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THAT SUIT IS HER; REDOING
SUITABLE STYLES TO SUBVERT
FEMININE IDENTITIES IN THE
PROFESSIONAL WORKPLACE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Design In Fashion

at Massey University Wellington New Zealand

Claire Hacon 2011

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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I would like to acknowledge the advice and input of my supervisors, Catherine Bagnall and Amanda Bill in the preparation and development of this thesis. Their extensive intellectual knowledge and enthusiasm throughout the project was invaluable. Likewise I greatly appreciate the guidance in developing and refining the research structure received from Massey University's IDIE Postgraduate staff, especially the Directors, Dorita Hannah and Julieanna Preston. My photographer Olivia Claire Taylor has been invaluable in photographing herself in the suits and this has helped articulate a major concept underpinning the work. Thank you to performance artist Sascha Perfect for performing the suits and my model Hannah Strand who patiently acted as my fit and process model. Thank you also to friends who contributed their counsel and fellow students who became involved performing the suits and providing valuable feedback. Finally I would like to thank my husband Jon for his advice on presentation, unfailing support and encouragement throughout.

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ABSTRACT
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The homogeneous western business suit typically worn by female professionals is, I would argue, disempowering because it functions as a reductive version of male power dressing and denies its wearer any opportunity to express her individuality. This practice-led research project has involved re-figuring the woman's business suit. This suit type been interrogated, analysed and reflected upon; this activity has formed a significant part of the research study. As tailoring is the central discipline of my practice, I utilise these skills to offer women multiple suit forms to challenge stereotypes of feminine representation in professional organisations.

My project is situated within the context of research from the perspective of the fashion practitioner and utilises conceptually-led design methods (Bugg, 2006, p. 2). A multi-method approach has been taken to interrogate the design practice and this includes the application of different pattern-making and tailoring methods to various suit studies and the analysis of wearers and viewers responses to these suits.