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Works by SUSAN HOLMES: Front Cover, 'Graffiti Dress' made 2002 of Tivec, wool, nylon. Artwork on fabric done by teen-age experts, in felt pen. Inside Front Cover, 'Forest Floor Dress' made 2005 of hand dyed silk; the brooch is knitting needles in plastic - imitation tortoise shell and the skirt is dyed with natural dyes by India Flint. Model: Marianne. Photography: Phil Fogle

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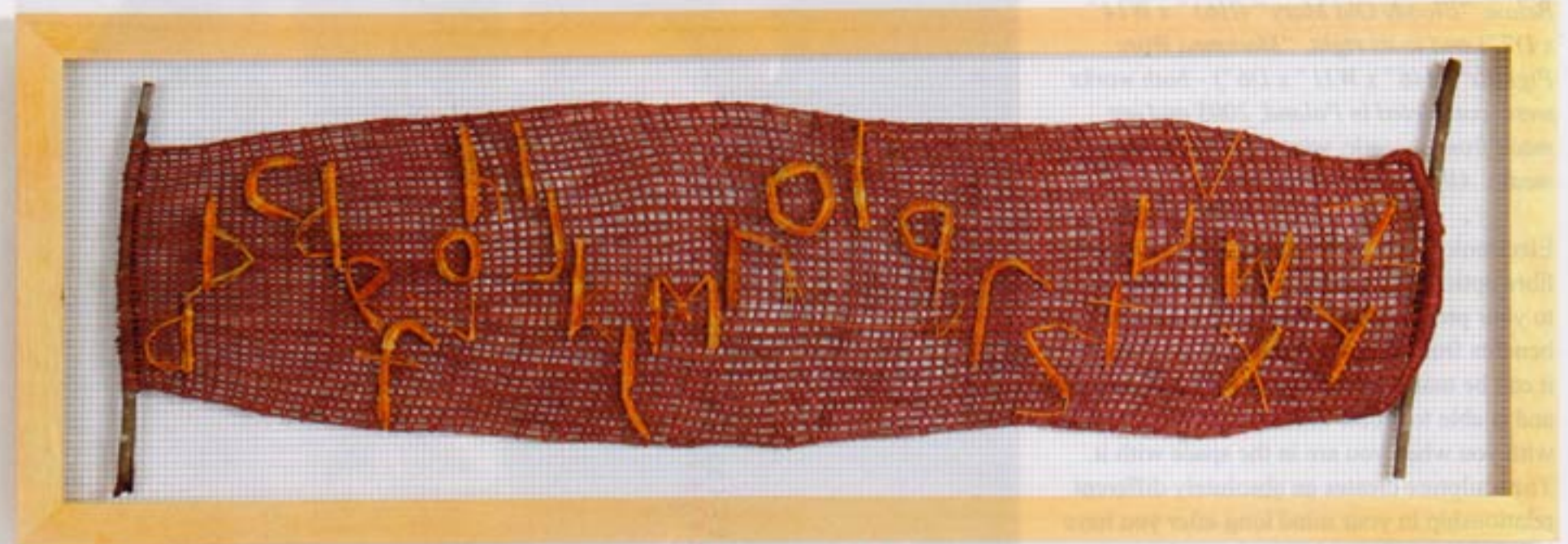
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Adrienne Kneebone is an emerging non-Indigenous artist who has lived on the outskirts of Darwin, NT for the last ten years. She works primarily in pandanus fibre and native grasses, having adopted a twining technique when she made The Top End her home. In 2004, Kneebone learnt the cobbling stitch from Nalda Searles through a mentorship funded by Territory Craft though an Australia Council of the Arts grant.

Her solo exhibition, *Amesh* was carefully conceived and executed. The exhibition contained flat wall pieces, three sculptural works situated on plinths which were connected with shell imagery, and digital photographs on canvas. Kneebone's explorations are akin to other contemporary textile and needlework artists working in the juncture between constructing new postcolonial and feminist narratives, and stitching/weaving to create imagery which tells a story. Such elements often function best when posed as an installation, aspects of which Kneebone has utilized for personal reflection. For example, she has engaged the viewer with photo-documentation 'paintings' alongside her weavings. In doing so, she invites the viewer's experiential engagement with the space as well as the artwork. Artist, Narelle Jubelin has particularly influenced this genre for Australian women artists and 'conceptual' needleworkers since the late 1980s.

As the title of the exhibition suggests, *Amesh* is a linked metaphorical reference to psychological "enmeshment." The artwork develops an account of what it means to be both daughter and mother, and how these aspects of one's identity are linked to place. Such concepts are suggested most directly in the positions of three painting-weavings lining one wall: a black 'mesh', a 'netting' image in sugarpalm fibre stitched onto chicken wire called *Empty Nest*. This piece is flanked by two wall hangings titled *Nappies*. The *Empty Nest* image is central, dark and full of grief; by contrast, the nappies are red, the colour of life, and hang in rows of multiples, suggesting an overflowing.

The exhibition seems to explore the still-fraught territory of what it means to be a contemporary female artist/creative visionary and be involved in another creative life-giving role, that of being a mother. Kneebone suggests that the never-ending duties/cycles of the domestic-carer role can be seen as "one and the same", and not in an antagonistic juxtaposition to one's public creative life. I found it interesting to note that the enmeshed characteristics of the daughter/mother roles illustrated by Kneebone are distinctly void of the other conventional role which, in generations past, kept some females in a type of servitude to others: that of 'wife'. Perhaps Kneebone's own life has not been ensnared by the wifely duties which so conflicted the hearts and minds of many female artists and, if they were skilled needleworkers, limited their artistic expression to conventional traditions such as decorating the home environment.

The Woods Street Gallery, Darwin
September 7 - 17 2005



This page, top. "TACTILE NURSERY", 130 x 50cm, pandanus, wire frame, dyed with bush colours. Above, "OCEAN ARTEFACT", 80 x 30 x 30cm, pandanus and bush colours.

Opposite page clockwise from top left: "LADDER OF OPPORTUNITY", "NAPPIES 1", 60 x 110cm, "ORANGE SHELL", 60 x 25 x 25cm. All works from pandanus, dyed with bush colours. Images by Fiona Morrison.



Kneebone has developed a practice which seems to easily connect her multiple identities: serious artist, playful child, dutiful mother and lover, as well as lover of the natural world. The latter role is suggested in the central sculptural shell imagery, one titled *Ocean* and the other, *Orange*, with full colour, sensuous lipped openings. The woven work in both is very intricate. Kneebone, likewise, has multiple roles in her conceptual artistic oeuvre: weaver/stitcher, painter, photographer and architectonic installation practitioner.

The photo series in the exhibition explores life's intimate moments, such as the occasion when the artist's two-year-old discovered the colours of a beetle's back. The photos seem to capture those details which make up a well-lived and well-loved life, in the process reminding viewers to treasure the quality of lived moments with one another. The moments Kneebone has captured and collated in this exhibition serve to emphasize and connect the time-based rituals of hand-weaving (for artistic creation), making a diary (writing/photographing for personal or documentary-research reasons) and/or the slow and painstaking process of teaching a child to speak or read. A strong ladder image may serve as an iconic reference for this entire process and, with it, Kneebone has created her own structural avenue with which to escape any entanglements or 'A-meshments' that might have held her back from artistic pursuits.

In Darwin, Kneebone - formerly of Melbourne - has been able to carve out a life which allows her the time needed to create and raise a family on a limited income. Darwin's extreme tropical weather forces a more active and engaged reflection upon connections to the environment and the natural world. Kneebone's itinerant lifestyle makes weaving small objects (either flat or three dimensional) an ideal medium in which to work.

In a conversation with the artist, it is clear that her interest in spatial aspects of installation practice and time-based concepts has been influenced by her architect father.

Adrienne Kneebone's next solo exhibition, Absolutely Fibrous, will run from June 30 to July 14, 2006 at "Watch This Space" as artist-run initiative in Alice Springs. Kneebone is teaching a workshop on fibre sculpture through basketry techniques at the Grafton Arts Festival in October. She is represented in several national acquisitive collections and her work can be seen on her website: www.adriennekneebone.com (under construction at time of writing)

Lycia Trouton, DCA (University of Wollongong) is an installation artist, public artist and writer. She held a Visiting art history and theory lecturer/artist post at Charles Darwin University from July to November 2005

