



Liz Souter's baskets are works of art. Discover how she used home grown materials such as walnut, hazel and rowan, as well as red hot poker, pine needles and jacaranda stems. And be astounded by her stitched baskets, made from precious silks and indigo dyed camel hair. Her work is richly original with a fine eye for decorative touches.

Liz Souter Retrospective

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*Selections from four  
decades of basketmaking.*

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*Compiled by Penny Woodward and Kate Souter*





# Liz Souter Retrospective

*Selections from four  
decades of basketmaking.*

*Liz collected beads, medallions,  
coins, hooks, buckles and many  
other trinkets made of wood,  
bone, brass, silver, copper, steel and other  
materials, to decorate her baskets.*



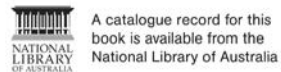
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## Table of Contents

Introduction	1 - 5
Baskets	6 - 97
- Stitched baskets	16 - 25
- Paper baskets	34 - 37
- Handle baskets	46 - 53
- Kindling baskets	59 - 61
- Red hot poker baskets	62 - 67
- Bird baskets	76 - 83
- Vineyard baskets	88 - 97
Large projects	98 - 103
Cards	104 - 111
Index	112
Credits	113





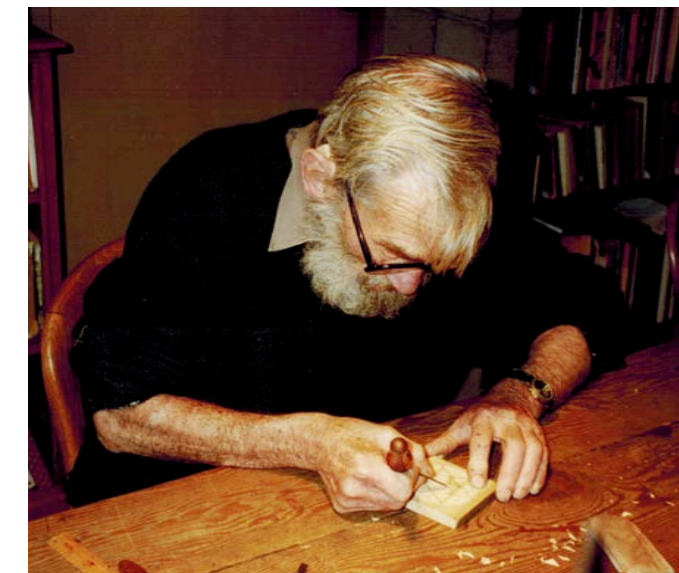
Liz Souter turned basketmaking into an art form. She created works from home grown and recycled materials including walnut, hazel and rowan trees, as well as red hot poker, pine needles and jacaranda stems. Her stitched baskets, made from threads such as precious silks and indigo dyed camel hair, could take 200 hours to make. Liz travelled widely, absorbing influences from other cultures. Always original with a richness and a fine eye for decorative touches.

Liz's passion for baskets started as a small child, when she played with buttons in her grandmother's covered sewing basket. This early experience instilled in her the awareness of baskets as containers. Twenty years later, after completing a fine arts degree, she was travelling home to Australia from England, overland through Iran and Pakistan. Here she observed migratory tribes harvesting wild rushes for baskets. They moved on leaving no imprint on the environment. This triggered her wish to work with and use renewable resources.

After many years spent following her schoolteacher husband around small country schools, Liz and John at last settled more permanently on 10 acres to raise their three children at Brown Hill near Ballarat. Here Liz began to establish a garden to feed the family, but also started attending basketmaking classes at the YMCA. Two years later she was running the classes.

*From Kate Souter: These earlier years were about experimenting with plants and craft. Many working bees were held with biodynamic and permaculture inspired activities. The whole family were seen at times wearing home spun and knitted brown wool jumpers. Mine smelled strongly of lanolin. Terracotta tags were made from rolled out clay, cut into thin round shapes, embossed with her trade-mark stamp and baked in bulk in the St George oven. There was compost making, indigo dyeing of calico, paper making from many different plant materials growing at Brown Hill. Some of the materials became bags or covers for handmade books. There were years in a row where the large windows at Brown Hill were covered in paper waiting to dry and be peeled off. The various papers, depending on delicacy or otherwise, became writing paper or lining for some of the smaller baskets.*

*It's all very fashionable now, to hark back to what was standard practice in decades past. But in 1980s Ballarat, self-sufficiency was seen as eccentric and a novelty. Being a teenager in the 1980s, having 'stuff', driving particular cars and*





*watching MTV was normal. My family life was certainly at odds with those of my peers. Living with Liz and John saw that everything was home grown, home-made, repaired, reused, recycled. We didn't have a VHS video player until I'd nearly moved out, we had only 2 channels on TV; the ABC and the local station BTV 6 (which we weren't really allowed to watch anyway). I found it embarrassing, wishing we lived in a 'normal' brick veneer home with proper carpet and heating. Couldn't we have normal animals even? Among other creatures, we had guinea fowl and five donkeys which dad would brush and then make felt from the hair. They would hook them up to a cart and take them out for walks.*

*As a teenager I didn't appreciate the hard work and wild inspiration that brought Liz to life. During the early years I attempted a project. I made half a 'washing basket' and lost interest. Probably very disappointing for mum though of course she never judged.*



For four decades Liz constructed beautiful baskets that were true to her early experiences in that they are containers and that as far as possible they are made out of renewable resources. Many of the materials for her baskets were grown in her own garden. Some of the first trees she planted at Brown Hill were hazels (*Corylus avellana*). These were coppiced and the pieces used for the bases of baskets or to reinforce the structure. Hazel is an excellent material because it can be picked all year round, splits easily and can be used green. It doesn't shrink or crack. Liz also loved to use walnut and rowan, but these had to be harvested when the sap was down (winter) and then dried for six months. Other plants she harvested from her garden, and used in baskets, were jacaranda, wisteria, willow, grape vine, fruit tree prunings and red hot poker, with each having different characteristics. As well as this she recycled materials such as rubber to enhance the interest and textural qualities of her baskets and often used recycled timber for the bases of baskets.

The material Liz most often used was rattan. These canes came from tropical climbing species in the Palmae and Araceae families and had to be imported. She always said it had no equal for strength and versatility and was sad that she was never able to find a good locally grown substitute. Outside the back door of their Brown Hill house was a large rectangular pool, originally designed as a home for fish and interesting water plants, but once

basket making became a passion this pool was the obvious spot to soak the rattan to make it malleable.

*From Kate Souter: In among the everyday-ness of bundles of rattan soaking in the fish pond and long strands of cane sweeping the air in the family room, with a 'watch your eyes when you're in here please', a few specific times stand out.*

*There was the stage when there was a proper production line that went on for months. Liz made hundreds of platters that became popular through her friendship with Penny Smith, who wrote for Vogue Living and Home Beautiful, and had mum's work on display presenting fruits or bread on the kitchen benches of Toorak and South Yarra. This created exposure to a market of people that Liz reckoned she would never have come across otherwise. Liz made these platters of various sizes and John wrapped them in precisely folded brown paper parcels. Off to the post office they went every day, like an early version of Etsy. The money she made from the sales funded trips to China, Thailand, Nepal, Borneo and Africa to learn more about the craft in these countries, she would always bring home special beads and trinkets to integrate into the next creations. She was proud that she was able to fund her own professional development through her hard work.*

All the baskets Liz made are containers of some sort. They are made to hold firewood, pinecones, kindling, eggs, onions, breads, nuts and numerous other forms of produce, as well as embroidery cottons and, of course, sewing materials. On a larger scale Liz also wrestled into

shape pack baskets for donkeys (these went to the tourist village at Coal Creek), wheeled wood baskets and harvest baskets for grapes. She also made domes to protect precious young plants in hers' and other's gardens. Liz usually worked in a style derived from traditional English basket making but she always incorporated influences from other countries, especially Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Sometimes they even contained people ....





*From Kate Souter: Another time was the mending of a hot air balloon basket. 'This has to hold actual real-life people in the air!' And also the bicycle baby carrier, 'a proper human child needs to be able to stay alive sitting in this'. She took the responsibility very seriously and made the safest receptacles.*

Liz's travels also taught her the importance of adornment and the way things are presented. This combined with her artists sense of proportion and eye for colour led to the creation of some really beautiful pieces. She fashioned small pieces of fig and olive wood into beads, used bone and pottery beads and medallions, and collected other beads and old medallions and coins to decorate the baskets.

*From Kate Souter: The 1990's saw Liz really expand into bigger and much more individual pieces. Plant protectors for seedlings featured heavily in the garden. Big pieces of brass buckles or silver and turquoise beads embellishing bold and chunky shapes with wooden handles from home grown trees. She would carve shapes into handles or bases and add gold paint or dragon's blood. These embellishments were similar to patterns and colours in the cards she made that were sent consistently to friends and family. These were their own independent works of art. The house at Brown Hill was full of home-made vessels elegantly displaying pumpkins, lemons, garlic... whatever had been harvested from the garden at the time.*

*There was a weekend at Hanging Rock for local producers where Liz made baskets to present and*

*hold her brother-in-law Bill Dhillon's grapes and wine from his vineyard Bindi Wines. They were on display for local tastings. Everyone was dressed from a bygone era with petticoats, big skirts, waistcoats, top hats and fob watches for the men. It was special.*

*Dad had several roles in mum's baskets, but it was such a freedom to her when she purchased her own drill to make holes for the stakes of cane into a wooden base or to attach a specific found brass latch or other embellishment. She possessed a new level of independence "I'm mad with power!" she would feign a terrifying look while waving her drill about followed by a couple of clicks of her fingers.*

*One constant in our lives was sitting by the fire in the evenings with both parents in their specific comfortable chairs. ABC TV on with The Good Life, Fawlty Towers, or maybe Yes Minister. Liz would be stitching her colourful silk woven creations. Hours and hours went into making them, usually into the hundreds. These baskets are unique and are especially treasured by those who have one.*

Liz used a Navajo basket and textile weaving tradition in each of these stitched baskets. This is a line from the centre of the basket to the rim. These spirit lines or pathways allow the spirit of the basket to escape as well as the spirit of the weaver who puts her heart and soul into every basket that she makes. This is certainly what Liz did, but there are also other meanings and the following interpretation seems right for Liz. They are there to

remind you that no matter how much darkness you encounter in your world, there is always a path to the light.

We hope that with this exhibition and this book we can bring Liz's work to more people, and share her joy of baskets and creativity and the sheer skill of her work.

The following book has images of the baskets displayed in the exhibition, these were given or bought by family and friends and have kindly been loaned back for the exhibition. You'll find excerpts from Liz's workbooks about the baskets, stories from those who have loved and used them for decades and information about the physical baskets themselves.

They are diverse and dynamic, showcasing an extraordinary range of use and we hope you enjoy rediscovering them, or in fact discovering them for the first time.

*Kate Souter sums up her mother's work by saying: Throughout her career, Liz shared her joy of making and she loved teaching others. She transformed lives with deep friendships and the pleasure of passing on her skills and knowledge.*

Liz Souter 1936-2017







# Homage to Hunza

pre 1991 • 100 x 100 x 150

*Walnut, hazel and roëan wood. Palembang rattan. Copper wire and wax stain.*

The creation of this large storage basket is based on methods used by the Hunza people of Kashmir where they make use of every piece of material available. The shape is based on the South Channel light in Port Philip Bay and I remember being on board the steam ship Wattle, with Liz and John, when Liz saw this light and commented on the shape being perfect for a basket.

*- Penny Woodward*





## Early Style Round basket

1986 · 33 x 33 x 22

*Rattan core*

One of Liz's earliest baskets, when she was learning the craft.



## Creelagh Wool basket

ca. 1987 · 56 x 43 x 36

*Palembang rattan. Terracotta tag. For carded wool,  
based on an old design from highlands and islands of Scotland.*



I visited Liz and John at their Ballarat home in about 1984. I was so amazed to see the beautiful long pond beside the house. I thought it was for the birds. I learnt that it was for soaking her materials. I then realised how seriously committed to her craft she was. This wool basket sits in our bathroom, and is used for clothes on their way to the laundry.

– Rosemarie Turner





# Hops-vine basket

1987 · 23 x 22 x 24

*Hops vine (Humulus lupulus), Palembang rattan.*

Liz wove this melon style basket using the hops vine growing in my Gent Street, Ballarat herb garden. It was an experiment, that Liz found quite hard, so she didn't make another. It's certainly very tough as it has lasted more than 30 years.

– Penny Woodward



# Jacaranda Twig basket

1987 · 23 x 23 x 36

*Jacaranda mimosifolia twigs and blackwood knob, lined with banana fibre paper, stitched with linen thread, silver chain decoration. Beads inside.*

Liz also called this the Echidna basket. It was displayed in the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Ballarat) exhibition 1995. The banana fibre paper was made from the banana plant that grew in the fernery at Liz and John's Brown Hill home.

'This basket used to sit on Liz's desk, it's lined with home-made paper. She kept beads and trinkets in it.' – Andrew Souter.







## Rubber and Rattan Bread basket

1987 · 52 x 25 x 21

*Palembang rattan, hazel and recycled rubber. Two brass bells, terracotta tag.*

Liz gave me this precious basket as a house warming present, soon after I moved to my home and herb nursery in Ballarat. Lined with a colourful napkin it has always been a container for my bread.

– Penny Woodward



## Lavender basket

ca. 2002 · 87 x 8.8 x 31

*Palembang rattan, shaped hazel reinforcement. Old harness clips (rear), recycled hardwood base*

It was my privilege to know and observe Liz working on her magical baskets, such a talent. I am surrounded by some of her best work, which is a joy. When this basket was finished, Liz asked me if I'd like to select from her collection of beads and special pieces to adorn her finished work. We chose these together.

– Lainie Ivanoff





# Pine Needle basket with Lid

1987 · 12 x 12 x 12

*Raffia and pine needle.*



# Tiny Pine Needle basket with Lattice

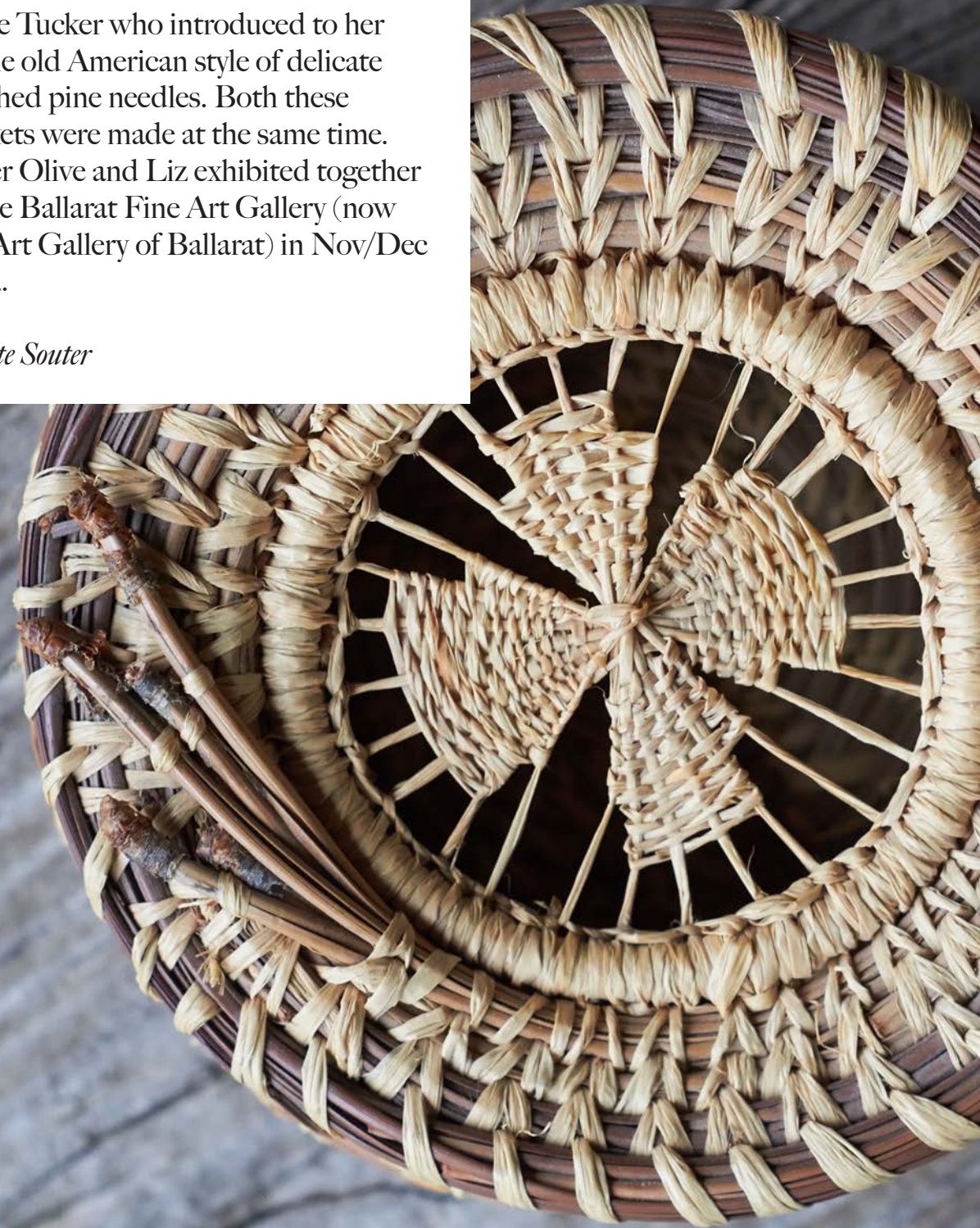
1987 · 10 x 10 x 5

*Raffia and pine needle.*



Liz made friends with basketmaker Olive Tucker who introduced to her to the old American style of delicate stitched pine needles. Both these baskets were made at the same time. Later Olive and Liz exhibited together at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Ballarat) in Nov/Dec 1994.

*- Kate Souter*





# Stitched Baskets



## Camel Hair Stitched basket

1986 · 38 x 38 x 10

*Coiled basket, sisal coil, natural camel hair thread died with indigo, (Indigofera species), plant dye. Native American basic basket stitch.*

I can remember Liz stitching this basket in my garden at 3 Gent Street, Ballarat. She looked after the garden and nursery for me, when I was in the Ballarat Bridge Mall selling herbs from Liz and John's donkey cart. Sometimes we swapped and she sold herbs in the Mall while I worked in the garden. Liz kept and used this basket until shortly before she died, when she gave it to me saying she wanted me to have it because it had been created in my garden. I still think of her every day, and especially so when I use one of her beautiful baskets.

*- Penny Woodward*





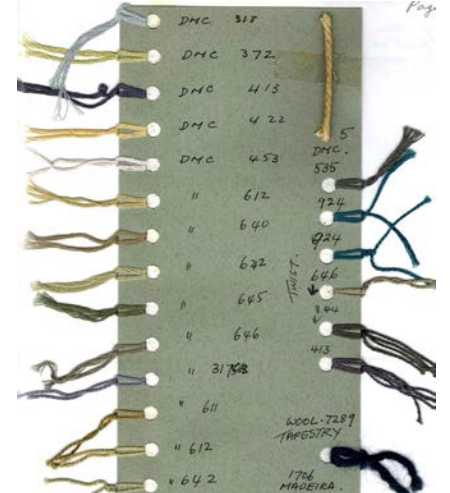
## Isfahan Stitched basket

1992-4 · 39 x 32 x 9

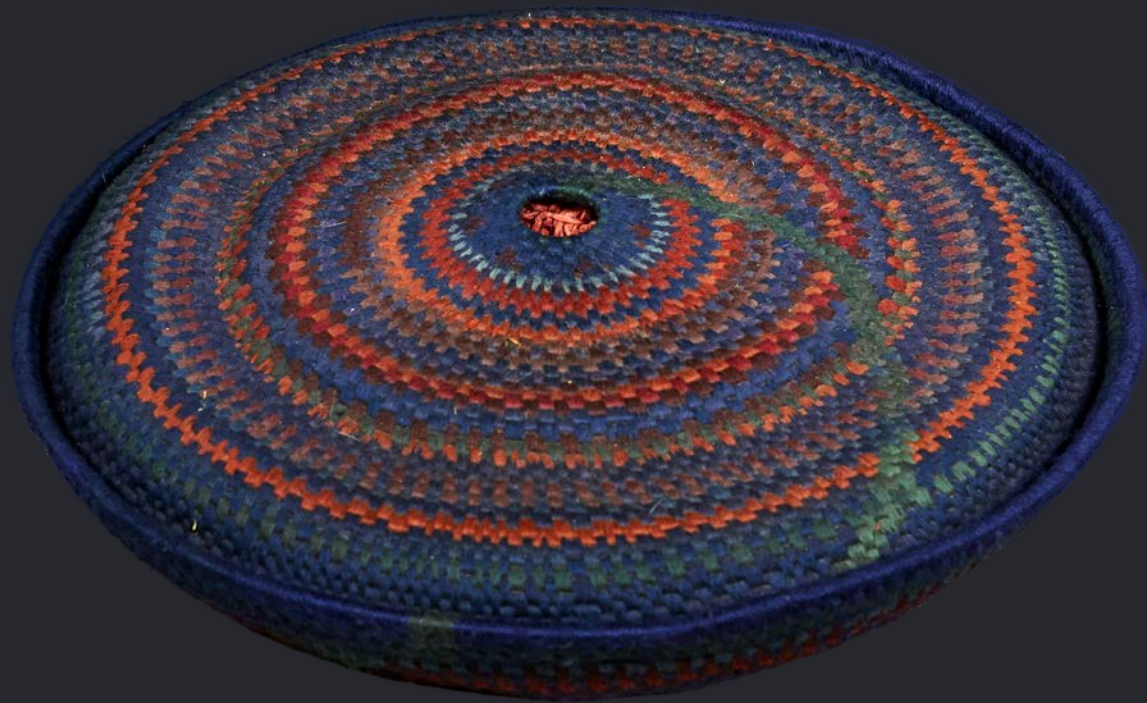
*Silk, wool and cotton, sisal and DMC string core, rattan, steel zip foot, Indian silver bead.  
170 hours.*

This basket is based on *A picture of 'Shah Ismael' and 'Allah Allah Gonbads' from the valuable collection of Bogeh Sheikh Safiaddin, Isfahan, Iran.* Written on the back of the postcard from Janice. Liz called this 'the gold and silver' basket when she was making it, and used it for storing embroidery silk.

This silk basket makes me feel so terrified about being the custodian of such an exquisite work. - *Andrew Souter.*







## Persian Carpet Stitched basket

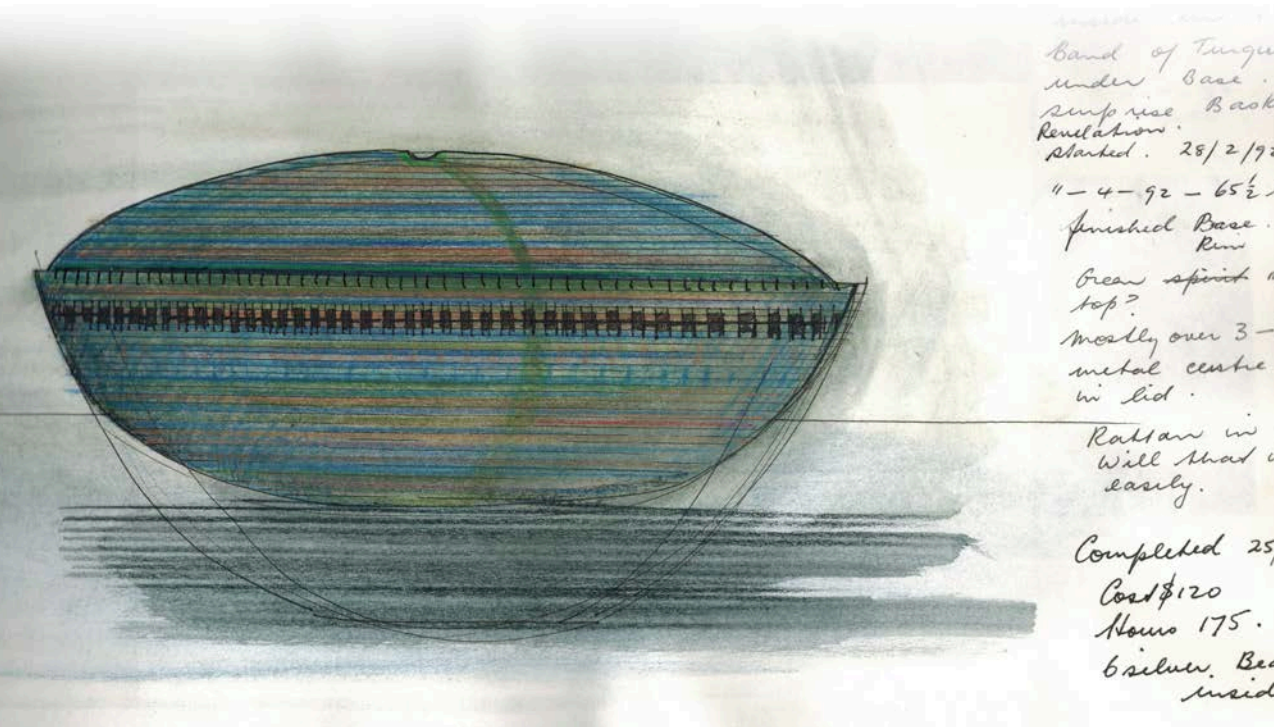
1992 · 43 x 43 x 6

Wool, silk and DMC. 6 Thai silver beads inside. Metal centre ring in lid. Rattan in rims.

Base took 132 hours, 175 hours in total

The Persian Carpet was inspired by Liz and John's travels in 1960/61 across Persia which was pre-revolution and still a peaceful and welcoming place. Liz said they learned to be careful when they admired the local people's beautiful things, including the carpets on their floors, as they would promptly be given to them and it was rude to decline a gift, these people weren't wealthy and were so very polite. The colours of this woven piece are Liz's recollection from the real Persian carpets she saw. The rest of her life she often referred to this travelling year and the people and places visited with her new husband John.

- Kate Souter









# Whale's Way

1996 • 42 x 42 x 13

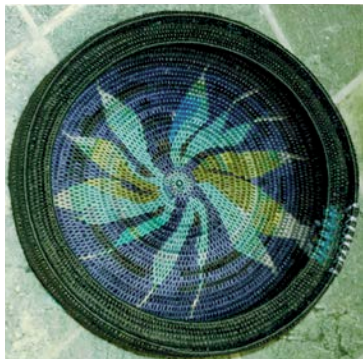
*Jute core, cotton core dyed green. Silk, cotton/silk, linen, cotton threads. Navy blue silk. Whale bone whale. 220 hours.*

A trip to Hervey Bay brought the inspiration for the Whale's Way which was made meditatively in the evenings by the fire. All of these special stitched baskets included a Navajo tradition known as the 'spirit line' to create an avenue to release any trapped negativity held by the maker or the viewer.

- *Kate Souter*

Many years ago I was with Liz in Hervey Bay watching whales from a boat. As the sun was setting we saw three hump back whales breaching with a resounding crash heading into the horizon. The path of the 'whale's way' is woven into this incredible basket. It also represents the moon shining on the water. Whales can be a very emotional subject. We had a whale closely surface beside our boat. It seemed to take a long time looking at us and then it quietly vertically submerged after snorting its fishy breath all over us assisted by the strong wind. Unforgettable! Liz had a great affinity with whales. She was most proud of this basket.

- *Clare Miller*







## Bread basket

1991 · 50 x 28 x 17

*Palembang rattan, oregon base, olive wood bead. Hebrew word carved into base. 'Lechem' meaning bread.*

My mother was involved in the Australian Jewish Museum. They had an exhibition and asked local artists to make items for it. Liz entered this basket in the exhibition - it was created to hold the Challah, a special Jewish bread. In the bottom of the basket John engraved the work "lechem" which is the Hebrew word for bread. This basket wasn't kept by the museum so my mother was able to buy it.

- *Diane and Sadi Lankri.*

*Statement made by Liz about her two baskets: Bread basket and Etrog basket.*

*In making these baskets I have used international materials to represent the Diaspora. Hazel wood and blackwood from Ballarat Victoria. Rattan from South East Asia. Australian seed beads. Olive wood from Israel. Oregon, originating in America - and, silver from India, - where I first experienced the richness and ritual of a synagogue in Cochin, Kerala State, India, thirty years ago. The materials were also chosen to represent durability, interwoven strength and rich contrast - the diverse elements combining to produce a basic structure and shape with the simplicity of purpose.*

## Etrog basket

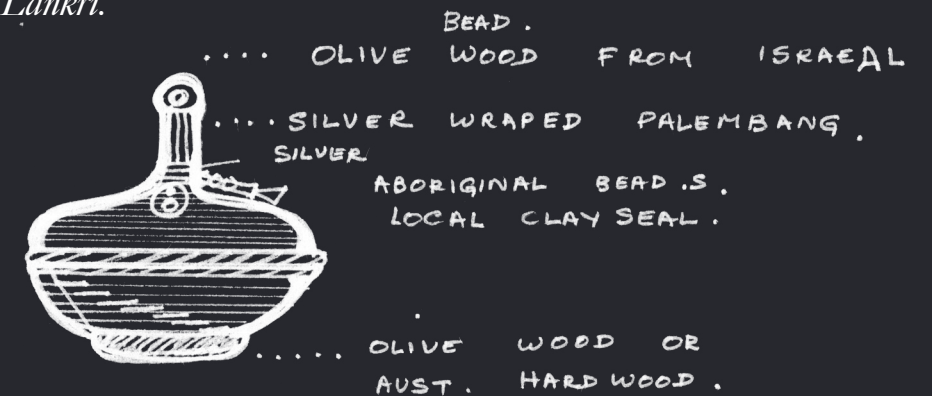
1992 · 17 x 13.5 x 36

*Australian blackwood base (Acacia melanoxylon). Olive wood beads from Israel. Silver beads from India, and silver wire.*



An Etrog Box is used to contain an etrog, a citron, a citrus fruit similar to a lemon, for the feast of Sukkot. During the service of the Waving of the Lulav, a requirement is that all participants take turns holding the etrog. To protect the etrog during the period of Sukkot it is contained in a, usually silver, box. This is a wooden and cane Etrog Box. The box is made up of a basket and lid, with beads threaded onto a string and tied at one end of the basket. A basket similar to this, also made by Liz, is on permanent display at the Jewish Museum.

- *Diane and Sadi Lankri.*







## Wheeled Wood basket

1990 · 84.5 x 44 x 66.5

*Palembang rattan, steel frame coated with matt black rust proof paint.*

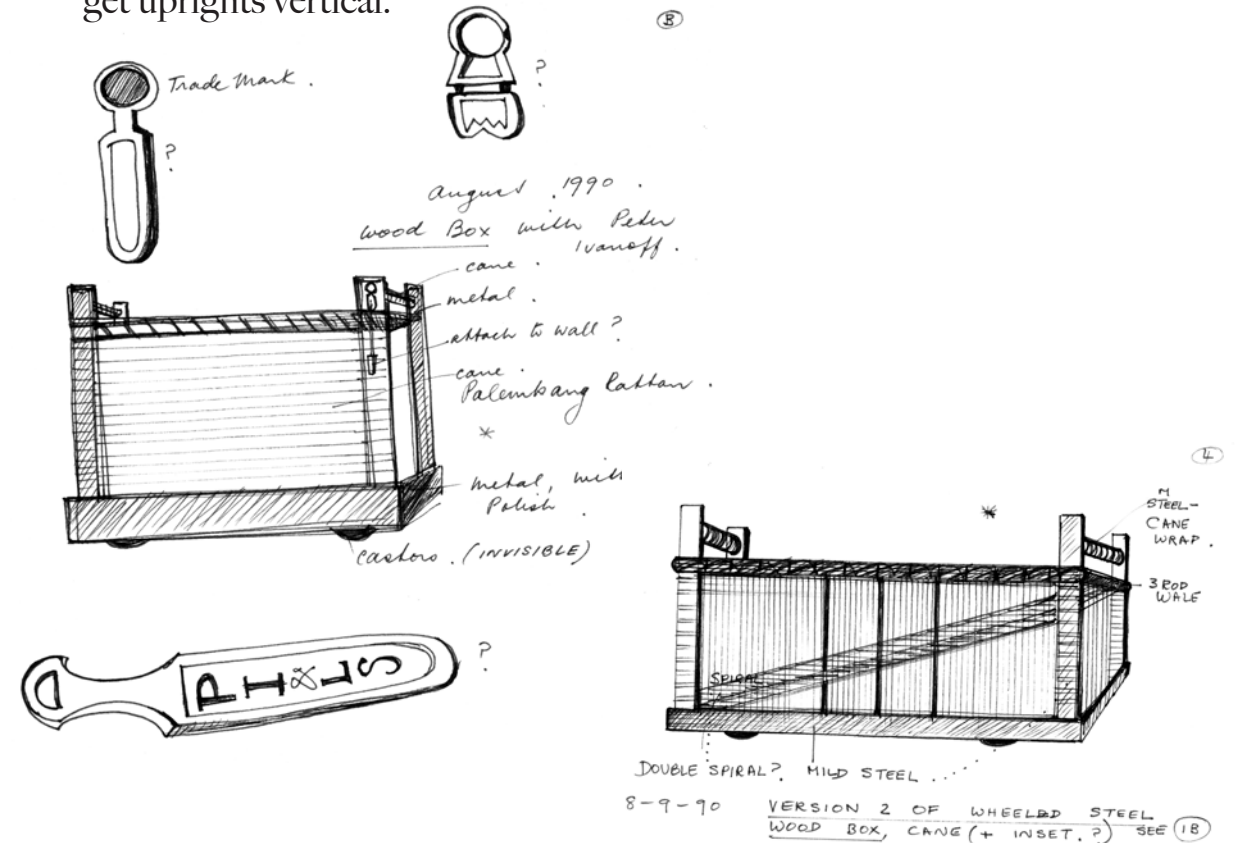
The idea of a mobile, woven cane firewood basket was born one evening over a few drinks with Liz, John and my wife Lainie. At the time Liz was using an old basket, somewhat the worse for wear, and impossible to move when full of wood. The concept was to build a slightly larger firewood container, on a steel frame with castors, structurally functional, clad in woven cane, visually beautiful. And to protect the inside of the basket we line it with light gauge steel sheet. The structure was basically steel angles welded to form a rectangular base with the vertical angles at each corner, and along each side

a number of evenly spaced vertical steel bars. Four castors were bolted to the base.

Then the hard bit. Liz wove the cane around the vertical sections along the sides, and around the steel tube handles. To take wet cane after soaking and weaving it around unyielding steel sections was not only difficult, but painful to wet hands. The end result in this case was up to Liz's very high standards.

Working with Liz was a unique and exciting experience, and I have never worked before or since with such a dedicated artist. We came together on a number of projects using her ideas, beautiful drawings and note books, themselves collectors' items. If Liz was the artistic Sorcerer, I was the Sorcerer's apprentice. – *Peter Ivanoff*

From Liz's workbook: Difficult to weave, only wet once to avoid rust. Hard to get uprights vertical.





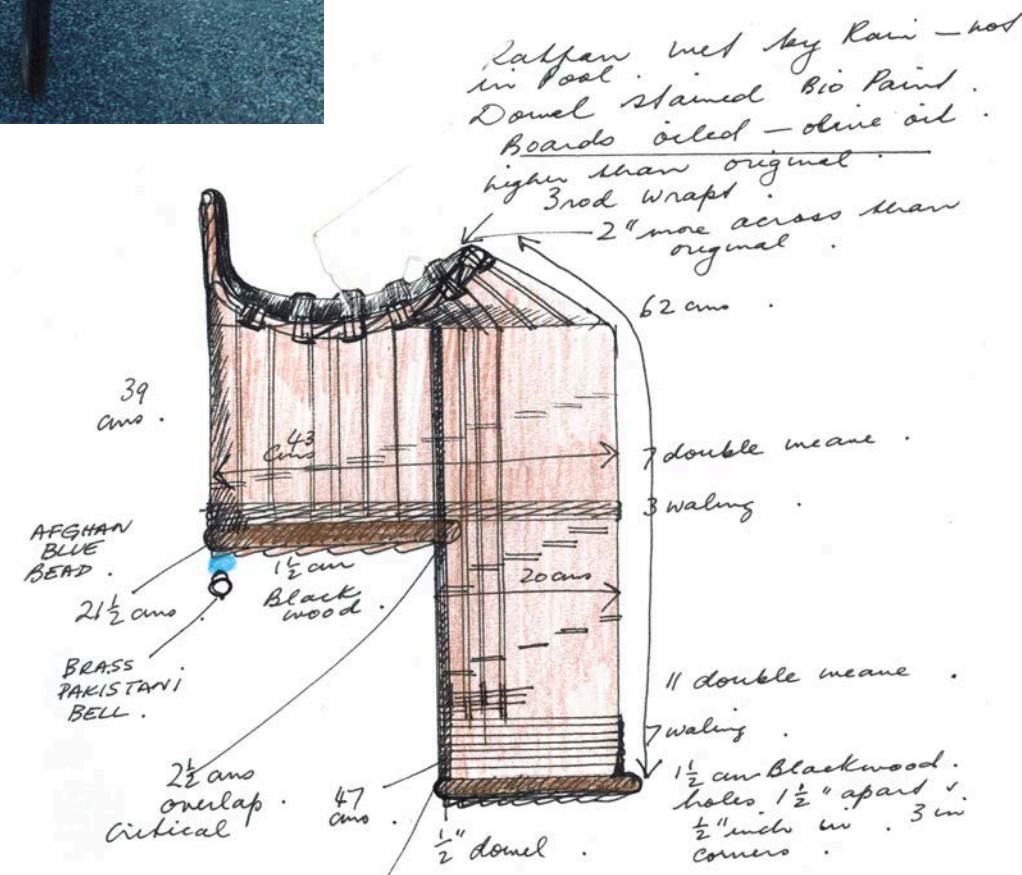
# Bike Seat basket

1992 · 63 x 39 x 62

Modelled on Dutch bike basket, but made bigger and stronger. Blackwood seat and base, Palembang rattan cane, 1.3cm dowel. Brass Pakistani bell and blue Afghan bead.

1996 was a great year. Maggie, Angus aged 4 and I flew to Darwin, cycled to Litchfield National Park then through Kakadu. Liz and John took on the challenge to collaborate on a cane bike basket for Angus to travel in. It needed to be solid and strong. Liz wove the rattan and John made the blackwood seat and base, connecting onto the bicycle rack. A wonderful way to travel.

- John Kerr and Maggie Dannatt







## Round Lathe Based basket

1992 · 58 x 58 x 29

*Hazel lathe base, scalloped sides, fitched rattan, hazel wood, rattan and silver bead.*

From Liz's workbook. Tried quince, pear, birch, rowan, bushy sugargum, hazel, rose, walnut, cootamundra, blackwood, tree lucerne. Hazel stood out as the best for splitting, so was split and roughed on a shave horse and finished by hand. Then holes drilled.

Andrew Souter calls this a laundry basket.



## Steel, Rattan & Blackwood chair

1992 · 84 x 34 101

*Palembang rattan back, blackwood seat, powder coated black steel frame. Two pieces.*

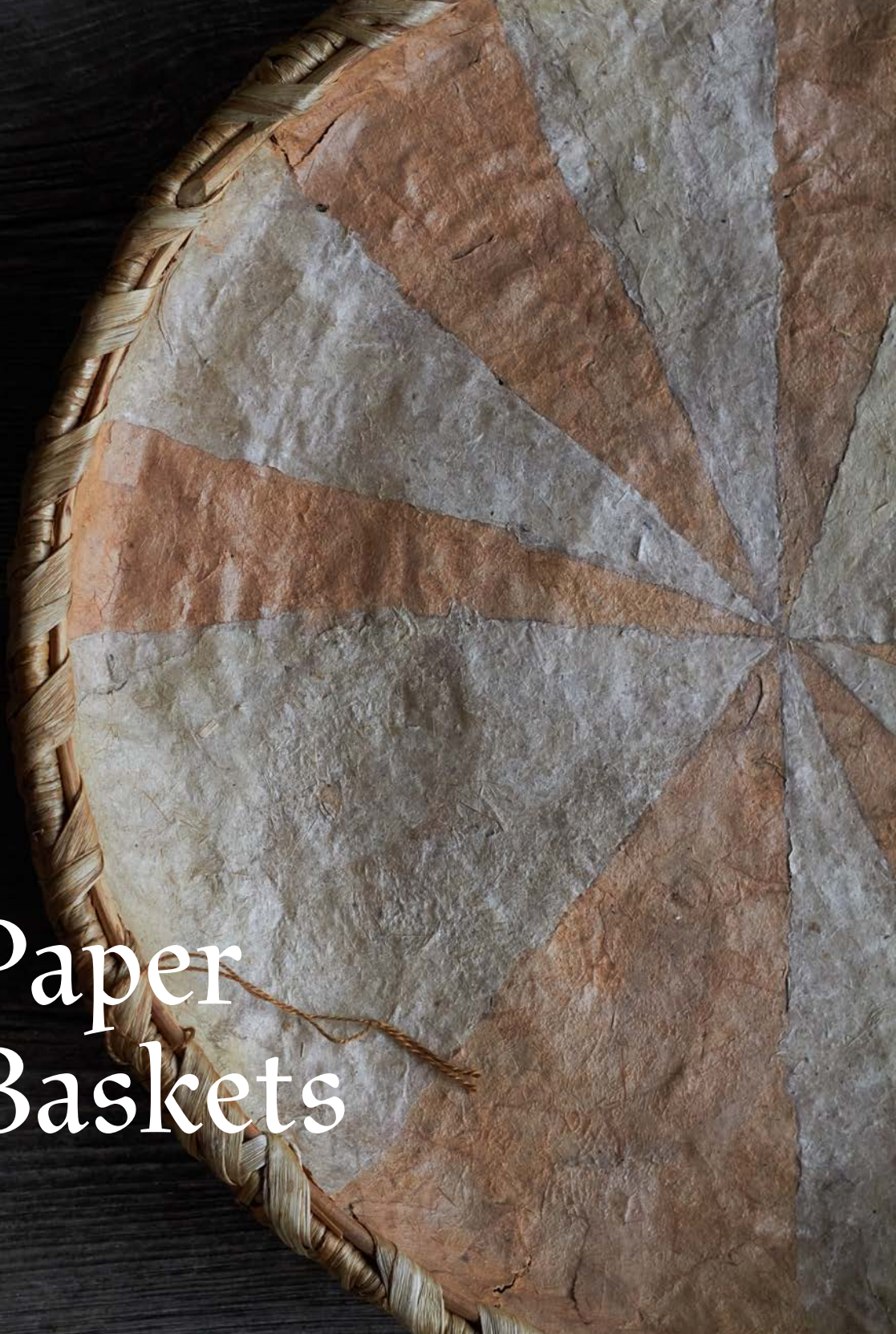
Liz collaborated with Peter Ivanoff to make this chair. It was patterned on a traditional Malawi chieftain's carved mahogany chair (below right). Peter produced the metal-work and Liz wove the chair back from rattan. John shaped the blackwood seat. They made two or three of these, Peter has one and I have another.

- Andrew Souter.





# Paper Baskets



## Handmade Paper and Red Hot Poker basket

ca. 1991 · 38 x 38 x 6

*Red hot poker, handmade paper*

Notes taken by co-papermaker Rosemary Pike suggest that the paper used in this basket was made from red hot poker and canna lily harvested at Mooramong, Skipton in 1983.

The paper was bleached with permanganate of potash.

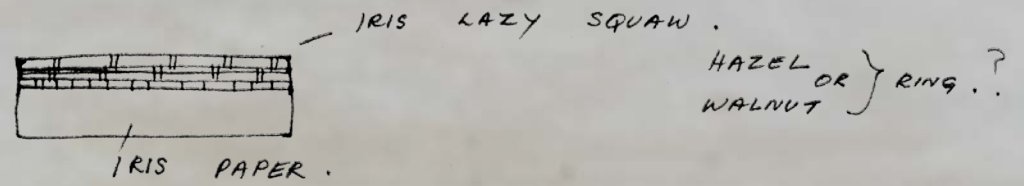




# Paper Perceptions

ca. 1991 · 31 x 31 x 6

*Iris stylosa*. Iris paper, tapioca glue, Iris leaf. New Zealand flax core, *Iris stylosa* stitching.  
Lazy squaw weave. Brass chain.





# Garlic/nut/egg baskets

ca. 1993 · 15 x 12 x 15

*Square basket: Oregon base, Palembang rattan, terracotta tag, bronze and silver beads. Oval basket: blackwood base, Palembang rattan, terracotta tag.*

I've had these two little gems since Liz's first exhibition at Tog's Cafe. I bought them at the exhibition and they sit side by side next to my stove - one full with eggs, one with garlic. A constant reminder of my friend Liz and her talent.

- Sue Turner







## Children's Pull-along basket

ca. 1995 · 64 x 33 x 35

*Palembang rattan. Timber base and toggle. Blackwood bead. Terracotta tag.*

Liz made several of these pull-along baskets with recessed wheels over more than a decade. Visiting small children played with them and were pulled along inside them. The earliest dated from the late 1980s. This one is from the mid 1990s.



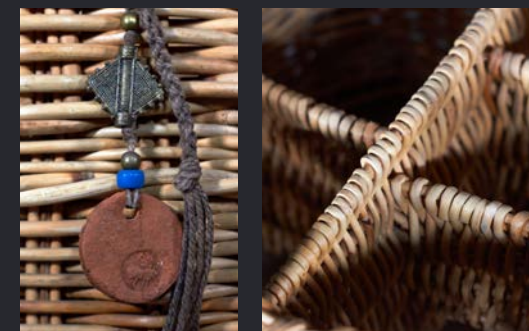
## Picnic basket

1996 · 33 x 35 x 40

*Palembang rattan, timber base, five compartments. Two small brass beads, blue bead and silver diamond shaped Thai bead, terracotta tag.*

This compact picnic basket was commissioned by Elizabeth Hurley (Lib). Lib wanted one of Liz's baskets that was just large enough to carry her thermos, a water container, drinking vessels and some snacks. This robust yet lightweight basket has a slim timber base and comprises 5 internal sections plus some of Liz's signature trinkets woven into the side. It's just the thing for an evening at the Moonlight cinema, watching school sports and of course out in the field, bird-watching.

– *Jenny Campbell.*





# Platters

ca. 1997 · Various Sizes

*Palembang rattan. Liz first made platters like these in 1986.*

Liz had an exhibition in our cafe Togs in Castlemaine in 1997. She made a few dozen of these simple platters in all sizes. We used them for years to serve crusty bread to our customers, with our home made soups.

– Sue Turner



# Wood Panel Kindling basket

ca. 2000 · 63 x 27 x 58

*Palembang rattan, wooden panel, oregon base, hazel wood reinforcement, walnut handles, Indian and Tibetan beads for good luck.*

Wedding present from Liz to Michael and Wendy Dhillon.





# Saskia's Bassinette

2001 · 83 x 45 x 28/59

*Marine ply base painted with red Liquitex high gloss liquid enamel, non-toxic. Palembang rattan*

In 2001, mum and dad collaborated once again, this time on a baby's bassinette for the impending birth of my daughter Saskia. Dad shaped the wooden base and he and I worked together on a folding slatted table to hold the basket. Again, the responsibility was felt 'this is to hold precious sleeping cargo' and of course it is still solid and intact 18 years on.

- *Kate Souter*

From Liz's workbook. Bought and cut base to shape 9/4/01. Painted base and dried by fire 10/4/01. Seems water resistant. Three uprights per hole, no X. 2.5 hours to top of first waling. 3 hours to completed basket - less wrapping. 18/4 finished wraps.







# Handled Baskets



# Walnut Handle, Brass Bell basket

ca. 1996 · 28 x 15 x 34

*Homegrown hazel wood sides, walnut handle. Palembang rattan cane. Recycled Kauri base (QLD pine), brass bell and screws. Terracotta tag.*

I saw an unusual basket at Liz's house in Brown Hill, I said, "isn't that gorgeous?" and she gave it to me right there and then.

– Clare Miller.

Liz describes numerous 'handle' baskets in the mid to late 90s. She explored different styles and materials to use as handles.



# Walnut Handle, Wooden Toggle basket

1996 · 25 x 15 x 40

*Walnut upright and crosspiece, brass screws and copper wrap. Brass Pakistani seeds. Oregon base. Palembang rattan.*

Liz always called this The Walnut Basket because John made the timber uprights and crosspiece from the walnut tree in their garden.

– Sue Woods





## V-shaped Handle basket

2002 · 26 x 14 x 19

*Palembang rattan, cedar base, cedar handle, two Thai silver beads. Terracotta tag.*



## Cedar Handle basket

ca. 2005 · 59 x 27 x 31

*Palembang rattan. Cedar handle, dried two years, carved. Hand carved walnut bead. Terracotta tag.*







## Carved Walnut Handle basket

2005 · 28 x 15.5 x 30

*Palembang rattan. Turned and carved walnut handle (dried two years) with inset Tibetan silver beads. Decorated with blackwood beads and a carved triangular Indian bead. Recycled oregon base.*

I used to teach Liz Tai Chi. I'd always wanted to have one of Liz's baskets and we were exhibiting together once. As soon as I sold a painting I went to Liz and bought one of her lovely baskets.

*- Gillian Robson.*





## Blanket Storage basket

2002 · 91x48x34

*Palembang rattan, blackwood timber base and hazel handle mount, iron hinges, screws and handle.*

Visitors to Liz and John's home at Brown Hill remember that Liz used this basket under a bed to store blankets. The single handle was used to pull the basket from under the bed.



## Large Round Tray

ca. 2003 · 48.5x48.5x7

*Palembang rattan, terracotta tag.*

For more than twenty years I have used this tray as our fruit basket. When I was looking for a cover for our book on tomatoes, I immediately thought of Liz and this tray. The wonderful Kirsten Bresciani took the photo and Liz saw it before she died. Now whenever I pick up a copy of *Tomato*, I think of Liz and our friendship of more than 35 years.

*- Penny Woodward.*







## Toy Trollies

ca. 2003 · 41 x 25.5 x 30

*Palembang rattan, cedar base, hazel toggles, plantation pine wheels.*

Given to Sandy King on the birth of her twins Yasmina and Tobias. These trollies were used by our kids to carry toys in, pull each other around in, and were a reminder of days I spent with Liz and her creative soul when her husband John was unwell in Darwin, a special heartfelt bond was formed. The care that John took in the wood, the stories of the beads and the stunning weaving of Liz. It was a blend of family heritage and heartfelt fun for our kids.

– Sandy King



## Kindling basket, Large Brass Decoration

2004 · 57 x 30 x 56

*Rattan with pine base and leather and brass decoration.*

This basket was featured on the front cover of *Basket Views* July/August 2005, the publication of *Basketmakers Victoria*. It was also filled with flowers for Rohan Souter's wedding in 2004.







## Kindling basket with Brass Studs

ca 2005 · 60 x 19 x 29

*Palembang rattan. Pine base, silver ink and brass pattern. Silver ink wrap. Brass buckle. Blue bead and fish inside. Rear brass wall attachments.*



## Kindling basket with Wooden Decoration

2005 · 60 x 31 x 43

*Palembang rattan, wooden base and decoration.*

This basket holds Liz's unique energy. Her generous nature, her kind loving smile. It holds our friendship and the happy times we spent together. The basket reminds me of these things every day and makes me happy. It holds the timber for our fire-place.

*- Bronie Sheridan.*





## Piano Pedal Magazine basket

ca. 2004 · 45 x 19 x 30

*Palembang rattan, hazel wood, leather, decoration: soft and sustain piano pedals. Base 3.5cm thick.*

I watched Liz weave our beautiful basket at Brown Hill. Liz kindly invited me into her workspace and home over several days, and we both understood her need not to suffer constant observation. Liz worked and I respectfully treated her home as my own, preparing food, washing dishes, reading books from her library and exploring the garden. When we were hungry, we ate beautiful food together and contemplated life. There were long periods of comfortable silence as Liz wove her magic, using well-worn antique tools that hung above the fireplace to secure the hazel wood to the basket and disappearing to the shed to stain and polish the leather. The soft and sustain piano pedals linked and threaded perfectly with no modification necessary, as if predestined for this second chance in Liz's hands. What started out as a basket for an exhibition, evolved in to a personal project and came to represent a wonderful shared experience of friendship embodied in the basket.

– Lynda Russell







# Red Hot Poker Baskets



# Hanging Garlic basket

ca. 1987 · 17x17x53

*Red hot poker (Kniphofia species)*

Small basket for holding garlic, woven in the shape of a garlic bulb.



# Red Hot Poker Lidded basket

ca. 1986 · 40x40x42

*Red Hot Poker (Kniphofia caulescens) and rattan frame. Rowan handle.*

Throughout the 80's, I was paid \$10 an hour to harvest red hot poker reeds from the chook yard and bundle them together to hang up to dry. The most special basket to me made from these red hot pokers has a lid shaped like a temple with a carved piece of rowan atop the lid as a handle. In the last house she lived in, Liz had it positioned on a table at the end of her bed and I remember how happy she was to be able to look at it every day.

– *Kate Souter*





## Small Harvest basket

ca. 1986 · 25 x 19 x 21

*Palembang rattan frame, red hot poker (*Kniphofia caulescens*)*

A delicate, beautifully made small harvest or melon basket. Val Newman uses it to store her fragile sea urchins.



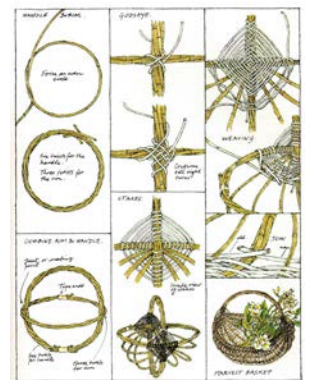
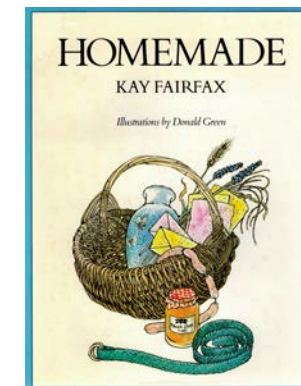
## Medium Harvest basket

ca. 1997 · 40 x 22 x 19

*Palembang rattan frame, red hot poker (*Kniphofia caulescens*)*

Liz made many of these simple baskets, also called melon baskets because of their shape. She grew large swathes of red hot poker specifically for her basket making.

The basket on the cover of *Homemade* (published 1983), is one on Liz's baskets. The instructions for making the baskets were provided by Liz, the illustrations from her work are by Donald Green.







## Asymmetrical Fruit basket

ca. 2005 · 38 x 31 x 18

*Palembang rattan. Gold leaf on base, brass bead, recycled timber base (blue bead inside). Irregular shape*

This shows Liz's playfulness and creativity.

– Sue Turner.

## Fruit or Egg basket

ca. 2005 · 33 x 16 x 18

*Palembang rattan, cedar base, reinforced copper decoration.*

Purchased at Tog's Cafe exhibition in Castlemaine, 2005. Liz's baskets [at the exhibition] were traditionally made and spoke of times past with embellishments featuring leather, knobs, beads, recycled woods and handles. These features were perfectly incorporated into each basket, so much so that the baskets took on the personality of the addition. It is these clever, beautifully balanced elements together with the shape of the baskets that made each individual. Bases of recycled timber made of pine, cedar, oregon and more were used. Liz's practical titles, such as "kindling basket, fruit basket, garlic basket" belie the cultural, spiritual and historical references. The baskets hold a timeless beauty passed from maker to holder.

– Maree Brown.





# Large Plant Protector

ca. 2005 · 85 x 85 x 60

*Palembang rattan, hazel reinforcements, terracotta tag.*

Liz made many different sized and shaped plant protectors. The first domes of this style were made in 1998. Called anti-bird domes. Liz experimented with the number of hazel reinforcers needed. Later Liz makes domes with 'hazel side pieces, 1 every 4 canes, much more rigid. They take 4 hours to make.' Also in her workbook Liz explains, 'Plant protectors deter cats from digging, guard against wind chill, help to protect from frost and animals. Create micro climates inside the dome. Promotes growth and allows rain through to plants.'



# Indian basket

2006 · 26 x 26 x 14

*Palembang rattan, Indian silver decoration.*

In one of her workbooks, Liz calls these 'Indian' baskets, mentions they are like baskets in an Indian book and that they were used to put decorated packages in.







From Liz's workbook. On a roadside in Africa, I saw a few pumpkins for sale displayed on a beautiful basket with little wooden legs. It struck me that we do very little in more advanced societies towards displaying beautiful fresh produce in equally beautiful natural containers.

## Pumpkin basket with legs

2006 · 43 x 24 x 51

*Hardwood legs, rattan cane, fig wood bead with Yemeni and Indian silver beads. Plantation pine base. Wax stain.*

Liz made many of these pumpkin baskets with legs. This basket was in the Textile Network Exhibition 22/9/06-1/10/06 at Robert Clarke Centre, Ballarat.





## Dog basket

ca. 2007 · 69 x 64 x 42

*Palembang rattan, kauri shield with Norwegian pewter decoration.*

This basket was made for Liz and John's last dog, Rabi, (short for Rabindra). Andrew Souter remembers an earlier dog basket made for John and Liz's border collie x corgi, Puppa. Puppa struck up a relationship with Ursula the guinea fowl, and they often shared the basket. Ursula took over the basket after Puppa died.



## Pencil Holder

2007 · 11 x 11 x 15

*Palembang rattan, wooden base, brass and wooden beads, terracotta tag.*

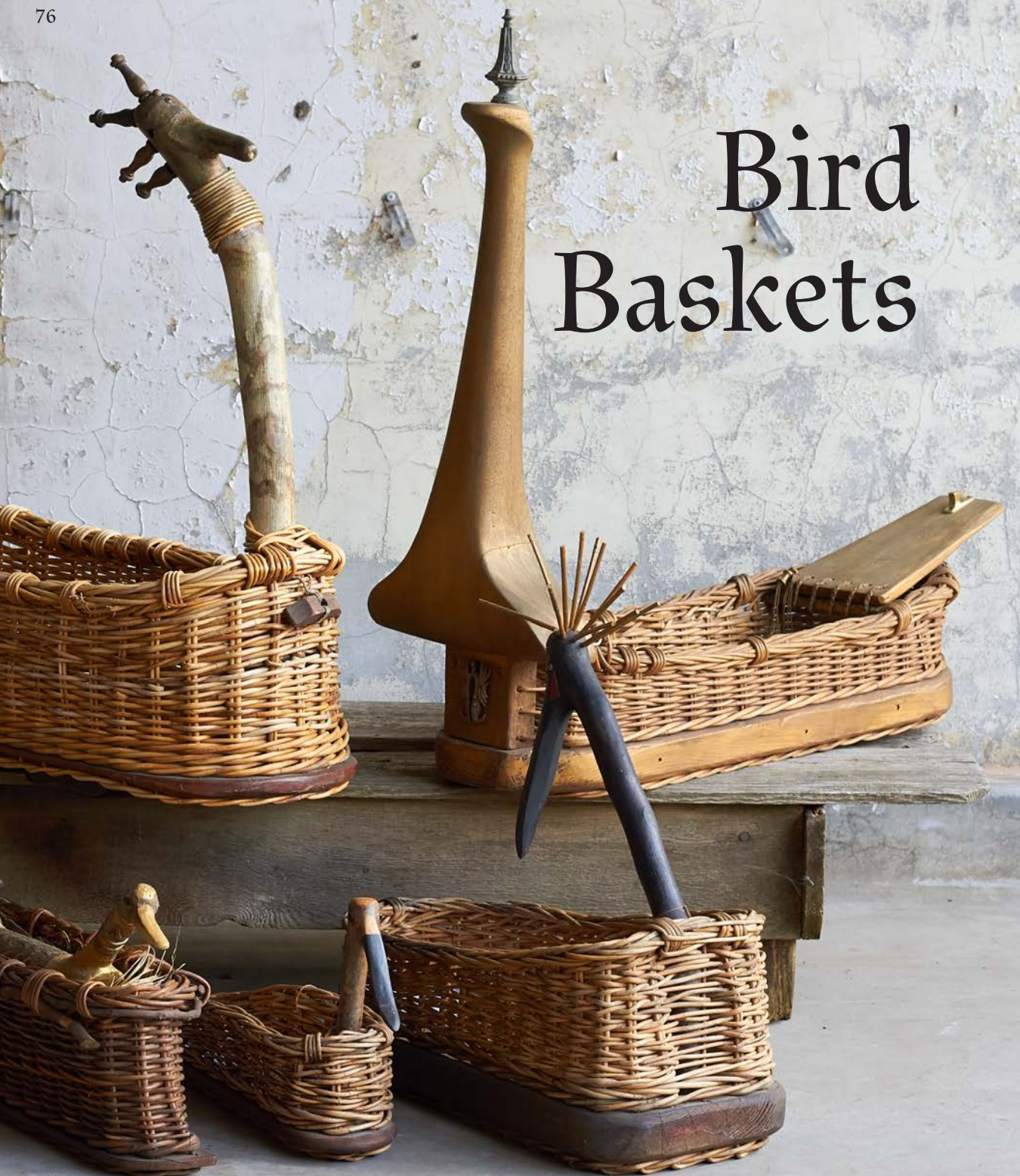
For as long as I remember, Grandma has been giving me blank drawing books and encouraging me to fill them up. Subsequently, drawing and love for art are a huge part of my life. I have an enormous amount of appreciation for the constant encouragement and effort Grandma put into fostering my creativity and am very lucky to have had her as an inspiration.

– Max Souter Bray





# Bird Baskets



## Crowned Saddle Bill Crane basket

ca. 2000 · 63x25x59

*Oregon base, walnut neck, gold leaf crown added 2002. Silver Indian ink. Liquitex and gold Indian ink. Palembang rattan.*

Liz says in her notebook, "Put crown on this Oct 2002. Balance better."







## African Bird Toy basket

ca. 2004 · 106 x 30 x 82

*Palembang rattan, timber bird's head, base, toggle and flap. Antique brass hook. Gold paint.*

Upon the arrival of our children, Ruby and Emma, Liz wove the basket and John crafted the timber pieces for this magnificent toy basket. It is imbued with personality and its functionality and eccentric appearance make it a much loved companion.

– Michael Dhillon



## Small Bird basket

ca. 2005 · 51 x 13 x 46

*Palembang rattan, walnut bird, hardwood base, boot polish, liquitex acrylic.*

Liz had such a good eye for quirky bits of wood to incorporate into her baskets. Here a bit of her walnut tree, a quick carve, some boot polish and two black studs. The bird was born. She sits on my kitchen bench full of shopping lists, pencils and important bits of paper and makes me smile.

– Sue Turner



# Golden Bird Storage basket

2001 • 88 x 28 x 82

*Gold Indian ink, oregon base, rosewood rear, Palembang rattan, found objects including brass hooks.  
Rear lid.*

From Liz's workbook: Bird carved from a table leg from Restorer's Barn, \$10.  
Hand adzed and sanded. Made basket after cutting base back and sanding  
cut Thai door shape [of base] back and put on gold loops for line. Wrapped.  
Painted gold and sanded. Gold ink - two colours.  
Liz also called this Golden Thai Bird Boat.







## Golden Duck in basket

ca. 2009 · basket: 51 x 15 x 18 – duck: 43 x 10

*Palembang rattan with hazel strengtheners. Flax and camel hair in basket. Duck: body walnut (dried 2 years), green fig wood beak and neck, green hazel wings. 18 crt gold leaf and Permaset gold and bronze.*

When Liz first suggested that I might like to make a basket, I readily took up the opportunity. Without any idea yet of the significance of this beginning, I installed myself in front of the hearth with a bundle of cane and Liz explained how to begin a melon basket. The engaging nature of the activity settled my thoughts and an air of quiet concentration entered the room- time shifted in a most satisfying way. I became absorbed by the movement of my hands, the feel of the damp material, the occasional words of instruction and the steady rhythm of weaving over and under. That afternoon, I discovered my craft and also my teacher.

Liz taught me that our baskets had to be strong enough to endure hard work and to last for several generations. We had to respect our material and take into account the environmental impact and sustainability of how it was harvested and where it had come from. Liz supported me through the challenges of making- administering chocolate cake and lemon verbena tea at crucial moments- and reined me in when my work became sloppy. At completion, she would celebrate my triumph with a twinkle in her eye and a double click of appreciation- she was always so proud of my achievements.

For years I visited Brown Hill to make baskets. Each time Liz would generously clear space in her busy life to accompany me through the creation of a new project. They were functional and beautiful creations, often holding a story inspired by a memory or experience. We made baskets for grape harvesting, vessels with slated bases of freshly harvested hazel wood, shaped by hand on the draw horse. Others stood on pointy-toed legs crafted from surveying pegs or had conical lids inspired by the design of traditional African huts. Liz was always the facilitator and mentor and John would often look on encouragingly, heading out to the shed periodically to return later with a treasure that might be useful as a handle, a hinge, a decoration or an interesting talking point. My time at Brown Hill was enriched by the conversations, dreams and plans that were shared along the way and I am full of gratitude for how much Liz passed on so open-heartedly to me.

When Liz died, I realised that I didn't actually have a Liz basket of my own. But then this beautiful bird and its nest came to roost. It reminds me of the delightful character that so often featured in Leunig cartoons and which John would save for me from the paper. Months worth at a time, each stamped with the date, would periodically arrive in a recycled envelope, reinforced with tape. To me this basket represents the many things Liz taught me about being a maker, about living a good life, and it reminds me of how safe and looked after I always felt when I stayed at Brown Hill.

– Kirsty Robertson.

Making re Tex hill bx at Pats. 23/9/09. decided I would do Bird then  
 4/09. materials  
 Cut Bird Body walnut, dry at least 2 years. Fig wood beak & neck. Hazel wings  
 green green  
 4/4/09

1/4/9 carved & gilded wings. 18crt gold leaf + Permaset gold.  
 5/4/09 No more gaps to fill head 6/4 Scrimed head on. 7/4 Dilled  
 wings/feathers  
 8/4 ordered gold. Bronzes Permaset - Kalmac.  
 11/4 Put wings on with sale sticks + Super glue.  
 13/4. Cut down long beak to be more duck like. Cut out "No more Gaps"  
 re did. It got wrecked when I recut the beak. - leave to dry for a  
 few days. Covered over some WW I didnt like. Re coloured tail. Need  
 to retain basket prior to bx. July 6 - (2009) felt very brave  
 re cutting beak. - could ruin it altogether.  
 19/4 Sanded eyes, re did gold.

Basket 51cms long. 18cms high  
 15cms wide  
 10cms wide.  
 Duck 43 long.



4/7/09  
 Fix in with  
 Camel hair &  
 cut more  
 flax to support  
 So Tricky





## Food Dome

2013 · 45 x 45 x 53

*Palembang rattan, Israeli olive wood bead (inside lid), harness metal decoration.*

This sturdy rattan basket, a distinctive moroccan tagine style with a conical lid that stands tall. Liz would have said 'it has authority'. She gave it to my husband for his 50th birthday, inside the basket was one of her hand printed and painted cards of a bird in flight underneath a silver moon. We now use this basket for special occasions. It holds a surprise, a cake, present or special dish for the occasion.

*- Deb Sonenberg*



## Oval Tray

ca. 1995 · 70 x 34 x 4

*Palembang rattan, terracotta tag.*

Stylish enough to hang on my wall as a beautiful ornament but practical enough to be used so many times for bread rolls, freshly baked muffins, or piles of fresh fruit when I am feeding a good crowd of friends.

*- Sue Turner.*



# Noah's Ark

ca. 2004 • 58 x 26 x 45

*Palembang rattan, cedar base, hazel. Brass fittings, olive wood bead, walnut toggle. Timber people, animals, ladder, steps and superstructure. Terracotta and brass pots.*

I loved the collaborations mum did with dad. Dad was very happy to be involved in any of the projects. There are a few variations of Noah's Ark, one for their first grandchild Max, one for close friend Rosie's first grandchild and one for the local Steiner School where Mum and Rosie were both involved. Dad shaped the solid wood bases and the little fences that interlocked as well as a wooden ladder that descended from the ark's deck to the floor.

– *Kate Souter*



Some of my fondest memories with Grandma (Liz) are of sitting at the big dinner table, surrounded by paints and stencils, creating canvas artworks that she would turn into books for me. Another incredibly special gift, created in a collaboration of Grandma's beautiful basket weaving and Grandpa's woodworking, was the Ark. Stuffed with little wooden animals and everything you could need for surviving a biblical flood. Probably the most beautiful and special gift a young child could receive.

– *Max Souter Bray*







Vineyard  
Baskets



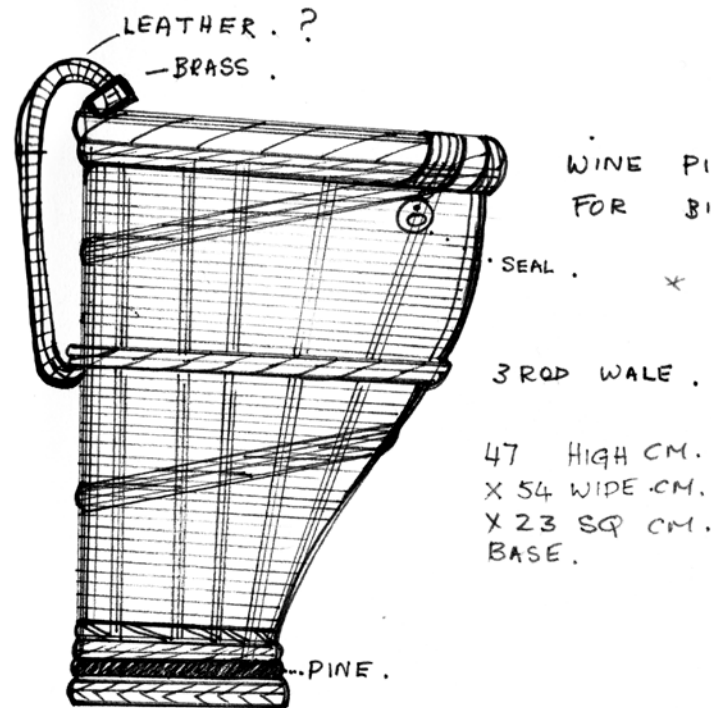
# Grape Collecting Backpacks

ca. 1991 · 54 x 48 x 49 and 54 x 48 x 44

*Palembang rattan, olive wood bases, leather straps, terracotta tags*

These two grape harvesting baskets were given to Bill Dhillon in time for the first Bindi harvest in 1991. They comfortably rest across the shoulders and upper back and readily empty the grapes by way of the picker bending forward and the contents spilling past the neck and head into a bin or vat.

— *Michael Dhillon.*



WINE PICKING BASKET  
FOR BILL OCT. 1990.  
GISBORNE

SEAL .  
\*  
3 ROD WALE .

47 HIGH CM.  
X 54 WIDE CM.  
X 23 SQ CM.  
BASE .

(PROVED SATISFACTORY  
SIZE + SHAPE . APRIL  
1991 .







John Souter with grape collecting backpack after repair and restaining in 1992



## Single Bottle Holder

1991 · 13 x 13 x 56

*Palembang rattan, hazel rim, olive wood bead, Indian silver, Malay silver, terracotta tag, silver wire.*

Liz gave this to Michael Dhillon for his birthday in 1991.



# Wine Bottle basket

1995 · 46 x 36 x 23

*Palembang rattan, stained timber base, hazel uprights, terracotta tag.*

Twenty years ago my dear aunt Liz made this magnificent wine basket for my father Bill. The first week of October is a nostalgic time that marks Liz's passing and my late father's birthday. This basket and its contents carry many stories; Liz's crafting with love and detail, my father's appreciation and the basket's constant use, these vineyards and labels with Dad's mentor Kostas Rind and Kaye - Bill's wife, my mother and Liz's sister. Family, stories and feelings woven tight, present every day.

*- Michael Dhillon.*







## Large Grape Harvest basket

ca. 1995 · 100 x 62 x 35

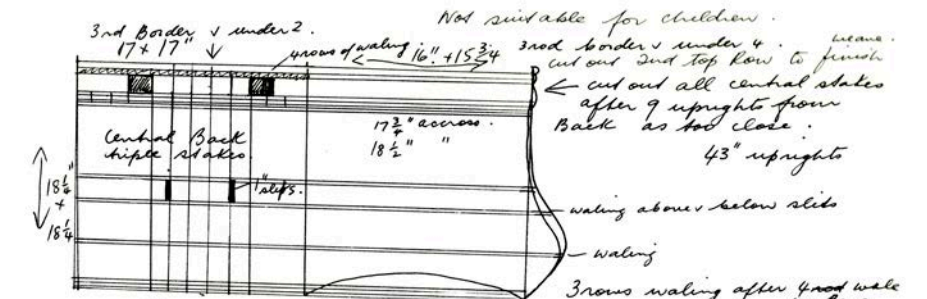
*Palembang rattan, hazel, olive wood and other beads, terracotta tag*

Modelled on traditional grape harvest baskets from Burgundy, France.





# Donkey baskets



Hours.

25/9	5 1/2	10/10	- 3	Lg: 850
26/9	5 3/4	11/11	- 5 1/2	John \$20
27/9	7	21/10	- 3	
28/9	6	22/10	5 1/2	
		23/10	5 1/2	
		24/10	3 3/4	wrapping.

52 1/2 hours @ \$20 per hour.

Place articles - down drop - may fracture cane.  
 Tested with kind + children 27/10 Lg h. says OK.





# Balloon basket



Nightmare Balloon Basket. 19-8-77  
31-8-77

52 canes 3-6mm (cut 2 pieces) sep 2" shorter than 1 metre  
52" 1 metre x 6-8mm. + flush with base. 39 1/2"

John 830. Pine chips.

4 trips to Towner.  
\$114 Pine Base with  
3 Boards across.  
+ screws.

Cane \$65.  
114.

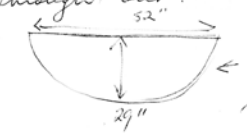
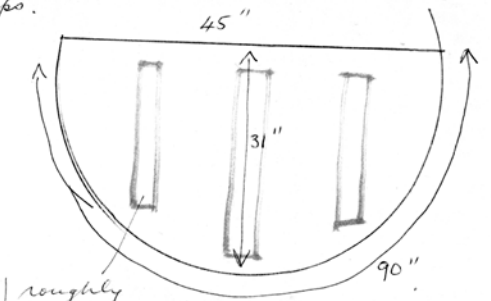
3/8/97 \$32 1/2 hours

4 Rod Border. then under 5  
Bands of Waling.  
through out 52"

roughly 1" deep x 2" wide.

Basket finished up more this  
shape should have double  
stacked front + had wider  
than usual gaps?  
Had to reple all the joints...  
flu

sent by  
Copper. 2/9/97





# Large Wheeled Wood Trolley basket

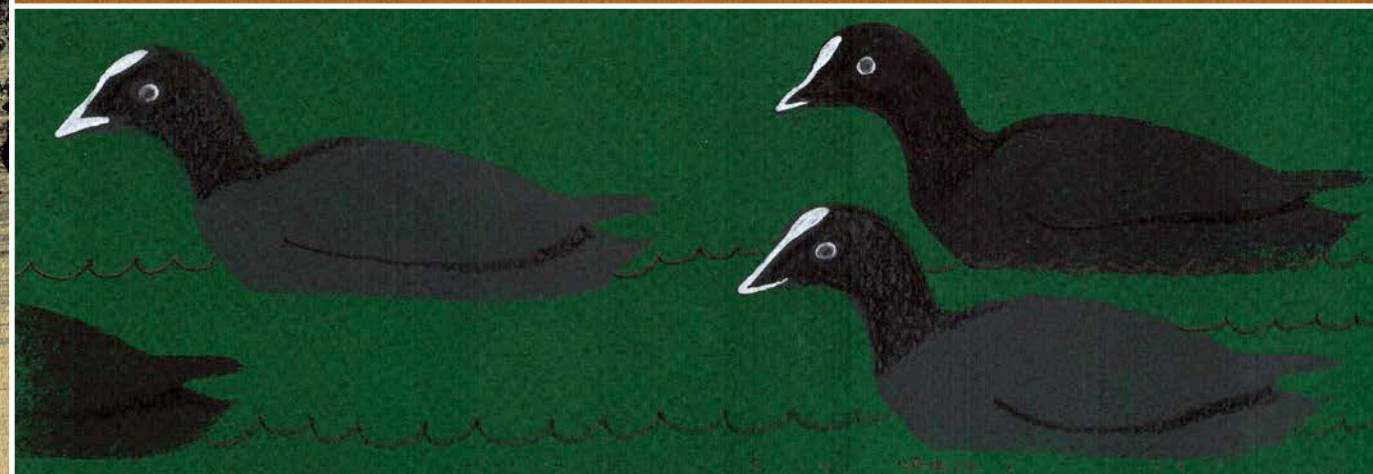
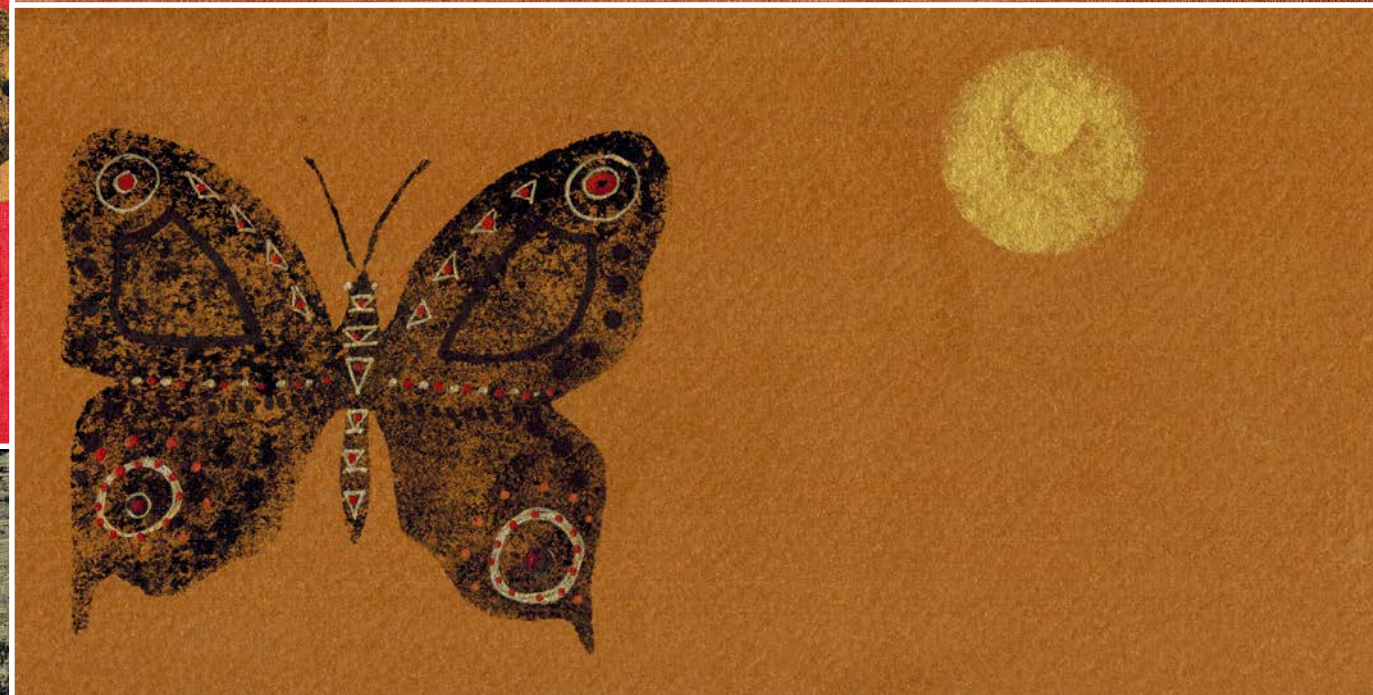
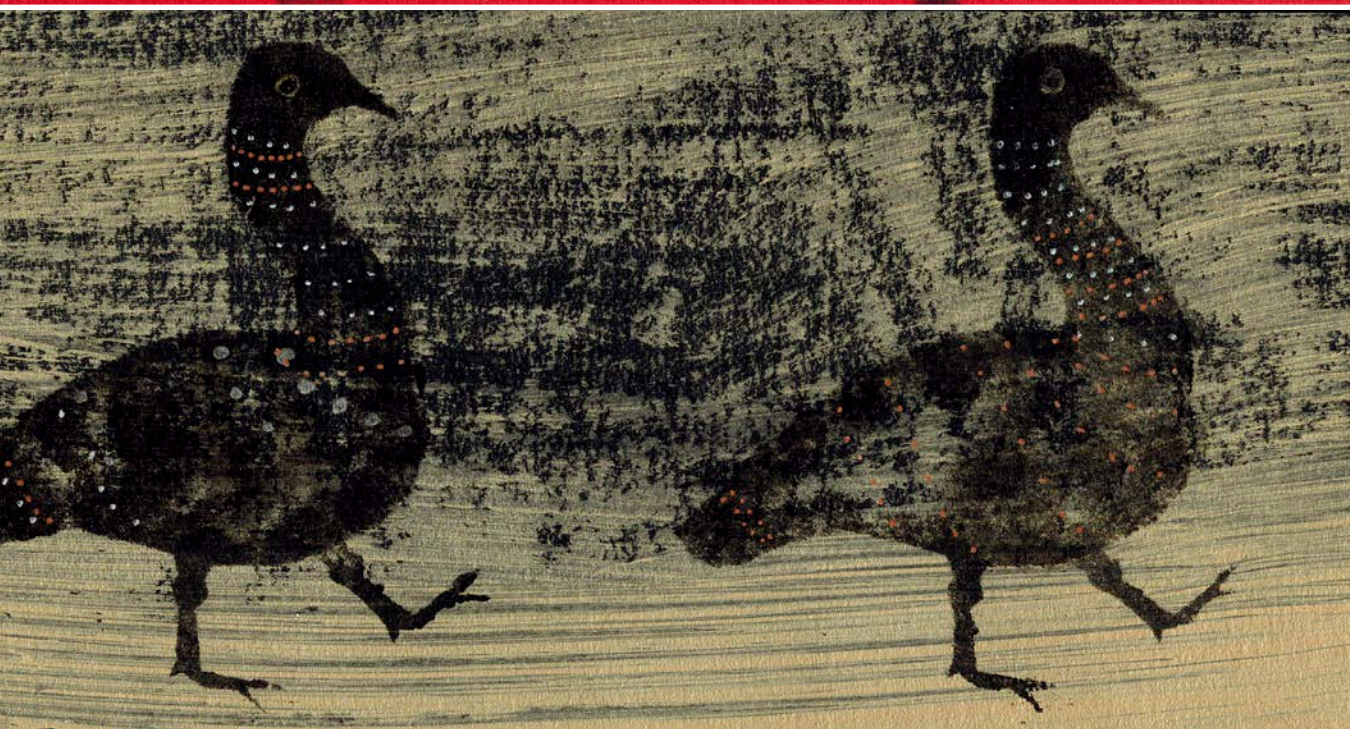
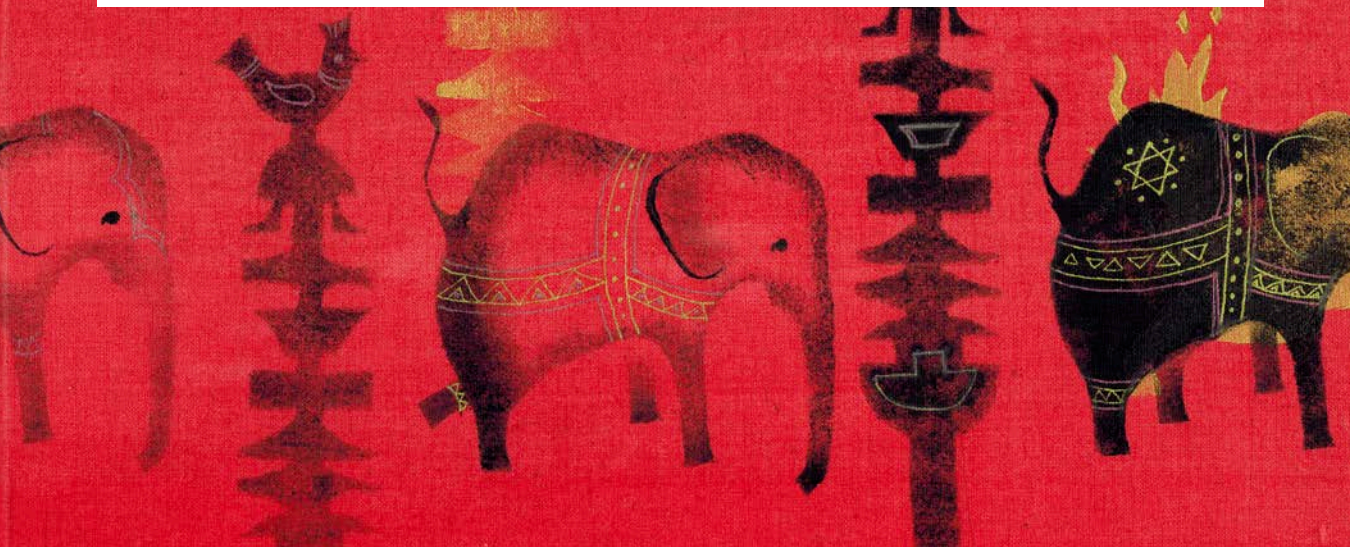
This basket was a collaboration between Liz and Jos van Hulsen, pictured opposite with his partner Mary, and the frame they used for the basket.



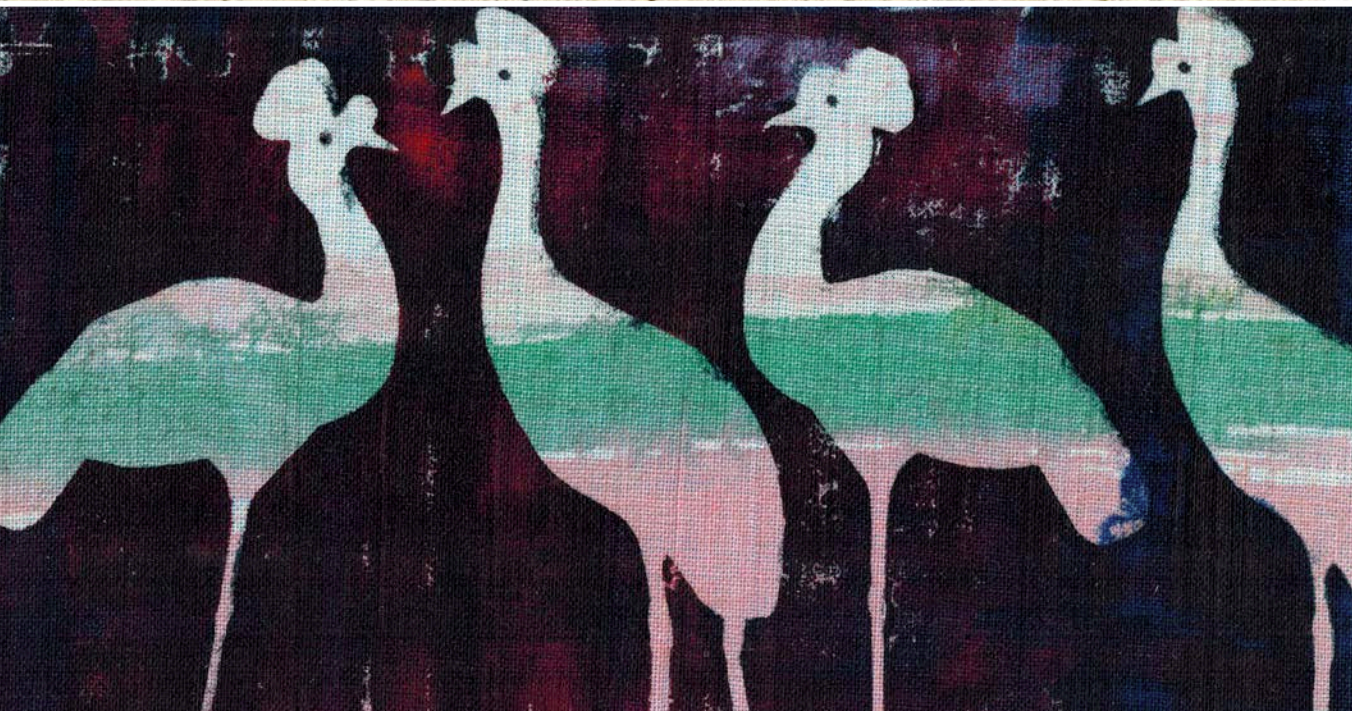
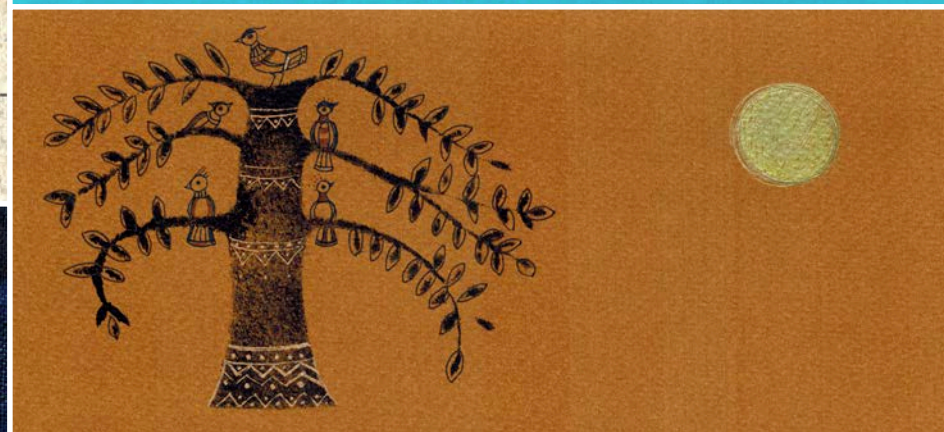


# Cards

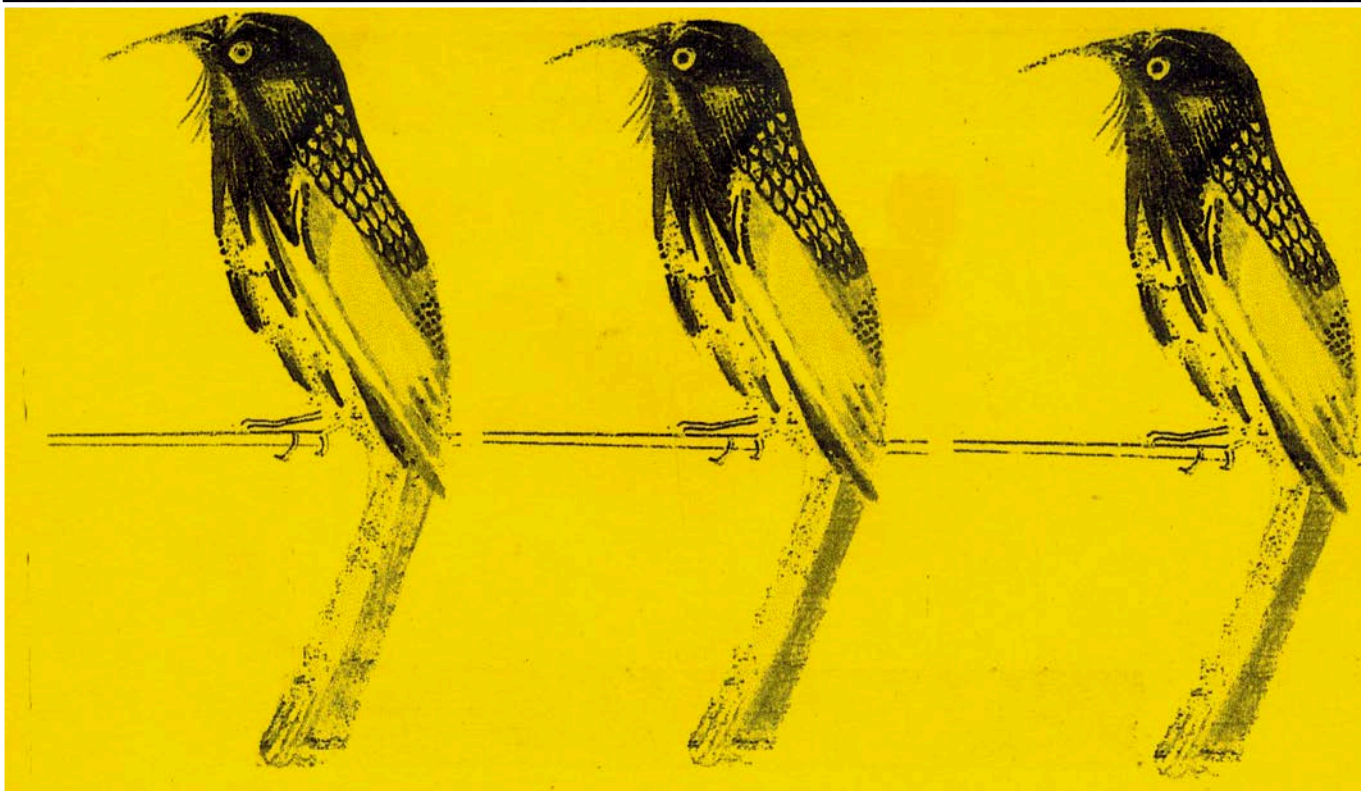
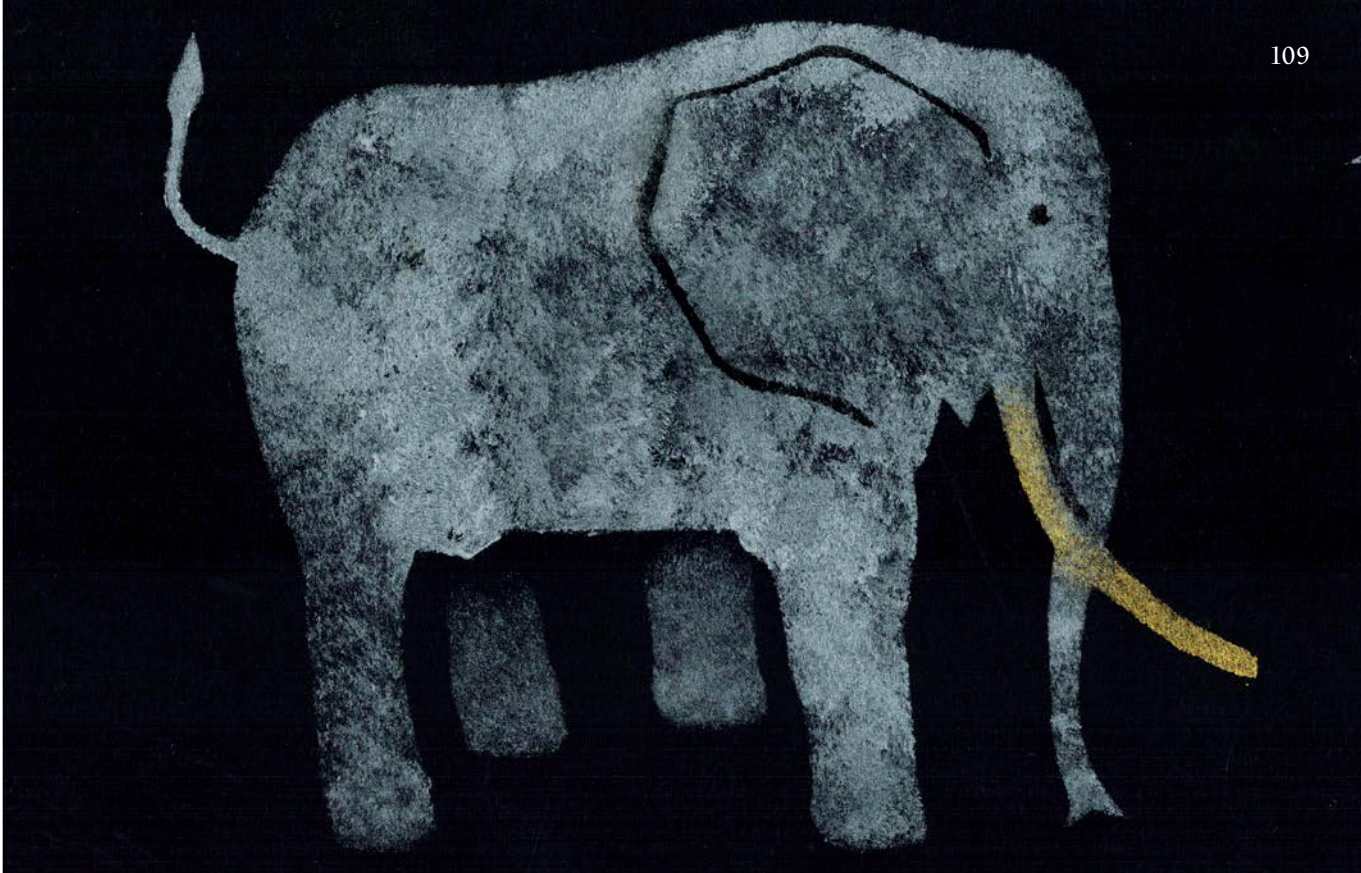
Liz made beautiful cards and over many, many years sent them to friends and family all over the world. Every one contained a thoughtful note, a genuine connection. Most of these cards were made using Liz designed stencils, beautiful coloured cards and paints, with details being highlighted by hand in ink or paint.



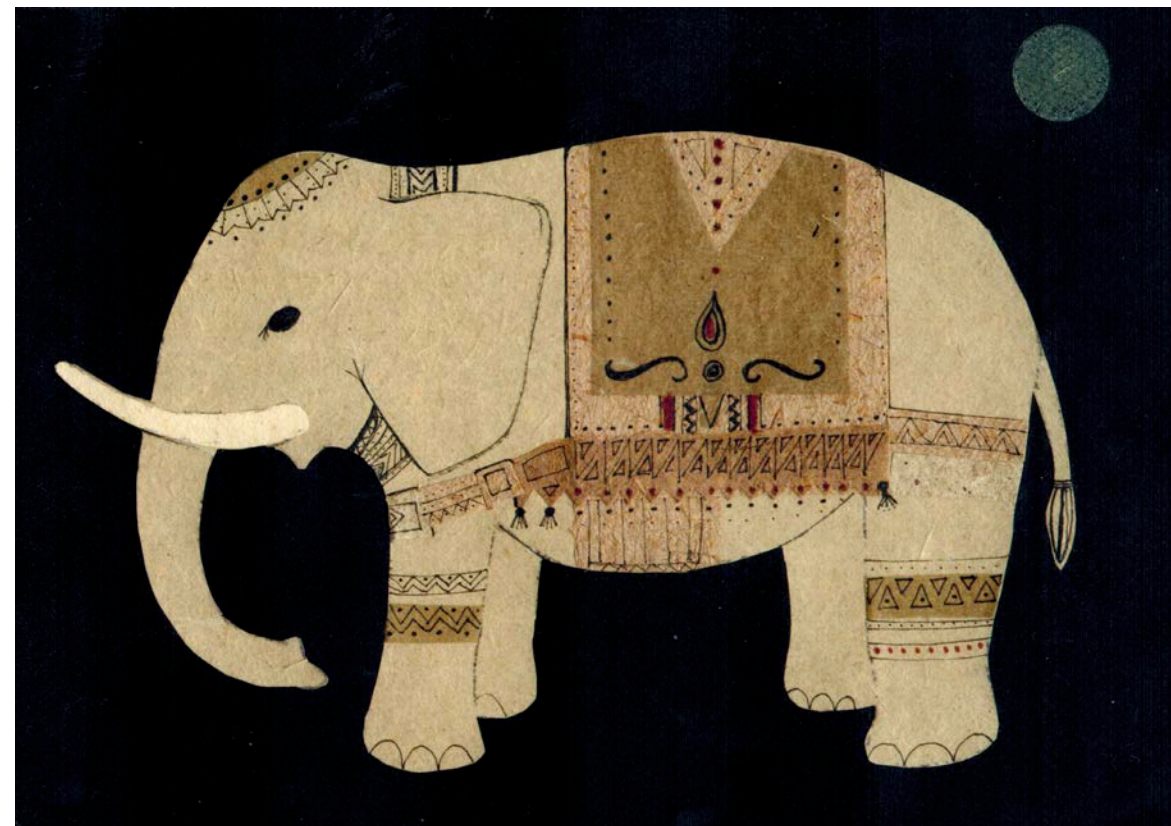
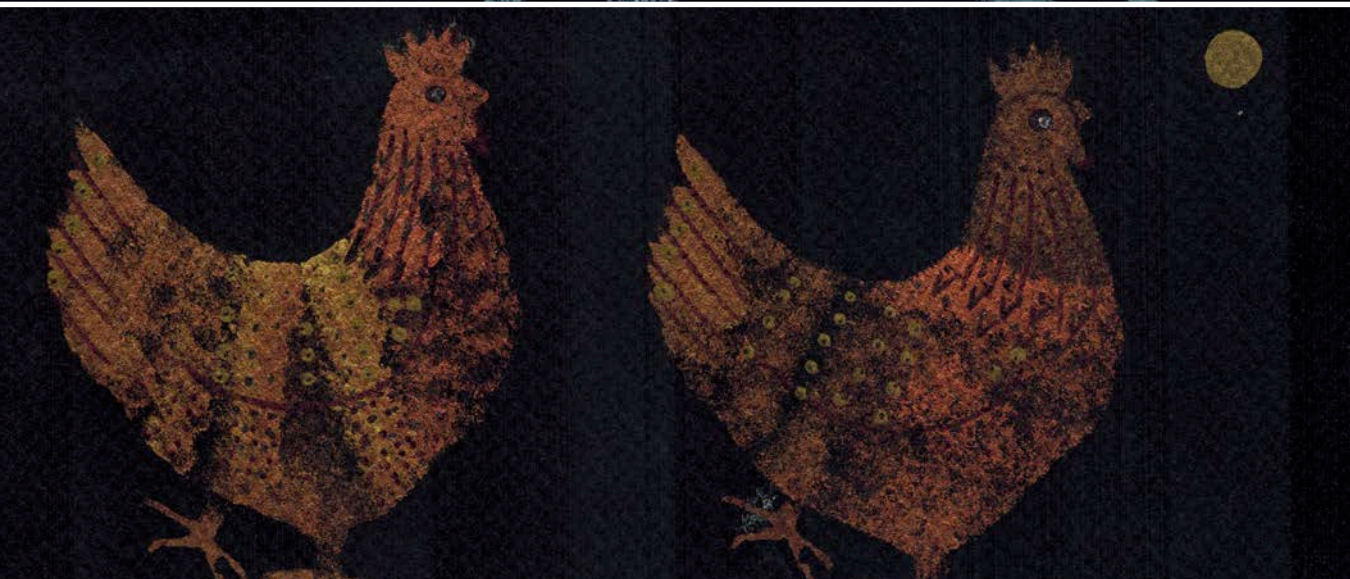
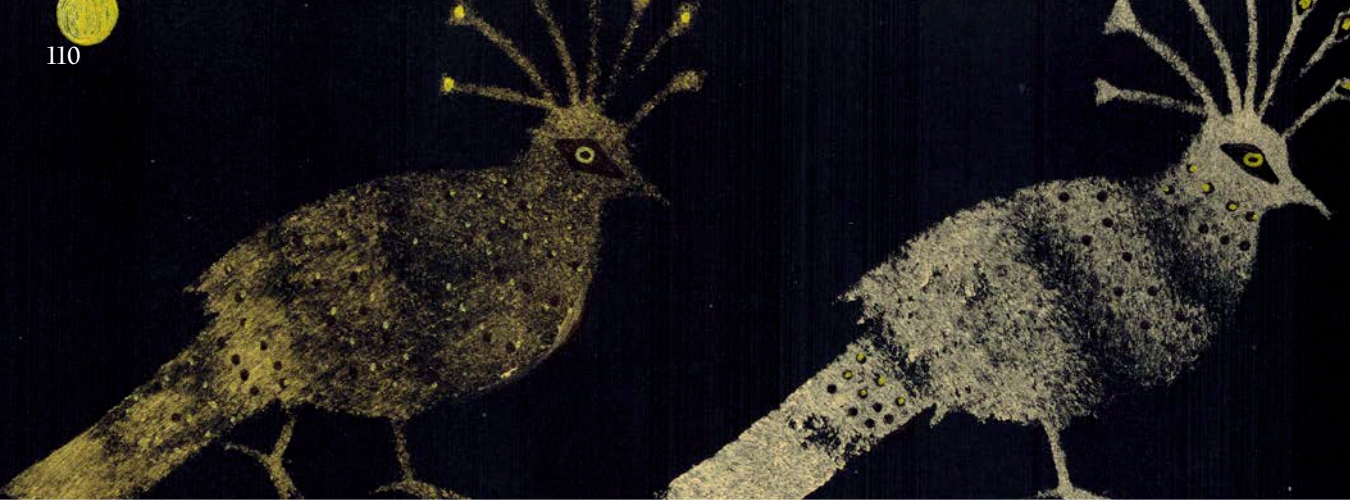












Clare Miller talks about some other cards that Liz made, represented here by the Three Kings and Elephant cards.

*"These cards are totally different to the stencilled cards. The brown shades were carefully cut from homemade paper made from banana leaves and other unusual fibre plants. Further additions come from 'found' paper decorations, and pen or brush work. Most beautifully designed detailed work, photocopied into a card."*





# Basket Index

African Bird Toy basket .....	78	Large Plant Protector .....	70
Asymmetrical Fruit basket .....	68	Large Round Tray .....	55
Bike Seat basket .....	30	Lavender basket .....	13
Blanket Storage basket .....	54	Medium Harvest basket .....	67
Bread basket .....	26	Noah's Ark .....	86
Camel Hair Stitched basket .....	17	Oval Tray .....	85
Carved Walnut Handle basket .....	53	Paper Perceptions .....	36
Cedar Handle basket .....	51	Pencil Holder .....	75
Children's Pull-along basket .....	40	Persian Carpet Stitched basket .....	20
Creelagh Wool basket .....	9	Piano Pedal Magazine basket .....	60
Crimson Rosella Stitched basket .....	22	Picnic basket .....	41
Crowned Saddle Bill Crane basket .....	77	Pine Needle basket with Lid .....	14
Dog basket .....	74	Platters .....	42
Early Style Round basket .....	8	Pumpkin basket with legs .....	72
Etrog basket .....	27	Red Hot Poker Lidded basket .....	65
Food Dome .....	84	Round Lathe Based basket .....	32
Fruit or Egg basket .....	69	Rubber and Rattan Bread basket .....	12
Garlic/nut/egg baskets .....	38	Saskia's Bassinette .....	44
Golden Bird Storage basket .....	80	Single Bottle Holder .....	93
Golden Duck in basket .....	82	Small Bird basket .....	79
Grape Collecting Backpacks .....	90	Small Harvest basket .....	66
Handmade Paper and Red Hot Poker basket .....	35	Steel, Rattan & Blackwood chair .....	33
Hanging Garlic basket .....	64	Tiny Pine Needle basket with Lattice .....	14
Homage to Hunza .....	7	Toy Trollies .....	56
Hops-vine basket .....	10	V-shaped Handle basket .....	50
Indian basket .....	71	Walnut Handle, Brass Bell basket .....	48
Isfahan Stitched basket .....	18	Walnut Handle, Wooden Toggle basket .....	49
Jacaranda Twig basket .....	11	Whale's Way .....	24
Kindling basket, Large Brass Decoration .....	57	Wheeled Wood basket .....	28
Kindling basket with Brass Studs .....	58	Wine Bottle basket .....	94
Kindling basket with Wooden Decoration .....	59	Wood Panel Kindling basket .....	43
Large Grape Harvest basket .....	96		


## Acknowledgements

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Our warm and sincere thanks to Deb Sonenberg for the initial leg work with ideas and story collection, road trips to the Basket Makers of Victoria and the Jewish Museum and with Kirsty Robertson for their help editing, and collecting, cleaning and sorting baskets. To Dan Coates for the amazing photography and design; Ellen Coates and Alex Leeder for help with photography and editing, and Andrew Souter for extra photography. And to everyone else who told us stories about their baskets and their times with Liz, and then lent their precious baskets to us for this exhibition. Apologies to those who offered baskets which we were not able to co-ordinate to collect, and to those who are in this book, but we were not able to find space for at the exhibition. This book represents only a small proportion of baskets made by Liz during her 40 years of basket making.

Kate Souter and Penny Woodward





*These terracotta tags were attached to most of the baskets Liz made. They were her signature. Liz made them from rolled out clay, cut into thin round shapes, embossed with her trade-mark stamp and baked in bulk in her kitchen oven.*