

SHE SHED
Contemporary
Wool Craft





Steven Junil Park, *Wool Scraps Coat*, (detail), 2022
Photo by Mark Tantrum

SHE SHED: Contemporary Wool Craft

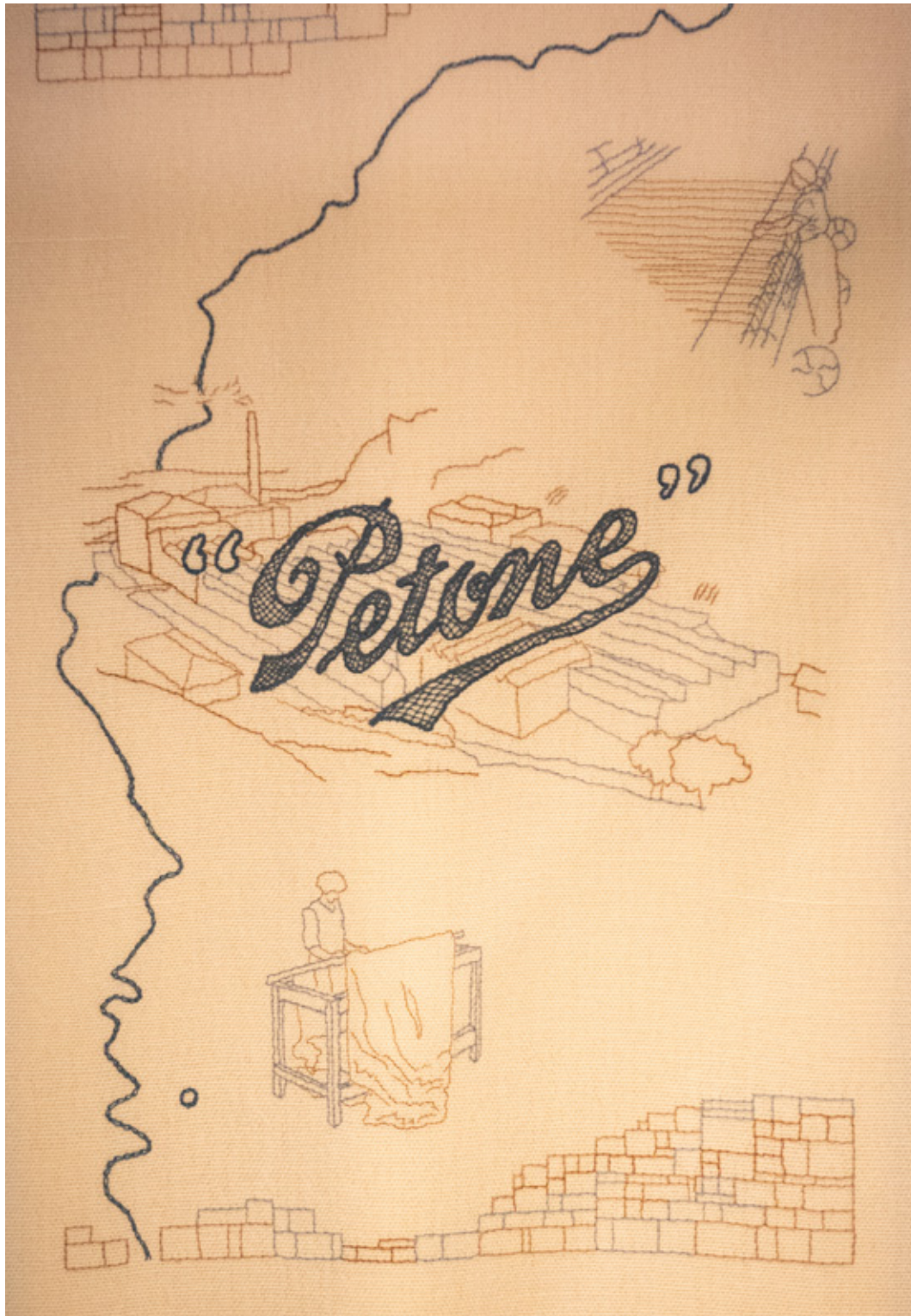
She Shed is Dr Bronwyn Lloyd's dream space of wool craft. The works of the seven makers demonstrate the timely revival of heritage craft skills and the value of slow crafting. Wool becomes the foundation cloth to tell stories about identity, cross-cultural exchange, and connection with nature. It even becomes a woven page to record the experiences of women working in primary industry in Aotearoa.

SHE SHED Contemporary Wool Craft

Petone Settlers Museum
17 Mar – 16 Oct 2022

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INTRODUCTION

By Dr Bronwyn Lloyd

As The Dowse Art Museum's 2021 Blumhardt Curator, I was invited to put together an exhibition of contemporary craft at the Petone Settlers Museum Te Whare Whakaaro o Pito-one. Encouraged to choose something from the Museum's collection as a starting point for the project, it was a recent acquisition that immediately attracted my attention: an heirloom wool blanket produced in 2020 by Petone business Stansborough Ltd as a fundraiser for Women's Refuge.

The limited edition blanket, titled "History Repeats Itself", refers back in time to the gifts of blankets by the staff at the Petone Woollen Mills to families in need during the Influenza epidemic of 1918. Produced on a restored century-old loom from the Petone Woollen Mills, which ceased operation in 1968 after 80 years, the Stansborough blanket became the catalyst for the two linked wool craft exhibitions that I developed: a heritage display called *History Repeats: Petone Woollen Blankets*, and *She Shed: Contemporary Wool Craft*.

The overarching story told across the two exhibitions is about the movement from home-based wool craft to industrial wool manufacture, and then to the revival of artisanal and heritage wool crafts in the present day.

The heritage display incorporates Petone Woollen Mills items from the Petone Settlers Museum Collections, including blankets from different eras, textile samples, and photographs of the Mill staff, along with an oral history component featuring a fascinating interview with Elaine Vermeeren, one of the last surviving workers from the Petone Woollen Mills, who describes in colourful detail what it was like to work there in the early 1950s.

The works of the seven artists in *She Shed: Contemporary Wool Craft* showcase the resurgence of heritage craft skills in recent years and the value of slow crafting. I wanted to put together an exhibition that honoured the tradition of domestic wool craft, but one that also has a contemporary edge, with works that reflect issues relevant to our lives today. Wool becomes the foundation cloth to tell stories about identity, cross-cultural exchange, connection with nature, and to express concerns about the impact of consumerism on the environment. It even becomes a woven page to record the experiences of women working in primary industry in Aotearoa.

She Shed occupies a small footprint but tells a big story about the value of contemporary artisanal wool craft in Aotearoa, and one that invites us to explore a more considered, resourceful, and contemplative approach to making.

Caroline McQuarrie *Woolens and Worsteds*, (detail), 2022
wool, recycled wooden broom handle
Courtesy of the artist and Jhana Millers Gallery

**PARTICIPATING
ARTISTS**

Georgina May Young

Steven Junil Park

Vita Cochran

Daegan Wells

Lizzy Leckie

Caroline McQuarrie

Rona Ngahuia Osborne

GEORGINA MAY YOUNG

Young is based in Ōtepoti Dunedin and is of Te Ūpokorehe, Whakatōhea, and Irish descent. Her practice centres on the loom, needle, and thread, and draws from Indigenous woven histories and European weaving traditions.

An avid gardener and textile artist, Young's work explores memory in landscapes, and she describes her art practice as "a slow meditation on the fragility of life and our ecosystems, revolving around whenua, whānau, and whakapapa." Layer by layer and thread by thread, Young creates magnified portals into other worlds.

"These textile pouches, woven from wool and hand-embroidered, could be from an ancient civilisation. Perhaps they were found on a hillside or dug out of the mud. Embraced and held close to the body, like a pocketful of collected seeds, their design catalogues the flora and waterflow of Pito-one and the Korokoro Stream. Past and present, real and imagined, the pouches resonate with a sense of place."



With us we carry (1), 2022
woven linen and wool pouch, wool thread
Courtesy of the artist

With us we carry (2), 2022
woven linen and wool pouch, wool thread
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



STEVEN JUNIL PARK

Park is a multi-disciplinary artist living and working in Ōtautahi Christchurch. He works under the name '6x4' producing everything for the label himself: clothing, shoes, and accessories. Most of his pieces are one-offs and often feature recycled, natural dyed, or vintage textiles. For him, the history of the materials and the making processes involved are just as important as the outcome. In a world of excess, he creates his work by being resourceful and using preexisting materials.

"As a Korean-born New Zealander, my work often examines ideas of identity, exploring my own feeling of unbelonging in either culture through making functional objects. My investigation of the traditions of Korean craft is a way to understand my heritage and the world around me, trying to find home in the negative space between different object cultures."

This coat is patchworked from a box of wool scraps in my studio, left over from other projects completed over several years. This style of patchworking references a traditional Korean technique called Jogakbo. The shape of the coat references a traditional Korean Durumagi, and the hand quilting technique honours Nubi, which is made up of hand-sewn parallel rows of running stitch."



Wool Scraps Coat, 2022
repurposed vintage wool pieces
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



VITA COCHRAN

Cochran is a textile artist from Aotearoa who lives in Sydney. Her work engages with the histories of domestic craft, decoration, and the work of women modernists. Introduced to rug hooking by her grandmother Flo, Cochran recalls her “chaotic, resourceful, and determined” approach to making, qualities she incorporates into her own dynamic approach to this wool craft.

“This is a rug about its own process. In it you can see the shapes of cut-up, unwanted woollen clothing and the jagged forms of fabric offcuts left over from past rag rugs. I’ve always enjoyed these shapes, which pile up like accidental abstractions on my studio floor, and here I’ve preserved and celebrated them in the design. Rugs today are often used to bring subtle tones and a sense of order to minimalist interiors. This rug does the opposite. It brings the mess.”

Another historical dimension is added to the *Offcuts Rug* through Cochran’s recent discovery that three of her great-Aunts—Mary, Katherine, and Margaret Gleeson—took up employment at the Petone Woollen Mills after being sponsored by their brother to emigrate to New Zealand from Manchester in 1913. The sisters had worked in the Manchester woollen mills and their skills were a welcome addition to the burgeoning wool industry here. The deconstructed garments visible in the design of Cochran’s rug recall the piecework undertaken by the predominantly female workforce in the Woollen Mills and remind us of the important but undersung contribution that women made to primary industries in Aotearoa.

Offcuts Rug, 2021
hooked rag rug made from old woollen garments
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



DAEGAN WELLS

Wells lives in Colac Bay, Ōraka in Western Southland. His current research concerns the history and legacy of wool craft and its place within rural homes in Aotearoa.

"I've been thinking recently about local craft practices, and how when someone is learning to weave, they often start with something simple like a table runner, in the same way as someone who's learning to knit might start by making a scarf. This table runner extends that idea. Made from linen, hand-spun wool sourced from my pets, harakeke sourced from an historic mill nearby, and embellished with stones, it builds on a childhood memory of collecting beach stones and arranging them into patterns on the kitchen table with my grandmother. This memory acts as a generative tool to construct a work that explores the tradition of handmade craft in rural communities and how this is integrated into everyday life."

Wells has arranged stones on the table runner, in a pattern similar to those he created as a child, but there is a political dimension to this activity in the present. The stones come from a part of Colac Bay that is eroding into the sea, and will soon expose a retired, unofficial landfill, a former dumping ground for chemical and agricultural waste. Further erosion will likely prove catastrophic to the local ecosystem. The stones in *Tideline* come from a spot just in front of the landfill. "I think of the stones as part of the fabric of the area," Wells says. Gathering them, setting them in tin and attaching the stones to the weaving, is thereby a sensitive and meaningful act of preservation.

Tideline (after Judy McIntosh Wilson), 2022
hand-spun wool, muka, linen, and tin-set stones
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



LIZZY LECKIE

Leckie lives in Kūaotunu on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. She grew up in the Otago town of Milton, and her grandmother Googie, an accomplished craftswoman across many disciplines, taught Leckie how to spin fibre, weave, and knit. During family holidays in Hāwea Leckie went foraging with Googie for lichen and other natural items to use as dyes.

A comment made by artist Maureen Lander during a dyeing and weaving wānanga a couple of years ago renewed Leckie's interest in natural dyeing. Lander pointed to a tānekaha tree directly across the road from Leckie's property and exclaimed, "Look, you're in nature's supermarket." Leckie revived her foraging skills and began to experiment with making plant-based dyes. She has set up a trapline in the bush and regularly forages for windfallen plants. A pile of walnuts washed downstream from her neighbour's property recently made their way into her dye-pot. There's a kind of alchemy in the process.

"I find that when I'm weaving with wool and fibre dyed from plants, everything vibrates together naturally and the colour combinations always work, in the same way that a garden intrinsically works. Colours from plants have a different vibration and a depth that chemical dyes don't have, and I think that's because the colours have the history of the plant in them."

From yellow flowers comes pink, 2021

wool dyed with tānekaha (brown and grey), tānekaha and iron (grey) kanono (yellow), and wachendorfia thyrsoflora (pink), (fine weaving: two-ply Merino warp, four-ply weft)
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd

Te peha o Tāne (the bark of Tāne), 2021

wool dyed with tānekaha (brown and grey), tānekaha and iron (grey) kanono (yellow), and wachendorfia thyrsoflora (pink), (fine weaving: two-ply Merino warp, four-ply weft)
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd

Silver leaves turn to orange, green becomes blue, 2022

colour bands dyed with silver dollar gum (orange), mullien and alum (light green), madder with ground limestone (red), fig (green), fig and alum (yellow), fresh indigo leaves and salt (light blue), (Merino and Arapawa wool and linen)
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



CAROLINE MCQUARRIE

McQuarrie is a multi-media artist based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. One of her research interests is how the act of making can bring agency to women's lives. Storytelling has been a feature of several recent bodies of work where the artist has cross-stitched short texts that imaginatively reconstruct the stories of colonial settler women in Aotearoa, who are seldom present in the historical record.

"The unwritten history of women in Aotearoa's primary industries in the twentieth century is the focus of *Woollens and Worsteds*. Taking written material and visual imagery from historical research, and an imagined story of a mill worker, this work explores the Petone Woollen Mill's material history. *Woollens and Worsteds* is made from a hand-woven blue and cream wool base, reminiscent of the colourway of a vintage Petone Woollen Mills blanket, embellished with wool embroidery. The front of the work (illustrated p.6) celebrates the public face of the company and the physicality of the mill, while the back imagines the more personal story of a female mill worker."



Woollens and Worsteds, 2022
wool, recycled wooden broom handle
Courtesy of the artist and Jhana Millers Gallery



RONA NGAHUIA OSBORNE

Osborne lives in the Wekaweka Valley in the far north of Aotearoa and is of Scottish (Clan Fyfe) Irish (Clan Caduggan) and Kai Tahu descent. 2022 marks twenty years since Osborne's heirloom textile and art business Native Agent was germinated in an exhibition at a shared artist studio in Mt Eden. Osborne created a bedroom setting from recycled woollen blankets, and the dolls and soft furnishings in the display were decorated with embroidered and appliquéd motifs that referenced her family history.

Woollen blankets were common items of trade between European settlers and Māori, and form the foundation for many of Osborne's works. Combining Māori imagery with colonial symbols, the 2002 installation offered a compelling commentary about the history of trade and exchange in Aotearoa, providing fertile material that Osborne has continued to explore in her practice.

"This work uses material handed down from my mother and grandmother, and even pieces of hand-loomed linen that travelled here with my Irish forebears some six generations ago. I reflect on many of the symbols I have used over the years to create a blanket that encompasses the ideas of descent, inheritance, and migration. *Te Whakahekenga* refers to inheritance, in the handing down of skills and woven cloth from mother to daughter—embellished with imagery of whakapapa and migration. Hine-te-iwaiwa is the goddess associated with childbirth, and the divine feminine. She assists with entrances and exits from Te Ao, the world of light."

Te Whakahekenga (Blanket), 2022
recycled woollen blankets, wool, hemp and linen
with embroidery thread
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd

Hine-te-iwaiwa (Doll), 2022
recycled woollen blankets, wool, hemp and linen
with muka, feathers and embroidery thread
Collection of Bronwyn Lloyd



1880 - present day
PRICE'S FOLLY



LUCY LARKIN
The 'Petrie' shawl is a fine example of the 'Petrie' shawl, a traditional Scottish shawl made of wool. It is named after the town of Petrie in the Scottish Highlands. The shawl is made of a heavy, woven wool fabric and is traditionally worn by women in the Scottish Highlands. It is a symbol of Scottish heritage and is often worn at traditional Scottish events. The shawl is made of a heavy, woven wool fabric and is traditionally worn by women in the Scottish Highlands. It is a symbol of Scottish heritage and is often worn at traditional Scottish events.



Wika Cochran
The 'Wika Cochran' shawl is a fine example of the 'Wika Cochran' shawl, a traditional Scottish shawl made of wool. It is named after the town of Wika Cochran in the Scottish Highlands. The shawl is made of a heavy, woven wool fabric and is traditionally worn by women in the Scottish Highlands. It is a symbol of Scottish heritage and is often worn at traditional Scottish events. The shawl is made of a heavy, woven wool fabric and is traditionally worn by women in the Scottish Highlands. It is a symbol of Scottish heritage and is often worn at traditional Scottish events.

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–Bronwyn Lloyd

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