SMOKE AND MIRRORS: SMOKEFREE SPONSORSHIP AND THE RECONCEPTUALISATION OF NEW ZEALAND FASHION DESIGN

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Abstract

The Benson and Hedges Fashion Design Awards (1964-1995)/Smokefree Fashion Design Awards (1996-1998) was New Zealand's longest running fashion design competition. Open to both amateurs and professionals, the awards were promoted as a vehicle for “turning dreams into gold”, with many designers going on to establish their own businesses. Designs entered in the early awards evoked a European fashion sensibility aligned with the glamour connoted by the gold packaged sponsor's product. Where indigenous design did feature, it was as embellishment. In 1990, the New Zealand Government passed the Smokefree Environments Act placing a sunset clause on tobacco sponsorship. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, tension is evident within the awards as organisers sought to adapt the event to attract new underwriters, while remaining faithful to the existing sponsors vision. In the 1990s, Avant-Garde and Oceania sections were established linking the awards with the New Zealand Wearable Art Awards, the latter section actively sought entries that conceptualised New Zealand's place within the Pacific. The 1995 fashion awards were the last to be sponsored by Benson and Hedges forcing organisers to adapt to the expectations of the Health Sponsorship Council's (HSC) Smokefree brand. In the same year the Oceania Section was added, entrant, Margaret Marr acknowledged this finally endorsed “Pacific-influenced clothing” in New Zealand fashion. Publicity material proclaimed Smokefree was “taking the ash” out of fashion, implying an industry that had burnt itself out and was now irrelevant. With a pounamu (greenstone) pinhead as the Smokefree symbol, and drawing upon the Brand New Zealand ethos, the HSC repositioned New Zealand designer fashion as an international brand that was young and cutting edge. Using the awards as a framework this paper posits that the shift in sponsorship made visible a greater diversity of practice within New Zealand fashion design.

Introduction

The Benson and Hedges Fashion Design Awards (1964-1995)/Smokefree Fashion Design Awards (1996-1998) was New Zealand’s longest running fashion design competition. Established in 1964 as the Wills Gold Rose Award, from 1965 the awards were sponsored by Benson and Hedges, a Wills brand of gold-packaged cigarettes.

The golden packaging lent itself to the advertising mantra “turning dreams into gold”; simultaneously a reference to the sponsor's product, and the awards ability to open doors for budding designers. An open entry policy made the awards unique and attracted both amateur and professional designers, the event was televised from the 1970s and received significant radio and print media coverage. Auckland designer and textile artist Susan Holmes, a member of The Mill, an Auckland-based craft cooperative, argued the publicity generated by the awards allowed small scale creative entrepreneurs, like herself, to gain a higher profile (Dallaway-Davidson, 2016; Anon., 1984).

Fifty entries were received for the first awards in two sections—High Fashion Daywear and Formal Evening Wear; by the time the awards closed it regularly attracted over 500 entries. Fashion promoter Josephine Brodie coordinated the awards until 1982 when Maysie Bestall-Cohen, who had modelled in the early awards, took over the running of the event. A Wool Award was created in 1965, donated by the New Zealand Wool Board, this award cemented the link between the fashion industry and one of New Zealand's primary industries. In the 1960s, the evening section was the highlight of the show, the top awards were granted in this section, however, as New Zealand society moved away from “grand occasions”, and designers began to focus on daywear, “…it became obvious that the most glittering prize could no longer be restricted to eveningwear” (Anon., 1984). In 1971, a Supreme Award was created, each section winner was eligible to take this award, over time sections expanded to include menswear and categories for leisure wear.

The Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Act 1990 put a sunset clause on tobacco sponsorship forcing organisers to consider ways to strengthen the awards to ensure longevity. The 1995 awards were the last to be underwritten by Benson and Hedges. From 1996 until the awards folded in 1998, they were underwritten by the HSC and became known as the Smokefree Fashion Awards. New promotional material deployed green, a Smokefree colour, to connote growth and freshness. A pounamu dressmaker's pin head replaced the golden cigarette packaging as the HSC resolutely proclaimed it was “taking the **ash** out of f**ash**ion” (New Zealand Smokefree Fashion Awards, 1996).

This paper explores the transitions that occurred during the awards 34 year run, from garments that looked backwards to Europe for inspiration; to garments which used New Zealand products, but stylistically and conceptually looked forward acknowledging New Zealand's place in the Pacific. I seek to demonstrate that while external economic forces assisted in this evolution in style, it did not accelerate or become evident until the demise of tobacco sponsorship. Britain had been one of New Zealand's major agricultural trading partners, wool was a key New Zealand export, this dynamic began to change after 1961 when Britain announced it would seek to join the European Economic Community (EEC). Access quota rights to British markets were negotiated but these ended in 1977 forcing New Zealand to look elsewhere. In 1984, the Labour government removed subsidies and tariffs available to farmers and promoted free trade agreements. (Nixon and Yeabsley, 2010). A growing desire for fashion which expressed a modern Pacific vision began to emerge in the 1980s as New Zealand's economic ties to Britain were relinquished.

Notwithstanding these changes, the supreme award winning garments from the 1980s continued to promote New Zealand product, leather and wool, through a European lens.

As the organisers of the awards looked to secure its longevity, in the face of the demise of tobacco sponsorship, we begin to see a greater alignment between values associated with New Zealand's place in the Pacific and the garments which won awards.

Literature Review: New Zealand Fashion

Research on New Zealand fashion has grown since the early 2000s as part of a global interest in fashion scholarship. The most extensive study on the history of New Zealand fashion, which covers the period of the awards, was undertaken by Lucy Hammonds, Douglas Lloyd Jenkins and Claire Regnault in *The Dress Circle*: *New Zealand Fashion Design Since 1940* (2010). *The Dress Circle* counters a narrative that the appearance of four New Zealand labels on the London catwalk in February 1999 marked the birth of New Zealand fashion (Lassig, 2010, p. xi). Covering each decade from the 1940 to the 2000s, *The Dress Circle* is a social history of fashion design drawing on designer stories and archival material. Many designers featured from the 1960s gained, or had profiles enhanced by, the Benson and Hedges Fashion Design Awards. Indigenous design and the Benson and Hedges Awards are mentioned but not covered in depth in the book.

In *New Zealand Fashion Design* (2010), fashion historian Angela Lassig draws attention to British fashion historian Colin McDowell's 2002 comments that the absence of Māori design at New Zealand fashion week was perplexing given "… it seems to me that Māori culture is such a strong part of New Zealand life (McDowell cited in Lassig, 2010, p. xiv). Acknowledging the use of Māori design by some fashion designers, Lassig noted tensions existed between the use of Māori design in commercial collections where consultation and collaboration had not taken place (Lassig, 2010, p. xv). *New Zealand Fashion Design* focussed on designers working in the contemporary context and who had high profiles in the 2000s. Within these stories the awards are mentioned, notably Doris de Pont's success in winning the 1990 Menswear Award with a linen suit that featured a koru design in the jacket lapel, this was inspired by a national flag proposed by Friedensreich Hundertwasser (Lassig, 2010, pp. xiv–xv; Pollock, 2012).

Fashion: Australian and New Zealand Designers by journalist Mitchell Oakley Smith (2010) showcases contemporary New Zealand designers who have received international acclaim. Oakley Smith focusses on creativity born out of geographic isolation, rather than indigenous design. This theme ties in with the premise of the exhibition *Together Alone*: *Australian and New Zealand Fashion* (1 October 2009 – 18 April 2010), National Gallery of Victoria, Australia (Jocic et al., 2009).

Together Alone was one of several fashion exhibitions to appear from late 1990s, as part of a rise in global fashion scholarship. These exhibitions have contributed catalogues and monographs to the growing body of research on New Zealand fashion design. The most high profile exhibition on Māori fashion design was *Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan Travel in Style*,

Hawkes Bay Museum and Art Gallery 27 September 2014 – 15 March 2015. *Travel in Style* explored Tirikatene-Sullivan's use of traditional Māori motifs in her clothing designs and the symbolic significance of her wardrobe as a Member of Parliament (Cracknell et al., 2014).

The role of fashion design competitions in the development of New Zealand fashion were explored in *Fashion on Wheels: The New Zealand Gown of the Year Contest* (Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland, 27 August – 7 November 2004) curated by Claire Regnault and *When Dreams Turn to Gold: The Benson and Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards 1964-1998,* Dunedin Public Art Gallery 18 March 2017 – 25 June 2017 curated by Lucy Hammonds and Natalie Smith. *Gown of the Year*, a ballgown competition, and one of New Zealand's earliest fashion design contests ran from 1958 to 1964. A forerunner to the Benson and Hedges Fashion Design Awards, Gown of the Year was regularly sponsored by W. D. and H. O. Wills. Lea Draysey won the inaugural award with a gown given a Māori name *Ao-tu-roa* (Light of Day) (1958), a strapless evening dress in white velvet, embroidered with emerald crystals. The reference to place in Draysey's garment was an exception, the majority of gowns entered in the awards evoked European glamour and nights at the opera, as suggested in Roswitha Robertson's *Tosca* (1962) entry and Peggie Wilson's *Vienna Bon Bon* (1963) design (Regnault, 2003).

When Dreams turn to Gold showcased the history of the Benson and Hedges awards through garments, photography and audio visual material. Indigenous design was profiled by the inclusion of work by Di Jennings and Kerrie Hughes, Lindah Lepou and Kriz Hema. Hughes' nomination in the 1984 Leisure Lifestyle Section was on display: a fine wool pantsuit with cummerbund made from suede, goatskin and wool patterned with a Polynesian design. Jennings' was represented by her 1989 High Fashion Daywear Award winning yellow coat appliquéd and beaded in a hibiscus design. Lindah Lepou was represented by a Black Beaded Drees and Kimono Bomber Jacket (1997), a nominee in the avant garde award Lepou's work was described as "Polynesian dressing for the Millennium" representing a fusion between European, Japanese and Polynesian design traditions. Kriz Hema (Ngati Kahungunu and Hawaiian descent) won the Young Designer Award (1995) for a work described by judges as "footpath fashion" due to the use of 1000 aluminium drink can pull-tabs (Hammonds and Smith, 2017). Each of these designs visually spoke to the emergence of a distinctive New Zealand fashion identity, they were showcased alongside other designs that nodded to the use of New Zealand wool and leather to create European high style, and designs influenced by influence of popular culture.

Methodology

This project uses a Thematic Content Analysis of archival texts and images. Key sources include the 'Papers of Maysie Bestall-Cohen Promotions: Records of the Benson and Hedges and Smokefree fashion awards 1970-1998', Alexander Turnbull Library, in addition to fashion magazines from the time notably *More* and *Fashion Quarterly*. A Thematic Content Analysis is often used for the presentation of qualitative data. Rosemarie Anderson describes it as a form of "low hovering" over the data, grouping material for later discussion and analysis (Anderson,

2007). This method allows me to make sense of a diverse range of sources. One of the challenges of writing a history of New Zealand fashion design is that it is not recorded and collected in conventional ways, due in part to the gendered nature of fashion design, where women often cut and sewed from the kitchen table (Smith, 2021; Hammonds, et. al., 2010, pp. 10–11; Vincent, 2018).

Findings and Analysis

Figure 1. Telecom Phone Card (1994)

In 1994, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the awards and promote the event to potential new sponsors, Telecom, the government-owned telecommunications authority, issued a phone card, (Figure 1) featuring key designs across four decades. From left to right, the card features Michael Mattar's 1968 Creative Award for Design winning entry; Annie Bonza's 1971 red and orange dress which won the Evening and Hostess Wear section; Konstantina Moutos' black velvet gown with diamante straps which won the After Five High Fashion Award and the Supreme Award in 1986, and first time entrant, and Māori fashion designer Marty Samuels 1993 nomination. Samuels design won the Avant Garde Section and the Supreme Award. The phone card visually illustrates the findings of my study, showing the transition from a look back to European fashion, as epitomised in the Mattar outfit through to the emergence of design which showcases New Zealand's place in the world.

Looking backwards to Europe

Mattar's black velvet culottes speak to the glamour years of the early awards and the influence of Paris. Waikato-based Mattar was a traditionalist, rejecting contemporary trends and the Youthquake for timeless glamour: "I don't like 'gear', Mod clothes, gimmicky trends or jazzy frou-frou nonsense on clothes…" (Anon., 1970). He won accolades in the Benson and Hedges for his work with wool, winning the Wool Board Award in 1969 with *El Matador*, a fine knit red wool dress with hand beading. Many of the early award winning designs privileged wool, promoting a primary New Zealand product, showing how this product could be used to create high European styles.

A key Māori designer, and awards entrant, from this period, Kura Te Whiria Ensor also looked to European designs; she admired Coco Chanel's little black dress, celebrating her heritage by incorporating Māori motifs, patterns and names into her work to raise the profile of Māori

design. In 1969, the Māori Women's Welfare League sponsored two of Ensor's entries in the day and evening wear sections Benson and Hedges Awards, which Ensor named *Aotearo*a and *Marama* (Smith, 2022). *Aotearoa*, a cream wool ensemble with paua-shell trim was later displayed in New Zealand House, London, as part of a New Zealand Wool Board Promotion (Smith, 2022). Ensor's work reflected national fashion trends, Hammonds et al. (2010) note that in the 1970s the national costume worn by New Zealand representatives at Miss World pageants transitioned from traditional styles of dress to European-style high fashion incorporating elements of Māori design. The wives of New Zealand businessmen and diplomats also sought garments that reflected New Zealand history for their overseas travelling wardrobes (Hammonds et al., 2010; Smith, 2022)

Ensor's most famous outfit, the *Tania* dress, was entered in a different competition, the Cameo New Zealand Fashion Showcase, 1973. This off-the-shoulder garment in the shape of a Māori cloak, featuring a screen-printed panel with kowhaiwhai motifs in red, black and white was purchased by Tirikatene-Sullivan. Describing the outfit as the "prize in my wardrobe" Tirikatene-Sullivan had a sleeve added to cover the bare shoulder and wore the garment when she greeted the Māori Land March on the steps of Parliament in October 1975 boosting Ensor's profile and that of Māori design (Smith, 2022).

Searching for a New Zealand look

Throughout the seventies, wool was New Zealand's major export, promoted within the country and abroad by the New Zealand Wool Board and International Wool Secretariat (Malthus, 2009, p. 106). The practice of using Māori design to embellish traditional-style garments continued into the 1970s, in 1972 it was reported that "subtle use was made of motifs inspired by Māori patterns on some of the evening and day wear offerings" (Anon., 1972). In spite of the continuity of themes, the awards in this decade lacked cohesiveness of vision, in comparison to the back-to-Paris looking 1960s.

The selection of an Annie Bonza garment for the Telecom phone cards belies tensions evident within the awards between the promotion of wool to create Northern Hemisphere styles, the acceptance of the handcrafted vibrancy in fashion that marked the 1970s, and growing calls for a New Zealand look. Bonza, a well-known New Zealand designer, had links with the Pacific, having spent time in Rarotonga, in the 1980s she became outspoken about the promotion of an identifiable New Zealand look, with her braid-work interpreted by some as an indigenous look (Hammonds and Smith, 2017; Hodkings 1989). These aspects of her practice, and her strong commitment to New Zealand design, likely influenced the selection of her work for the promotional phone card

Commentary from judges during the 1970s reflects a continuation, seen in the 1960s, of benchmarking New Zealand fashion against Northern Hemisphere trends, alongside the search for a New Zealand style, one that connected with New Zealand's reputation as an adventure-loving nation. In 1971, judge Paul Rigby stated New Zealand designers were "…adapting the London and Paris look to suit the way of life and conditions peculiar to this country" (Anon., 1971). In 1978, judges expressed disappointment at a lack of strong leisure entries, given New Zealand's reputation as a sporting nation, with an outdoor adventure playground, as awards co-

ordinator Josephine Brodie commented: "… it is rather sad to think in a country like this that there were not good designs in casual and sportswear" (Brodie cited in TVNZ, 1978). In 1979, fashion journalist and awards judge Leone Stewart interviewed international guest judge, Madame Frederique Reusser from the House of Michel Goma, Paris, on New Zealand fashion. Reusser told Stewart she was looking for an "indigenous style" (Anon., 1979a). A ferry ride made Reusser think New Zealand designers had a future creating 'active sportswear fashion' (Anon., 1979b); Reusser's vision of a New Zealand style was distinctly European, evoking Thorstein Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1934) linking leisure with the moneyed classes she imagined: "Something chic to sail in, a high fashion water-skiing outfit, tailored rugby shorts, perhaps? But why not something stylish?" (Anon., 1979b).

In 1977, the Woolgrowers Award for Handcrafted Wool Fashion sponsored by the New Zealand Wool Board was established, encouraging more 'skilled creative craftspeople into the ambit of the Benson & Hedges' Fashion Design Awards (BHFDA) programme (1977). In 1978, the Supreme Award went to June Mercer of Palmerston North, winner of the Woolgrowers Award, for a natural wool, hand-crocheted ensemble of leggings, cardigan, skirt and cape, described as "New Zealand fashion image." The high visibility of crafts made from wool energised the wool industry, and Brodie described these entries as "authentically New Zealand" (Brodie cited in TVNZ 1978). In 1986, the Woolgrowers Award for Handcrafted Wool Fashion was withdrawn as the New Zealand Wool Board felt it was too amateur and in conflict with high fashion handknits, doing the "wool craft industry in New Zealand more harm than good" (Rushworth, 1985). References to the casual nature of the New Zealand lifestyle and the search for a look that captured, this, along with references to wool as a typical New Zealand fashion textile highlight the lack of a cohesive fashion vision put forward by the Awards of the 1970s.

'Fine leathers', 'beautiful wools', 'export dollars'

The selection of Moutos' 1986 Supreme award winning asymmetric black velvet evening dress for the phone card signals not only the rise of young talent, but an aspiration for a fashion industry that could earn export dollars through connecting with Northern Hemisphere markets. Trade liberalisation had opened up the New Zealand market to imports and as the economy boomed a new market for designer clothes at home and abroad emerged (Carlyon and Morrow, 2013,pp. 303–305; de Pont, 2012). A 1986 press release singled out three designers as having export potential: Trish Beach who won the High Fashion Daywear award for a fine luxury leather leisure outfit; Konstantina Moutos' black velvet dress, and knitwear designer Roz Mexted, who won the New Zealand Wool Board's Fashion Award (Gilchrist, 1986, p. 3). Beach and Mexted's garments utilised new materials available to designers as a result of farmer diversification in the wake of the demise of subsidies. Mexted's seven-piece ensemble was a wool and mohair mix. The removal of subsidies from wool and weedkillers had increased demand for angora goats who could "turn weeds into mohair." (McKenzie, 1985, p, 67).

Fine and hand-knitted wool and fine leather featured strongly among nominations during the 1980s. If people abroad were asked what they would most associate with New Zealand, they would reply: "butter and lamb chops – hardly with haute couture" claimed BHFDA publicist Joan Gilchrist. As a result marketing had to be strong for New Zealand designs to sell overseas, their point of difference—the quality of local textiles—had to be foregrounded: "As NZ can

rely less and less on traditional dairy products and frozen lamb. It may have to rely more on the fine leathers and beautiful wools, crafted and woven and designed into fabulous fashion for export dollars" (Gilchrist, 1986, pp. 3).

Leather became "the new darling of the designers", (Geary, 1987, p. 62; Clements, 1989, pp. 158–166) as one leather designer explained, the product epitomised a "...throw-away approach to luxury" drawing heavily on an "Italian ease" aesthetic (Anon., 1986, p. 37). The link between conspicuous consumption and leisure was reinforced in *Fashion Quarterly* under the editorial direction of Paula Ryan who had a penchant for Chanel, promoting the designer's aesthetic in her magazine. In her 1989 editorial, for instance, she looks at "country inspired casuals and equestrienne dandy dressing... all important starting points for your winter wardrobe" (Ryan, 1989, p. 13). These discourses filtered into the awards during the 1980s when Ryan was involved as compere and judge. As the decade drew to a close there were rumblings of dissatisfaction that the designs which won awards were often "obvious copies", not representative of innovative New Zealand fashion design (Body, 1986).

Hughes and Jennings were two key designers from the 1980s who were producing an alternate vision of New Zealand fashion, along with Bonza. Yet, these glimpses of a fresh look, one that referred to New Zealand's place in the Pacific were often overshadowed by organisers' and judges' references to a more traditional look. In 1989, Bonza won the Leisure section with a little black dress embroidered in her signature braid-work work with the names of contemporary New Zealand musicians. Through the use of a rainbow of coloured thread and musical references to Pacific Island group Herbs and the Mighty Asterik, a New Zealand reggae band, among other talent, the dress paid homage to New Zealand culture. As the awards faced an uncertain future under tobacco sponsorship, Bonza's award winning tribute to Kiwi music seemed a more relevant and fitting lifestyle award choice than the Chanel-type garments evident for most of the decade. Her music dress echoed an emerging new discourse around the role of the creative industries in promoting national identity, as Bonza said:

> I sort of feel we have a responsibility to push our own industries and particularly in fashion where there's so much copying and influence from overseas. Hopefully, people will start to feel OK about being Kiwis and dressing like Kiwis (Bonza cited in Hodkings, 1989).

Bonza's comments echoed those made by *More* magazine editor Lindsay Dawson some five years earlier when she ran a Kiwi Pride feature, exploring the emergence of tasteful souvenir sweaters and t-shirts (Dawson, 1984, p. 3). For Bonza, Kiwi pride was about expressing New Zealand's location on the Pacific Rim: "As a Polynesian country we should be able to develop a style that is unique to New Zealand" (Binsley, 1989, p. 3).

Green, Innovative and Smokefree

As the legislated end of tobacco sponsorship was nigh, awards organisers were forced to embrace the ideas symbolised in the work of designers like Hughes, Jennings and Bonza. In 1993, an Avant Garde Section was launched to cater for the increasing number of conceptual designs entered as an overflow of the New Zealand Wearable Art Awards, but also to tap into their success. Samuels won this section with his Māori-inspired design.

An Oceania Section was added 1995. Entrant Margaret Marr acknowledged the Oceania section finally endorsed ‘Pacific-influenced clothing’ in New Zealand fashion. “Celebrating Oceania validates the idea that Pacific-influenced clothing has a role in fashion” (Anon., 1996, p. 78).

Unconstrained by sections titles like High Fashion and Leisure Lifestyle which carried a visual history of past award winners, often in traditional styles, the Avant-Garde and Oceania sections were open to interpretation and attracted strong innovative design (Rycroft, 1996).

In the same year that the Oceania section was launched, and in preparation for the transition from tobacco sponsorship to funding provided by the HSC, the latter solicited proposals from advertising agencies, including Colenso. Colenso's strategy focussed on Smokefree as a lifestyle choice that was clean, fresh, green and above all avant garde. Focus groups were held with New Zealand women about their perceptions of New Zealand fashion, and the emotive connections they had with Benson and Hedges. Twelve women between the ages of 18–39, who had attended an awards ceremony, were all working, and either single or living with a partner but without children took part. They associated Benson and Hedges with ideas that included: ‘moneyed’, ‘good taste, leaning towards the classical and prestigious’, ‘Narcississm’, ‘Exclusivity and Privileged’ (Colenso, 1995). They felt New Zealand fashion was behind the times, and were excited about Pasifika themes emerging in the work of young designers and what they saw as the “confluence of ‘designer’ and ‘street’ fashions” (Colenso, 1995). For these participants this was a brand that was not imitating global trends but one that had ‘attitude’ and emphasised New Zealand’s geographic on Pacific Rim inspiration and its “commitment to individual expression and creativity” (Colenso, 1995).

Discussion: Smoke and Mirrors

The analysis of key themes in archival material on the awards indicate a consistent looking backwards to Northern Hemisphere designs for inspiration. While elements of Māori design were incorporated into garments from the 1960s, the elitist golden connotations of the sponsors product which was gatekept by section criteria and judging expectations meant the visibility of an indigenous style within the awards, one that reflected broader changes within the fashion industry, did not become fully evident until the 1990s when smokefree legislation passed. The demise of tobacco sponsorship occurred at a time in which there was a growing emphasis on a national identity celebrating New Zealand's place within the Pacific and the emergence in 1993 of what Margaret Werry describes as a national “personality”, Brand New Zealand that emphasised New Zealand as fresh, young and green:

> It melded pastoral and natural images (clean, green, and pristine) with signifiers of the new: new technology, youth, experimentation, and achievement (Werry, 2011, p. 149).

Samuels encapsulates this narrative in the story of his journey to the awards. Samuels viewed entering the awards as one of three options alongside finding a job and starting his own business. True to the qualities of Brand New Zealand, he took a calculated risk; deciding the

awards was the promotional vehicle he needed to get a foothold in the apparel industry, he borrowed $2,000 to make this a reality. In six weeks he had produced five entries and went on to win three categories and the Supreme Award:

> I definitely wasn't doing this for fun. I needed the money, I needed publicity and I wanted a job. It was a great opportunity for instant recognition (BHFDA, 1994).

The following year *Fashion Quarterly* ran an editorial locating Samuels' casual knits in a mysterious blue and purple tinged New Zealand landscape stamped with the qualities of Brand New Zealand. For Samuels, the New Zealand fashion was not literally the export focussed wool off the sheep's back or luxury leather image which infused the stories behind the design concepts nominated in the 1970s and 1980s, it was more intangible:

> New Zealand's got a "nice" backdrop kind of image overseas, the outdoors... that kind of thing. But I think we can have input into areas we're not so well known for, like design. I would like to push a sophisticated design identity for New Zealand. I'd like to go over there and show them we're not just a country full of sheep (Schaer, 1994, p. 39).

In publicity, Samuels explains he used the handle of an aluminium meat tenderiser which he rubbed against a concrete path to create an "elegant aluminium fastening for an elegant grey jacket" (BHFDA, 1994). Samuels' story captures New Zealand's tradition of innovative design pitched in terms of a 'making do' mentality described as a 'No. 8 wire' attitude—often couched in terms of New Zealand's isolation from the rest of the world (Olsen, 1990, pp. 100–101). In his fusion of Māori style with innovation wrought by geographic isolation, Samuels' look captured what awards organisers had been searching for as they sought to secure the future of the awards. He had, to paraphrase publicity material, 'taken the **ash** out of f**ash**ion' and his 1993 award winning garment, the fourth and last on the Telecom phone card signalled a bright new fashion vision for future awards nominees to aspire to.

Conclusion

An analysis of archival material from the Benson and Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards indicates that the golden smoke generated by Benson and Hedges sponsors and embraced by awards organisers, shaped section themes and judges perceptions of what New Zealand fashion should look like. This smoke obscured the slow and progressive rise of fashion design which conceptualised New Zealand's place within the Pacific and showcased indigenous design and innovation wrought from geographic isolation. The transition from tobacco sponsorship to Smokefree sponsorship ushered in a new era with different expectations, allowing the foregrounding of a New Zealand style. This vision of New Zealand fashion had been bubbling under the surface of the awards since its inception, but had struggled to emerge within a framework that benchmarked European trends, looking backwards rather than forwards into the future.

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