilities for the future direction of my art practice.

SUMMARY OF TERMS

The order of this listing is not hierarchical. The first three terms; 'in-between', 'fabric as paint' and 'fabric as readymade paintings' are terms that I have used within this project in order to explain the positioning of my art practice. The remainder of the terms are terms of common use within the clothing manufacture and tailoring industries.

'In-between'.

Through locating my art practice in a position 'in-between' I locate it in the 'interstitial', a term identified in the *Reader's Digest Wordpower Dictionary* as 'forming or occupying the interstices' (Oxford University Press (ed) 2001, p507).

Fabric as paint.

My choice within this exegesis to conceptualise 'fabric as paint' involves the choice of fabric as an alternative to the traditional media of paint on canvas.

Fabric as readymade paintings.

Woven fabric commercially produced for the clothing industry with either plain coloured or patterned surface created during the weaving or printing processes.

Fabric.

Fabric for this exegesis is the commercially produced outcome of weaving warp and weft threads.

Warp.

Warp threads are tied to the weaving loom forming the length and stronger direction of the fabric.

Weft.

Weft thread is attached to the shuttle that weaves under and over the warp threads forming the weaker direction of the fabric.

Thread.

'A long thin strand of cotton, nylon or other fibres used in sewing or weaving' (Oxford University Press (ed) 2001, p. 1020).

Fibre.

The natural (wool, cotton, flax etc) or manufactured (nylon, synthetic etc) filaments that are spun to make a thread.

Selvedge.

The parallel edges of fabric created during weaving that run the length of fabric and prevent it from unravelling.

Straight of grain.

The straight of grain runs parallel to the selvedge edge. Its placement is important for the ultimate cut of the object in patternmaking and tailoring.

Patternmaking.

Patternmaking is the art of taking the measurements of a three dimensional object or using the measurement of a designed shape or form and transcribing them into a two dimensional pattern.

Bespoke tailor.

A bespoke tailor is skilled in designing, patternmaking, cutting and fitting. They may sew or have a machinist do the machine sewing, but their hand finish of the object is exquisite. Nevertheless, it is their skills in cutting and achieving the perfect individual fit that separate the bespoke tailor from other tailors.

CHAPTER ONE

Why fabric?

I am drawn to the aesthetics of fabric; to the texture of its softness and pliability. My interest in fabric and clothing had broadened during a period of self employment as a designer-dressmaker and patternmaker for female clothing between October 1988 and January 1998. This experience and my love of fabric formed the personal basis for this research project.

I began by researching artists' biographies, looking for artists who like me could list sewing and pattern cutting experience as a skill base. It was not my intention to study particular artist's careers but rather to uncover the extent to which sewing and pattern making and art practices were integrated. The majority of these artists simply incorporated clothing in their artworks. In order to understand whether sewing and patternmaking experience was advantageous to a practitioner of fine art I also investigated the works of artists who did not have clothing manufacturing experience but who incorporated clothing in their artworks. A comparison of the works of these two groups was made.

Group one – Artists with clothing manufacturing experience.

Nicole Constantino, Nancy Grossman, Susan Cianciola, Helen Story, Lucy Orta, Robert Kushner and Kosuke Tsumura all had previous design, dressmaking and pattern making experience and most of them incorporated clothing in their artworks. Nicola Constantino from Argentina was a fashion designer for a short time and then studied the art of the furrier before turning her skills to art. In his

essay 'Report from Sao Paulo Cannibals All', Edward Leffingwell writes that Constantino:

> critiqued the obsessiveness of the fashion industry, mounting a squadron of elaborately garbed mannequins in a massive acrylic display case *Human Furriery* (1995-1998) . . . all carefully tailored from flesh-coloured synthetic skin . . . patterned with quiltlike squares; at the precise centre of each was an intimate feature of the human body: a male nipple, a navel or an anus, all cast from life (1999, p. 50).

Fig. 1 - Nicole Constantino, *Human Furriery* (1995-1998), silicone "human" skin, real human hair.

Nancy Grossman, an American, whose parents were the proprietors of a clothing factory, became a skilled patternmaker before pursuing an art practice. Grossman's *Exit Art* (1991) is described by art critic, artist, and art historian, Robert C. Morgan as:

> bound and gagged heads, in black leather, with straps, zippers, brushes, and horns, with bulging eyes, lips, and noses, with tormented mouths, operate as fetishes of the darker side, the "other" or the sense of non-self in a quandary of utter dissemblance, the ego in the state of complete dissolution (1991-1992, p. 65).

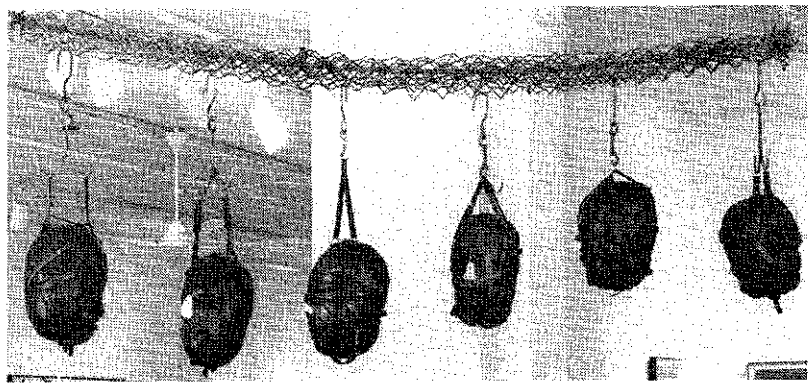

Fig. 2 - Nancy Grossman, *Exit Art* (1991),
carved wooden heads, leather, leather straps, metal hooks.

In her essay 'Clothes Encounters' Carly Berwick wrote that Susan Cianciolo was 'a fashion designer touted in *Harpers Bazaar & Vogue*. Now she's a full-time artist' (2001, p. 164). Cianciolo discusses her work *Run Restaurant* (2000). She said 'I realized I have to create my own system where I'm creating a type of work and structure that don't exist in the market' and that 'for the *Restaurant* I was thinking about the aspects of installation that were specifically spiritual in context' (cited in Berwick 2001, p. 165). Berwick commented that:

> This train of thought led to her creation of outfit kits . . . that are being sold in the museum gift shop. Those who purchase the kit - which include pieces of fabric, some with hand stitching – can cut and assemble the cloth, as the artist or designer might, actions that Cianciolo sees as part of a contemplative process (2001, p. 165).

Helen Storey's *Primitive Streak* (1997) is 'composed of 27 garments and includes the *1000 Sperm Coat* and the *Double DNA Dress'* (Berwick 2001, p. 165). Storey stated that she:

> became interested in things that fell outside mainstream fashion, which were ideas and concepts really . . . Fashion helps people understand new concepts, *Primitive Streak* (1997) allows me to talk about biology It's a dress people are looking at; it's not as threatening . . . it's a fashion collection chronicling human embryonic development (cited in Berwick 2001, p. 165).

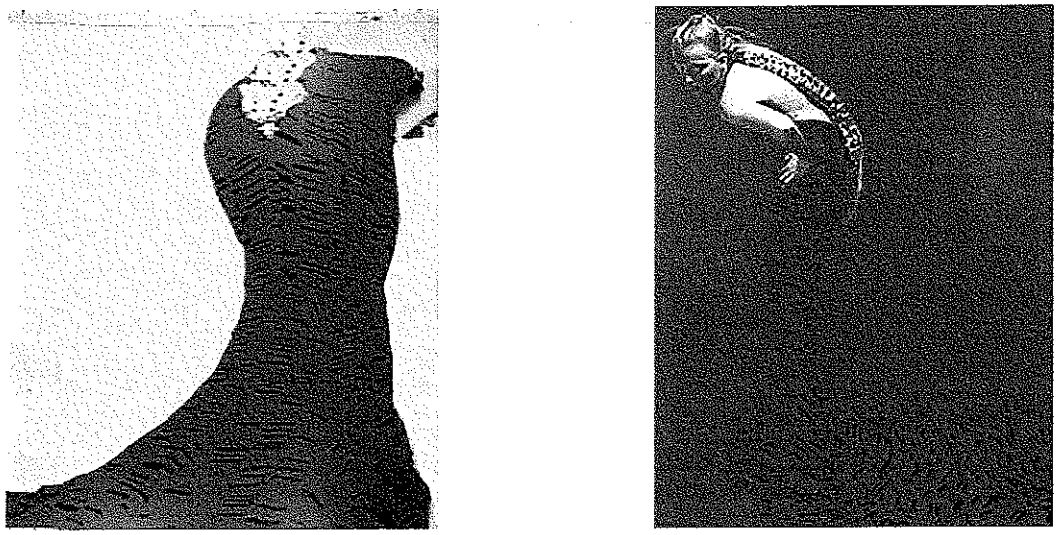

Fig. 3 - Helen Storey, *Spinal Column Dress* (1997), dress, spinal column.

Lucy Orta's *Refuge Wear* (1994) series is described by Berwick as:

> wearable survival gear: overalls, for instance, that transform into a tent or sleeping bag . . . [modelled] during that years fashion week in Paris . . . as part of Orta's "interventions" which were staged near the Louvre, a squatters' building, and the fashion tents (2001, p. 165).

Orta stated that 'there was a blatant consumerism in the industry, which was thrown off track by the Gulf War and economic breakdown. That's when I started working on *Refuge Wear'* (cited in Berwick 2001, p. 165). Orta, in correspondence with Nicholas Bourriaud, curator, art critic and writer, wrote that 'There was rampant unemployment, and you could feel the effects of the instability sweeping the streets'. She said that 'the very first objects I created were shown outside the art system in the form of 'interventions', such as the *Refuge Wear'* (Bourriaud 2003, p. 8).

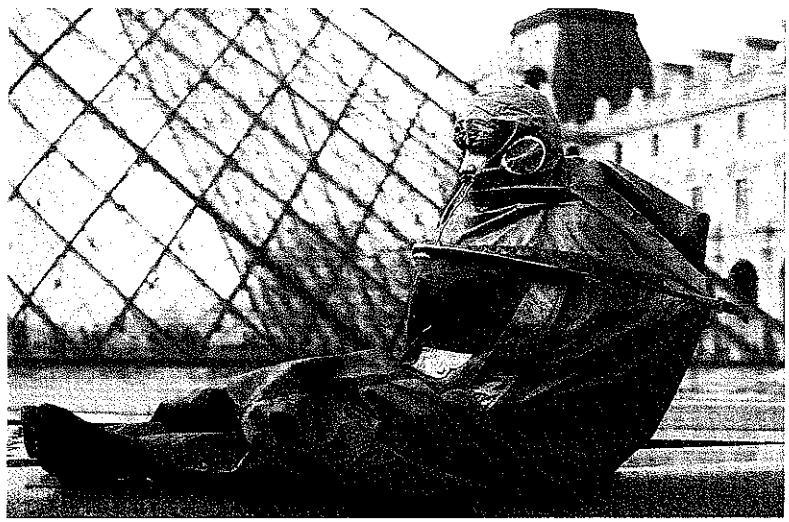

Fig. 4 - Lucy Orta, *Refuge Wear- city Interventions* (1993-1996), innovative textiles.

Robert Kushner's *Two Roberts and Violet* (1983) consists of acrylic on cotton with mixed fabric appliqué. Kushner, a costume designer, began his art practice with costumed performances before turning to his fabric paintings. In his essay 'Robert Kushner's Happy Consciousness' Donald Kuspit discussed Kushner's art writing that it 'demands that light of delight we all saw by in childhood'. Kuspit wrote that the 'materials affords a sense of readymades; he paints and then sews fabric fragments together which suggests that, today, authentic painting can only be a fiction of painting' (1987, pp. 24-26).

Kushner addressed the happiness in his art by stating 'Happy art really makes it sound mindless' he continued 'First of all, it is totally possible to do happy art, if we have to call it that, with as much intelligence as it is possible to do sad art (cited in Becker 1984, p. 38). The effect of Kushner's use of fabric was described by Janet Kardon in her essay 'Opulent Subversions':

> By allowing fabric, traditionally assigned as women's domain, to be his medium and his message, subliminal gender signals flicker into his Arcadian scenarios. A sewing machine is more prominent in his studio than a paintbrush; Kushner adapts women's techniques in a direct attempt to reverse gender roles (1987, p. 16).

Fig. 5 - Robert Kushner, *Two Roberts and Violet* (1983) (detail), various fabrics, paint.

Kosuke Tsumura's *Jacket – Jacket* (1994) deconstructed the tailored suit jacket by peeling back the outer layer of fabric and uncovering the inner sculptured structure of a number of suit jackets. He exhibited them down one wall and also as freestanding sculptures across the floor space of the gallery. On the DNP Pavilion web page titled *Artist profile Kosuke Tsumura*, it was stated that Tsumura:

> joined Miyake Design Studio in 1983. In 1994 . . . he presented his collection at Paris Collection for the first time. Since then, he has presented his collection at Paris Collection as "KOSUKE TSUMURA" twice a year. While having worked as a fashion designer, he has also continued to create as an artist focusing on the contemporary age, society, and city (2004, p. 1).

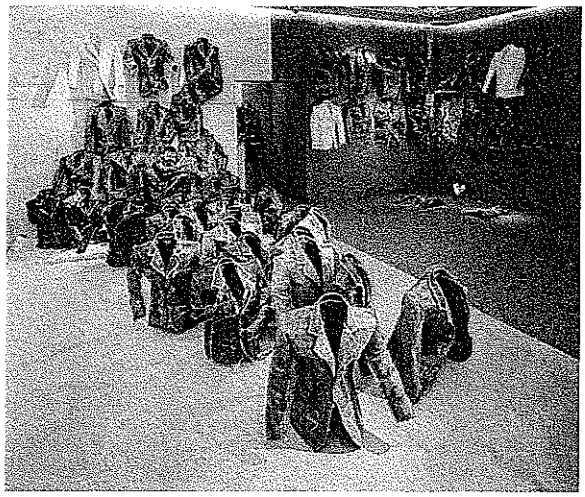

Fig. 6 - Kosuke Tsmura, *Jacket – Jacket* (1994), lining, interfacing, horsehair, haircloth, cotton selecca, frames.

Except for Tsumura these artists had separated themselves from the world of fashion. All except for Kushner referenced clothing manufacture. Constantino and Grossman chose to make garments out of synthetic skin and leather fitted as skin as if distancing their works from clothing manufacture and aligning them with the body or skin. Cianciolo, Storey and Orta all mentioned that it was their dissatisfaction with fashion's consumerism and its lack of ideas and concepts that led them to explore art as an outcome for their thoughts and concerns. Yet both their sewing experience and expertise in fitting the body, skills they had bought to their art practice from the fashion industry, were evident in the finished art works. As an alternative direction to clothing manufacture, Orta created garments that became sleeping bags or forms of shelters for the homeless. Tsumura, in his *Final Home Project* also created a shelter within a garment. Conversely, Cianciolo and Kushner were making art that did not include clothing, though with Cianciolo's outfit kits the purchaser could 'cut and assemble the cloth, as the artist or designer' (Berwick 2001, p. 165). Kushner was the only artist in this group to construct paintings out of readymade fabrics which he over-painted in acrylic.

I compared the works of artists from group one with artworks made by artists who did not have a background in clothing manufacture, but who had utilised clothing made from fabric as their medium. Again my interest was in how artists integrated sewing and patternmaking through their practices.

Group two – Artists without clothing manufacturing experience.

This second group of eleven artists included Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Kim Soo-Ja, Matej Andraz Vogrincic, Beverley Semmes, Leslie Dill, Charles LeDray, Fred Wilson, Junichi Kusaka, Yin Xiuzhen and Maureen Connor.

Christian Boltanski's *Monument Canada* (1988) is described by Nancy Marmer who wrote that 'the artist combines 15 black-and-white, blanched-out face-shots of children with piles of multi-coloured, multi-patterned clothes, neatly folded and stacked against the wall. The combination is formally very satisfying, even a bit too satisfying, but conceptually unsettling' (1989, p. 235).

Boltanski wanted his art to be like a mirror, he said that 'everyone who looks at it sees himself, but every reflection is different and the artist holding the glass up doesn't exist any more. There is never a clear meaning or moral. You arrive at enlightenment yourself' (1995, p. 25).

Fig. 7 - Christian Boltanski, *Monument Canada* (1988) (detail), clothes, lamps, black & white photos.

Annette Messager's *The Story of Dresses (Histoire des robes)* (1990):

> focussed on objects rather than the people to whom they belong and used dresses as a substitute for the female body; the body has "evaporated." Hermetically sealed in boxes, behind glass like sacred relics, the dresses are accompanied by memories and associations manifest in drawings and photographs attached to them with pins and bits of string (Conkelton 1995, p 33).

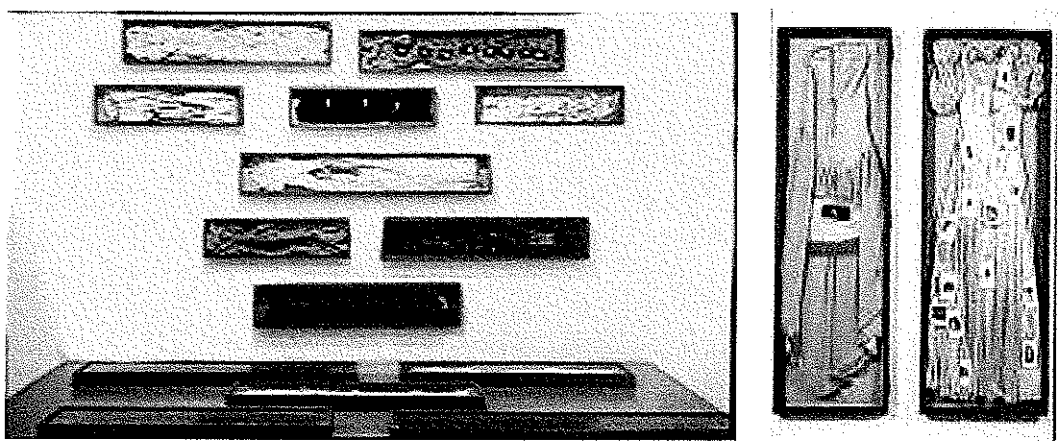

Fig. 8 - Annette Messager, *The Story of Dresses (Histoire des robes)* (1990), sealed glass top boxes, dresses, drawings, photographs, string.

Kim Soo-Ja's *Cities on the Move - 2727Kilometers, Bottari Truck* (1997) included a one ton truck carrying used clothes wrapped with used bedcovers. Leffingwell described it thus 'the truck literally was the vehicle for the artist's work in cloth and in the "performance" of the fabric through sewing, wrapping, inserting, wearing, filming, publishing' (1999, p. 51). Soo-Ja, like most Korean women, was 'taught from an early age to sew and develop needlework skills' (Sunjung Kim 2001, pp. 131-132).

Fig. 9 - Kim Soo-ja, *Cities on the move –2727 Kilometers, Bottari Truck* (1997),
Hyundai truck, used clothes, bedcovers.

Matej Andraz Vogrincic's *Casa Vesta (Clothes House)* (1999), a two storied house with used clothing covering the outside walls discussed by Angus Trumble as 'clothing a free standing house in the Campo Sta., Margherita for the 1999 Venice Biennale'. Trumble said that 'there has always been an aspect of social conscious to the hard physical work' and that 'gifts of old clothing were gathered to "dress" the house and afterwards redirected to suitable charities' (2003, p. 70).

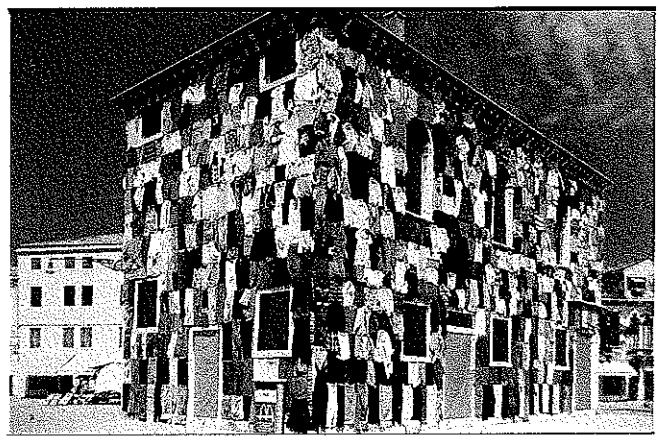

Fig. 10 - Matej Andraz Vogrincic, *Casa Vesta (Clothes House)* (1999), second hand clothes.

Beverly Semmes, artwork titled *Red Dress* (1992) is critiqued by Chris Townsend, writer, independent curator and lecturer:

> Semmes's clothes are larger than life . . . overwhelming the space which should structure and condition them . . . such as the massively proportioned *Red Dress* (1992), with its 45-foot-long train flooding fabric across the gallery . . . The questionable utility of garments on such a scale, with such internal structures, begs another question – that of form versus function (2002, p. 106).

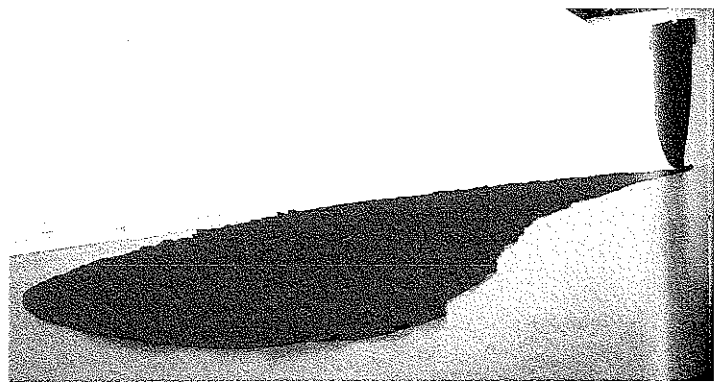

Fig. 11- Beverly Semmes, *Red Dress* (1992), velvet, wood, metal hanger.

Leslie Dill's *Dada Poem Wedding Dress* (1994) is made from paper painted white and stamped with the words of the Emily Dickinson poem 'The Soul Has Bandaged Moments.' Dill recounts her artwork and the performance as follows:

> I chose a virginal white dress as a reminder of the many women who are HIV positive and a symbol of the incredible loss of innocence that awareness of early mortality has brought us. As the words of the poem were being recited by four women in black pants and tops unrolling white ribbons, two more of us began ripping the dress apart word by word. The dress no longer represented an aloof beauty, protected by this skin/dress/bandage of words (1995, p. 84).

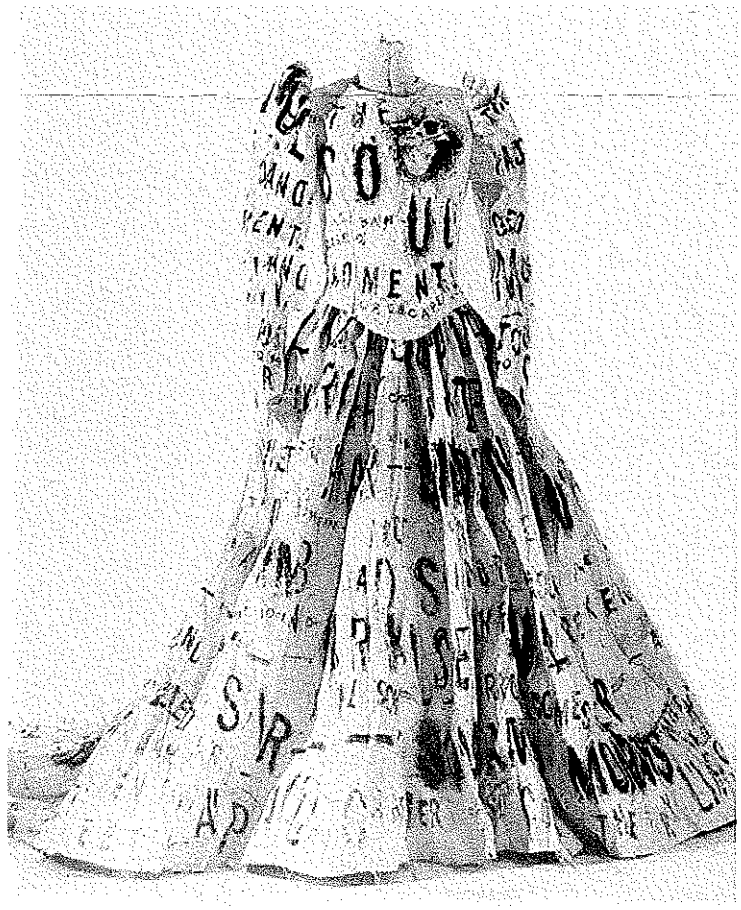

Fig. 12 - Leslie Dill, *Dada Poem Wedding Dress* (1994), printed paper wedding dress.

Charles LeDray's *Untitled/Web* (1992) is described by Jerry Saltz as:

> tiny garments meticulously handmade in a variety of styles from fabric, tattered cloths and rags . . . it packs a potent – if pensive – psychological punch . . . Every cuff, buttonhole, zipper and hem is perfectly sewn. A broken-down teddy bear on a pedestal looks as if it's been torn apart. A disturbing tinge of violence, neglect or abuse runs throughout the work (1993, pp. 126-127)

Townsend writes that artist Charles Le Dray was 'taught to sew at the early age of four by his mother, the artist subsequently trained himself to fashion other materials into tiny replicas of real, crafted or industrially manufactured objects' (2002, p. 118).

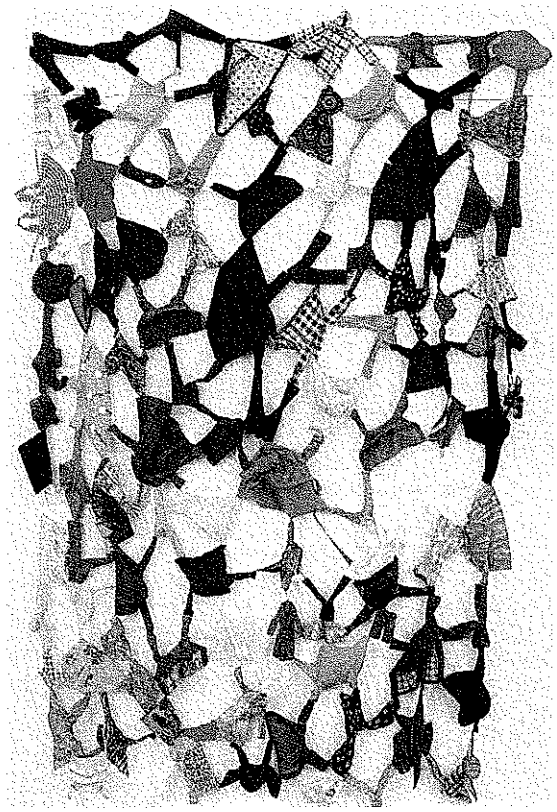

Fig. 13 - Charles LeDray, *Untitled/Web* (1992), fabric, thread, buttons.

Fred Wilson's *Guarded View* (1991) is described and interpreted by Kenneth E. Silver, art historian, as a work that:

> comprises four headless mannequins of black male figures standing on a low white platform and dressed in the uniforms of guards from four New York museums . . . reminders that while black men and women physically stand guard over almost every American museum collection, they are also virtually unrepresented in them as subjects and as artists (1993, p. 47).

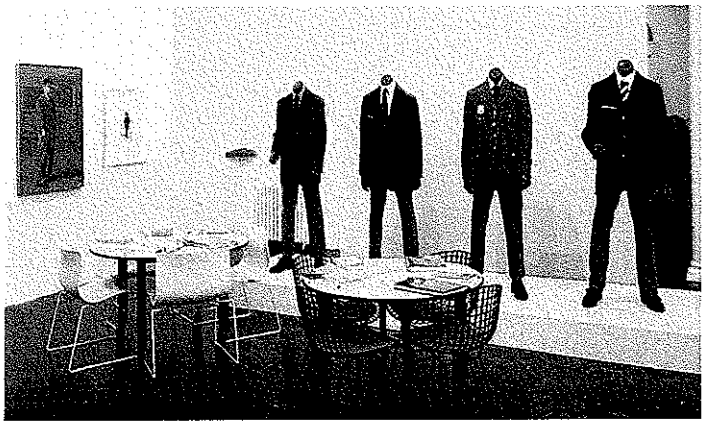

Fig. 14 - Fred Wilson, *Guarded View* (1991), mannequins, museum uniforms.

Junichi Kusaka's *Of Clothing* (1994) is discussed by Dana Friis-Hansen as a:

> Naumanesque video corridor led to a mans prison striped business suit . . . a live camera above it and below it a monitor on the floor. As the walls were lined with the same stripes, one's image appeared on the monitor surrounded by and traversed by these stripes, as if one were trying on the uniform and trapped by it Merging social concern with conceptual art strategies, Kusaka's clever objects engage both the eye and the intellect (1994, p. 144).

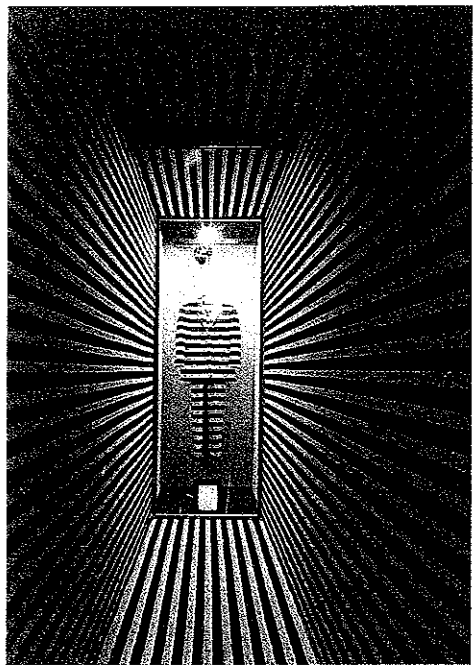

Fig. 15 - Junichi Kusaka, *Of Clothing* (1994),
prison striped business suit, corridor, video, camera.

Yin Xiuzhen's *International Flight* (2002) is described by Felicity Fenner, curator and writer, as:

> a response to current world events . . . The installation comprised two suspended sculptural structures in the form of passenger planes. Second-hand clothes, gathered from the cities where the sculptures will be exhibited, were stretched over the armatures like skin grafts. Hung at eye level, the installation brought the human tragedy of Sep. 11 into the viewer's face (2003, p. 83).

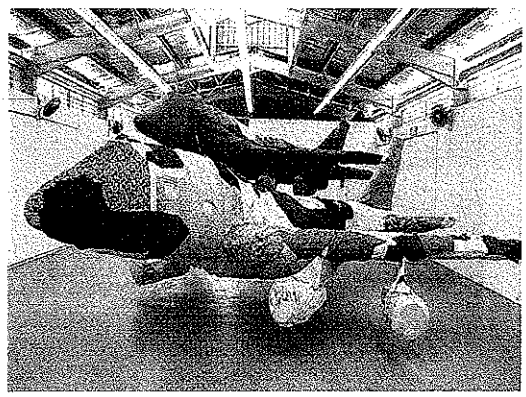

Fig. 16 - Yin Xiuzhen, *International Flight* (2002), wire frames, old clothes.

Richard Martin, from the Costume Institute Metropolitan Museum of Art wrote that Maureen Connor's *Thinner Than You* (1990) 'exemplifies clothing as women's surrogate'. He said that 'the powerful cultural demand upon women to be thin that produces lifetime disorders of malnutrition, bulimia and anorexia is epitomized in the exaggerated thinness of the body within the dress' (1993, p. 7).

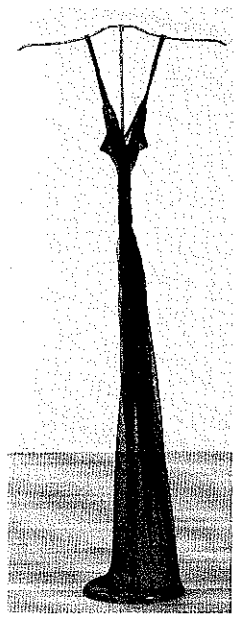

Fig. 17 - Maureen Connor, *Thinner than you* (1990), stainless steel, cloth.

In comparing the artworks of these two groups the noticeable difference was that most of the artists in group one had used their prior sewing experience to extract a more exact fit while distancing their artwork from the fashion industry. The

majority of artists in group two were unconcerned with the fit or the fashion industry; they simply used clothing as their medium to convey their concerns. The artworks of Boltanski, Soo-Ja, Vogrincic, Wilson and Xiuzhen incorporated second-hand clothing requiring no sewing or fitting expertise. The artworks of Messager, Semmes, Le Dray and Connor utilised garments that were either extremely large or small in relation to the body. Therefore, whilst they may have sewn the garments they did not need fitting expertise or patternmaking experience.

Two artists, Dill and Kusaka, exhibited clothing sized to the body. However, their clothes appeared to have considerations other than fit. Dill's dress was made of paper and ripped apart during a performance. Kusaka's prison striped suit enticed the viewer's participation as they appeared dressed in the prison stripes from the surrounding walls, ceiling and floor through the video. Of the eighteen artists in group one and group two my interest was particularly captured by the works of Kosuke Tsumura and Robert Kushner.

Firstly, Tsumura was able to operate between the worlds of fashion and art. Tsumura's fashion collections remained commercial and marketable whilst his artworks expressed his ideas in much the same way as any other artist. In his work *Jacket Jacket* (1994) Kosuke had uncovered the inner sculptured structure of the suit jackets and exhibited them free standing on the floor. While reflecting on this work I was reminded that fabric could be cut to a shape dictated by the architectural structure that it covered, and in turn realised that the possibilities of

shape and form with fabric were immense, but had been little explored outside the fashion industry.

Secondly, Robert Kushner's regard for fabric is obvious in his continued connection to it through his artworks, his written reviews of textile design books, his early costume performances and his concern for decoration. Robert Becker questioned Kushner about his medium asking, 'so it's basically a love for fabric that you're working with, rather than a dislike for paint and canvas?' Kushner answered 'If it were merely that dislike, I would probably expand my range of materials' (Becker 1984, p. 37). I associate strongly with Kushner's love of fabric.

As I reviewed the works of the artists in group one and group two I realised that this research had not encompassed the field of practice in which I had intended placing my work. I recognised that I had been looking at artworks which in some instances had been compared to and exhibited alongside the works of fashion designers in exhibitions and publications. In the majority of cases these works occupied that blurred region between fashion and art or design and art. For example, exhibitions and catalogues such as the *Fall from Fashion* at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art May 23 – Sep 26, 1993, *Biennale di Firenze looking at fashion* 1996 at various installations throughout Florence and *Addressing the Century 100 Years of Art & Fashion* at the Hayward Gallery, London Oct 1998 – Jan 1999. Journal articles such as the Art and Fashion section of the *Artnews* Nov. 2001 pp158-170 and publications such as Chris Townsend's book *Rapture Arts seduction by Fashion* (2002). Through my research in this area

I began to understand that my interest was in an art practice that was not tied to fashion design.

Looking at Kushner's practice I recognised that a core area of interest lay in my love of fabrics. I then shifted my research from artists who used clothing, to artists who used fabric. Like Kushner, my interest in fabrics related to those which were commercially produced and designed for a western culture and which were also very rich in cultural connotations. I then identified a third group of artists who had used fabric as their medium.

Group three – Artists who used fabric as their medium.

I researched the works of twenty artists through focussing on one artwork from each artist and analysing critical reviews of that artwork. By choosing only one work, I was not investigating a particular artist's practice, but researching the many ways in which fabric might be used. I categorized my findings into six sub-groups according to the way in which I saw that these artists had used fabric.

Fabric as performance	Christo and Jeanne Claude, John Toth, Franz Erhard Walther and Joseph Beuys.
Fabric as tension or illusion	Reiner Ruthenbeck, Ernesto Neto and Anish Kapoor.

Fabric production interactions	Rosemarie Trockel, Renee Green, Narelle Jubelin and Virgil Marti.
Fabric as ground in painting	Jenny Watson, Sigmar Polke, and Claude Viallat.
Fabric as architecture	Maria Fernanda Cardoso and Do Ho Suh.
Fabric as hanging	Anne Hamilton, Cosimo von Bonin and Sun-Ok U.

Fabric as performance.

Christo and Jeanne Claude valued the historical and classical traditions associated with fabric which they wrote of in their 1993 press release for *Wrapped Reichstag* (1971-1995):

> Throughout the history of art, the use of fabric has fascinated artists. From the most ancient times to the present, fabric, forming folds, pleats and draperies has been a significant part of paintings, frescoes, reliefs and sculptures made of wood, stone and bronze. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, in weddings and other ritual celebrations, veiling has a sacred or joyful message. The use of fabric on the Reichstag follows this classical tradition (1993, p.8).

Grazia Gunn, freelance writer, describes this artwork and its reception:

> It is an art which contains elements of painting, sculpture, architecture and urban planning. All is performed on a grand scale, involving thousands of people. It is watched by thousands more; it is recorded by media cameras; it is broadcast, transmitted, and accessed on the Internet. The art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude is for all the world to see as it happens . . . The aesthetic impact of the wrapped Reichstag is indisputable (1996, pp. 333-334)

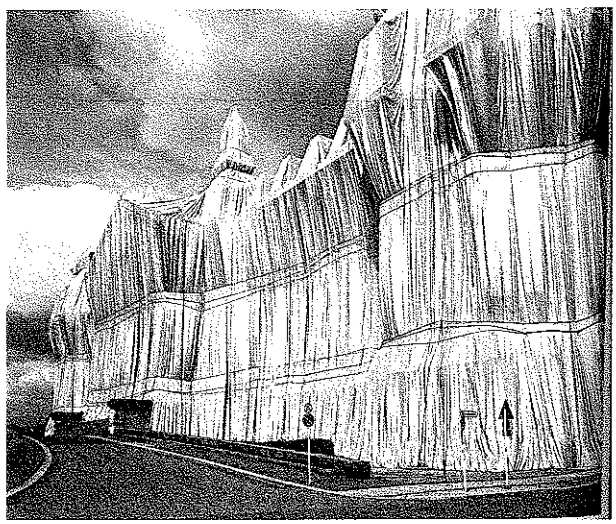

Fig. 18 - Christo and Jean Claude, *Wrapped Reichstag* (1971-1995), silver polypropylene woven with yarn, rope.

John Toth's *In A Circle* (1998) is a painted environment for performance that becomes collaborative via the internet linking live performances in New York and Buffalo. On his web page *John Toth, Fabric Installations*, Toth eloquently describes his close association with fabric in his writing 'Fabric is a Structure for Behaviour':

> Immediately from the womb we were dressed in furs, blankets and clothes. Later, as a child, I crawled under the quilting frame of my grandmother's Slavic sewing circle . . . I played under fabric landscapes that covered furniture in storage, in the scary part of the attic . . . In later years, I camped in dark green resin soaked cotton . As an artist I use fabric to mingle the mystery of materials from brightly colored nylon and synthetic grids to metallic meshes and translucent Mylar's, with light, film and projected video (n.d., p. 1).

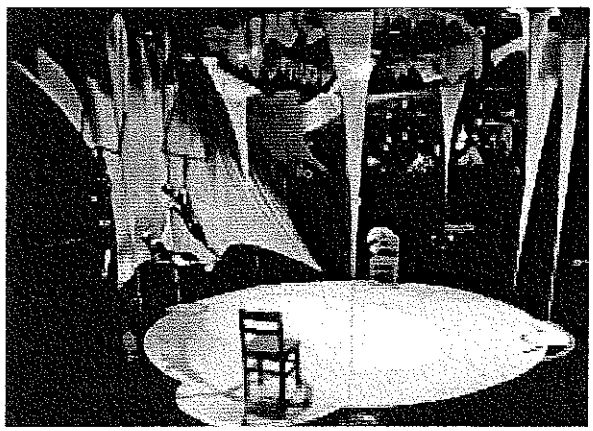

Fig. 19 - John Toth, *In a Circle* (1998),
painted environment, fabric structure for performance.

Franz Erhard Walther in his *Work Demonstration I, Working aggregate* (1971), sets up an installation of objects (including fabric). Mannfred Schneckenburger, two times Director of Documenta in Kassel Germany, wrote that the performance begins when 'the object becomes a *Werksatz* or "set of working components" and the viewer becomes the user. It is the experience of actually handling the material that constitutes the work of art' (2000, p. 553). Walther sums up the core of his action-work as 'ideas are produced/defined/reshaped in action' (cited in Korper 1993, p. 57).

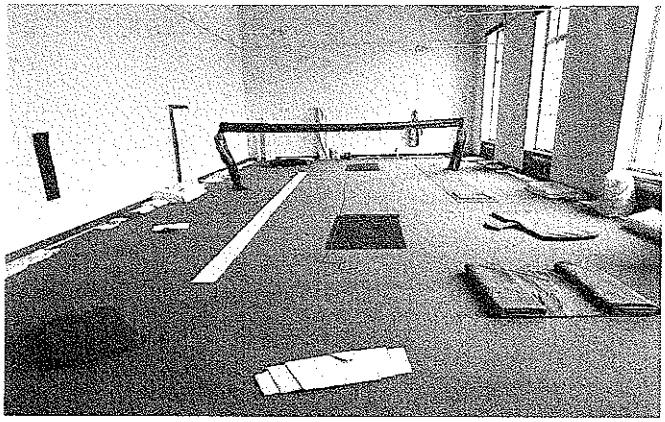

Fig. 20 - Franz Erhard Walther, *Work Demonstration I, Working Aggregate* (1971), textiles, books, sacks, bags, covers, strips, textile boxes, garments.

Joseph Beuys had 'developed the material syntax of his sculpture in the 50's: mass, weight, storage, conduction and insulation as properties of grease, felt, copper, iron etc. in which reality and metaphor are one' (Schneckenburger 2000, p. 554). His felt works included *Homogeneous Infiltration for Grand Piano,* (1966) which was a grand piano totally covered in grey felt. Author, Jean Poderos wrote that it was 'created during an event at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dusseldorf' he said that 'in the early eighties Beuys replaced the felt wrapping, thereby creating from it a new work called *Skin*, which is often present beside the piano' (Poderos 2002, p. 111).

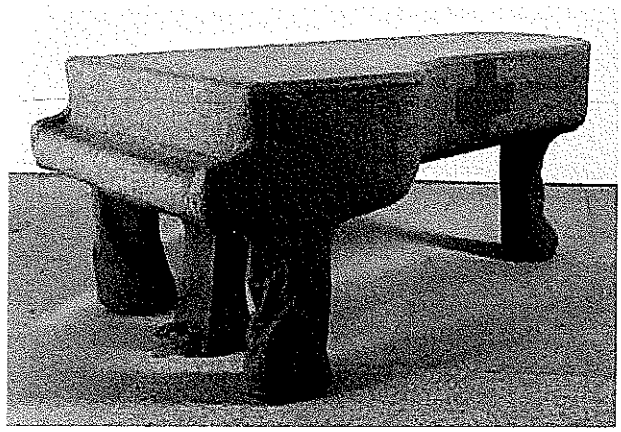

Fig. 21 - Joseph Beuys, *Homogeneous Infiltration for Grand Piano* (1966), piano, felt, fabrics.

I was not interested in fabric as a part of a performance. Yet I found that I shared ideas and relationships to fabric with Christo and Jeanne Claude and Toth. However, in this project I directed my interest towards the memories and past histories symbolised by fabric in much the same way as Christo and Jeanne Claude did. I also felt a strong empathy with the way in which Beuys perceived felt when he described how its 'reality and metaphor are one' (cited in Schneckenburger 2000, p. 554). Although I agreed that a particular fabric might be seen as a metaphor for abstract ideas, I was not interested in it becoming a metaphor of itself: an archetypal statement of felt. I was, however, interested in using fabric as a metaphor for a culturally understood memory.

Fabric as tension or illusion.

Schneckenburger suggests that Reiner Ruthenbeck's artworks such as *Suspension IV* (1969-1970) 'translates the materiality of soft cloth and hard glass, elastic rubber and rigid steel . . . creating a wonderfully meditative and powerful equilibrium out of gravity and counterforce' (2000, p. 537).

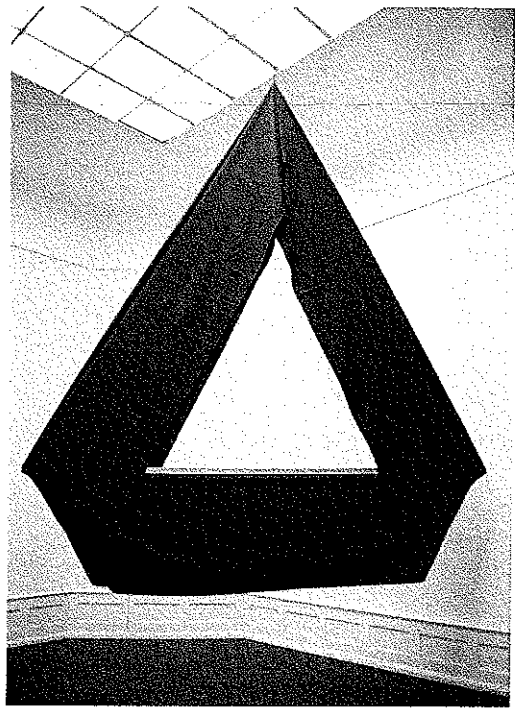

Fig. 22 - Reiner Ruthenbeck, *Suspension IV* (1969-1970), fabric, rectangular metal tubing.

Ernesto Neto's *Goddess Ship* (1998) is a stretched shaped space into which the viewer is able to enter. Leffingwell describes it as 'a self contained room of translucent, white Lycra tulle, suspended in tension at various points from the ceiling' and it is 'weighted to the floor with sandbags' (1999, p. 50).

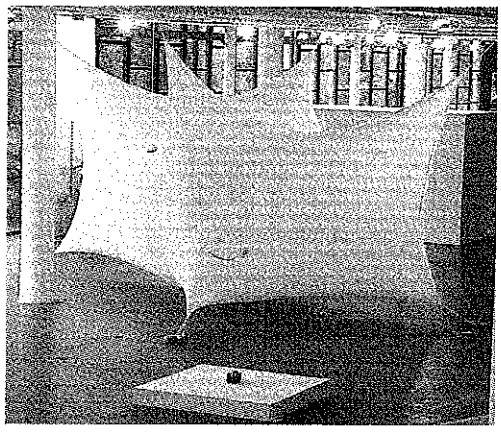

Fig. 23 - Ernesto Neto, *Goddess Ship* (1998), lycra, sand.

Anish Kapoor's *Body to Body* (1997) is described by Marion Boulton-Stroud, founder and artistic director of the Fabric Workshop and Museum, as being

created by 'layers of woven felt supported in part by a fibreglass structure' she continues 'Kapoor's forms often use illusion to heighten the sense of depth or lend mystery to the piece' (2003, p. 146). Art critic, Benjamin Genocchio described this work as: 'among the most ravishing artworks using fabric' and 'an exotically shaped moulded wall sculpture by Kapoor' (2002, p. R21).

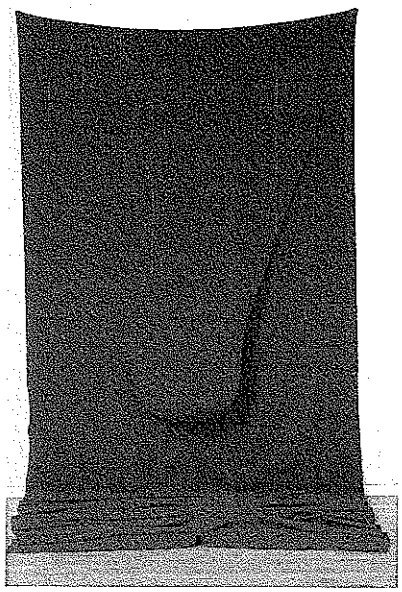

Fig. 24 - Anish Kapoor, *Body to Body* (1997),
wool, fibreglass.

In these artworks, the artists were physically addressing the materiality of the fabric. In the case of Ruthenbeck and Kapoor their choice of fabric suspended with a weight used the natural stretch of the fibre to create the tension within their work. Ernesto Neto chose lycra fabric (commercially used for swimwear and sportswear) and again utilised weight to stretch the fabric from floor to ceiling. Whilst I appreciated the aesthetics of the rounded curving shapes created by both Neto and Kapoor, I was not interested in putting fabric under tension in my own work. Although the exact fit that I aimed for would stretch the fabric, I wanted to ensure that the bespoke tailor was referenced through maintaining the warp and

weft of the woven thread in the fabric. This created an aesthetic particular to the material I worked with.

Fabric production interactions.

Other artists used fabric production processes such as machine knitting or screen printing. Rosemary Trockel's *Untitled (Please do Nothing to Me, But Quickly)* (1989) is one of her many knitted fabric pictures. Sidra Stitch, author and curator, discusses these paintings:

> These works expressly depart from the standard oil-on-canvas format that is privileged within the male-dominated realm of fine art and instead present a "painting" made from a stretched expanse of knitted wool that incorporates patterns or text statements. A domain of creativity usually relegated to the inferior status of women's work and craft is thus given a voice in "fine art" . . . Trockel's knitted pictures are not actually hand-made but rather designed on a computer and then machine-made (1991, p. 12).

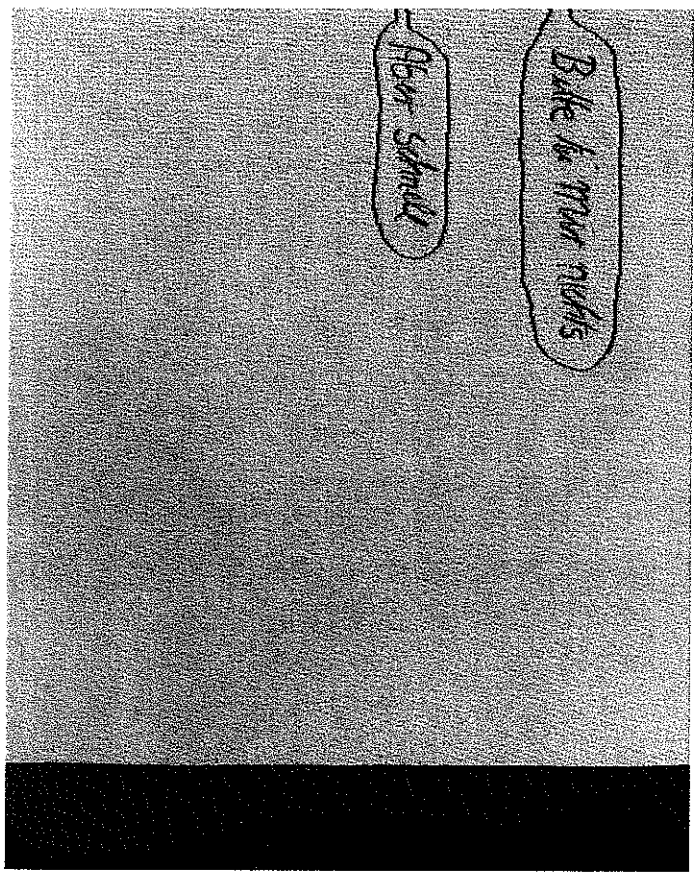

Fig. 25 – Rosemary Trockel, *Untitled (Please do Nothing to Me, But Quickly)* (1989), wool.

Renee Green's *Mise-en-Scene: Commemorative toile* (1992) is described by Boulton-Stroud as:

> starting with . . . upholstery fabric first popularised in France in the 17th century . . . Green replaced some of the original vignettes with images she discovered in the groundbreaking book *The Image of Black in Western Art* (Harvard University 1989) . . . The manipulated toile was then used to upholster chairs, settees, and chaise lounges, and to make wallpaper and drapes. Arranged as a stylized parlor (2003, p. 114).

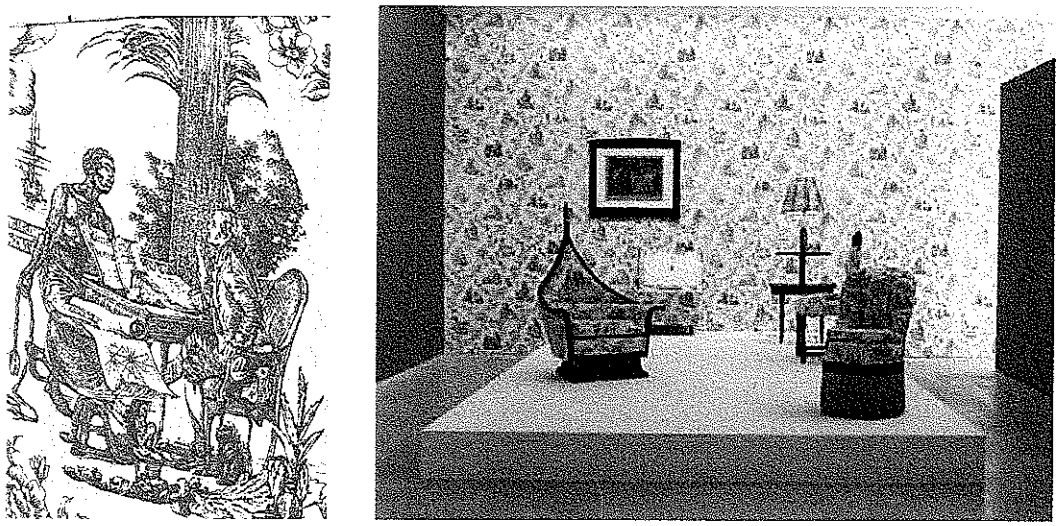

Fig. 26 - Renee Green, *Mise-en-Scene: Commemorative toile* (1992-2004), pigment on cotton sateen upholstered furniture, matching wallpaper.

Narelle Jubelin's *(and hence rewritten)* (1995-1996) is critiqued by art critic Lynne Cooke as:

> Enveloping most of the gallery wall is a sumptuous pink curtain, its surface covered with a quotation from an early modernist benchmark, transposed here in Jubelins handwriting . . . Given that the script was created by leaching colour from the surface rather than by overprinting, the text becomes far more than a decorative embellishment: it is an integral part of the cloth, embodied within it (1997, p. 416).

Fig. 27 - Natelle Jubelin, *(and hence rewritten)* (1995-1996) (detail), sandwashed rayon, steel.

Virgil Marti's *Bullies* (1992-2001) is fabric wallpaper printed with fluorescent ink and rayon flocking on tyvec 139.7cm width. A closer look is rewarded by the discovery that the centres of each design are photos from Marti's school year books of all the boys who bullied him throughout his schooling. Genocchio critiqued this work as 'creepy fluorescent wallpaper by Virgil Marti' (2002, p. R21).

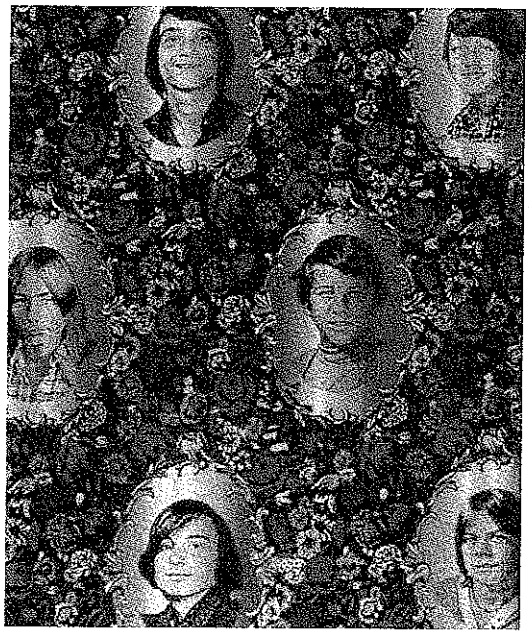

Fig. 28 - Virgil Marti, *Bullies* (1992-2001) (detail), flourescent ink, rayon flock on Tyvek.

I found some similarities between Trockel's knitted paintings and my own work. In the past I had presented fabric as paintings in a fine art context. These fabric works might remind the viewer of craft activities associated with female, yet like Trockel's fabric, the fabrics that I used were commercially manufactured by machines. I saw no similarities between my work and Green's, Marti's or Jubelin's each of whom had printed onto fabrics, altering the fabric designs by inserting the artists' identity or other concerns. For this body of research I was more interested in using readymade fabric as a medium that might evoke emotions and memory that the viewer may read as a metaphor for abstract ideas.

Fabric as ground in painting.

Many artists used fabric other than canvas as a ground to paint on, and a few artists allowed that fabric to be viewed, forming a part of their paintings. Jenny Watson's *Long night of the soul II* (2004), comprises two panels: acrylic on Indian silk, acrylic on Indian brocade 90.5 x 91cm, 40 x 30.5cm. On their web page, roslyn oxley9 gallery describes Watson's art practice stating that 'Watson long ago dispensed with a conventional approach to painting. With the most simple elements-readymade ground, rudimentarily painted figures and fragments of painted text-Watson unveils an emotional interior' (2004, p. 1).

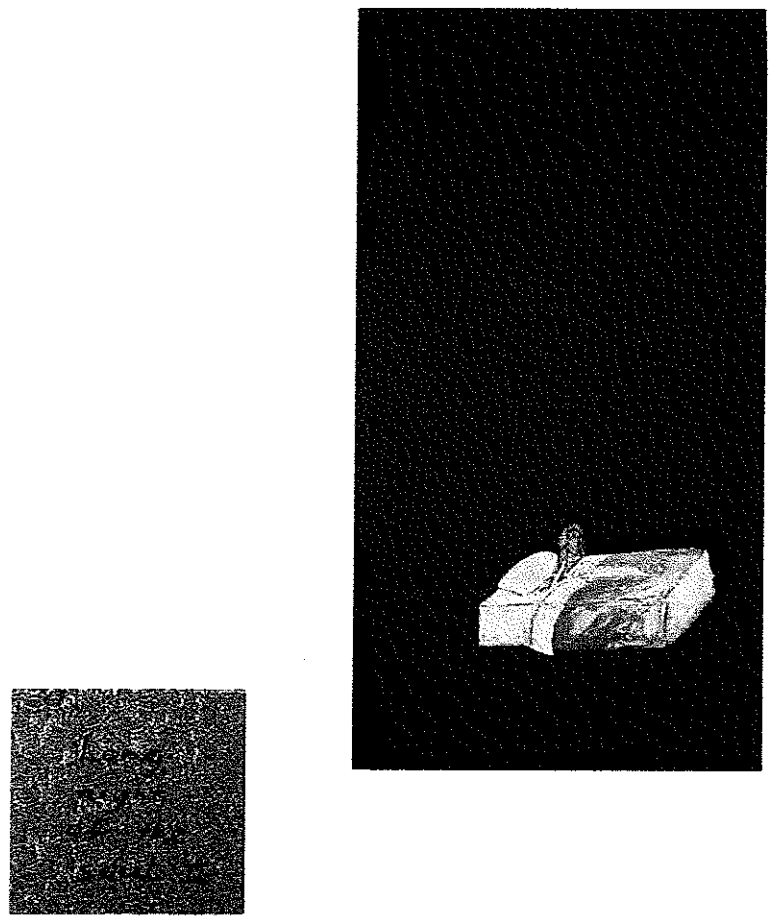

Fig. 29 - Jenny Watson, *Long night of the soul II* (2004), acrylic on Indian silk, acrylic on Indian brocade.

Sigmar Polke's *Refugee Camp* (1994) uses commercial fabrics. In his essay, 'Seams and Appearances: learning to paint with Sigmar Polke', Sean Rainbird discusses Polke's use of commercial fabrics:

> From the early 1960's to the present day, Polke has preferred to use commercially produced, often pre-printed fabrics instead of straightforward canvas supports. In doing so he paradoxically gains a freedom to explore painting itself without being dominated by the iconic status of the subject. The fabrics he used suggested instead that even the painters support belonged as much to the everyday world as in the studio. The idea of a blank surface awaiting the autograph mark is made obsolete by the presence of pre-printed fabrics and finishes. Polke immediately establishes a relationship to something that existed before the picture, while simultaneously diverting that material from its intended function and transforming it into something unique (1995, p. 12).

Fig. 30 - Sigmar Polke, *Refugee Camp* (1994) (detail), artificial resin, lacquer on fabric.

Claude Viallat's *Untitled No. 78* (1997) integrates fabrics, awnings, bed sheets and tarpaulins as his painting ground. In his essay 'Unfolding the Grid' Raphael Rubinstein interpreted this work as:

> Conditioned . . . by the texture or, more specifically, the textiles, of the French street. Even Viallat's trademark form . . . has a direct relation to quotidian life since it's based on a particular kind of sponge used for whitewashing walls in Mediterranean countries. I think it is part of Viallat's genius to have embodied this theory-driven practice from the beginning in materials that are so strongly linked to the everyday (2003, p. 121).

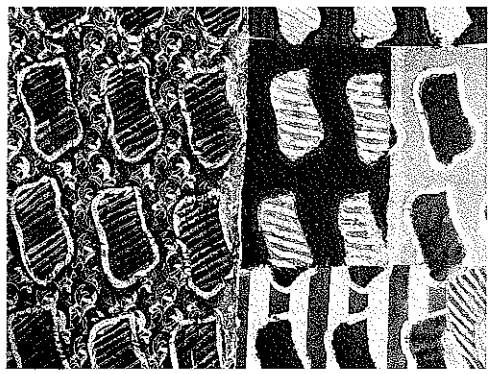

Fig. 31 - Claude Viallat, *Untitled No. 78* (1997) (detail), acrylic on fabric.

Watson, Polke and Viallat from this group and Kushner from group one, are all internationally acclaimed artists who began artworks with readymade fabric and completed their works exposing part of that fabric to the viewer. In all their works the viewer is able to interpret the unpainted ground as belonging to their

environment and culture. These artists interpreted the fabric as a ground, and completed their works by partially painting on those fabrics. In my body of research I use fabric as an alternative to paint and therefore I let the fabric stand alone.

Fabric as architecture.

Artists have also used fabric to create architectural rooms, and tent-like structures. Maria Fernanda Cardoso's *Flea Circus* (1996) is housed in a tent-like structure completely made out of brightly coloured fabrics. Genocchio described both the performance and the tent: 'Cardoso's tent for her captivating flea circus performance' was an 'elaborately decorated big top' (2002, p. R21).

Fig. 32 - Maria Fernanda Cardoso, *Flea Circus* (1996), acrylic & oil on cotton canvas, pigment on nylon taffeta, various fabrics, steel, brass, video,various props, fleas.

Do Ho Suh's *348 West 22nd St., Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at the Rodin Gallery Seoul/, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery/ Serpentine Art Gallery London/ Biennale of Sydney* (2002), is described by Jenny Liu as:

> Composed of sheer sheets of silk . . . an exact replica of the walls and ceilings of his New York apartment and outer hallway, hand-sewn in translucent pink and blue fabric, and complete with shadowy window details, spectral radiators, and insubstantial plumbing fixtures . . . Suh's home rests lightly on the ground, suspended by wires . . . Suh's piece is a place of temporary escape, and shelter, from the endless transitions, displacements and dislocations not only of global movements but also of the individual family (2000, p. 210-211).

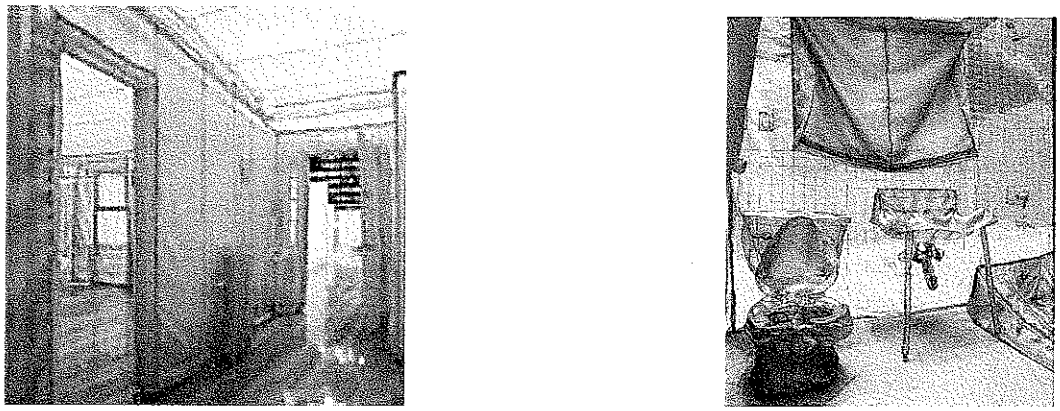

Fig. 33 - Do Ho Suh, *348 West 22nd St, Apt A, New York, NY 10011 at Roden Gallery Seoul/ Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery/ Serpentine Art Gallery London/ Biennale of Sydney* (2002),
translucent nylon.

These artists made rooms in lightweight portable fabrics that formed tent-like structures created by suspension or the insertion of a central pole. Cordosa appliquéd and decorated her tent but Do Ho Suh's rooms were in plain fabric showing only the stitching that made them. Works like these confirmed my commitment to employ fabric and stitching as the material from which to create artworks.

Fabric as hangings.

Ann Hamilton's *mattering* (1997-8) is discussed in her conversation with Mary K. Coffey, Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow at New York University:

> **Coffey** - You used all that billowing orange material to evoke not only the local silk industry, but also the undulating movements of the worms that produce the thread . . At what point does the site enter into the conception of the piece?
> **Hamilton** - when I first visited this [building] . . . emerging on the third floor felt to me . . . like coming up from under water into air. It was a physical sensation (2001, p. 21).

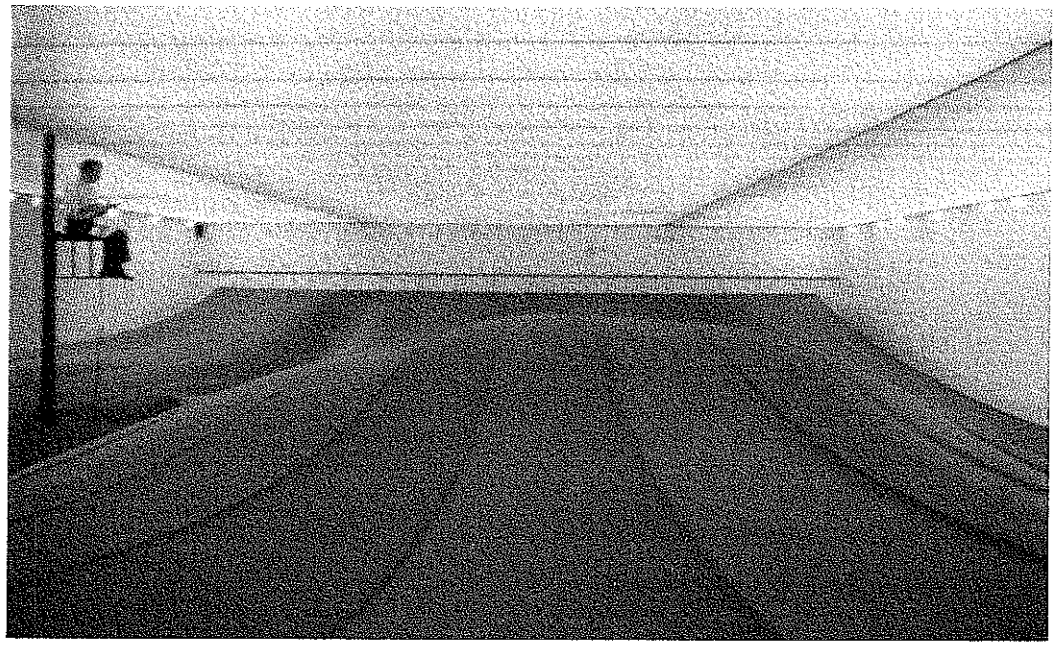

Fig. 34 - Ann Hamilton, *mattering* (1997-98),
orange silk, telephone pole, attendant, peacocks.

In Cosimo von Bonin's *Tudor House* (1997) the media includes cloth, floodlights and photographs. The cloth is stitched together and exhibited in one corner of the gallery, hung high on one wall gradually sloping down and along the other wall to the floor. It is held in place by two pieces of wood attached at both ends of the fabric. Holger Liebs describes von Bonin's practice as follows:

> Apart from the strong preference for apparently marginal or covert key themes of art history, von Bonin focuses on creating links to the world of fashion and music, and recently architecture, as well as continually referring to the framework conditions of personal or collective artistic production (2001, p. 54).

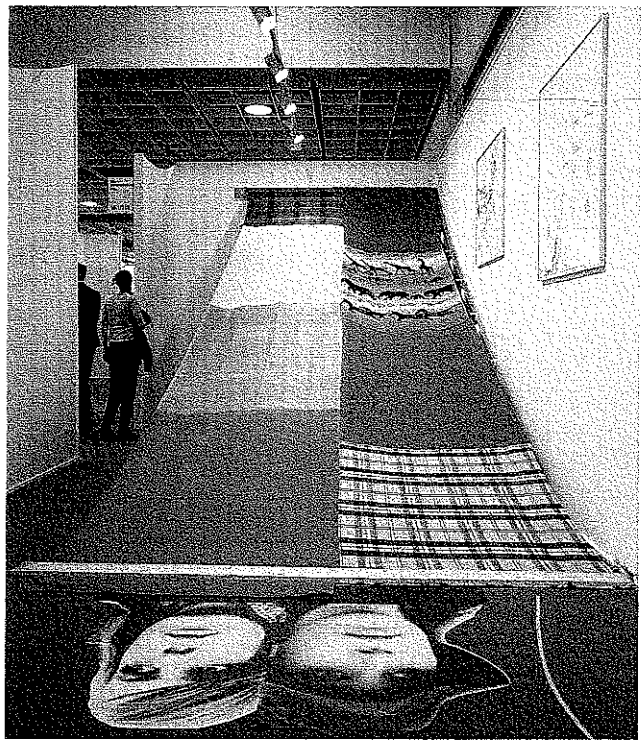

Fig. 35 - Cosimo Von Bonin (with Kai Althoff), *Tudor House* (1997), cloth, floodlights, photographs.

Sun-Ok U's *Materiellimmateriell – a room (for John Cage)* (1993) consists of twelve drops of black cotton fabric that are hung from just below the ceiling and not quite touching the floor. Light is projected onto them. The Queensland Art Gallery's essay titled 'South Korea Sun-Ok U' discusses the conceptualisation of this work:

> The coinage 'materialimmaterial' is synthesised from two opposing words – 'material and its antonym 'immaterial'. 'Materialimmaterial' echoes Sun-Ok U's belief that all the meanings which are contrary to each other are eventually converged to be identical, and that therefore distinctions between conflicting concepts such as soul and body, idea and reality, light and shadow, come to be meaningless (1993, p. 87).

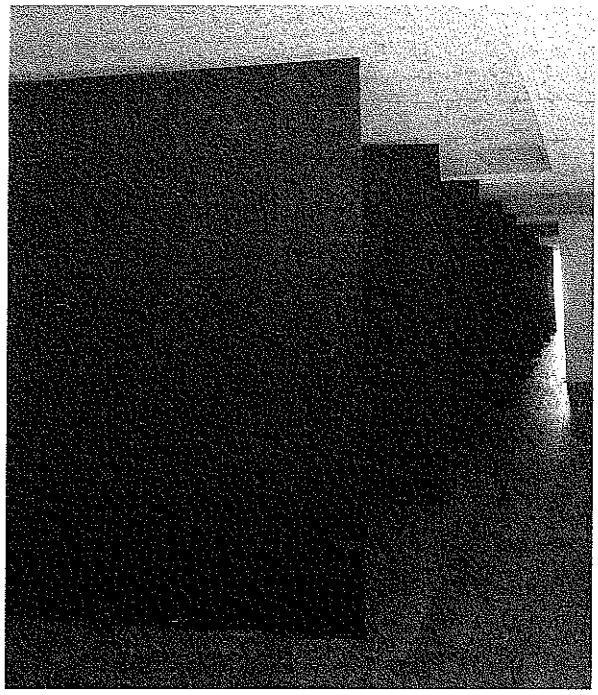

Fig. 36 - Sun-Ok U, *Materiellimmateriell – a room (for John Cage)* (1993), cotton fabric, projected light.

An unexpected result in my research of the twenty artists in group three was that eleven were male and nine were female. A wider research using different definitions for the uses of fabric may uncover a less balanced proportion of male and female practitioners. However, for this group the majority of the artists were male. This aspect of the research confirms that it is significant to employ fabric as a medium in a fine art context.

The focus of this chapter has been my explanation of why I use fabric, and to place my work in a context with that of other artists who also use fabric. Reflecting on the artworks in group three plus the works of Tsumura and Kushner from group one, I recognised where my interests in fabric were and how I might use fabric as my medium.

These investigations highlighted that:

- There are immense possibilities of shape and form with fabric.
- The textures, softness and pliability of fabric are important to its aesthetic.
- Readymade fabrics offer a particular aesthetic.
- Fabric can be a metaphor for abstract ideas.
- Maintaining the warp and weft of fabric references the cut of the bespoke tailor and an aspect of the aesthetic.
- Fabric is not specific to the feminine.
- Fabric can be used as a material equivalent of paint.

CHAPTER TWO

Which fabrics and what methods.

Chapter two researches the social and cultural meanings that may be associated with pinstriped suiting fabric, Belgian linen, pink satin and the methods of production that I used in this project. Firstly, I investigated the relationships of power associated with pinstriped fabric. Secondly, I researched Belgian linen, the traditional fabric ground for painting. Thirdly, I explored the feminine associations attached to pink satin. Finally, I investigated the connotations associated with the methods of production that I used, namely the cut of the bespoke tailor, the pulled thread work of embroidery preparations and machine stitching.

Pinstriped suiting fabric.

My prior employment between 1960 and 1988 as a book-keeper and financial administrator had established my understanding of the corporate world. My interest in pinstriped fabric stemmed from its hierarchical connotations, which were the starting point for my research into the meanings attached to stripes.

Alison Lurie, Professor at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, suggests that striped fabric appears to have its own connotations of a social order through placing the wearer of the pinstripe in a 'higher mental activity and intellectual order'. She wrote that:

> Stripes, for example, often seem to express organized effort, a desire or ability to "follow the line" laid out by oneself or others . . . . Very broad [stripes] tend to suggest organized physical effort of the sort necessary to members of an athletic team: narrow stripes appear to have more to do with mental activity and

> intellectual order. Bookkeepers, accountants and clerks are traditionally pictured as wearing shirts or blouses patterned with the narrowest of black-and-white or navy-and-white stripes, imitating the ruled lines of a ledger, and suggesting attention and energy devoted to ordering detailed matters. In certain cases, not only the breadth of the stripes but their obviousness may be informative. The pin-striped suit of the traditional gambler differs from that of the banker or stock-broker not only in cut but in the much greater definition of the stripes. Both men are concerned with figuring the odds on a large investment, but the gambler may be seen to do so more openly and without any air of being above the profit motive (1981, p. 206)

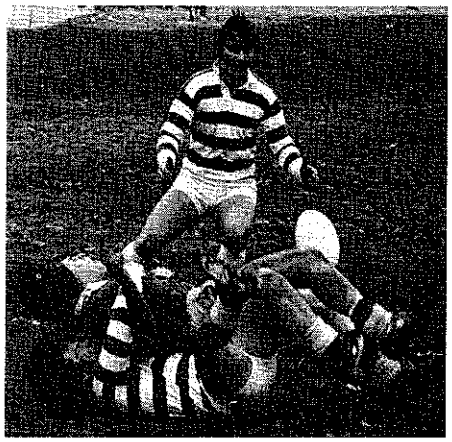

Fig. 37- Two visuals used by Lurie supporting her interpretation of stripes in clothing: Rugby players, New York 1974, photographed by Tony Marshall and Alan Jones and Julie Oshins portraying the banker and gambler in a production of *Guys and Dolls*.

Although Lurie's definitions of the differing stripes are interesting, they might not be widely recognised. The hierarchy of the pinstripe that she alluded to is culturally understood through its long history with the business suit, which began in the form of a lounge suit in the late nineteenth century. Farad Chenoune in his book *A History of Men's Fashion* recorded a count of men's street fashion taken at the end of 1890:

> 'Tailor and Cutter' that Bible of British tailors, stationed one of its staff writers at Charing Cross in London with the purpose of taking stock of the wardrobe of the man in the street. After several hours of observation, the reporter counted 530 lounge suits, (the forerunner of today's business suit) 320 Morning coats and 150 frock coats (1993, p. 122).

Fig. 39 - Cabinet photographs c1890, three city businessmen display the well-cut suits and heavy watch chains of professional respectability.

Pinstriped fabric, from which many suits are made, was adapted along with the suit as the dress of professional and business men. The recognisable status, power and hierarchy of the suit led to it being worn from time to time by other sectors of the community. Men from all walks of life began to emulate the wearing of the suit particularly on occasions when cultural protocol required a more formal dress such as weddings, funerals, church and attending court. John Berger, art critic and cultural historian, wrote that 'for most of this century most peasants – and most workers – wore dark three-piece suits on ceremonial occasions, Sundays and fetes. When I go to a funeral in the village where I live, the men of my age and older are still wearing them' (1991, p. 34).

In the 1970's feminists and particularly those women in business and professional occupations emulated the male corporate and professional dress of the pinstriped suit and claimed it as their own. Joanne Entwistle, author and lecturer in Sociology suggests that:

> Power-dressing emerged in the late 1970's in the United States as an explicitly feminine discourse on how to present yourself at work. It addressed the so-called 'career' or 'professional' woman and produced a way of dressing which sought to mark out or gender the female body by rendering it distinctly 'feminine'. The recurring theme of power-dressing is concerned to 'manage' one's sexuality so as to acquire 'authority', respect and power at work. The result is a 'uniform' for work which treads a thin line between 'masculine' dress (i.e. the 'suit') and 'feminine' decoration aimed at 'softening' the tailored lines of the suit. Power-dressing is closely related to the notion of 'dress for success' (Molloy 1980) which had been heralded in the mid-1970's as crucial to the career success of men (2000, pp. 187-188).

Thus, in claiming pinstripe fabric as a medium, I might also be dressing my artwork for success. While that concept amused me, the thing that held my interest more was that this fabric had crossed both genders as a dress code. In fact it had become a 'uniform' of 'dress for success' in either gender. I also envisaged a way of using pinstriped fabric as a replacement for the paint on Frank Stella's *Black Paintings*. Just as the fabric signified social and hierarchical divisions, I was also interested in the hierarchical divisions between fine art and craft and between male and female artists. It seemed to me that, through its connotations, pinstriped fabric might be a useful agency for these concerns.

Belgian linen.

Steven Saitzyk's web site presents excerpts from his book *Art Hardware: The Definitive Guide to Artists' Materials,* (1987):

> The source of linen fibres is the flax plant, whose fibres are stronger than any other natural fibre and range in length from 10 to 36 inches. Linen fibres are round, not flat like cotton, which gives linen fabrics their irregular texture. Chemically, the fibres are 70 to 80 percent cellulose and contain the same oil that is found in the plant's seeds and that is used in linseed oil. The natural content of linseed oil preserves the fibres and keeps them flexible . . today, the best grades of linen are produced in Belgium. Yet, few artists can afford an eight to ten-ounce, tight-weave Belgian linen in widths larger than 54 inches, let alone find it (Saitzyk (n.d.) p. 1).

The expensiveness and availability of Belgian linen contribute to its reputation as the ultimate in painting grounds. In a hierarchical order of painting grounds Belgian linen (8-10 ounce tight weave) would be placed at the top of the order followed by lighter weight grades followed by cotton canvas. The irregular texture of Belgian linen is appreciated by painters who utilise it as part of the surface of their paintings. That surface is also recognisable by the discerning viewer as being reflected in the price of an artwork. Ralph Mayer, in his book *The Artist's Handbook of Materials & Techniques,* confirms the superiority of Belgian linen:

> Linen canvas is distinguished from cotton by its natural colour (cotton is white or very pale) and by the irregular character of its weave, which is the result of the round shape of the linen fibres. This characteristic persists through the layers of paint, imparting a sense of depth which is desirable to many painters . . . . On the wall, and especially in the company of linen canvases, paintings done on . . . . cheap grade of canvas can usually be identified at a glance (1991, p. 289).

Pink Satin.

University of Nevada's Professor in Art History, Joanna Frueh discusses the potency of pink in her conference abstract 'The performance of pink':

> We perceive pink as a pale version of red; we think that red is bold and pink is demure. This formulation of difference reveals the trivializing association of pink with femininity. Pink "belongs" to little girls, to "old ladies," and to gay men; to the cute, the campy and the no-longer-lovely. Pink like femininity, signals excess in a culture that would rather believe in the threat of red than the potency of pink.
>
> In a different actuality, pink is complex and dynamic. Its conscious use by girly girls, gay men, and a hip designer[s] . . . . indicates that pink's "excess" carries the essence of erotic play, whether the user makes love in a geranium-bright lace thong, colours her lips in MAC's Razzpa, or decks himself in high pink blush like the fictional rock star (2003, pp. 38-39).

Whilst I agree with Frueh's suggestion that pink lifts the spirits, and can be seen as demure as well as the essence of erotic play, I don't agree that these readings

trivialise pink's traditional association with femininity. If that were the case then surely organisations such as CODEPINK or Queensland Cancer Fund would not claim pink as their recognising colour.

The American newspaper *The Nation, March 2003* continued Frueh's associations of pink with particular interest groups when they wrote 'CODEPINK is not an organization but a phenomenon: a sensibility reflecting feminist analysis and a campy playfulness' (Codepink, (n.d.), p. 1). However, I believe that this organisation was created from the concerns of all women and not a 'feminist analysis' or a 'campy playfulness' and therefore it claims the traditional feminine relationship to pink as a means of encompassing all women. CODEPINK stated that it began as a Woman's Peace Vigil in Washington D.C. in opposition to the war in Iraq, and that today it exists in more than 100 communities around the globe describing themselves and their activities as 'a women initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement that seeks positive social change through proactive, creative protest and non-violent direct action' ((n.d.), p. 1).

Queensland Cancer Fund uses pink as a code for female in their annual fundraising event 'Pink Ribbon Day'. A pink ribbon is purchased by the public and pinned on the chest of each donor advising their generosity and support for breast cancer research. Other organisations such as National Breast Cancer and Avon are also involved in 'Pink Ribbon Day' fundraising, each creating their own individual pink emblems. It is this encompassing of feminine and traditional relationships of pink that I draw upon in my art practice. I use pink in my art to evoke the inclusion of women.

Why pink satin? Aesthetically, the shiny surface of satin contrasted and added to the matt surface of the pinstriped fabric. Historically, satin was also a fabric used by the wealthy and elite in society, a fabric unaffordable by the masses. Therefore in its past it held associations to grandeur. Ann Hollander discusses the use of superfluous draped cloth in Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque art:

> Beautiful material was as admirable as gold or blown glass, and occupied far more space . . . A single aristocrat sitting for his portrait, however, could only wear one luxurious outfit at a time. The display of many yards of velvet or satin behind him would suggest that he owned more such stuff and was able, in modern terms, to fling it around. Even after immensely full and trailing garments ceased to be worn, at least by men, excess drapery survived in art: it is notable for example in the paintings of Hals and Van Dyk and the sculptures of Bernini (cited in Lurie 1981, p. 134).

In postmodern times satin can be associated with eveningwear, underwear or it can have an air of sleaziness. On the other hand when satin is used in fashion, it can be worn as day wear. Therefore, in using pink satin I attempted to ignite the feminine connotations of sexuality, femininity, and the postmodern female as well as referencing satin's historical connotations of wealth, grandeur and good taste.

In summary, my use of pinstriped fabric, Belgian linen and pink satin in my art practice draws upon the cultural connotations of these fabrics. I extended these connotations through the different ways I used them: they have been stretched, sewn, had threads withdrawn from them, dismantled, used as a lining, suspended, and the stripes of the pinstripe have been matched with acute accuracy while at other times the stripe was manipulated. In all of these actions the fabric maintained its integrity as a versatile artist's medium. Yet it occurred to me that the methods of production might also hold significance for each artwork.

Therefore the processes of production employed in each artwork were also investigated.

My processes.

In the process of my practice, my sewing machine became my paintbrush and I claimed the terminology of the bespoke tailor to describe my method of manipulation of those fabrics. I claimed this terminology because I was aware that a bespoke tailor connoted a higher order of sewing, a more elite stitch, a more expensive stitch and perhaps, because it was manipulated by me, a woman, it might also be a more 'subversive stitch' (Parker, 1984). This term originated in the title of Rozsika Parker's book *The Subversive Stitch Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* in which she traced woman's history through the changing climate of social responses to embroidery. Parker exposed different values applied to the act of embroidery depending on who, or if machinery, was involved in the making of embroidery. Similarly, different values were also applied to sewing which Josette Rey outlines in *Le Petit Robert,* the French dictionary:

Couture:	1 The action or the art of sewing . . . 2 The profession of those who make clothing for women . . . The *couturier's* profession.
Couturier:	A person who directs a sewing shop, creates original patterns, presents them with the aid of models, and has them made in his studios upon the request of his clients.
Couturiere:	A woman who sews and makes clothing for women at her own expense (cited in Bernier 2001, p. 43).

There is a noticeable gender bias in these descriptions of sewing and its practitioners. The couturier is referred to as a professional who directs, creates and presents yet doesn't sew in 'his' studio and for 'his' clients. The couturiere is the female who sews for women at her own expense who apparently is not

professional or capable of directing, creating and presenting. Where the art of sewing is separated by the gender of the practitioner, the art of the bespoke tailor is assumed to be a male activity. John Cutler, a fourth generation tailor, defines the bespoke tailor's activities as follows:

> A tailor deals with the individual. A tailor believes the body is right . . . A handmade suit can be adapted to create the illusion of a slimmer torso, broader shoulders or longer legs. There's no miracle involved, just a subtle improvement. Layers of horsehair, woollen haircloth, cotton selecia and lining are used around the chest, shoulders, collar and ribs to create balance, and high-quality fabrics are then stitched over the structural framework . . . A handmade suit will remain in shape for life (Lunn, J. and Alexopoulos, P. 1999, p. 46).

The title bespoke tailor not only suggests a tailor's superior knowledge, its visual form has gathered authority over time as Ann Hollander explains in her book *Sex and Suits*:

> The staying power of male tailoring shows how visual form can have its own authority, its own self-perpetuating symbolic and emotional force . . . By staying the same while undergoing constant internal changes, male tailoring acquired more virtue and new value throughout its life, instead of losing force or currency. It has gathered power rather than dissipating its force during its two centuries of fluctuation, so that its satisfactions have been cumulative (1994, p. 4).

The cumulative power of tailoring and the status of the suit have imbued pinstriped fabric with power and status. Following from this, I propose that art which wears the uniform of the pinstripe and has the fit of the bespoke tailor could be read as a metaphor for the power structures contained within corporate, professional and political organisations.

Methods other than those of the bespoke tailor were used when I fabricated the architectural structures to be covered by the pinstriped fabric. These structures were made from wood and Styrofoam, and required a knowledge of building skills that I acquired during my undergraduate training in sculpture and painting.

Practical issues such as transport lead to calculating new carpentry techniques that related to the joining and strengthening of each structure. It was my experience in measurement and patternmaking that enabled me to visualize the patterns to be cut and formulate methods of construction regardless of the materials used.

There were other methods that I used which evoked the feminine: I had used the technique of pulled thread work that was historically associated with embroidery and today might be a pastime or hobby. Rozsika Parker in *The Subversive Stitch Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* distinguishes the nineteenth century embroiderer from today's embroiderer:

> In the nineteenth century, embroidery and femininity were entired fused, and the connection was deemed to be natural. Women embroidered because they were naturally feminine and were feminine because they naturally embroidered . . . . On the whole women no longer embroider as a gesture of wifely or domestic duty. But the aspect of embroidery as a bond between women has lived on . . . . An embroiderer can become a sociologist but does not bring her work out in staffroom, boardroom or pub (1984, p. 11 & 215).

I also machine stitched onto the pinstripe fabric and by so doing altered the direction of the woven stripe, manipulating and inserting other meanings and identities. This stitching appeared more like the light mark of a drawing or the delicate stitching of handmade embroidery. Yet it was the action of a female sitting at her sewing machine.

To this point, I have described my research project and in Chapter One completed a comparative study of artists who employed fabric as their medium. I have done this in order to place my work in context. In Chapter Two I researched three fabrics that I chose to use in this project in order to understand the collective

mythologies relating to power, status and femininity imbued within these fabrics. Also, I have discussed the connotations of my methods of making that include the art of the bespoke tailor, embroidery preparations and machine stitching. In Chapter Three I explore my decision to position this research project through the works of Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* (1958-1960).

CHAPTER THREE

The relevance of Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* (1958-1960).

Chapter Three is the investigation of Frank Stella's art practice at a time when he had just left University and was entering the art world as an emerging artist. I began by researching the artworks of other artists who had referred to Stella's *Black Paintings*. Then the discovery of a long association of these paintings with the pinstriped fabric of the suit, confirmed my visual connection between them. Stella's use and craftsmanship of the materials of house painting interested me. A throw-away remark gave me the opportunity to insert female agency within his practice. Then through my research of written histories and a biography, I was able to investigate Stella's corporate persona. Finally, an interview taped in 1964 and Frank Stella's book *Working Space* 1986 provided Stella's perspective, of his career between 1958 and 1960 two decades apart.

I began my research into Frank Stella's art practice knowing that I was not the only artist who had investigated this artists *Black Paintings*. Kathy Temin and Elaine Sturtevant had made reference to these paintings, but my own approach differed to theirs.

Kathy Temin (an Australian contemporary artist from a Jewish and haberdashery background) referred to Frank Stella in many of her works. Temin, whose father is a holocaust survivor, critiqued Stella's *Die Fahne Hoch* of which Richardson wrote that this title is 'the first phrase in the first line of the *Horst Wessel Lied*' and that it was 'the official marching song of the Nazi party'. Richardson also

noted that *Arbeit Macht Frei* is the 'infamously euphemistic Nazi slogan which was written over the entrance gates to the extermination camp at Auschwitz (Poland)' (1967, p. 26). Like Temin, I was disturbed by Stella's seeming lack of compassion with his use of those titles, but for Temin they had a far more personal meaning. Kathy Temin discusses that aspect of her work in an interview by Naomi Cass:

> *Indoor Monument: Hard Dis-play* is a sculptural translation of a Frank Stella black and white line painting in the form of a knee high maze that occupies the floor of the large Smorgon gallery . . . I found a serious disjunction between the visual fact of the work – the work's reception – and the reference of the title . . . I wanted to make my own interpretation because I think this gap is significant enough to want to draw attention to it . . I do know at the time no one really questioned it, beyond the visuals of resolving formal pictorial problems. Commentaries by the artist speak only of the formal properties of the painting (cited in Cass 1995, pp. 29-33).

Temin also stated that she was aware of the lack of women practitioners in accounts of minimalist art practice. In her reproductions she conveyed this by her use of haberdashery as a medium and employed a crafted grunge look in the finish in her artworks. Cass quoted Temin saying that 'the materials relate to what I am trying to do within the work. The 're-done' versions of other peoples work are an irreverent reversal of minimalism, combining materials that have completely different associations'. Temin continued saying that 'initially this was a way of gendering the work' (cited in Cass, 1995, p. 31).

It is not surprising that artists whose gender is female appropriate and reinterpret works that originally exclude them. Temin, described by journalist Ann Lim as 'grunge artist Kathy Temin' quotes Temin who 'says her decision not to finish things off is a conscious one' (1997, p. 17) whereas I chose to maintain the formalist structure of tailored pinstriped fabric. Interestingly, Cass describing

Temin's rough finish as tailoring wrote that 'she recreates a kind of rag trade where she is a tailor of a different kind' (1993, p. 80).

In her essay 'Materiality and metamorphosis' Pricilla Pitts, suggests that:

> Temin has focused on Stella's striped paintings, exploiting the connotations of their pinstriped business-suit look . . . She's also recycled his stripes in the various furry "parts"' such as owls' eyes and ducks' wings. In these works Temin deliberately constructs a collision of the infantile feminine with the authoritative masculine (1995, p. 3).

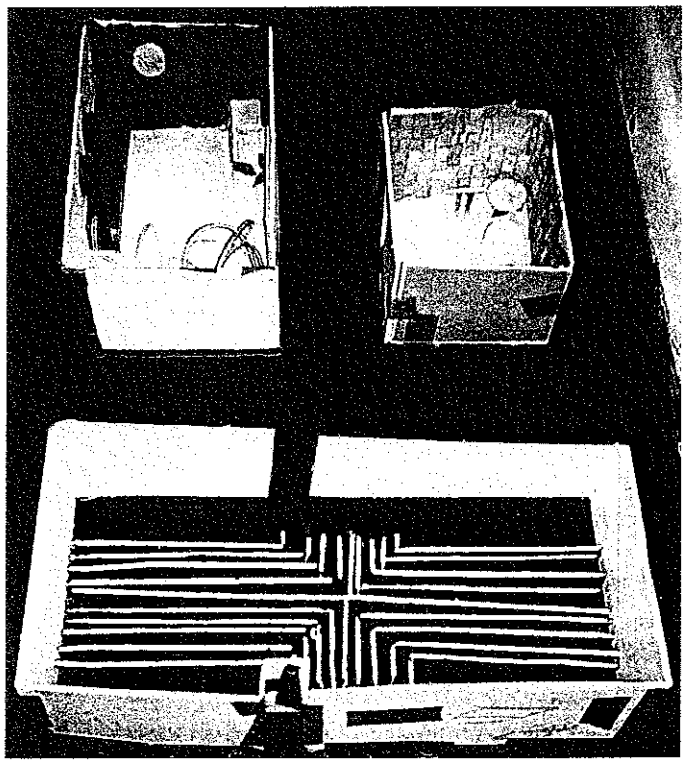

Fig. 39 - Cathy Temin, *Models for Three Indoor Monuments (*1995), cardboard, paint, tape.

I also was interested in the pinstriped fabric of the business suit, and like Temin, I saw it as a literal translation of a Stella *Black Painting*. Another artist, Elaine Sturtevant also referenced Frank Stella in her art practice. Her *Stella Die Fahne Hoch* (1990) was made from the same materials and measurements as the

originals. In Sturtevant's art practice she copies the works of important figures within the contemporary art arena. Armelle Leturcq critiqued Sturtevant's first retrospective in Europe. She wrote:

> With an almost obsessional precision, Sturtevant since 1966 has devoted herself to "repeating" the works of important figures in contemporary art . . . The Stella's, Warhol's, Duchamp's, have lost their time and place of origin, the dates get mixed up, the time is out of order, but the pieces become brutally present and contemporary (1992, p. 88).

Interestingly, the original Stella *Black Paintings* did not survive well over their first eighteen years since their making, due to the materials used and the method Stella used when paint was applied directly onto the canvas. In 1976, the Baltimore Museum of Art brought together sixteen of the *Black Paintings* for the exhibition *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings* curated by Brenda Richardson. She wrote that:

> Few paintings remain in their original condition. Many of the works have been repainted, through restoration as a result of damage or by reason of aesthetic choice. Repainting has not necessarily been done by the artist; professional conservators have been employed by some owners to execute necessary restoration work. Certain paintings have been varnished (for either protective or aesthetic reasons), which has altered the original, matte surface quality produced by the absorption of paint into raw canvas (1976, p. 15).

Therefore, Sturtevant's reproductions are important works. Her *Stella Die Fahne Hoch* (1990) is an original painting that might have appeared in 1958-1960, and therefore her works are important in the preservation of the history of these paintings.

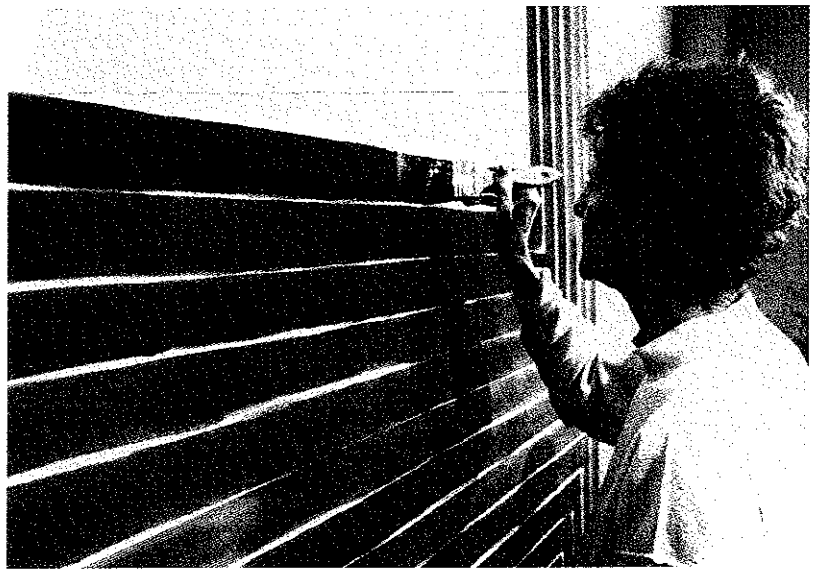

Fig. 40 - Elaine Sturtevant, reproducing Frank Stella's *Black Painting – Bethlehem's Hospital* (1988),
enamel on canvas.

Notably, both Sturtevant and I have recreated Stella's paintings, yet for differing reasons. Sturtevant created an exact replica which updates the image historically, whilst I combined the power of pinstripe fabric to subvert and reinterpret the power of Stella's imagery.

Stella and the Pinstripe.

The connection between Stella's *Black Paintings* and the pinstripe was initially made when four of them were first exhibited in *The Sixteen Americans* exhibition at M.O.M.A. in New York. Emily Genauer, art critic of the *New York Herald Tribune*, in December 1959 wrote that the four *Black Paintings* exhibited were 'unspeakably boring. (Stella) who paints huge black canvases carefully lined with white pin-stripes and calls the results, very accurately, "striped painting"' (cited in 'An Artist Writes to Correct and Explain' 1959, p. 7). Also in that article were

a letter to the editor, a correction, an image detail of one of the paintings and the accompanying catalogue entry. Those written components are set out below:

> I did not invent the term "stripe paintings" but rather the paintings themselves . . . I concede it is sufficiently accurate. My paintings are what I do, not what I don't. In fact, I paint black stripes about 2 1/2 inches wide. Therefore the unpainted white spaces between them are not the stripes, but what you call the "background."
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Frank Stella
>
> Mrs Genauer stands corrected. In Stella's nine-foot by seven-foot canvas reproduced above, included with three other similar works in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, those are not white pinstripes on black which you see but broad black stripes on white.
>
> A catalogue note to the Stella paintings, written by Carl Andre, reads in its entirety. "Preface to Stripe Paintings." Art excludes the unnecessary. Frank Stella has found it necessary to paint stripes. There is nothing else in his painting. Frank Stella is not interested in expression or sensitivity. He is interested in the necessities of painting. Symbols are counters passed among people. Frank Stella's painting is not symbolic. His stripes are the paths of brush on canvas. These paths lead only into painting (1959, p. 7).

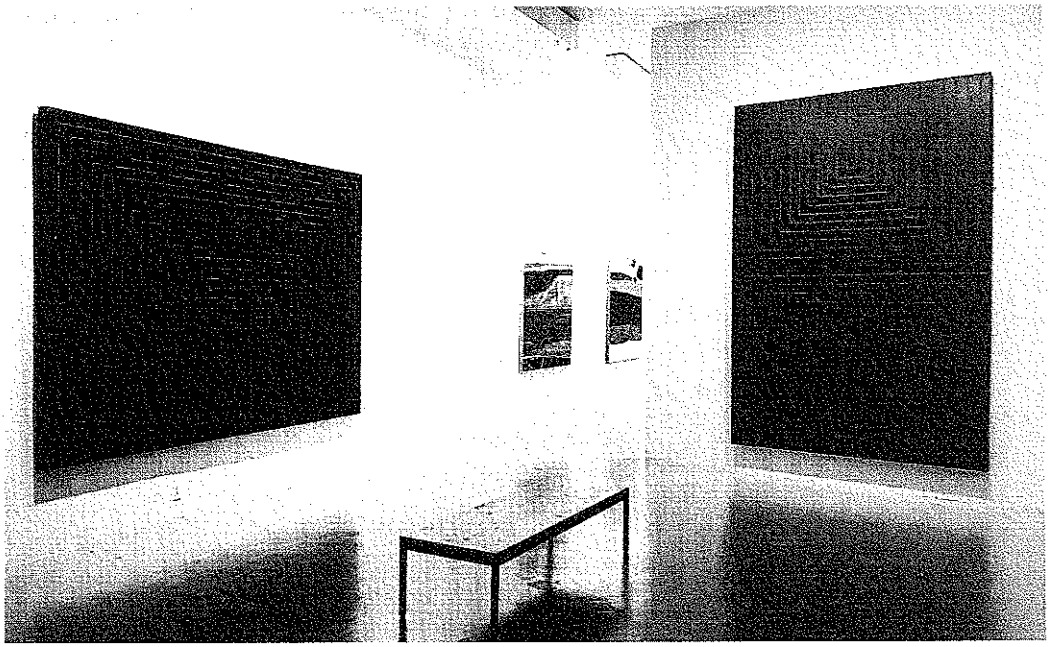

Fig. 41 - Frank Stella, *Black Paintings* (1958-1959), in situ at the *Sixteen Americans* exhibition, M.O.M.A. New York, 16th Dec 1959 -17th Jan 1960.

This disputed connection between Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* and the pinstripe was explained by William Rubin as 'the optical effect of the value contrasts between the painted black bands and the reserved interstitial unpainted stripes led many journalists to speak of white pinstripes' (1970, p. 16). But Rubin also suggested that these unpainted stripes really functioned as lines:

> Stella's insistence that he had not painted white lines followed from the importance he attached to not drawing with the brush – the method that had been crucial to most Abstract Expressionists . . Nethertheless, Stella did do the drawing without it – inasmuch as the "negative" spaces between the bands really functioned as lines (1970, p. 18).

Anna Chave in her essay 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power' wrote that

> So wary have critics been of exploring what Stella's art signifies that even the most unavoidable allusion has passed essentially unremarked: the likeness of the black paintings' patterns to those bolts of fine pinstriped wool flannel used for decades by Brooks Brothers and J. Press to make the suits of bankers, executives, and politicians. The full connotations of the quintessential Power Fabric could scarcely have been lost on Stella, a 1958 graduate of Princeton University and an alumnus of Andover prep school (1990, p. 48).

I understood Chave's scepticism that Stella was unaware of the 'most unavoidable allusion' (1990, p. 48). Viewing these paintings through reproductions in books and journals reduced the surface texture and flattened the image thus making their connection to pinstripe fabric more understandable. Later, when viewing the limited edition prints, I did not change my view. The hand strokes of the lithography crayon made reference to drawing and softened the black mass of each stripe. Yet the off-white gaps still appear to advance and be more prominent.

In her introduction to *Frank Stella Prints 1967-1982* Judith Goldman assessed whether or not Stella forced illusionistic space out of the prints. She wrote:

> The prints show us the regulated patterns and the shapes they echo. But illusionistic space comes with the territory of printmaking. So long as Stella put marks on paper, there was no way to escape printmaking's inherent figure/ground relationship, and no way to excise illusionistic space from the prints. He could have bypassed the relationship. By cropping paper, he could depict shape as emphatic; or by extending an image to the sheet's edge, he could obliterate the figure/ground relationship. But rather than cancel out that relationship, he tried only to neutralize it (1983, p. unnumbered Introduction).

Interestingly, the 'figure/ground relationship' which Goldman describes in Stella's prints was what I recognised as the pinstripe. Although the early connection to pinstripes was corrected immediately in 1959, an association has continued for over thirty years. As Rubin reiterated this connection in the 1970s, Goldman saw it in the prints in 1983, and Chave continued expanding on that connection in the 1990s. My contention that pinstriped fabric might be seen as a readymade Stella painting therefore has some history and agency.

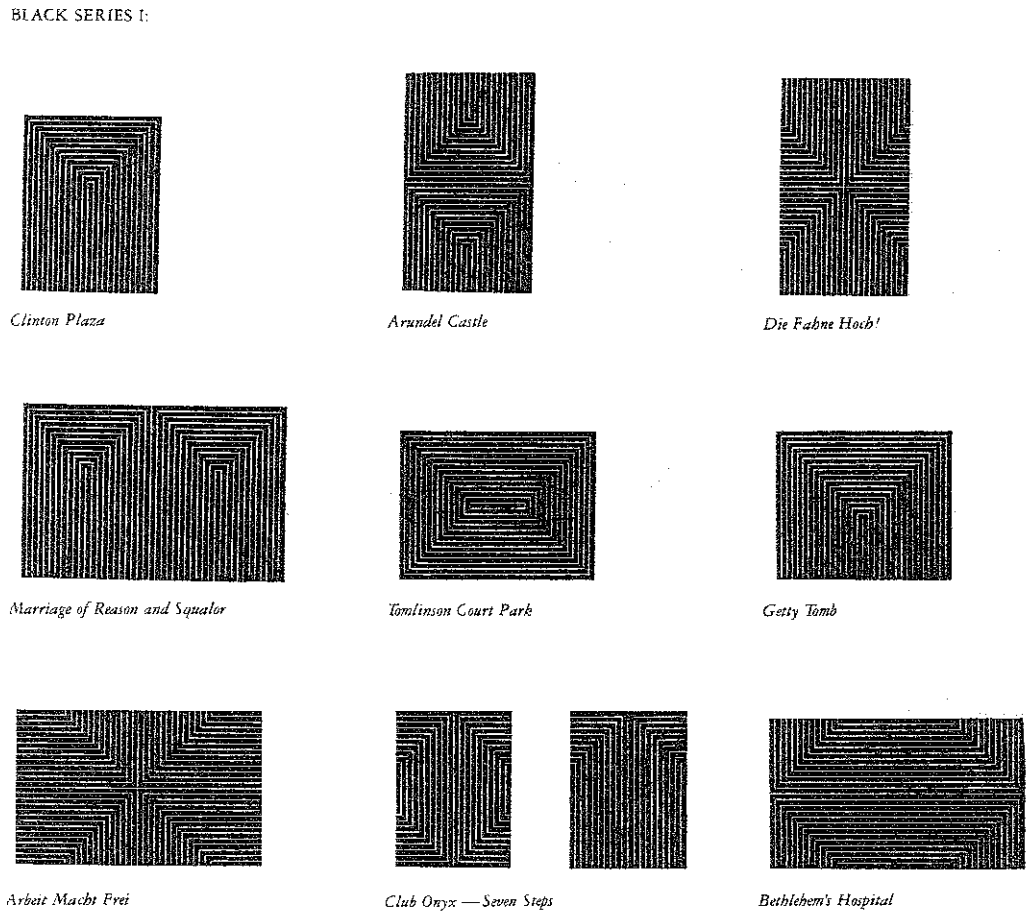

Fig. 42 - Frank Stella, *Black Series I* (1967),
lithograph prints two colour on 15 x 22" Barcham Green paper edition 100.

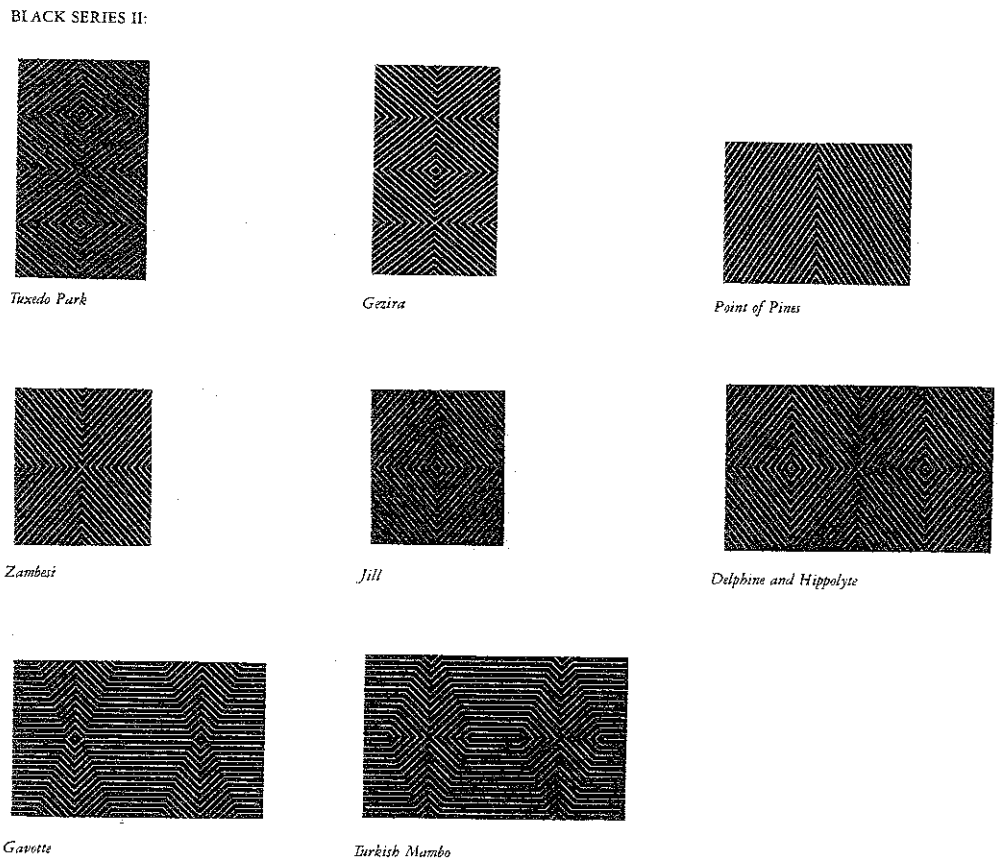

Fig. 43 - Frank Stella, *Black Series II* (1967),
lithograph prints two colour on 15 x 22" Barcham Green paper edition 100

Stella's materials and skills.

In Stella's art practice his use of the house painting techniques and materials was considered as part of his personal conceptual problem-solving techniques. In a lecture delivered by Stella at the Pratt Institute in January or February 1960 he stated that 'there are two problems in painting. One is to find out what painting is and the other is to find out how to make a painting'. Stella continued that 'the first is learning something and the second is making something' (Richardson 1976, p. 78). And after looking at, and reproducing other artist's works, Stella came to the conclusion that there had to be a better way. As he saw it:

> There were two problems which had to be faced. One was spatial and the other methodological. In the first place I had to do something about relational painting, i.e., the balancing of the various parts of the painting with and against each other. The obvious answer was symmetry [sic] – make it the same all over . . . The remaining problem was simply to find a method of paint application which followed and complemented the design solution. This was done by using the house painter's technique and tools (Richardson 1976, p. 78).

Stella's introduction of his medium and methods of painting at this forum ensured that they had been considered by art critics as a part of paintings problem solving techniques. His methods and medium have been seen as industrial and commercial but perhaps it is also possible to interpret them as elements of a craft practice namely house painting used within a fine art arena. Stella said 'I didn't want to make variations; I didn't want to record a path. I wanted to get the paint out of the can and onto the canvas', continuing he said 'I tried to keep the paint as good as it was in the can' (Hobbs 2002, p. 20). Hobbs surmised that 'Stella's painting reinforces definitions of art in terms of its age-old connotations of skill, craft, and trade, giving rise to the often cited reduction of the work of art to the simple designation "work"' (2002, p. 20).

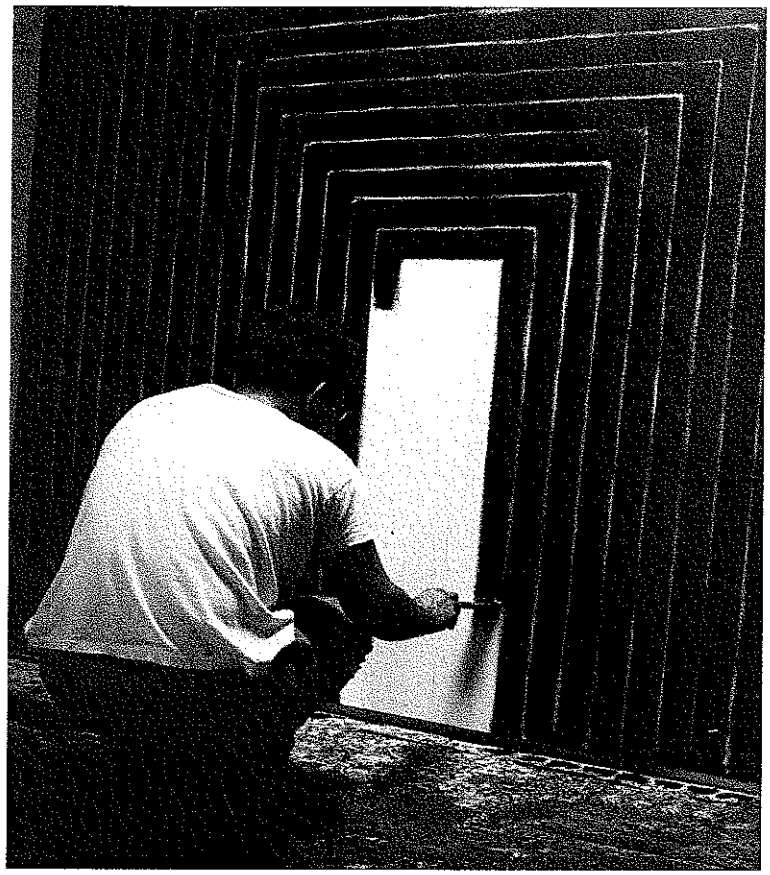

Fig. 44 - Frank Stella, *Getty Tomb* (second version) (1959), photographed painting in his studio

In reflecting on such cases, I wondered how I might introduce fabric, embroidery and sewing techniques into an art practice as a critical problem solving tool. I returned to the practice of Kushner, who was an artist operating in the same era as Stella. He had bought fabric and sewing to painting utilising them as his materials and methods in his concerns with decoration. Donald Kuspit had referred to Kushner's works as 'a positive art that articulates happiness' (1987, p. 21). Janet Kardon wrote that by 'allowing fabric traditionally assigned as a women's domain to be his medium and his message, subliminal gender signals flicker' (1987, p. 16).

It seemed fabric and sewing were loaded with gendered meaning and that they detracted from Kushner's painterly concerns. Yet the commercial paint and the two and one half inch brush that Stella used from house painting were not seen as male gendered craftsmanship. Rather they were seen as processes and approaches that enhanced the industrial and corporate identity of Stella's art. The discrepancy in the critique of the two mediums was ultimately due to fabric being tied to female production and thus considered less critical conceptually. Therefore, I understood that introducing the skills and medium from my previous self-employment as a designer/dressmaker and patternmaker into my art practice would require strategies based on informed and analytical research.

The opportunity to insert female agency into Stella's practice.

Stella's art practice during this period 1958-1960 had been associated with early minimalism. The fact that this period of painting history and minimalism in particular had very little documentation of female artists was of interest to my area of research. So the appropriation and reinterpretation of those works presented me with the opportunity of inserting female agency back into an approach and style that appeared to have omitted women.

In her essay 'Minimalism and biography' Anna Chave, 'explores what has been at stake and for whom' at that time. She discusses the 'hesitation that [Lucy] Lippard and [Judy] Chicago felt at the prospect of openly claiming their identities as women at this historical juncture'. She writes that 'Lippard' after all 'lived with Robert Ryman from 1960-1967 and counted Sol Le Witt both a close friend and her "major intellectual influence" during that period' (2000, p. 3). Chave

recalls Lippard's hesitation in 1970 when 'openly assuming a female subject position seemed a bad idea because "women were cut out of a lot of the action, and perceived as inferior. So I didn't really think I was one of them"' (cited in Chave 2000, p. 2). Chave also discusses Judy Chicago's break from Minimalism saying that 'Chicago sacrificed some hard-won critical credibility as she steered her work in the 1970's away from Minimalism towards idioms accommodating a more explicit visualization of women's experiences' (2000, p. 2).

This was the culture that operated around the time when Stella was holed up in his studio for eighteen months painting his twenty three *Black Paintings*. Caroline Jones author, critic and professor of art history wrote that:

> Andre and Stella had known each other for five years, ever since both had attended the Phillips Academy at Andover, but it was Hollis Frampton (also a classmate) who had remained closer to Stella, and Frampton who renewed the friendships when all three found themselves in New York in 1959 (1996, p. 146).

With little money and struggling to work and make art, this group of friends discussed the titles of these works seeking to match the blackness of the paintings' appearance with the blackness evoked in their titles. (Rubin (1970) Richardson (1976) and Chave (1990) have subsequently effectively mined the meanings of those titles and I used those critiques in my second exhibition titled *Gemini paintings* discussed in Chapter Eight.

Why then did Stella title one of the paintings *Jill?* I was interested; perhaps my contention that the history of minimalism had excluded females was wrong? As this was the only *Black Painting* to have the title of a person's name and the fact that it was a female, it's not surprising that Richardson asked Stella who *Jill* was.

His dismissive reply was 'She was around at the time' (1976, p. 64). Rubin wrote that '*Jill* was named after a young lady' who was 'involved with some of those places' (1970, p. 45), alluding to the titles that referred to place names. I responded to Stella's throw-away line in my final exhibition *The fabric of art* with a work titled *A woman around at the time,* which is discussed in Chapter Nine

Perhaps I had drawn too fine a thread between the exclusion of women in early minimalism and my perception that the response by Stella was disrespectful of women and that therefore his practice appeared to exclude women. But then I located a conversation between Caroline A. Jones, Assistant Professor of art history and Director of Museums studies at Boston University, and 'Fontaine Dunn, one of Stella's administrative assistants from the late 1970's through to the early '80's' (Jones, p. 185). Jones wrote that Fontaine Dunn,

> recalled that there was sanctity about [the] final application of paint to fabricated metal reliefs. The final "authorising" of the object was an operation that first excluded women, and finally, everyone else:
>
> CJ: So you were never a hands-on assistant to the studio?
> FD: No, never. That was exclusively a male preserve. [Laughs] It was almost like that thing you know, a woman on the ship is bad luck (1996, p. 185-186).

I understood that historically artists who employed others to manufacture their artworks may finish off or authorise completion of a work, but Dunn's description of her experience working for Stella, was that he excluded women. Reflecting on the hesitation of Lippard and Chicago in the early 1970s at the beginning of their careers, and the exclusion of women by Stella in the late 1970s and early 1980s it is not surprising that artists whose gender is female retrace that period and reinterpret the works of the white male artist.

Stella's corporate persona.

Stella's corporate persona might have begun with his photograph in a three piece suit, taken by Hollis Frampton for the catalogue of the *Sixteen Americans* exhibition. However, it was extended by the artist statement in that catalogue 'Preface to stripe paintings' (discussed earlier) which Carl Andre had written. Another author was Hollis Frampton, who wrote the letter to the editor of the New York Tribune rejecting the title of 'pinstriped paintings' which he signed as Stella. When these image building measures or bad boy pranks were discovered, Stella explained them as a result of his timidness. Stella's explanation is quoted by Hobbs in his essay 'Frank Stella: Then and Now':

> I was shy. And they were very aggressive and loved to do it. Hollis, I mean there was no stopping him . . . The best letter, it was all Hollis's ideas too. He was mad because Emily Genauer criticized me. He loved to attack critics. But it was a good letter . . . very cute and very clever. [Carl's essay] was sort of mystical . . . I would've never thought of that in a million years (cited in Hobbs 2002, p 19).

Carolyn Jones suggested that Stella's photo in a three piece suit evoked a dress code appropriate for a college year book which might rival *Esquire* magazine:

> The photograph that might have been far more appropriate for a Princeton yearbook than a museum catalogue presenting cutting-edge artists to the New York art world was submitted to M.O.M.O. curator Dorothy Miller for publication in *Sixteen Americans*. Even though Stella later recalled in an interview that Miller (the curator of the *Sixteen Americans)* was apparently taken aback by the image and asked for "a more informal photograph," Stella chose not to comply with her request. Thus, he broke with an established yet unwritten code for vanguard representation in the 1950's by not appearing as the expected angry young lion and presenting himself instead as such an epitome of conventional good taste that his image might be said to rival contemporaneous *Esquire* magazine layouts (cited in Hobbs 2002, p. 14).

Jones indicated that the photograph of Stella might be seen as proof of the artist's sartorial affiliations. However, not everyone agreed with that interpretation

Hobbs, suggested that 'it can also be looked at as a tongue-in-cheek jab at the conformism of the 1950's New York vanguardism' (2002, p. 14).

In a letter to Stella's friend, Sidney Guberman, Barbara Rose (who was later to become Stella's first wife) also commented on Stella's attire when she wrote 'Do not let that dandy F. Stella outsmart your so smart wardrobe as he is obviously trying to do, what with those many houndstooth jackets from Langrock [a clothing store in Princeton] hanging in rows in his starving artist's garret' (cited in Guberman 1995, p. 59). Guberman wrote that he 'was incredulous but it was true. Frank was deep into deficit spending, buying an Ad Reinhardt painting and two-hundred-dollar jackets' (1995, p. 59). I was interested in the image of Stella in a three piece suit which I found in Guberman's book *Frank Stella an Illustrated Biography*. The fabric of this suit was a plain dark fabric rather than pinstriped but it was representative of the attire of a male in the business or corporate world.

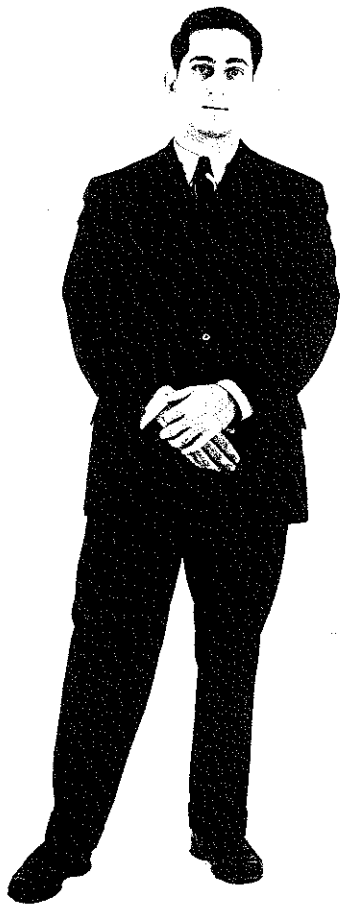

Fig. 45 - Frank Stella, the photograph he submitted for the catalogue of the *Sixteen Americans* exhibition at M.O.M.A.

Stella's associations with the industrial and corporate sectors were not only made through his appearance. He shared friendships with the hierarchy in arts organisations which are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four. He initially shared exhibitions with minimalist artists who also used industrial materials and manufacture in their artworks. Their use of such materials and methods is discussed by Anna Chave:

> By manufacturing objects with common industrial and commercial materials in a restricted vocabulary of geometric shapes . . . Minimalist artists availed themselves of the cultural authority of the markers of industry and technology. Though the specific qualities of their objects vary . . . the authority implicit in the identity of the materials and shapes the artists used, as well as in the scale and often the weight of their objects, has been crucial to Minimalism's associative values from the outset (1990, p. 44).

I saw the cool aesthetics in minimalism as a device through which to enter into a dialogue with the power relationships within art practices, not only in relation to Stella's *Black Paintings* but within contemporary art practices such as the relationships between artists, critics, writers and art galleries.

By the end of my first year's research, I came to the decision that I would concentrate on that part of the painting that Stella had negated; the gap 'in-between' each stripe of black paint. This gap became integral to the positioning of my art practice. This was the gap that he had left blank; the gap that formed the pinstripe within the paintings. And it was the same gap that enabled the viewer a sight of the warp and the weft threads of the woven cotton duck (canvas); the gap where Stella introduced fabric into his paintings.

In summary, I found that Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* 1958-1960 were relevant to my art practice in many ways. Firstly, other artists had referred to Stella's *Black Paintings* highlighting different aspects of these paintings and his career. Secondly, the *Black Paintings* had a long association with pinstriped fabric, and accordingly, I understood that pinstriped fabric might be seen as a readymade within Frank Stella's painting. It also became clear that further art making investigations were required in order to explore the wide range of methods available to me. Thirdly, I understood that Stella's art practice (like the minimalist artists) was not inclusive of women and that in redoing a 'Stella' I might seek to include the feminine. Finally, Stella's corporate persona provided another focus on which I might draw on in my own art practice.

Reflecting on this research into Stella's career during the *Black Paintings* period 1958-1960, I realised that I had gathered information through essays and books that were written either around that time or somewhat distanced by time from that period and the original works. Therefore, I was interested in the views that Stella expressed close to the completion of the *Black Paintings* in a 1964 interview by Bruce Glaser that Stella, Dan Flavin and Donald Judd all took part in which was reproduced in 2000 by art historian and author, James Meyer in his book *Minimalism*. I compared Stella's views at that time with a more distanced view of his early career which Stella provided in 1986 as author of his book *Working Space*.

Stella reviews his career 1958-1960.

In the 1964 interview Stella was forthright when Glaser asked 'Are you implying that you are trying to destroy painting?' to which Stella replied 'It's just that you can't go back. It's not a question of destroying anything. If something's used up, something's done, something's over with, what's the point of getting involved with it?' Glaser then asked 'Are you suggesting that there are no more solutions to, or no more problems that exist in painting?' Stella's response was:

> Well it seems to me we have problems . . . I always get into arguments with people who want to retain the old values in painting – the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas. My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there is there . . . All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion . . . What you see is what you see (cited in Meyer 2000, p199).

Stella's response does not sound at all like someone who is shy as he suggested earlier when Hollis Frampton wrote a letter of complaint for him and Carle Andre

wrote his artist statement for the *Sixteen Americans* exhibition. In hindsight Stella speaks of a 'power' that he knew he was involved within when he first 'superimposed a simple idea of banded organisational symmetry on top of landscape gestures' (1986, p. 155).

> First . . . It hit me that there was an 'art history' alive and well, with which the artist must make his peace. Second – and this was something that as a young man one could not say in public because it was certain to invite ridicule – once one had become part of this organism, one had the power to influence it. This was pretty heady business, but the access to power was tempered by a sense of responsibility which introduced the possibility of a new kind of failure. It was not enough to worry that in the pursuit of art one might fail to catch up to it; in addition, one had to worry about doing part of the job to keep it running (Stella, 1986 p. 158).

It seems as if Stella was always aware of a relationship of power he had through his connection to art history and his conviction that he might change the course of art history. Stella had a goal 'to paint abstract paintings'. He was convinced that:

> a completely independent abstract art, one that had severed its roots from representational bias for pictorial depiction, would be an improvement, and would preserve and defend the accomplishment of abstract expressionist painting. Even now writing twenty five years after the fact, it is hard to know whether describing this ambition sounds simple or naïve. All I can say is that the ambition was born in the paintings made in 1958 from June to November in New York City' (1986, p. 158).

Stella's hindsight account of the period 1958 to 1960 is surprising frank about his goals and ambitions that he might control the power to alter the way in which art history would view abstract art. I knew that my research was not going to alter art history but I thought that in concentrating on that gap 'in-between' each of Stella's stripes of black paint, I might venture to renegotiate the materials of painting and sculpture by working towards a conceptual repositioning of fabric in fine art and thus highlight the powered and non-powered positions within contemporary art practices.

CHAPTER FOUR

Relationships of Power.

The relationships of power that existed between Frank Stella, the art critics and the New York gallery system enabled the initial acceptance of the *Black Paintings* (1958-1960) when Stella was an emerging artist. This became the starting point for my investigations into relationships of power. Following Holliday T. Day's theory that argued that retold myths justify power through tying rituals and their regalia to nature, I would argue how this was demonstrated in advertising and corporate promotions. Yet as Foucault theorised, I too as an artist was implicated, 'as individuals are the vehicles of power – not its points of application' (1980, p. 98). In my first exhibition the *Back door project* I explored these relationships which might exist in Australian contemporary art practices between emerging artists and the gallery system.

Anna Chave noted that Stella had friends and acquaintances in the right places to promote his art practice:

> As well educated middle-class, white American males, the inner circle of Minimalist artists was generally socialized to assume a perspective of authority. . . [Stella] had the most privileged background of all. He may not have been a stereotypical ivy-leaguer eager to don the pinstripes in his turn, but the proverbial "old boys' network" could not have served him better if he had pursued a career on Wall Street (1990, p. 62).

The 'old boys' network' that Chave referred to was formed by Stella's connections from his student days as well as by people that he was introduced to who were able to assist in starting his career as an artist. Initially, these contacts were made through Stella's education at Phillips Andover Academy 1950-1954

where he met Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton (fellow students) and later at Princeton University in 1954-1958.

Andre introduced Stella to Barbara Rose, 'a graduate student in art history at Columbia. After seeing the *Black Paintings*, she (Rose) decided that Stella was the most important artist of her generation' (cited in Chave 1990, p. 62). These introductions became friendships that were close and personal when in '1961 in London [Stella] marries Barbara Rose; Michael Fried serves as best man' (Rubin 1970, p. 156). Chave wrote that Rose was to become 'a critic, highly supportive of Minimalist art' while fellow Princeton student, Fried, would 'become Stella's most passionate and articulate supporter as well as the most influential critic of the day' (1990, p. 62). Hobbs confirmed Stella's friendship with Fried '[Stella's] long-term friend from undergraduate days at Princeton, the critic and art historian Michael Fried' (2002, p. 22).

Further connections that proved favourable for Stella's early career were Princeton lecturers Robert Rosenblum who lectured in art history and William Seits who ran an open painting studio attended by Stella and Darby Barnard. Rubin wrote that in the winter of 1958 Stella '[was] introduced by Darby Barnard to art critic Clement Greenberg'. He writes that 'at the suggestion of Rosenblum, Leo Castelli visited Stella's studio with Dorothy Miller' and that in 'August 1959 Stella joins the Leo Castelli Gallery' (1970, p. 155). Chave wrote that 'William Seits (rose to power at the Museum of Modern Art)' and that Rosenblum 'went on to write Stella's first full-scale magazine article *Frank Stella: Five years of*

Variations on an "Irreducible" theme, and in 1970 a monograph on his work titled *Frank Stella'* (1990, p. 62).

Stella's early association with this group of people was vital in presenting his work to the New York art audience. Art students are advised that networking is a vital promotional activity to assist in obtaining exhibitions for their artwork. Of course the artwork would necessarily be of a standard that would interest art historians, critics and gallery curators. However, thinking back on Stella's early entrée to the New York art world, it would appear that attending Phillips Andover Academy, Princeton University and majoring in art history rather than attending an art college, put him in touch with the art historians and critics of his future. Simultaneously throughout the whole of his degree he had studio facilities, materials provided and studied painting with artist in resident Stephen Greene although for the first three years this wasn't an accredited subject of his degree.

These powerful relationships within the art world interested me. However, I was also interested in the power structures within our contemporary society. In my research I discovered the documentation of the exhibition *Power: its myths and mores in American art 1961-1991* curated by Holiday T. Day. In her catalogue essay 'The nature of power', Day discusses the methods that twenty seven artists had used in their investigations of power relationships:

> The artists in the exhibition examine power relationships by questioning the literal reference conveyed by the image and its form; the cultural values placed on the materials and methods of production of the art; and the aura created by the context or usage of the art. In this way, they critically explore cultural myths, social structures, and rituals as the media of power in the wider society (1991, p. 12).

I recognised my own methods of working in Day's description of the ways in which other artists had critically explored relationships of power within their societies. Day presented this exhibition in three sections suggesting firstly that, 'myths are created in every culture to justify or explain its existence. Perpetuation of the myth is essential to maintaining the power relationships it fosters'. Secondly, cultural 'myths justify power' which operates through hidden and 'embedded values and structures of society'. Thirdly, 'rituals and regalia serve to perpetuate the power relationships of class, race and gender within American society by re-enacting certain myths, maintaining societies structures, and providing signs of difference and authority' (1991, pp.13-14, 18 & 24).

In the first section of the exhibition 'The Myth Behind the Icon' Day included works of Frank Stella noting that:

> By eschewing the connotations of romantic art and adopting the classic forms of Greek geometry, Judd, De Maria, and Stella celebrate the power of the technology and science to better American life. These new icons supposedly grounded in universal forms and scientific truth, provide a clear message about the superiority of the technological society over other cultural forms and enhance the status of those members of society engaged in production and knowledgeable in the secrets of science (1991, p. 17).

I reproduced Stella's artworks and acknowledged that maybe these connections linked my works to come into line with the 'universal forms and scientific truths' Day had described. However, I worked against this to exploit Stella's icon status by using craft techniques.

Day included the business suit in the third section of the exhibition 'Contemporary Rituals and Their Regalia':

> While dress (such as a business suit or a hairstyle) . . . are acknowledged by society to indicate social status, race, and gender distinctions, such regalia also include items that appear to be part of the world of nature as well as the world of things. For example, dress includes the manipulation of physical appearance as well as the wearing of clothes . . . If the ritual and its regalia are common and natural enough; they become transparent or invisible in the sense that we forget not only their artificiality but also their existence. Tying rituals and regalia to nature enhances their power because nature is equated with truth or reality . . . the businessman portrayed against a row of classical columns suggesting a natural order inherited from an older culture (1991, p. 24-25).

The rituals and regalia that Day had connected with the suit interested me. 'Businessman portrayed against a row of classical columns suggesting a natural order' (1991, p. 25) were the same connections between the corporate world, the pinstriped suit and art that Carol Squiers referred to in her essay 'The Corporate Year in Pictures'. She described a double page spread from the 1984 annual report of The Chase Manhattan Corporation as:

> If a company can't make its annual report pictures look like art, the next best thing is to put art right into the pictures . . . The Chase Manhattan Corp . . . owns one of the world's major corporate art collections . . . this year it decorates the annual report, where it is used as a backdrop for group portraits of executives . . . these casually formal pictures show Chase executives in conversation . . . they sit or stand in tidy spaces defined by expanses of expensive looking art, as if this rarefied atmosphere protects and coddles them while they get on with the important business of increasing bank profits (1999, pp. 211-212).

The American executives in this picture were of course appropriately dressed in business suits. This type of photograph might well be linked with Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* where he wrote that 'In order to gain and hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence' (1979, p. 36).

Australian companies have also used connections between tailoring and finance. For example, the National Australia Bank Limited's advertising campaign

suggested that 'Tailoring could save you $80,000 and 8 years on your home loan' and qualified that statement in small print 'A National home loan specialist can tailor a home loan solution just for you' (2000, p.1).

In 2003 the journalist Lizzie Corser presented a five page article in *Brisbanenews* titled 'Dress Codes.' She wrote that 'your work place determines to a large extent what you wear to work'. For example, in a law firm 'a lawyer needs a decent level of confidence. This is where the power suit comes in' (2003, p. 4). A partner in a renowned Brisbane city law firm said:

> The job is a serious job . . . You feel like you've got to be in that mode to do the job that we're doing . . . Our approach to business attire and high standards of dress reflects the firm's top-tier status as well as the expectations of our clients, the corporate business arena and the courts (cited in Corser 2003, p. 4).

An accompanying photograph shows that partner with two other lawyers sitting on the one armchair, the female lawyer sitting on the seat and the two males perched on either arm. As if showing their individual status within the firm, the partner wears a pinstriped suit; the male lawyer wears a plain navy suit and the female lawyer a tweed suit. Coincidently, the chair of lawyers is placed in front of an artwork.

In a similar way, in September 2004 Parker Pens in the UK released worldwide in eleven languages a limited edition *Duofold Pinstripe* Parker Pen. Included in the boxed set were eleven cards which had a limited history of the pinstripe written on the reverse side and on the face were six cards with images of people wearing pinstripe suits between 1925 and 1953, one card that had a 1950 Ford with pin stripe detailing, another a gold Zippo double pinstriped lighter, one a cartoon and

two cards had images of artworks on them. One of the artworks was a detail of my *Power Dressing – Pocketing Style* (1999), a pinstriped fabric painting 1900 x 1400mm with two small tailored pockets.

Parker Pens had created exclusivity around this object. They limited the number available and increased the price of the pen, then demonstrated an association between the *Duofold Pinstripe* pen and the history of pinstripe through photographs of people wearing suits and early advertisements as well as an association to the arts through artworks. I received a licence fee for providing this image. Therefore, both Parker pens and the artist (me) had commercially used the image of art and the understood hierarchy contained within the pinstripe as Day has suggested.

Such circulation of power is described by Michael Foucault who claims we are all invested with power:

> Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (1980, p. 98).

I suggest that Day used Foucault's hypothesis in selecting artists' works with an understanding that power was not wielded and received but entrenched within society. Each artist critiques their understanding of particular relationships of power and these criticisms appear to be similar to the 'local character of criticism' that Foucault discusses in his discourse on 'subjugated knowledge':

> I believe that what this essentially local character of criticism indicates in reality is an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought . . . It seems to me that this local criticism has proceeded by means of what one might term 'a return of knowledge'. . . arising out of this thematic, there is something else to which we are witness, and which we might describe as an insurrection of subjugated knowledges . . . naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy . . . a particular local regional knowledge . . . that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge . . . that criticism performs its work (1980, p. 81-82).

This was what Day called 'working from within' and she wrote that 'artists risk being co-opted by the system rather than undermining it' (1991, p. 28). Coincidently, I critiqued the power structures within art galleries in the *Back door project* and artist Elizabeth Gower in her critique of my work wrote that 'by shifting [my] attentions from the corporate world of suits to the art world bureaucracy is a bit like biting the hand that feeds you' (GUQCA Review November 8, 2001). It seems that both Day and Gower were suggesting that there may be consequences for artists who make art that is somewhat political.

This research has investigated the relationships of power that existed between Frank Stella and the art critics and the New York gallery system through his relationships and friendships with fellow students and lecturers and people they were able to introduce him too. Day's suggestion that 'tying rituals and regalia to nature 'enhance[d] their power' (1991, p. 24-25) was demonstrated by banks and advertisers both here and overseas. It can also be surmised that Stella's conscious use of others as authors and his choice to wear suits to project his artistic persona, was Stella's way of invoking power.

CHAPTER FIVE

Craft and Textiles.

This chapter focuses on the powered and the non-powered relationships between fine art and craft. Firstly, I looked at how art and craft practices were defined through two research reports and the definitions made by art and craft organisations. Secondly, through reading essays on contemporary craft practices I was able to align my practice to some of those ideas. Terry Smith clearly stated his ideas of the separation between artists and craftspersons through their methods of working. In Smith's definition I identified as an artist. That identification related to my processes but not to my reasons for using craft practices. For the latter I turned to Sue Rowley, but it was artist Julian Ruesga Bono who clearly stated my sense of place 'in-between' fine art and craft when he wrote that 'many artists are working from within the textile category within its functional and social usage as a critical form for rethinking culture and its relation to power and hierarchy' (1999, p. 95).

My interest in the definition of art and craft was to understand the separation between the two genres in order to situate my practice 'in-between'. I wasn't surprised that other artists were dealing with preconceptions of how fabric in art might be viewed. When Robert Becker asked Robert Kushner 'Does it upset you that people might doubt the fine-art quality of work that's made of fabric'? Kushner answered:

> Sure. I mean, to a certain degree. But it's more indicative of a general attitude toward fabric. Its sounds so silly to say "my work is about making people look at fabric." Well my work is about raising the issue of decoration, which is the primary issue of fabric. But my work is about drawing, and colour. So it hurts

> me a little bit when people only say, "Oh, that's so wild!" I feel like kicking them because it's not! It's about the edge between wildness and control (1984, p. 38).

In Kushner's words I recognised his response when his concerns were sometimes not seen or valued beyond the appearance of the fabric in his painting. Similarly, my artworks made with fabric, bespoke tailoring and my sewing machine led some of my contemporaries to question whether my work might be categorised as craft and therefore not relevant in postgraduate studies in contemporary fine art.

That questioning led me to peruse the demarcation, between art and craft. I researched two Australian reports; the Arts Training Australia (ATA) report *Mapping the Visual Arts and Crafts in a Research and Education Training Publication* (1995) and the David Throsby and Beverley Thompson report *But what do you do for a living? – A new economic study of Australian Artists* (1994). Both reports had difficulties in defining arts and crafts. However, within these reports I discovered the definitions of artists and craftspersons made by UNESCO and Australian arts organisations. The UNESCO definition of an artist was:

> Any person who creates or gives creative expression to, or recreates works of art, who considers his [sic] artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognised as an artist, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association (Throsby and Thompson 1994, p. 6).

Unlike UNESCO's inclusive description of artists and craftspersons, some Australian art organisations defined craftsperson's separately from artists. The National Association of the Visual Arts (N.A.V.A.) positioned craft in relation to its consumption:

> The market for artworks functions through the activities of commercial galleries and dealers. Some artists, especially craftspeople, sell direct to the public. In addition consumption of the visual arts occurs to the large public audience through the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions housed in art museums and other art spaces (ATA, 1995, p. 36).

The Crafts Council of NSW considered the market place and commitment as important, defining a craftsperson as 'An individual engaged in object making who places their work in the market place and perceives their craft practice as their dominant profession' (ATA, 1995, p. 35). Yet the Visual Arts/Craft Board, Australia Council did not separate the artist from the craftsperson, they were concerned that practitioners of visual arts/crafts 'regard their commitment to visual arts/craft as of major importance in their working life and either currently work at least occasionally for sale or exhibition or have exhibited at a gallery in the last two years' (ATA, 1995, p. 35).

In summary, the broad UNESCO's description of an artists practice was repeated by the Australia Council while NAVA and the Crafts Council of NSW separated the artist from the craftsperson. In my experience I don't know an artist whose work is not for sale, whether from their studio or from the gallery in which they exhibit. I felt the division was difficult and perhaps unnecessary.

To discover why I invoked craft in my art practice I researched craft theory essays contained in: *Craft & contemporary theory* (Rowley, S. (ed), 1997); *Reinventing Textiles vol. 1: tradition & innovation* (Rowley, S. (ed), 1999); *Reinventing Textiles vol. 2: gender and identity* (Jefferies, J. (ed), 2001). However, it wasn't until I came across the essays of Terry Smith, Sue Rowley and Julian Ruesga Bono that I recognised, in their writings, my processes, my reasons for using craft

practices in a fine art practice and my sense of place 'in-between' fine art and craft.

Terry Smith, Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the Sydney University, clearly states his ideas on the separation between the practices of artists and craftsperson's:

> all but modernist art receded into anachronism, regionality and irrelevance. This left a generalised sense that art and craft differ, essentially, in all ways: in their preferred relationships to materials (for artists they are a vehicle; for craftspeople they are sacred); to composition (for artists an arrangement of imagery or images won out of medium or against it; to craftspeople mostly a surface effect); to purpose (for artists a communicative act about something of significance usually beyond art but often about representation itself, for craftspeople the execution of an appropriate design for the provision of an object of satisfying usefulness). And for those who receive the artwork or craftwork, a different pleasuring of the eye: one intimately associated with the hand, touch (haptic); the other with sight (optic), ideas, suggestions, concepts (cognitive) (1997, pp. 21-22).

I identified with Smith's description of how an artist works. I have a love of fabric but I wouldn't say that my medium was sacred. My composition is won out of making the improbable occur; sometimes creating structured objects in fabric as in the *Back door project* (a process that excited me when first seeing the work of Kosuke Tsumura). Sometimes my compositions were won by disrupting the fabric through the use of traditional embroidery preparations as in *Gemini paintings*. Other times I commandeered and directed the power of the pinstripe as in *The fabric of art*. My purpose was always to communicate to the gallery audience. In terms of Smith's separations between fine art and craft I had associated with the artist but these separations related to the 'how' i.e. the making of the art and not to the 'why' I was using craft practices. For the latter I found Sue Rowley's essay 'Craft, creativity and critical practice' useful. Rowley states:

> That many artists, including installation artists and textile artists, invoke craft precisely to reflect critically on the questions of social formation and temporal experience . . . . Craft is employed as a sign of alternative possibilities for social identity and community . . . . In this sense craft functions as a sign of an alternative, community-based creativity, resistant to the modernist notion of the heroic genius (1999, p. 16).

My work is made using the historical craft practices of tailoring, embroidery and tapestry frames. Rowley's suggestion that this craft 'reflect[ed] critically on the questions of social formation' (1999, p. 16) was of interest. I saw the use of tailoring, embroidery and tapestry frames in my works as signs of art hierarchies (sometimes gendered), whilst at the same time underlying the handmade-ness and craft aspect of the works.

But it was artist Julian Ruesga Bono whose practice I identified with and who most clearly stated my sense of place 'in-between' fine art and craft. In his essay *All Ornaments are Useful to Scale Facades* which takes its title from the words of Walter Benjamin. Bono speaks of his own experience of textiles and suggests that:

> Within Western artistic culture, textiles are considered as secondary and marginal elements, relegated to the category of the lavish, the popular and the functional, far from the sublime expressive level in which our culture catalogues what we call art. However, precisely because of that, many artists are working from within the textile category, within its functional and social usage, as a critical form for rethinking culture and its relation to power and hierarchy (1999, p. 95).

This is the sort of contrariness that I operate with, a persistent 'in your face' use of fabric. I continually change form and presentation. I choose fabrics such as pinstriped suiting, Belgian linen and pink satin to express the relationships of power and hierarchy within a western culture. In one exhibition large shapes and forms predominate. In the next the fabric is unpicked and associated with the

domestic, and in the final exhibition the pinstripes are acutely matched and manipulated. Presenting art as sculpture and then as painting, I work with the belief that each transformation extends fabric as a valid medium.

At the beginning of this project another classification of art practices that I tried to deflect was textile art. I had associated this label with the work of artists who weave and artists who construct fabrics or hangings, but was to discover that it was much more. Sarat Maharaj, Professor in art history at Goldsmiths College, proffers a playful analogy in his imaging of the shorts of a boxer that briefly appear to flicker between 'manly swagger signs' and 'womanly sway signs' concluding that 'we face an indeterminate garment':

> An 'undecidable' – as Derrida puts it, something that seems to belong to one genre but overshoots its border and seems no less at home in another. Belongs to both, we might say, by not belonging to either. Should we comprehend 'Textile Art' under the chameleon figure of the 'undecidable' (2001, p. 7)?

I was interested in Maharaj's visually illusive positioning of the boxer's shorts flickering between male and female, somewhat similar to the non-gendered position of the pinstripe today. Maharaj's 'indeterminate garment', is similar to the concept of 'in-between-ness' explored more thoroughly in Chapter Six.

That visually illusive position was also identified between art and craft in the Lausanne Tapestry Biennales. Philippe Jeanloz stated that 'for fourteen editions the Lausanne Biennial defined itself with reference to a technique (Tapestry Biennial) and then for the 15th in 1992 by referring to a material (Contemporary Textile Art Biennial)' (1995, p. 57). These fifteen Biennales were the results of competitions but 'the sixteenth Biennale breaks with tradition of a competition

open to everyone, since the selection has been made by commissioners, that is to say by invitation' (1995, p. 55).

The *16th Lausanne International Biennale – Textile and Contemporary Art* titled *Criss-Crossings,* was comprised of two exhibitions. *Parallel Histories* explored the 'relationships between fine art and woven art' and *Model Homes* explored 'functionality assumed within decorative art' (Jaggi 1995, p. 9). For the latter exhibition 'six America, Austria and Swiss artists' were invited 'to come and build a "model home" at the Biennale' (Bernard, Heiss & Stoos, p. 127). This Biennale's metamorphosis from 'tapestry' to 'contemporary textile art' to 'textile and contemporary art' explores a link made between art and craft. Yvette Jaggi, Mayor of Lausanne, discusses that link:

> For today we can no longer permit ourselves to consider textile creations simply as beautiful artistic objects made from fibres, whether or not mixed with other materials. It is certain that they constitute a real and significant contribution towards contemporary art, in the sense that they question, disturb and even provoke . . . For textile art is also a form of expression which questions certain clichés about the beautiful and the ugly, the abstract and the representational (1995, p. 9).

In this investigation I did not define the differences between art and craft nor did I set out to do that. I was trying to locate through research, how and why I was using craft practices within my art practice. As I worked through these debates I realised that I had only tentatively acknowledged the connections between the various hierarchies of value in fine art and craft and that these positions of power and powerlessness needed to be further investigated. I attempted this in the *Gemini paintings* exhibition discussed in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER SIX

Research methodology and positioning my art practice.

Chapter Six discusses the research-action-reflection methodology used throughout this project and the placement of my practice in a position of the 'in-between'. I sought to position my work at the intersection of painting and sculpture; to be more specific, as readymade fabric paintings or sculptures that seek to challenge the hierarchical structures of our society.

Methodology.

The research-action-reflection methodology I employed involved studio and theoretical research, studio practice and reflection followed by a time of critical reflection on the exhibition outcomes. The repetition of this cyclical research practice subsequently changed the original process order from research-action-reflection to one of reflection-research-action and then action-reflection-research. Each alternation assists in the accumulative knowledge and understanding of the research topic.

In his paper 'Sources of Rigour in action research: addressing the issues of trustworthiness and credibility', Bob Dick defines action research as:

> to research action, and to action (that is, act on) research. It might also be defined in terms of its characteristics. It is above all responsive and flexible. . . . It achieves this responsiveness and flexibility through being cyclic. In content and in methodology its later cycles are informed by its earlier cycles . . . [Action research] seeks to achieve these two aims continuously. To do so, it alternates action with critical reflection. Informed by understanding, the action provides the change. Out of the attempt to produce change, a greater understanding emerges (1999, pp. 2 & 5).

Positioning my art practice 'in-between'.

I have chosen to situate my art practice as one that is not a fixed position, but rather as one that operates from a position 'in-between' traditional genres than more conventional approaches. In my art practice I worked literally on those spaces 'in-between' the painted stripes of Frank Stella's paintings that William Rubin once described as 'the reserved interstitial unpainted stripes' (1970, p. 16). I interpreted this as a place where women had been excluded from art history (see Chapter Nine *The fabric of art*). In critiquing the gallery system whilst operating from within I positioned my work 'in-between' the powered position of the gallery system and the non-powered position of the emerging artist (see Chapter Seven *Back door project)*. By presenting craft practices as fine art practices, I was operating 'in-between' fine art and craft (see Chapter Eight *Gemini paintings)*.

That 'in-between' position could also be stretched to include my role as an artist working in Australia within the western art cannon, while at the same time being located (in the antipodes) outside two poles: that of the 'other' (southern, primitive art) and the first-world accounts of art historical development (America, Europe and Britain). I realised that, as an antipodean, I had observed and interpreted international art and modernism through my environment and culture, experiencing it at arms' length through books, magazines, television and movies.

Consequently, I took the opportunity to travel to Europe, and to visit art exhibitions at the Venice Biennale, the Louvre and the Pompidou Centre. In 1956 Bernard Smith described Australian artists travelling as experiencing 'not one home but two homes' in 'the new world of Australia and the old world of

Europe'. Smith wrote that the Australian artist 'is a permanently displaced person whether he sits under the gum tree or walks upon the Pont Neuf' (cited in Burn, [et.al.] 1988, p.79).

However, this was not my experience; perhaps Smith's terms 'two homes' and 'displaced person' related more to the 1950s and 1960s, when travel was much slower and meant months overseas away from home. Smith later acknowledged that 'isolation from the art centres of Europe is no longer an important factor. In some respects the distance from Europe is enabling Australian art to find its own identity' (cited in Burn 1988, p.79). My own identification of my art practice is as being part of an Australian tradition. However, Smiths identification of Australian art as slightly outside the developments of mainstream contemporary art practice is suited to my own aims. The 'in-between-ness' I have consciously adopted seems appropriate to the position of Australian art as 'in-between' the (other) and the (inner) fine art worlds. This 'in-between-ness' has grown from a sense of my own identity that goes beyond my art practice. Being born as one of twins, my experience is that the terminology 'the twins' acknowledges two people as a single unit and ignores their individuality, creating a third position 'in-between' those two individuals. This experience of 'in-between-ness' is further compounded by my identity as a New Zealand born Australian.

Living in both countries has in many ways affected how I view the world. New Zealand, being a small island culture with a visual abundance of green-ness and grandeur of scenery, did not prepare me for the appreciation of space, size and boldness that I first experienced in 1970 when I relocated to Australia. From the

outset it was Australia's brashness and boldness that excited me and this in turn hinted at the possibility of understanding a bigger and bolder America. My association with my location, culture and visual sense is not new. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their book *The Empire Writes Back* suggest that:

> The experience of a new place, identifiably different in its physical characteristics, constrains, for instance, the new settlers to demand a language which will allow them to express their sense of 'Otherness'. Landscape, flora and fauna, seasons, climatic conditions are formally distinguished from the place of origin as home/colony, Europe/New World, Europe/Antipodes, metropolitan/provincial, and so on, although, of course, at this stage no effective models exist for expressing this sense of otherness in a positive and creative way (1989, p. 11).

This experience of living 'in-between' spaces and places have also been identified as formative to the writing of feminist theorist Helen Cixous. Pam Shurmer-Smith describes Helen Cixous ancestry as 'born in Algeria into a Jewish family, with a father who spoke French and a mother and grandmother who spoke German. Outside there was Arabic. Also outside was French colonial society' (2000, p. 156). Cixous describes her own childhood as double:

> The landscape of my childhood was double. On one hand there was North Africa, a powerful sensual body that I shared, bread, fruit, odours, with my brother. On the other hand existed a landscape with the snow of my mother. And above the countries, the always present history of wars (cited in Shurmer-Smith 2000, p. 157).

My experience of the change in landscape as well as my place within the canon of contemporary art practice out in the antipodes (Australia) particularly in provincial (Brisbane) conforms partially to Ashcroft, Griffin and Tiffin. The 'sense of Otherness' they described is evocative of my own experience of 'in-between-ness' but it is no hindrance to my art production. On the contrary, my home base in Brisbane informs my practice. Like Cixous it provides me with a

sense of doubling. Adopting the 'in-between' position enables me to sometimes see the world from a different perspective.

Homi Bhabha in his essay 'Culture's In Between' acknowledges a position of 'in-between-ness' in his own work that he describes as interstitial:

> I have developed the concept of hybridity to describe the construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism or inequity . . . the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration. It makes possible the emergence of an "interstitial" agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism . . . It makes it possible for us to confront that difficult borderline, the interstitial experience, between what we take to be the image of the past and what is in fact involved in the passing of time and the passage of meaning (1993, p. 212).

Similarly, author and lecturer at the University of Leeds, Griselda Pollock critiques T. J. Clark's *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers* and discusses 'interstitial spaces, the spaces of ambiguity' as the spaces of femininity. Through the works of Cassatt, Morisot, Renoir, Manet, Degas and Guys, Pollock devised a grid that separated the artworks' depiction of either 'the lady' or the 'fallen woman'. That division not only separated the depicted women but also separated the female artists. Pollock's spaces were:

> interstitial spaces, the spaces of ambiguity. . . defined . . . not only by the relatively unfixed . . . class boundaries (Clark) but because of cross/class sexual exchange. Women could enter and represent selected locations in the public sphere – those of entertainment and display. But a line demarcates not the end of the public private divide but the frontier of the spaces of femininity (1998, p. 82).

Bhaba's 'space of negotiation' that enables 'interstitial agency' and acknowledges an 'interstitial experience' (1993, p. 212), mirrors the same qualities of that 'in-between' space that I chose to describe as the site for my art practice and myself. It is a thinking space, a space that facilitates a deep sense of fairness within me, a

space in which to develop effective communication. My 'in-between' is a space where all aspects of the female are included. It avoids the divisions of femininity that Pollock described as inhibiting in modernist art.

As I have stated I seek to position my work at the intersection of painting and sculpture as a critical response to the hierarchical structures of not only the art world but also of our society. Positioning my art practice at these intersections has enabled me to respond to and critically challenge those structures as a means of gaining agency within the art world in which I work.

The remaining chapters of this exegesis will discuss the three major exhibitions through which this project has evolved, before making concluding remarks.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Exhibition 1 - *Back door project.*

The *Back door project* began in May 2001 after installing an exhibition at Soapbox gallery from my *Control* (2000) series which was made during my honours year of study. Disappointed that this white gallery space had a cream painted door in one wall, I tailored a pinstriped suit to the fit of the architecture of that door. Although the door was positioned on the opposite and adjacent wall to where the paintings were exhibited I felt that as the viewer approached the works, the door was the first highlight in that room. This was not the case; some viewers were unaware of the pinstripe suited door which was the gallery back door that led outside to the toilets and store room.

Reflecting on that 'suit' on the gallery back door and what it might mean, I realised that the back door might be seen as the tradesman entrance; or a metaphor for the entrance through which you might advance ahead of others, jumping the queue or being given preferential treatment; or alternatively the entrance which locks you out. The back door could also be understood as a place where shady business or dishonest dealings are transacted. Yet because it was a gallery door, it might also be the door through which the art entered the gallery. Any one of these readings might be a reality in the day to day business of art and were capable of being highlighted when the door was dressed in a pinstriped suit.

In his book *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space,* Brian O'Doherty suggested that there was no such thing as a space vacant of meaning.

If a gallery back door could be represented by being dressed in a pinstriped suit, the remaining architecture in the gallery was also re-opened to re-interpretation.

> The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values. Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of aesthetics. So powerful are the perceptual fields of force within this chamber that, once outside it, art can lapse into secular status. Conversely, things become art in a space where powerful ideas about art focus on them (1976, p. 14).

In this series I wanted to uncover those structures of power that form the relationship of power between artists and the gallery system. The *Back door project* drew attention to the architecture of the gallery and its invested power. This series suggested that those structures of power within each gallery form a basis for the relationships of power between artists and gallery systems.

It was possible to imagine that those galleries that were normally represented only by their names and reputations might also be seen, for the first time, through the structure of appearances. I wrote to the galleries suggesting that for the time of the exhibition, the doors would take on a human form of clothing.

At this stage I felt that if six galleries responded positively to my concept I would hold an exhibition at Soapbox gallery, thus making a total of seven gallery back doors on view. Accordingly, I needed to compose a letter that gave details of my intended project, but which was not explicit in advising of an exhibition place or date. I knew that my letter outlining the project would be accepted or rejected but did not consider it would be ignored.

I wrote to the following Brisbane galleries:

Andrew Baker Art Dealer
Bellas Gallery
Brisbane City Gallery
Brisbane Powerhouse Art Gallery
Craft Queensland
Doggett Street Studio
Fire-Works Gallery
Fusions Gallery
Gallery 482
Institute of Modern Art
Metro Arts Development Space
Phillip Bacon Gallery
Queensland Art Gallery
QUT Art Museum
University of Queensland Art Gallery

Within two weeks I had received four positive responses and then no further correspondence from the remaining eleven galleries. Around that same time I also sent the same letter to the following Sydney Galleries:

Art Gallery of New South Wales
Artspace
Australian Galleries
Darren Knight Gallery
Eva Breuer Art Dealer
Gitte Weise Gallery
Ivan Dougherty Gallery
Michael Nagy Fine Art
Mori Gallery
Museum of Contemporary Art
Power House Museum
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
Sherman Galleries
S H Ervine Gallery
Soho Galleries
Tin Sheds Gallery
Tim Olsen Gallery
The University of Sydney
Valerie Cohen Fine Art

I received a further two positive responses from the Sydney galleries. With six positive responses and the suit already made for the back door of Soapbox Gallery, the project was now underway. I had written to thirty four galleries and received twelve responses of which six were positive and six were negative. This left twenty-two galleries that did not bother or were too busy to respond. Of the negative replies, one gallery wrote that their door was too large and inappropriate for my project, and another gallery wrote that their back door backed onto an insecure part of Sydney and posed a security problem for that gallery. The other four rejection letters were standard letters stating that the galleries were fully booked for exhibitions for the next two years. As I had not requested exhibition space in my letter it was apparent that my correspondence was treated in much the same way as businesses treat job applications.

Prior to the opening of the exhibition I mailed a second letter to the thirty four galleries thanking them for their consideration or participation in my project and inviting them to the exhibition. Both my letters and the galleries responses were exhibited in a folder and where a gallery had not responded the notation 'no reply' was typed in the centre of an A4 page and included in that folder.

My letters were as follows:

Letter one

31st July, 2001

Dear

I wish to introduce myself to you. I am jewel mackenzie and at present I am studying for a doctorate in visual arts at Queensland College of Arts, Griffith University. My practice references modernism and incorporates both painting and sculpture in a minimal format using media such as paint, fabric and tailoring.

In April 2001 I exhibited a series of paintings at Soapbox Gallery and as a part of that exhibition I tailored a pinstriped suit to fit the rear door of the gallery. That tailored suit has led me to a concept expanding on that idea.

The project that I wish to begin would entail the cooperation of the Gallery directors in Brisbane, hence my letter to you. My idea is to gather together the back doors of public, commercial, institutional and artist run galleries and for each door, tailor a pinstriped suit. I would tailor the pinstriped suits using the measurements that I take of your gallery's back door. These suits would then be filled out with either a slab of sponge rubber or a building material that would enable them to hold their shape as doors. They would then form one exhibition and each door would be titled the name of the gallery which it represented.

I see these doors, when dressed in tailored suits, as representing the business of art. I also see the doors representing the diversity of our galleries in a way that is humorous and may not necessarily have been seen before. It might be that your door is thicker or it might be that your gallery has the taller door or may be even the largest overall door. For the time of the exhibition, the back doors of the participating gallery's in Brisbane would take on the human form of clothing and be represented not only by their names but also by their appearances. It could be fun!

I would appreciate your gallery's participation in this project if you were agreeable.

My contact address is:

jewel mackenzie
126 Oxley Road,
Chelmer, Qld. 4068

Thanking you,

The word Brisbane was replaced by Sydney for the letters to the Sydney galleries

Letter two (a) & (b) versions

26th April 2002

Dear

Towards the latter half of last year I wrote to you requesting permission to take the measurements of your gallery back door for which I would tailor a pinstriped suit. I was thrilled and very grateful that you agreed to participate in my request.

It has been an interesting project and one that has provided valuable learning experiences for me. It is now my pleasure to enclose an invitation to the opening of my exhibition on Friday 3rd May 2002.

Thanking you for your participation,

Yours faithfully,

jewel mackenzie

26th April, 2002

Dear

Towards the latter half of last year I contacted you regarding an art project that I was embarking on 'Back Door Project.' In my letter, I requested permission to take the measurements of the back door of your gallery, in order for me to tailor a pinstriped suit for it.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your consideration and now have pleasure in enclosing an invitation to the opening night on Friday 3rd May 2002 at the Soapbox Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,

jewel mackenzie

During the making of these doors I anticipated that this project would be seen as an exhibition of sculptural objects based on the structures of the doors and the carving of the locks, handles and bolts. However, when the doors were dressed and ready for exhibition, they were installed leaning against the walls and as such, appeared transformed into large pinstriped paintings which were all the more reminiscent of a readymade Frank Stella *Black Painting*. In a corner on a plinth was a pinstriped covered folder that contained the paper trail tracing the history of this project.

For me this project highlighted the system in which I had chosen to work as an artist and this experience fostered the realisation that perhaps there was very little difference between the corporate world and the art world. The letters that remained unanswered appeared to have been treated the same as job application letters in the corporate world. Either the recipients were too busy to reply, or in their non-reply they considered my letter an irritating waste of time from a student artist.

As an emerging artist, my future progression might appear daunting. I am required to negotiate my way through a powerful hierarchy with set boundaries that have been created in some instances by preceding artists concerned to preserve the aura and respect that the arts have acquired throughout history. In other instances the boundaries of art have been maintained by those whose livelihoods depend on artists' works such as curators, theorists and critics.

One of the most enjoyable outcomes from this exhibition for me was the good humour with which it was received. After all, I was being critical of the art system in which I wanted to participate, and although I had completed the work with a sense of fun, it might not necessarily have been accepted in that good humoured way by others involved. There perhaps lies the major difference between the art world and the corporate world: I know of no company with which I had previously worked that would tolerate what might be considered insubordination from within.

I had gained knowledge of the workings of the art gallery system and although that system might be considered daunting from an emerging artist's point of view, I understood that in the arts I was dealing with the human qualities of personalities and that they had a wonderful sense of humour that I look forward to exploring in the future.

Fig. 46 – jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – Brisbane city gallery* (2002), pinstripe fabric, cotton, wood, Styrofoam

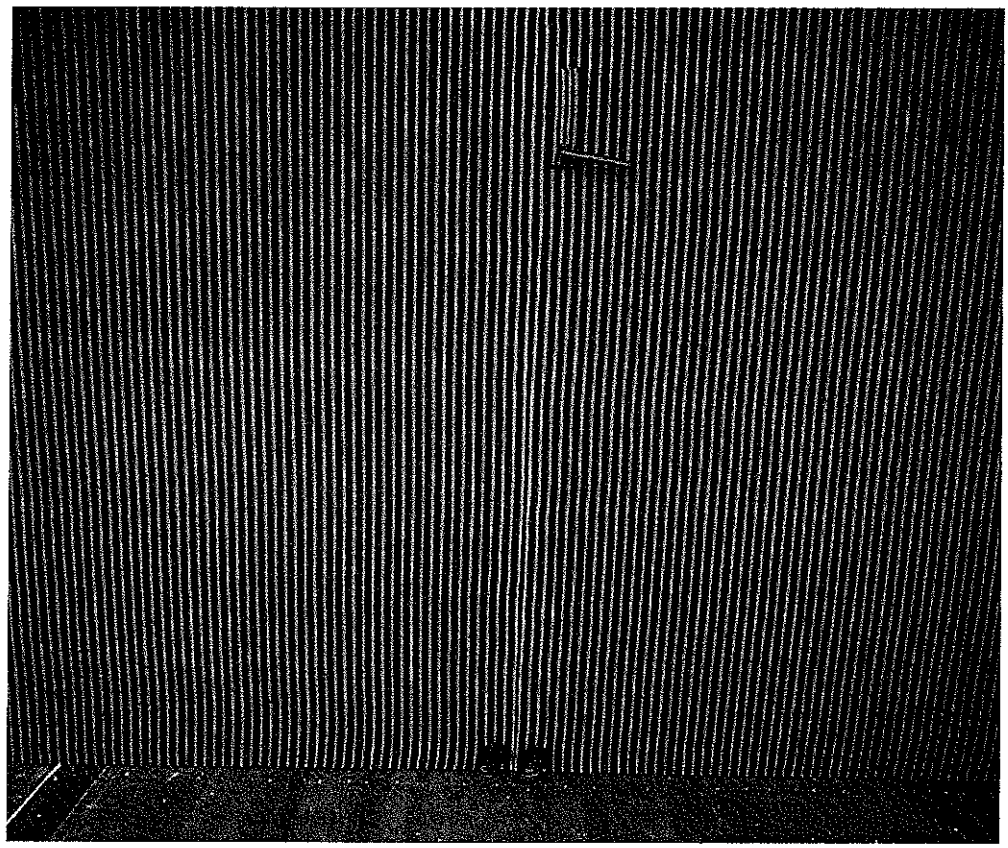

Fig. 47 - jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – I.M.A.* (2002) (detail), pinstripe fabric, cotton, wood, Styrofoam.

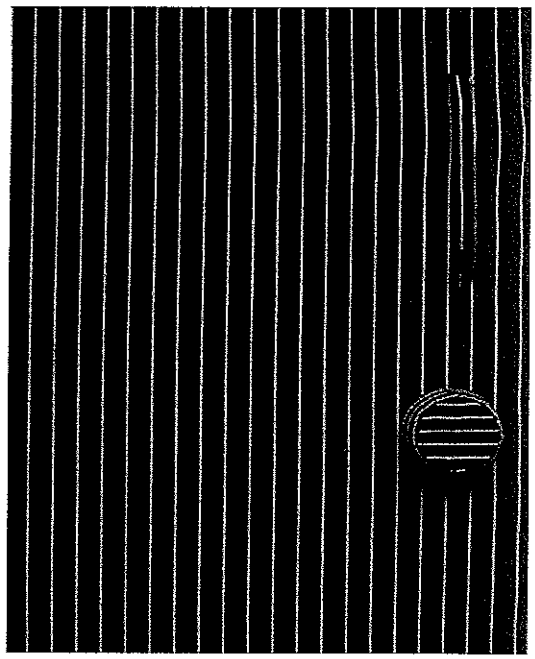

Fig. 48 - jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – Bellas Gallery* (2002) (detail),
pinstripe fabric, cotton, wood, Styrofoam.

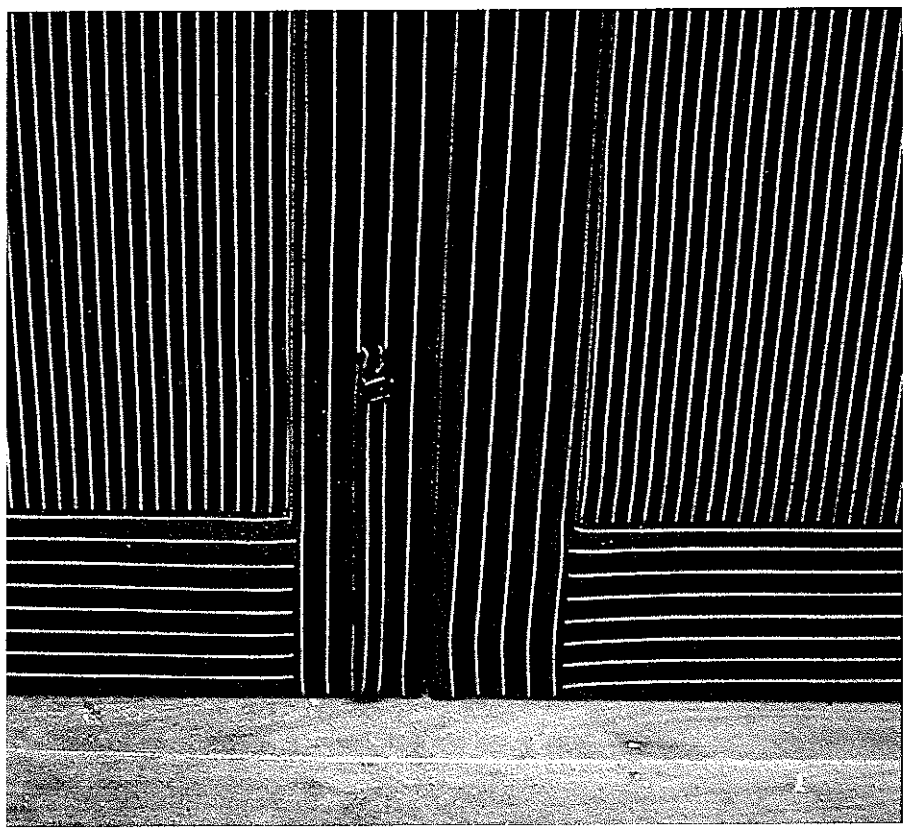

Fig. 49 - jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – AGNSW* (2002) (detail), pinstripe fabric, cotton, wood, Styrofoam.

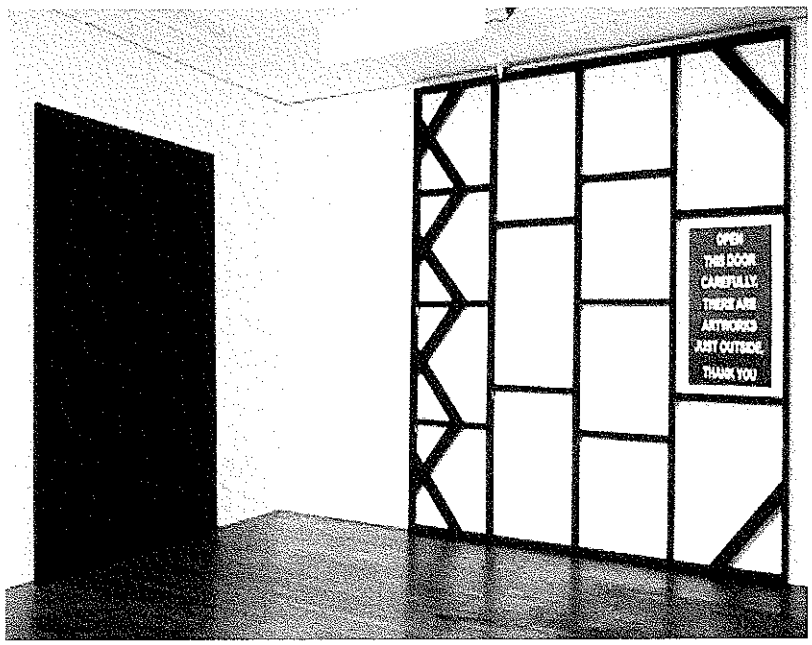

Fig. 50 - jewel mackenzie *Back door project – MCA and Brisbane City Gallery* (2002), in situ at Soapbox Gallery,
pinstripe fabric, wood, Styrofoam, lettering on corboard.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Exhibition 2 - *Gemini paintings.*

Simultaneously working on *Gemini paintings* and the *Back door project* enabled me to further research the power of the white walls of the gallery while considering craft practices in fine art and in particular the art practice of Frank Stella. I anticipated that, through unpicking the threads from the ground of a painting I would produce a gap in the weave. When these paintings were hung on the gallery wall I expected that the 'power' of the gallery might filter through those gaps and reside within those paintings (my paintings). Yet that gap was to invite more than power into my paintings, it was to invoke craft practices in a fine art context.

My research into Stella's *Black Paintings*, led to the discovery of the 1967 reproductions of these paintings in print format. Stella had followed the convention where painters re-present their works in the form of prints. He re-presented the *Black paintings* (1958-1960) as the *Black Series I* and *Black Series II* (1967) prints with the assistance of the master printers from Gemini G.E.L. Ltd in Los Angeles. These prints were later to take their name from that company and become known as the *Gemini prints*. Recognising the name 'Gemini' as the zodiac sign of twins, and considering my personal connection as a twin, I viewed my reproductions as the 'twin' other of the Frank Stella's prints, thus their title *Gemini paintings*.

Taking five of Stella's *Black Series I* prints and re-contextualising them as paintings highlighted the commercialism involved in this convention. Stella's confirmation of that commercialism is evident in an interview with Judith Goldman who asked Frank Stella 'when the Black prints came out, many people dismissed them: They said they were reproductions. How do you feel about that?' Stella answered 'They were right. They were reproductions. That they were just reproductions – that I don't know' (cited in Goldman 1986, 11).

I chose works that were seminal in Stella's career, namely the four artworks included in the exhibition *Sixteen Americans* at MOMA in New York between 16th December 1959 and 17th January 1960. *Tomlinson Court Park, Arundel Castle, Die Fahne Hoch* and *Marriage of Reason and Squalor* plus one other *Arbeit Macht Frei* which highlighted the duplication of the pattern of *Die Fahne Hoch* that Stella produced in both landscape and portrait versions. These were all from the *Black Series I* prints and significantly their patterns had been formulated by vertical and horizontal lines using the grid format which translated to the warp and weft of fabric, unlike the diagonal patterns of the *Black Series II* prints. The chosen patterns fitted within the sizing that I preferred for my paintings: 1400mm height x 1900mm width, a size that I was able to comfortably handle.

Stella's placement of the print on the page related to a proposal that his prints might be produced in a folio format that would enable each new series to be added. By retaining Stella's placement of the image at the lower left corner of the page, my paintings exposed the expensive archival painting ground of Belgian linen which highlighted the fabric and materiality of painting grounds. As it was

linen it was woven with one warp thread and one weft thread which (unlike canvases two warp and one weft thread) enabled the even withdrawal of threads.

My concept was enhanced by the inclusion of Belgian linen as a new material. I conceived my project as being one that withdrew the power of Stella from his painting and replaced that with the power of the gallery. Stella had negated the title 'pinstriped paintings' and as if obeying the master painter, I removed the offending threads by a process referred to in embroidery practice as 'pulled thread work'. The pulled thread work re-created Stella's patterns on the Belgian linen and evoked memories of the less highly valued art of embroidery. As craft theoretician Sue Rowley has claimed, such processes 'are usually grounded in a sense of historical depth, but without acceding to the authority of history to shape the present' (1999, p. 16).

Richardson's exhibition catalogue *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings* (1976) greatly assisted my emulation of Stella's processes. This research catalogue which traced and recorded all twenty three of the *Black Paintings* and the seventeen prints from the *Black Series I* and *Black Series II* was verified by Stella. Richardson wrote: 'lastly, and only at [her] request, [Stella] took the time to review the manuscript and verify factual data' (1976, p. xii). Robert Rosenblum described this exhibition and research catalogue as:

> what turned out to be one of the greatest exhibitions in my memory and one that was surprisingly unvisited and uncommented on . . . In the magisterial catalogue that accompanied the show, she documented the entire series with a prodigious bounty of scholarship, entailing scrupulous discussions of bibliography, chronology, provenance, and, particularly important, the references and meanings of these paintings often cryptic titles' (cited in Rubin, L. 1986, p. 11).

I also found personal connections in the titles that Stella gave his paintings. Their meanings have created much discussion (Rubin 1970; Richardson 1967; Chave 1990 & Hobbs 2002). Rubin wrote that 'Stella's titles constitute personal associations with the pictures, and he would be horrified at the idea that a viewer might use them as a springboard to content' (1970, p. 45). In the 1964 interview with Bruce Glaser, when Stella said 'What you see is what you see' (cited in Rubin 1970, p. 42) Stella was stating the position of his practice refuting any references, which interestingly most critics quoted him and closed the discussion. However, in 1990 Chave suggested that 'the meanings attached to language are contingent on who uses it, who hears it, and who has the power to enforce a given point of view, to define the official code' (1990, p. 48).

In 2002, an artist looking at these works is somewhat distanced from Stella's comments and, therefore, is distanced from 'the power to enforce a given point of view' (Chave 1990, p 48). Thus, I felt a comment on these titles was required, so, like Stella, I set out to find personal connections in my own titles. He had initially named one of his paintings *Tomlinson Court Park* (1959) after a block of units in the slum areas of New York where he had been employed as a house painter. In turn, I named my own painting after the park across the road from where I live, and thus the title became *Graceville Memorial Park (nee Tomlinson Court Park)* 2002. Considering other areas of Stella's practice, I chose to either duplicate his methods or to create new methods for his art. I considered such aspects as the depth of his stretchers, the paint he used, how he applied it and the look he was aiming for in his paintings. My pursuit of Stella's titles and methods appears in my list of titles and artists' statement for the exhibition *Gemini paintings*

Titles

He, with the help of his friends, looked for blackness within the name.
She wanted to weave those names with care.

1. *Graceville Memorial Park*

The park opposite her studio-home

(nee Tomlinson Court Park)

A park in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn (a slum area where he painted houses).

2. *Paired Individuals*

She (a twin) knew the value of the individual and of the other (her other).

(nee Marriage of Reason and Squalor)

He painted two versions and printed both as one. Carl Andre gave him this name, they thought it was appropriate to the psycho-sociology of young artists in New York at the time.

3. *Work sets you free.*

Her father had told her 'its not what you think or say, it's what you do that counts'.

(nee Arbeit Macht Frei)

Work makes free/liberates

He used writings over the entrance gate at Auschwitz (Poland).

4. *The Reconciliation flag*

She believed in the possibility of their futures.

(nee Die Fahne Hoch)

The flag/Banner on high

He used the first line of a Nazi marching song.

5. *Woomera-not the Hilton*

She lived in times and in a place where hope was hard to hold onto.

(nee Arundel Castle)

He found a black name in the home of the poor. An apartment block in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn.

Richardson, B. with assistance from Ward, M.M. (1976) *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings*.

Gemini paintings by jewel mackenzie

He had just left university.

She was still at university.

They said he didn't make a pattern before he painted.

She didn't believe them, so she made patterns.

He liked his stretchers to be objects sitting out from the gallery wall.

She wanted her stretchers to look like paintings.

He stretched cotton duck fabric to paint on.

She stretched and painted on Belgian linen fabric

He used industrial enamel black paint straight from the tin.

She used acrylic paint and mixed her own black.

He painted the black stripes freehand.

She wanted to know whether she could deliver a similar line.

He left a gap between the black stripes.

She chose to enter his paintings through that gap.

She wanted to get in underneath his stripes.

She wanted to explore the warp and weft of his fabric

She wanted to un-pick and re-weave; to disturb and provoke.

He rebuked the media who labelled his paintings.

She pulled out the pinstripes.

She exhibited her paintings on the gallery wall.

She invited another power back into her own pinstriped paintings.

She stood back to watch the results . . .

Artist statement accompanying the exhibition *Gemini paintings* at Soapbox gallery August 2002.

The *Gemini paintings* marked a turning point for me, a point at which I decided to omit the paint from Stella's works and in turn to concentrate on the more feminine activity of withdrawing threads from the linen fabric. The last painting *Work sets you free (nee Arbeit Macht Frei)* was unpainted, and exhibited on a separate wall. Alongside this work, and forming part of it, hanging from dressmakers' pins, were the threads that I had withdrawn and dyed black. Tied in bundles of five (which matched the number of threads pulled to make one pinstripe), there were twenty six bundles. This was the number of pinstripes that made up one of the patterns of this Stella painting. Not only had I eliminated paint, but I had infused the threads with dye, the colouring method of fabric pattern production. Re-quoting artist Julian Ruesga Bono, I was 'working from within the textile category, within its functional and social usage, as a critical form for rethinking culture and its relation to power and hierarchy' (1999, p. 95).

In summary, through the research in craft and textiles and through my research focussed on the art practice of Frank Stella between 1958 and 1960, I was able to forge a strategic position for my own artwork. I no longer concerned myself with the classifications that others might put on my works. The evolution of this research project through Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* and his *Black Series I* and *Black Series II* prints was, in a sense, a protective measure that I used to position my work in the area of contemporary fine art, outside the parameters of so called 'feminine' art, craft or textile art. Therefore, I used the artworks of Frank Stella as a tool through which I might work towards a contemporary fine art practice that would enable the conceptual repositioning of fabric in fine art.

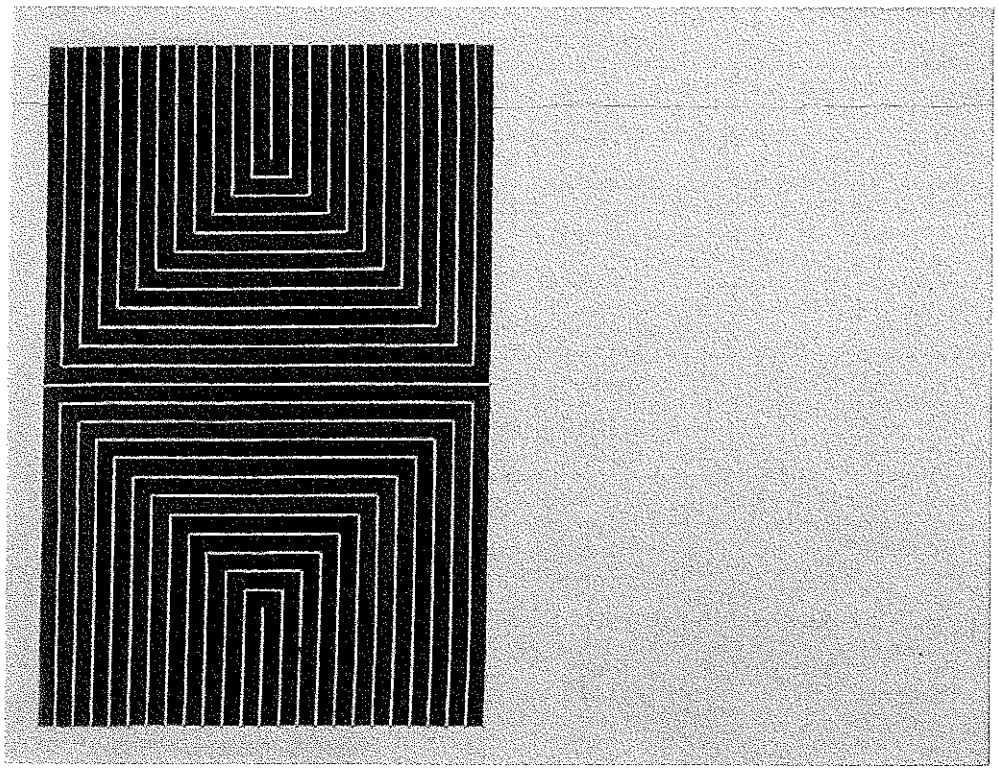

Fig. 51 - jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings – Womera-not the Hilton (nee Arundel Castle)* (2002),
Belgian linen, pulled threadwork, acrylic paint.

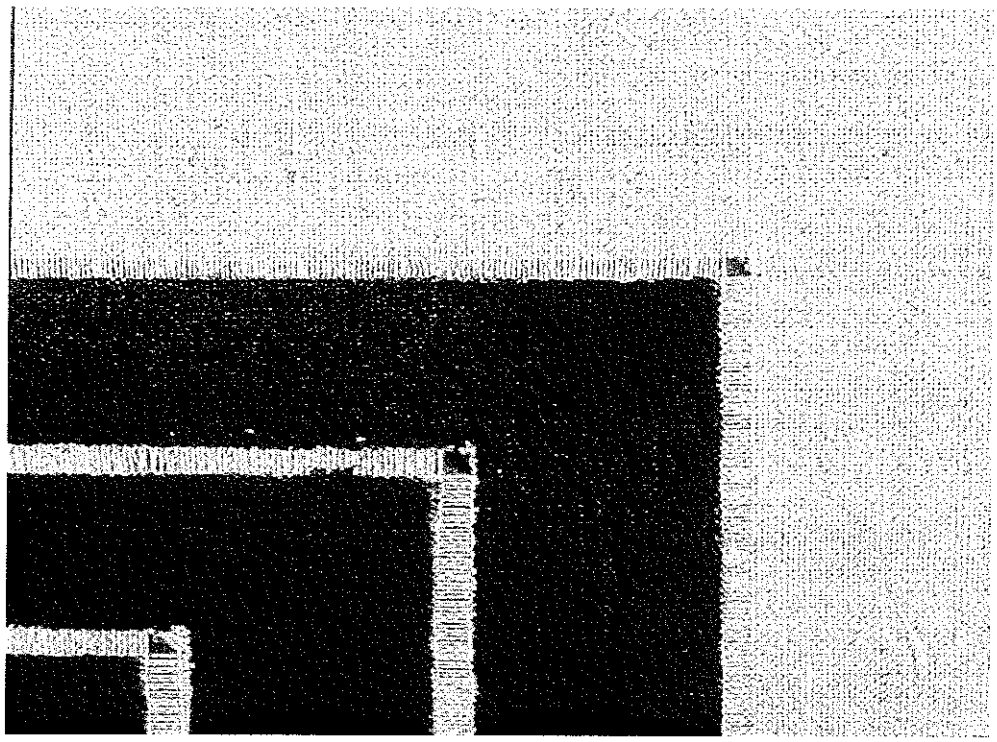

Fig. 52 - jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings – Graceville memorial park (nee Tomlinson Court Park* (2002) (detail),
Belgian linen, pulled threadwork, acrylic paint.

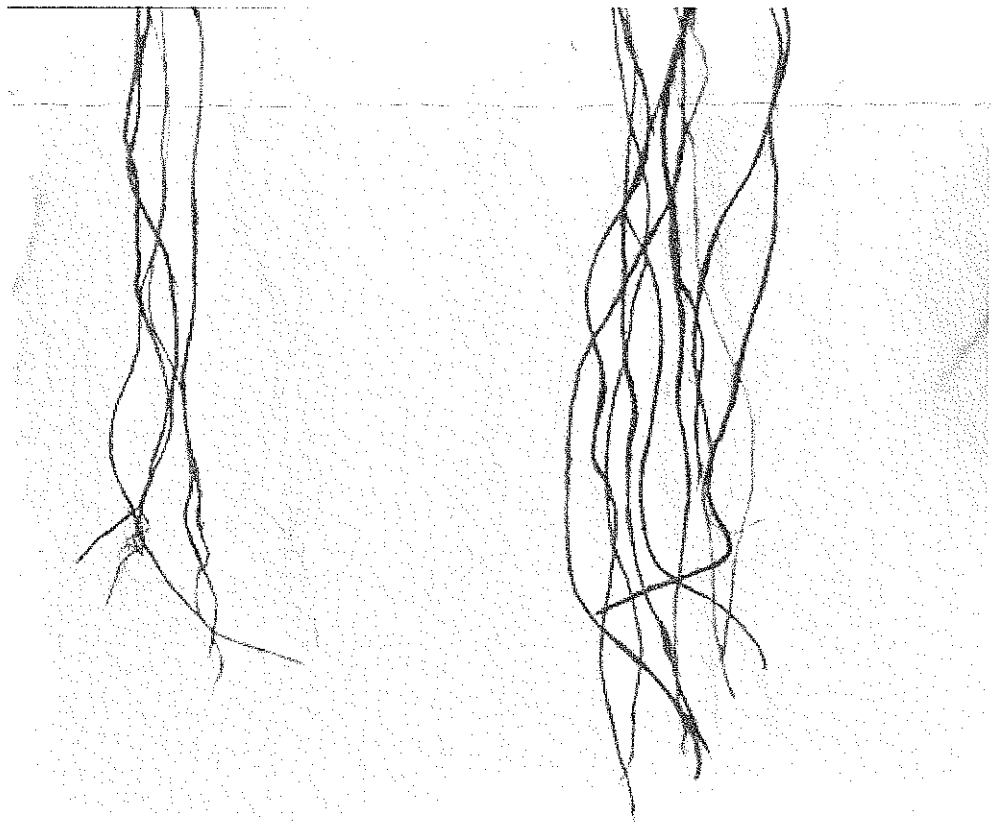

Fig. 53 - jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings – work sets you free (nee Arbeit Macht Frei)* (2002) (detail),
Belgian linen with pulled threadwork, loose dyed threads.

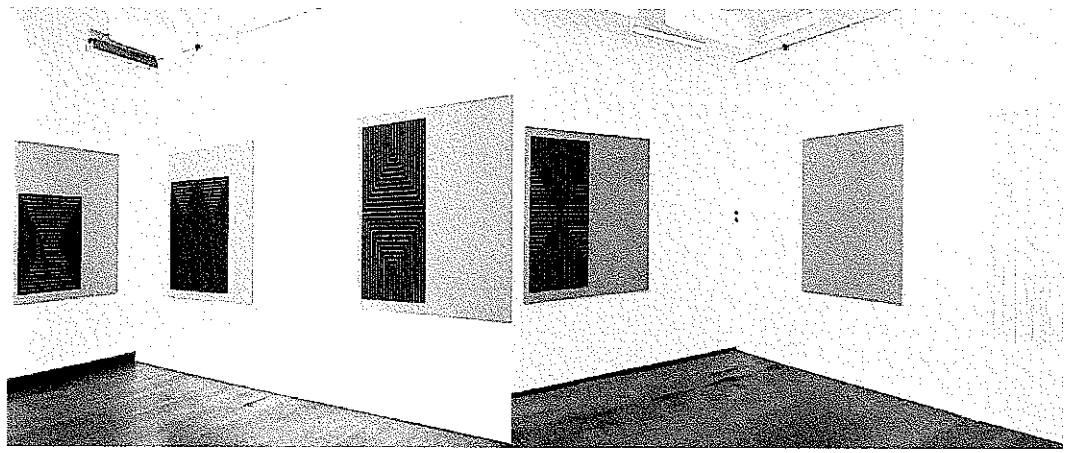

Fig. 54 - jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings* (2002) series, in situ at Soapbox Gallery.

CHAPTER NINE

Exhibition 3 - *The fabric of art.*

The exhibition *The fabric of art* opened on the 9th July 2004 at Soapbox gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane and was the final exhibition in this project which was examined together with this exegesis (of the same name) for the degree of Doctor of Visual Arts. Making up this exhibition are a series of works which were hung in three separate galleries.

In the first gallery *My Trojan* addresses my position 'in-between' art and craft through a sculptural representation of the Trojan horse that conceals a sewing machine within its pink satin lined belly. Tailored peepholes and a mechanical voice singing 'it's a small world after all' belie the presence of the machine beneath its pinstripe camouflage.

In the second gallery *A women around at the time* redresses the throw-away remark made by Stella regarding the title of his *Black Painting Jill*. Stella's painting is relegated to the background as two hairs of Medusa writhe through the foreground of the painting, finally protruding from its belly and capturing the gallery space with their presence. I position the two hairs of the Medusa 'in-between' Stella's dialogue, and the doubling of the unknown *Jill* from 1958 and the artist jewel in 2004.

In the third gallery *Drawing on Stella* is a series of drawings re-presenting the seventeen Gemini prints from the *Black Series I* and *Black Series II*. These

drawings evolved from the position I took 'in-between' the black stripes of Stella's paintings. They were realised by manipulating the woven white foreground stripes which formed the pinstripe that Stella had negated. They exist without the blackness of Stella stripes or titles.

My Trojan.

My Trojan was conceived when David Broker (deputy director of the I.M.A.) invited me to exhibit in the *4 x 4* exhibition in which four curators each chose one artist to participate in that show. I exhibited eleven works: two works from each of my five previous exhibitions which included the *Back door project* and *Gemini paintings,* and added *My Trojan*.

Initially the focus of *My Trojan* had been on the Iraqi war. Whilst grocery shopping, I discovered sitting on the end of an aisle a pink plastic toy sewing machine that was described as 'a working model with a light' which played the song 'It's a small world after all'. Serendipitously I had found the centre piece for *My Trojan* a sewing machine that I would place sitting and singing its heart out on a pink satin swing hidden beneath *My Trojan's* exterior of pinstriped fabric. Not only had I discovered the centre piece for the *4 x 4* exhibition, but I had brought my focus back to this project and its hypothesis that it is significant to employ fabric as a medium in a fine art context. *My Trojan* as the centre piece of the *4 x 4* exhibition made reference to the surrounding fine art using fabric as the medium and the skills of a bespoke tailor as the method of making. That little toy sewing machine highlighted issues of power relationships within the artworks, the gallery

system and the pinstriped fabric. I had begun the first piece of my final exhibition *The fabric of art* for my doctoral studies.

The title *My Trojan* signified 'The Wooden Horse [as] the stratagem by means of which Troy was taken' (Parada, C. 1997, p. 1). The making of that Trojan horse is described by Carlos Parada as:

> Epeius 2 made it big like a ship. He bespangled the purple-fringed mane with gold; ringed the blood-red amethyst eyes with green beryl gems; set white rows of teeth in the jaws; opened paths in the mouth to let the air come in; fixed pricked up ears; let the flowing tail trail unto the heels; made the hooves of bronze; set a ladder inside and adorned the outside with purple-flowered straps, and the bridle with ivory and bronze. And when the horse had been wrought, Epeius 2 set a wheel under each of its feet (1997, p. 1).

There were noticeable similarities between the wooden horse of Troy and *My Trojan* Firstly, the strategy of subversion when the 'Achaeans realised that Troy perhaps could be taken by cunning instead of by force' (Parada 1997, p. 1) was perhaps similar to the time when I realised that I might bring the sewing machine into the gallery under the cover of the pinstripe. Secondly, they were both horses; Troy was a wooden horse and *My Trojan* was a type of clothes horse. Thirdly, they were both dressed up; Troy in spangled gold, jewellery, ivory, bronze and purple whilst *My Trojan* was dressed in pinstripe and lined with pink satin fabric. Fourthly they were both transportable, as they both had wheels.

On one side of *My Trojan* there were two low positioned tailored peepholes through which you could see the sewing machine lit up, swinging and singing. On the other side a four inch protrusion at the same level held the foot pedal so that if the viewer chose to squeeze it the sewing machine began to sew. While the inside of Troy's Trojan was secretive and held the subversion until the dark of night

when the Achaean soldiers came out to let in their army through the gates of Troy, the secrecy and subversion of *My Trojan* lay in the fact that the sewing machine had entered the gallery under the guise of a pinstriped fabric. Once inside, it was no more a secret as the sewing machine could be seen as the purveyor of techniques and processes of these artworks.

A number of artists had already brought the sewing machine into the gallery and had used the sewing machine in performance. The American artist Edward Hopper had painted *Girl at Sewing Machine* (1921-1922). The German artist Konrad Klapheck had painted a stylised sewing machine titled *The Logic of Women* (1965). The Australian artist Anne Graham performed *Sweat* in 1994 in which she had physically taken her sewing machine on a shopping cart and sewn at eight sites around New York including onboard the 'A' train to Harlem. Graham said 'I wanted to interact with audiences in a "non-art" situation' (1997, p. 139). Kim Soo-Ja 'conceptualises the activity of sewing' becoming the needle in *A Needle Woman* (1999)' (Sunjung Kim 2001, pp. 140-141). In his essay 'The Sewing Desire Machine' Canadian artist Peter Hobbs wrote 'The idea is that by pursuing these different lines of thought, in which desire and sewing are linked, my sewing machine will also function as a desiring machine' (2001, p. 58). Hopper and Klapheck had painted the sewing machine, Soo-Ja and Graham had performed the practice of sewing and Hobbs had suggested his sewing machine linked desire and sewing.

However, I had positioned my own work in the fine art system with paintings constructed wholly of fabric stretched over painting frames. These paintings had

all been exhibited and accepted and critiqued as fine art. Yet at my first opportunity in the professional gallery system, using the cover of the pinstriped fabric on the outside of *My Trojan,* I installed the sewing machine with its lilting message of 'It's a small world after all'.

Later, I discovered Robert Morris's *Box with a Sound of Its Own Making* (1964) Brian Wallis describes this in his essay 'Power Gender and Abstraction':

> Contained within a box is, as the title announces, a tape recording of the sound of its manufacture: sawing, hammering, grunts and groans. This is of course a self-reflexive joke, but it is also a sly comment on what is traditionally gendered masculine labour . . . . Morris's box contains verifiable proof of the manual labour required. And it is honest handyman labour that seems to accord with conventionalized notions about the moral rectitude of hard work (1991, pp. 106-107).

In *My Trojan* my little pink sewing machine might also be seen as 'a sly comment on what is traditionally gendered [female] labour' (1991, p. 107). Yet the lilting 'It's a small world after all' seemed to evoke the sewing machine's response standing before all the fine art it had produced. Unlike Morris's box, which included a tape recording of the sound of its manufacture, my sewing machine actually sewed and made the sound of its own making, but required the viewer to interact.

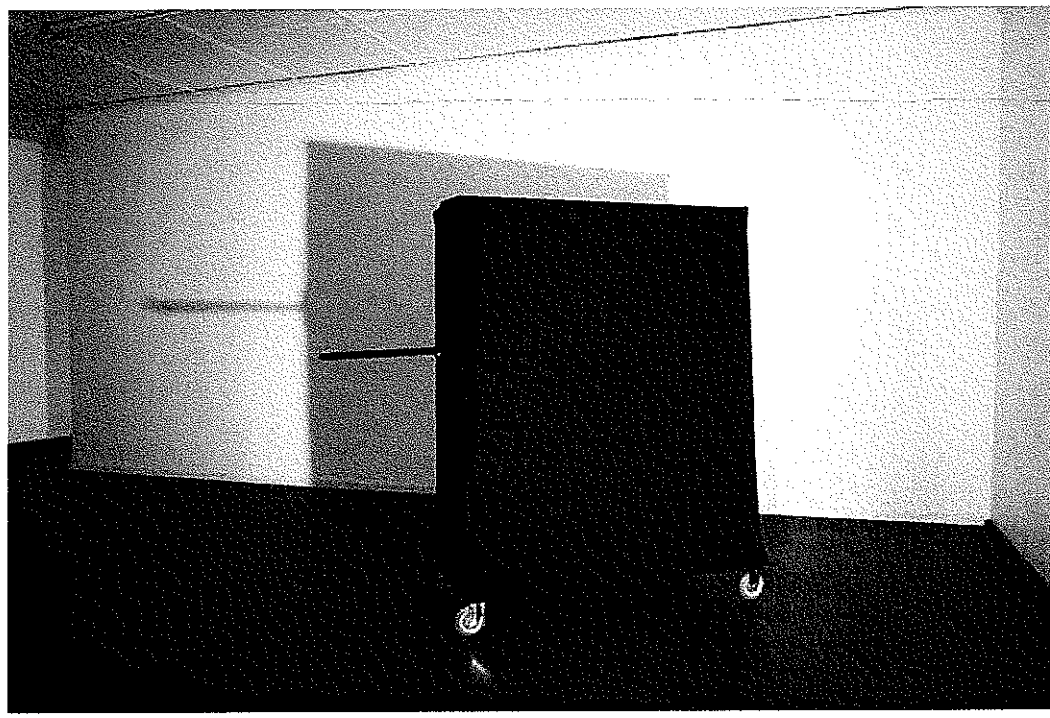

Fig. 55 - jewel mackenzie, *The fabric of art – My Trojan* (2003), pinstripe & satin fabrics, clothes rack, toy sewing machine, internal lighting.

The making of *My Trojan* was based on a mobile clothes rack with two protrusions: the handle for manoeuvring and the foot pedal for sewing. The outside was tailored in pinstriped fabric and the inside was fully lined in pink satin. Inside the clothes rack each bar was individually covered by hand stitched pink satin fabric and the base had a length of pink satin cut to fit. The internal swing seat on which the sewing machine sat was covered in pink satin with rope made from plaited embroidery cotton that threaded through the swing and hung from the top bars of the clothes rack.

A woman around at the time.

Originally I saw my critique of Stella's practice as an opportunity to thoroughly research a successful art practice and use his work as a tool; perhaps similar to the

way people read the autobiographies of successful people hoping to gather knowledge that may help them in their future. In representing Stella's works I am introducing a female perspective into an art practice that appeared to be completely devoid of the feminine with one exception: the *Black Painting* titled *Jill*. I was initially drawn to this painting by the fact that its title closely resembled my own name. As previously discussed in chapter three, I interpreted Stella's description of *Jill* as merely 'someone around at the time' as evidence of his disdain for his subject. Therefore, in my final exhibition *The fabric of art,* I responded to Stella's throw-away line with a work titled *A woman around at the time*.

I decided that a direct punchy and perhaps humorous approach was required to challenge Stella's response. The myth of the Medusa appealed to me. In my series *Gemini paintings* I had withdrawn the threads that represented the white stripe seen in Stella's *Black Paintings* and dyed them black. These black threads were reminiscent of female hair and now my representation of the Medusa was through her hair that in the myth had been turned into snakes. I evoked the myth of the Medusa using two strands of her hair that burst out from within the belly of my painting *Jill* and menaced the gallery space.

One version of the myth of the mortal gorgon Medusa was that she was raped in the temple by Neptune but was subsequently punished for seduction by having her beautiful hair replaced by a mass of writhing snakes. As well, the Medusa's stare had the power to turn men to stone and her mask retained that power even after Perseus cut off her head and placed it on his battle shield.

Kathleen Jenks, Ph.D. discussed that aspect of this myth as follows:

> at the core of Medusa's story lies a savage murder cunningly inflated to make her killer sound "heroic". . . . Medusa never asked to be slain while she slept . . . . Didn't Perseus notice that she was pregnant and very near her time? . . Dead, she survives in eerie, mournful music, art and writings by men who have cowardly joined Perseus in beheading her repeatedly, valuing her only for her death (2000-2003, pp. 11-12).

Page DuBois, professor in the Dept of Literature at the University of California, in her book *Sewing the Body Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* interprets the female body represented in stone and in particular the myth of the Medusa.

> This female's head, with its crown of snakes, returns human beings to the earth from which they came
>
> Medusa appears on the pediments of buildings and is omnipresent on Corinthian vases of the orientalizing period . . . I claim . . . . that the whole culture is concerned with this image of the mother who is parthenogenetic, like the earth, or who is androgynous, equipped with a snake/phallus. This mother is omnipotent, adequate in herself, not needing the male . . . . The myth of the Medusa is a myth of fear of women, fear of their archaism, their self-sufficiency, their buried power (1988, pp. 91-92).

Many sculptors and painters had depicted the Medusa such as the *Medusa head frieze* of 2nd century A.D. from the architrave of Didyma, the Hellenistic Temple of Apollo, the head of Medusa by a Flemish artist in the 16th century, *Medusa* by Carravaggio (1573-1610), *Perseus and Medusa* a bronze statue 18feet high. *Perseus beheads Medusa* 1875-1903 by Laurent Honore Marqueste. These artworks portrayed the Medusa with a tortured look on her face, her hair as writhing snakes and two highlighted her beheading.

Jean-Pierre Vernant, French anthropologist, author and Professor at the College de France, in his book *Mortals and Immortals* describes the way in which the monstrousness of the mask of Gorgo has been depicted.

> The enlarged rounded head . . . the eyes . . staring . . . the hair . . bristles with snakes . . . the ears are overly large . . . horns sometimes grow from the skull . . . the mouth extends . . . across the breadth of the face, revealing . . . teeth, fangs, or wild-boar tusks. The tongue protrudes outside the mouth The chin is hairy or bearded, and the skin is sometimes furrowed with deep wrinkles (1991, p. 113).

Yet, for me these historic versions of the Medusa were not as confronting as the painting commissioned by Gianni Versace that depicted the decapitated head of Kate Moss as the Medusa.

> Artist, Frank Moore has depicted the severed head lying on a bloodstained marble floor, its serpentine tresses still writhing, blankly returning the viewer's gaze yet able still to petrify, to freeze the spectator for perpetuity . . . Moor has painted his subject with the face of the English fashion model Kate Moss . . . But Moore's choice of Moss is not as simple as that . . . *To die for* (1997) was commissioned by the fashion designer Gianni Versace in 1997, shortly before his murder . . . The Versace Logo is still Medusa's head, its stylized glare repeated (Townsend 2001, pp. 7-8).

Coincidently, Versace did not live to take possession of this painting.

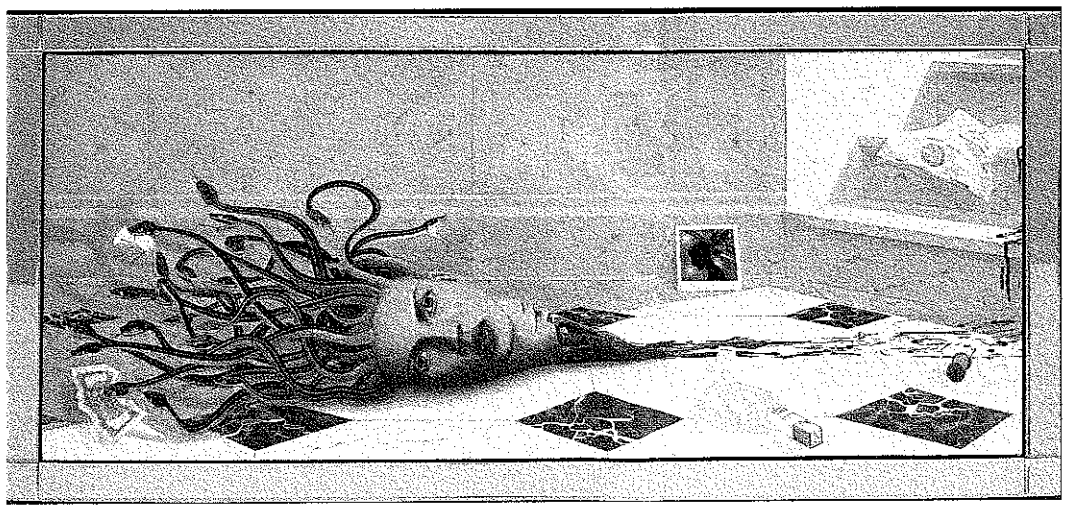

Fig. 56 - Frank Moore, *To die for* (1997),
oil on canvas on featherboard with mirror frame.

I was not interested in replicating the Medusa's contorted face or her beheading. I was using her hair as a 'doubling'. Jean-Pierre Vernant, in his book *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* discusses 'the Psychological Category of the Double':

> It presupposes a different conceptual framework from our own. A double is not a 'natural' object, but nor is it simply a product of the mind . . . . It exists on two contrasting planes at the same time: at the very moment that it shows itself to be present it also reveals itself to be not of this world and as belonging to some inaccessible, other, sphere (1983, pp. 308 & 309).

Hair in the role of a 'double' conceptually utilized a women's 'crowing glory' to represent that aspect of the feminine that was disregarded by Stella. In *A woman around at the time* the two hairs of the Medusa performed a 'doubling' in that one snake represented the unknown *Jill* from 1958 art history and the other jewel from 2004 within contemporary art.

It seemed to me that I could isolate the words of Stella, invoke the myth of the Medusa drawing out one aspect that suited my purpose. Helen Cixous's *Laugh of the Medusa* was appropriate.

> For us [women] the point is not to take possession in order to internalize or manipulate, but rather to dash through and to 'fly'. It is no accident women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds. They go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down (2001, p. 634)

This appeared to be what I had been doing with *A woman around at the time* and Stella's *Black Paintings*, 'taking pleasure in jumbling the order of space' as well as 'dislocating things and values' and 'emptying structures and turning propriety upside down' (Cixous 2001, p. 634).

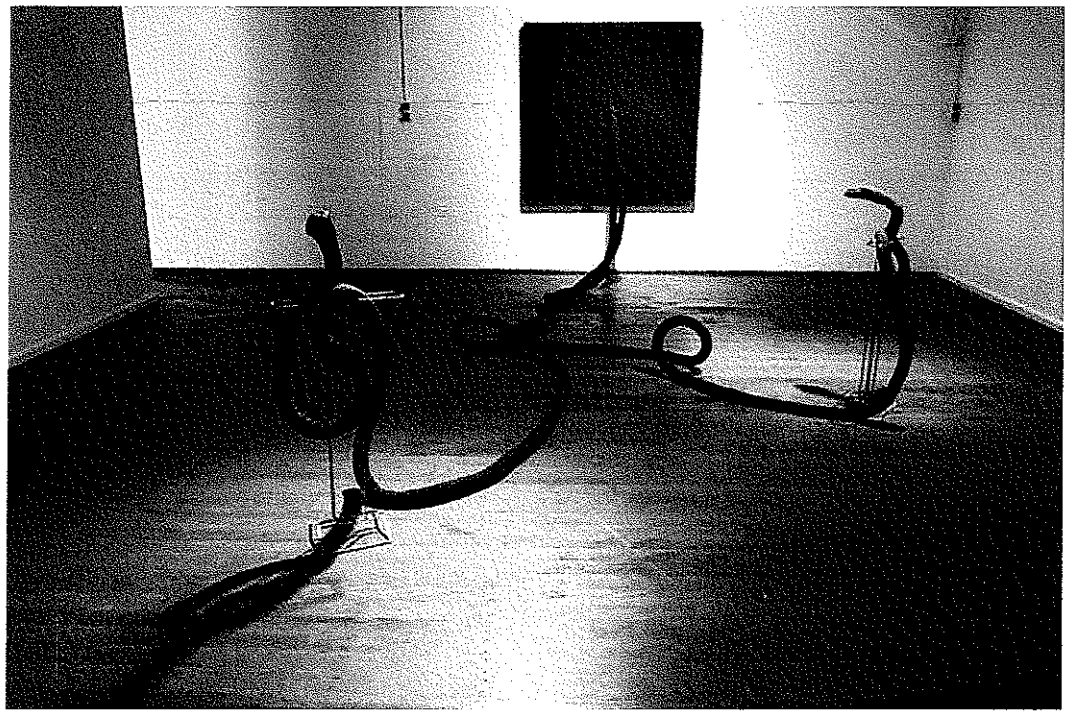

Fig. 57 - jewel mackenzie, *The fabric of art – A woman around at the time* (2004),
pinstripe & satin fabric, cotton, wading, plastic tubing, wood, chrome fittings.

The making of my fabric painting *A woman around at the time* began with the square format of Stella's *Black Painting Jill*. I decided that the size should be governed by the width of the diagonal opening of the van transporting this painting to the exhibition. Once the van was measured, I had a square frame made up in that measurement with a deep boxlike stretcher, similar to that which Stella had used. I cut a pattern the size of the frame which was cut into four triangles. These four triangles were used to cut out the pinstriped fabric and then each piece was joined on the diagonal to reassemble the square and stretched tightly over the stretcher frame. At the centre I unpicked some threads of machine stitching to enable the two menacing snakes, representing the hair of the gorgon Medusa, to break through the two dimensions of the painting and protrude out from her belly

into the gallery space. The snakes were made by hand stitching wadding and then pinstriped fabric over plastic drainage tubing, modelling one end of each snake again by hand stitching to form the heads. A touch of pink satin could be observed where the snakes burst through the painting.

Drawing on Stella.

I had reduced my practice to the interpretations of the basic elements of power relationships, the supplementing of paint with pinstriped fabric and the mimicking of Stella's *Black Series I* and *Black Series II* prints. *Drawing on Stella* focussed on how Stella's prints served as accessories to Stella's paintings. I intended redoing Stella's patterns in pinstripe fabric and stretching that fabric over stretcher frames as if they were paintings. I was then going to hinge two together at the bottom and put handles on the top and line inside with pink satin like handbags. I had anticipated that this type of presentation might connote the commercialism of this body of work.

Manipulating the pinstripe by playing with the pinstriping woven into the fabric I found a new direction in my art practice. I focused on Stella's patterns, machine stitching that part of the pattern that was in the opposite direction to the pinstripes and then removing the woven pinstripes behind that stitching. This method took on the appearance of a delicate and lightly touched drawing. I subsequently decided to construct these works as 'drawings'.

The presentation of these works as drawings imposed the requirement of specific framing. I decided that the frames for these works required an association with

sewing. At first I thought embroidery hoops might be the frames and later on decided on tapestry lap frames.

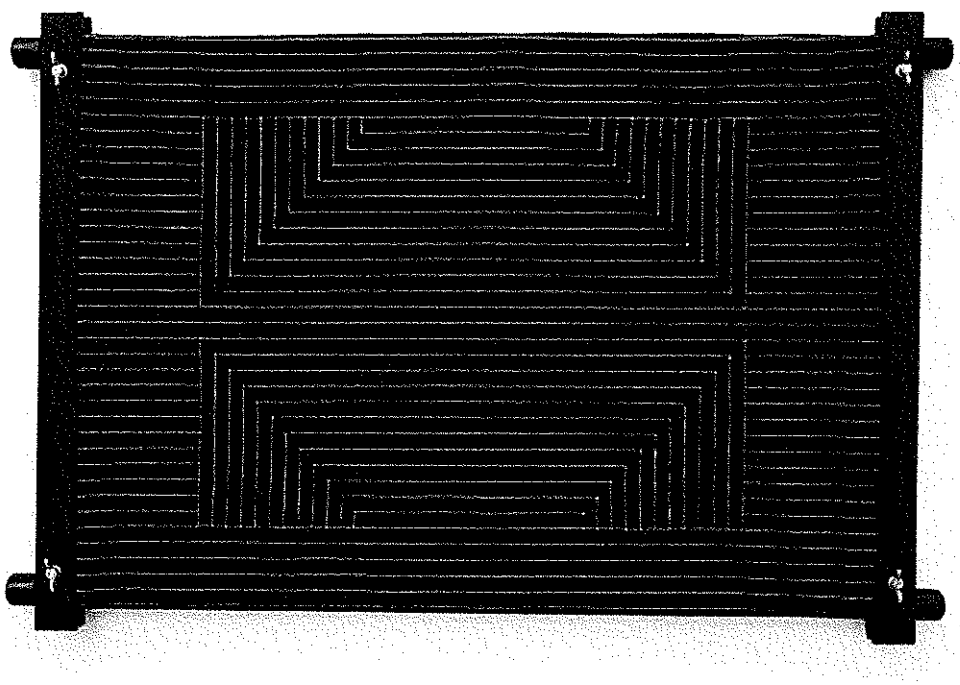

Fig. 58 - jewel mackenzie, *The fabric of art – Drawing on Stella* (2004), pinstripe fabric, cotton, interfacing on tapestry lap frame.

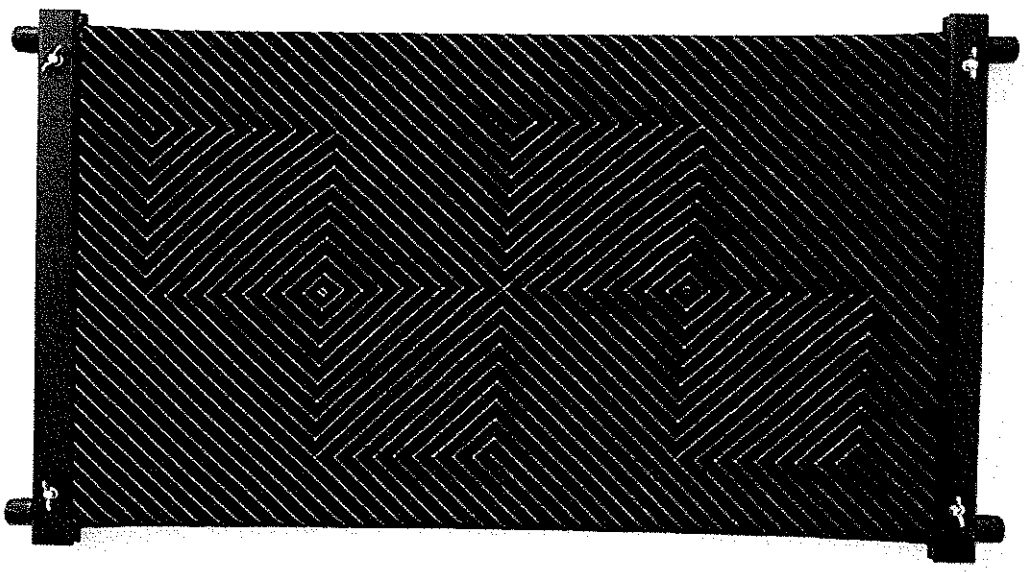

Fig. 59 - jewel mackenzie, *The fabric of art – Drawing on Stella* (2004), pinstripe fabric, cotton, interfacing on tapestry lap frame.

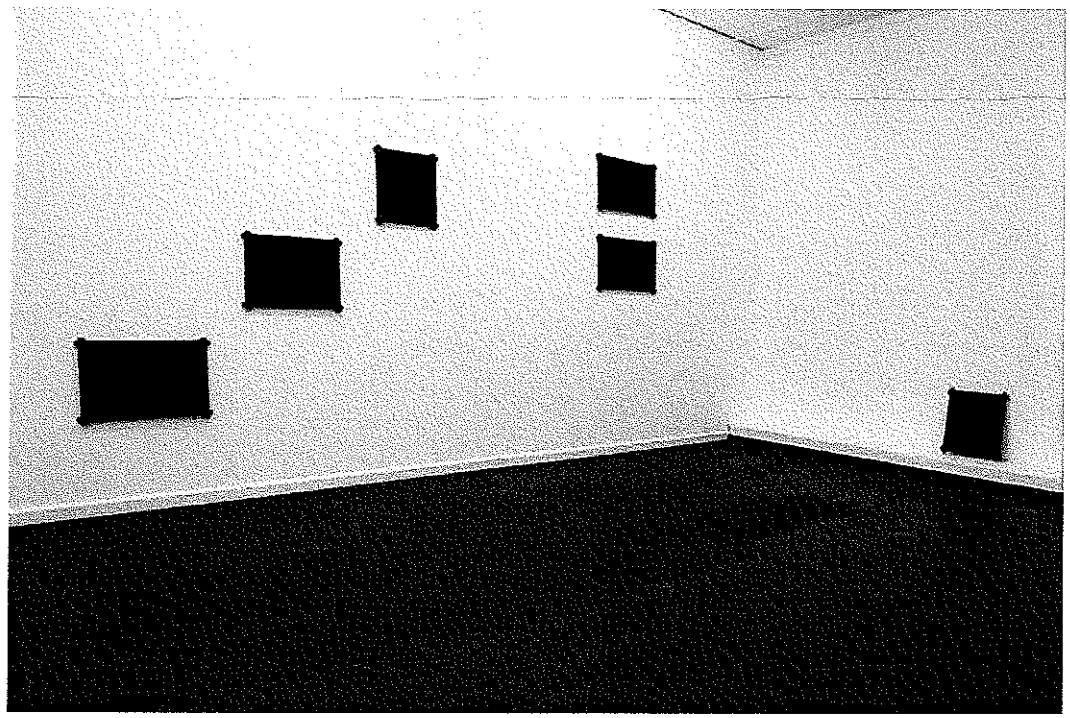

Fig. 60 - jewel mackenzie, *The fabric of art – Drawing on Stella* (2004), in situ at Soapbox Gallery, Fortitude Valley.

The making began with the calculation of the number of stripes in each of the seventeen prints, marking a starting point on the fabric and an end point at which the direction of the pinstripe needed to be altered in line with Stella's pattern. At this point I machine-stitched the opposing directional cream stripe on top of the fabric, manipulating the direction of the pinstripe and thus manipulating its power. When the stitching was completed, I pulled out the woven pinstripes behind that stitching. This method did not require the meticulous copying of the total of Stella's pattern; each of my drawings equates to one half of a Stella print. The other half is completed by the pinstriped fabric, following my hypothesis that fabric could be a material equivalent of paint.

In summary I have repeatedly re-presented Stella's prints. In *Gemini paintings* I had been looking at and emulating the way in which Stella worked. I had researched what he said about his work, how he titled his work and how he applied his paint. Secondly, in *A women around at the time* Stella's off-handed comment spurred me to respond to what I perceived as his disregard for women. Finally in *Drawing on Stella* my technique intervened with my original concept. However that technique performed the material equivalent of paint and will be something that I take with me from this project into my future art practice.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion.

Firstly I will discuss the critical reviews that were received on the *Back door project* and *Gemini paintings* exhibitions, both from within the university system and outside that system. These enabled an evaluation of my progress before commencing the works in my final exhibition *The fabric of art*.

I understood from reviews of the *Back door project* how valuable tailoring had been in this project and how important the attention to detail was to the making of these objects. Artist Leslie Dumbrell saw the tailoring as 'highly original technique' and described 'the physical appearance of this work [as] exceptional' (GUQCA Review, December 12, 2002). Academic Ross Woodrow wrote 'their supreme technical accomplishment that dissolves any simple reading of them as critique or homage' (GUQCA Review December 5, 2002).

The connection I had made between pinstriped fabric and Frank Stella's paintings was also observed. Artist Julie Rrap had seen 'The combination of pattern as industrial fabric design and constructed minimalist pattern is evocative and witty' (GUQCA Review May 31, 2002). While Woodrow saw 'a seemingly simple visual analogy between paintings and pinstripes and through systematic and rigorous thinking and making she has developed a uniquely innovative body of works which defy any singular interpretation' (GUQCA Review December 5, 2002).

My interest in power relationships was also recognised. Riap described those power relationships in the *Back door project* as 'the ironic play in this work continued strategies of deconstruction of high modernist themes. To play this back in the form of museum doors creates all sorts of interesting commentary on the structures and institutions of art' (GUQCA Review May 31, 2002). Angela Goddard, writer and Curatorial Assistant, Australian Art at the Queensland Art Gallery saw the relationships of power in the *Gemini paintings,* writing that 'by pulling the threads, she exposes the power of Stella and also the complicity of the walls of the gallery underneath' (2002, p. 73).

I anticipate that my audience might also be drawn from the society in which I live, a relatively wide audience both within the gallery system and beyond. Artist Lesley Dumbrell thought that my 'work speaks for itself. Her grasp of subject, there is no question that there is an audience for the work' (GUQCA review December 5, 2002) Whereas academic and artist Ian Howard saw the *Back door project* as fitting more to a wider audience 'the issues raised in the back door project are of more general interest and might be effective in a further developed form as an artists or limited edition book' (GUQCA review January 13, 2003). Interestingly, fabric was never mentioned during the reviews as an inappropriate medium nor was it suggested that I should perhaps use another medium.

From the outset I hypothesised that it was significant to employ fabric as a medium in a fine art context. I claimed that in my research I would work towards a conceptual repositioning of fabric in fine art, seeking to destabilize the

identification of fabric as a medium associated with women's craftwork. Did I achieve my goal? Perhaps it is too early to tell with only three exhibitions.

I would argue that researching fabric as a fine art medium was a valuable undertaking and that the significance of this project developed through five areas:

Firstly, my consideration that fabric is a material equivalent of paint. My conceptualisation that fabric might be seen as a completed painting enabled me to visualise pinstriped fabric cut and stitched with accuracy, matching stripe to stripe to form the patterns of a completed Stella painting. At the end of the project I was able to direct the 'paint' of the pinstripe through manipulation of the pinstripe thread.

Secondly, it is significant that fabric so closely associated with female, domestic and craft applications in our society, is a medium used by artists of both genders.

Thirdly, and importantly for a fine art medium, readymade fabrics through their societal connotations enabled clear interpretation of that medium by the society in which the art is made.

Fourthly, there are many ways fabric can be used in a contemporary fine art practice. I found that there are immense possibilities of shape and form with fabric and that fabric is evolving as a medium. This evolution was highlighted by artists who explored ways of using fabric. These artists inspired me in the continuation of these investigations of new techniques and strategies for fabric.

In this project I had used fabric, tailoring, embroidery techniques and machine stitching to interfere with the pinstripe in the fabric. I framed images using tapestry lap frames, connecting my art to historical art practices. Throughout my studio research practice, I grew from tentatively putting forward fabric and sewing to brandishing it boldly with no apologies. For me this research has strengthened my resolve to continue to explore the social and political dimensions of fabric in my future art practice.

Future direction of my art practice.

My confidence and strengthened resolve in using fabric as a medium suggests that I shall be leaving Stella behind after this project as I no longer require him as a tool through which to work. However, for the moment I anticipate continuing to use pinstripe fabric. I see it as a potent material from which to raise questions about unfairness, inequalities, political and socioeconomic divisions in our society.

In *Drawing on Stella* I found that I am able to manipulate the pinstripe within that fabric. That excites me. My mind races with numerous ideas of ways to continue to re-present the pinstripe.

I am interested in the history of western commercially produced fabric designs and their related cultural and social connotations. I see this as a future area of research and anticipate that at some stage I might be able to engage in comparisons between western commercially produced fabrics and fabrics produced from other cultures within the Pacific rim.

LIST OF IMAGES

Fig.19 John Toth, *In a Circle* (1998), Retrieved: April 27, 2001, from: http:/www.audart.com/circus/fabric.htm

Fig.20 Franz Erhard Walther, *Work Demonstration I, Working aggregate* (1971), *Art of the 20th Century,* Benedikt Taschen Verlag, Koln, p. 553.

Fig.21 Joseph Beuys, *Homogeneous Infiltration for Grand Piano* (1966), *Centre Georges Pompidou Paris,* Prestel Verlag, Munich, P. 111.

Fig.22 Reiner Ruthenbeck, *Suspension* (1969-1970), *Art of the 20th Century,* Benedikt Taschen Verlag, Koln, p. 538.

Fig.23 Ernesto Neto, *Goddess Ship* (1998), *Art in America*, no. 5, May 1999, p.49.

Fig.24 Anish Kapoor, *Body to Body* (1997), *New material as new media:* The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, p. 148.

Fig.25 Rosemary Trockel, *Untitled (Please do Nothing to Me, But Quickly)* (1989), *Rosemarie Trockel,* Prestel-Verlag, Munich, p. 104.

Fig.26 Renee Green, *Mise-en-Scene: Commemorative toile* (1992-2004), retrieved 28th January 2005 from: www.galerieimtaxispalais.at/ausstellungen/mo6...

Fig.27 Narelle Jubelin, *(and hence rewritten)* (1995-1996), Exhibition brochure, *Materialworld 25 Years of The Fabric Workshop and Museum,* MCA, Sydney, front cover.

Fig.28 Virgil Marti, *Bullies* (1992-2001), *New material as new media:* The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, p. 21.

Fig.29 Jenny Watson, *Long night of the soul II* (2004), retrieved 5th May 2004 from: http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/news/releases2004/01/29/62/

Fig.30 Sigmar Polke, *Refugee Camp* (1994), *Sigma polke join the dots,* Tate Gallery Publications, London, pp. 92-93.

Fig.31 Claude Viallat, *Untitled No. 78* (1997), *Art in America,* vol. 91, no. 4, April 2003, p. 121.

Fig.32 Maria Fernanda Cardoso, *Flea Circus* (1996), *New Material as new media:* The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, pp. 68-69.

Fig.33 Do Ho Suh, *348 West 22nd St, Apt. A, New York, NY 10011 at the Roden Gallery Seoul/ Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery/ Serpentine Art Gallery London/ Biennale of Sydney* (2000), *(The world may be) Fantastic 2002 Biennale of Sydney,* Biennale of Sydney Ltd, Sydney, pp. 210-211.

Fig.34 Ann Hamilton, *Mattering* (1997-8), *Art Journal,* vol. 60, no. 3, Fall, p. 23.

Fig.35 Cosimo von Bonin, *Tudor House* (1997), *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century,* Taschen, Cologne, p. 57.

Fig.36 Sun-Ok U, *Materiellimmateriell – a room (for John Cage)* (1993), *Asia Pacific Triennial of contemporary art (1993),* Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, p. 87.

Fig.37 Rugby players New York 1974 and actors from *Guys and Dolls, The Language of Clothes,* Heinemann, London, pp. 206-207.

Fig.38 Businessmen's attire 1890, *The Hidden Consumer Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914,* Manchester University Press, Manchester, p. 86.

Fig.39 Cathy Temin, *Models for Three Indoor Monuments* (1995), Catalogue essay by Julie Ewington, ACCA, Melbourne, p. 4.

Fig.40 Elaine Sturtevant, photographed in her studio (1988), *Artforum,* vol. 41, no. 7, March 2003, p. 246.

Fig.41 Frank Stella, *Black Paintings* (1958-1959), *Minimalism,* Phaidon Press Limited, London, p. 47.

Fig.42 Frank Stella, *Black Series I* (1967), *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings,* The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, p. 83.

Fig.43Frank Stella, *Black Series II* (1967), *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings,* The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, p. 84.

Fig.44 Frank Stella, photographed in his studio (1959), *Minimalism,* Phaidon Press Limited, London, p. 4.

Fig.45 Frank Stella, photographed in a three piece suit, *Frank Stella an illustrated biography,* Rizzoli, New York, p. 47.

Fig.46 jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – Brisbane city gallery* (2002).

Fig.47 jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – I.M.A.* (2002) (detail).

Fig.48 jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – Peter Bellas gallery* (2002) (detail).

Fig.49 jewel mackenzie, *Back door project – AGNSW* (2002) (detail).

Fig.50 jewel mackenzie, *Back door project* (2002), in situ at Soapbox gallery.

Fig.51 jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings – Womera-not the Hilton (nee Arundel Castle)* (2002).

Fig.52 jewel mackenzie, *Gemini paintings – Graceville memorial park (nee Tomlinson Court Park)* (2002) (detail).

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