



This number of shoes suddenly appearing in widely separated geographical locations seemed to me to warrant further investigation. Then, to further reinforce footwear in my mind, an installation by Rocio Roman appeared in the gallery at the Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne where she used literally thousands of found shoes. What was at work out in the ether, was it simply serendipitous or was footwear expressing the current zeitgeist? To ascertain if we were sharing thoughts and themes regarding footwear I asked Beth Hatton, Therese Flynn-Clarke and Rocio Roman if they would share their artists' statements about the shoes they had made.

The beautiful shoe made by Beth Hatton is based on a convict shoe and I quote from her statement: "I became interested in early Australian footwear when researching the surveying and settlement of Lake George for our exhibition *Baseline*. While reading about the making of Major Mitchell's first map of the colony (1836) I was struck by how often surveyors out in the field wrote begging for more shoes for the convicts because theirs were being torn to pieces by the vegetation.

"Convicts were the main source of labour for the early surveyors and settlers, and were given the really hard jobs such as working the surveyor's chains and clearing the bush. So I realised that convicts would have been the first to set foot in many parts of Lake George, and therefore one of their shoes could easily carry my ideas about the introduction of weeds to the early colony.



"By good fortune I came across Peter Sinclair who makes and wears replicas of early convict shoes. Using his pattern pieces I set about making my shoe with a mixture of indigenous grasses and some of Lake George's most pervasive weeds. As friends have commented, it is a clodhopper of a shoe yet still has a jaunty feel about it. The early convicts themselves were a cheeky lot. Not at all daunted by their lowly position, they talked back to their masters, stole from them, got drunk and ran away at every opportunity. I like to think that their larrikin spirit expressed itself somehow in the making of my shoe." >>>

Top of page, 3 sets of Fibre Shoes by **Therese Flynn-Clarke**. Materials used include stitched Alexander palm sheath, rubber tree stipules, linen thread, ceramics, dodder, Date palm inflorescence, Nepalese raw silk, stitched seaweed. Above, GRASS SNEAKER by **Wendy Golden**, H12cm x W30cm x D10cm, mixed grasses and linen thread, photo by the artist. Above left, INTRODUCING SPECIES shoe by **Beth Hatton** based on the pattern for a convict's shoe, 240x330x200mm, image by Ian Hobbs.