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First Son

Memory and Myth - an adjustment of faith

A written component presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Design in Fashion and Textile Design at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Holly McQuillan

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## Abstract

*First Son* is an exploration of cultural change in New Zealand from the 1940s till the 1980s using textiles as medium for communication. Referencing personal memories, contemporary New Zealand mythology, art and design; my work places an ordinary mans life within the sweeping social revolution that occurred over this time. As personal vehicles for expression of both my dead father and the declining rural Pakeha culture he grew up in, the textile objects have become memorials, moving statues for a culture that has been forever changed by war, government, technology and time. My research contributes written and visual material to the fields of post-modern, historical, phenomenological research, within the context of memory, identity, textiles and memorial. Using the memories a group have of an ordinary man who most people have never heard of, I hope to touch a part of all of those who see my work. The specific memories are not common, but the sadness, joy and very act of remembering someone is universal, so I propose that this will speak to all those who view it. I have aimed to create a body of work that is a visual memoir or a memorial in the form of a series of textile based Memory Objects to remember my father and the time he was alive, before those who knew him well are gone. It has used the space we surround ourselves with, particularly dress, to explore the links between the past and the present. It aims to show the importance of remembering, of archiving and presenting the past in an accessible and meaningful way.

*First Son* has also been designed using a method of garment production that has the potential to reduce waste in an otherwise wasteful industry. This further increases the impact of the work beyond historical, social and emotional frameworks and into the environmental context as well.

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