



When Dreams turn to Gold

THE BENSON & HEDGES AND SMOKEFREE
FASHION DESIGN AWARDS 1964-1998

introduction

When Dreams Turn to Gold: The Benson & Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards was exhibited at Dunedin Public Art Gallery from 18 March to 25 June 2017.

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Curatorial support from Andrea Bell

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Moving image footage: Extracts from the Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards 1978 / 1986 Produced by TVNZ. Courtesy of TVNZ Television Archive

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Offering glamour, spectacle, opportunity and reward, the Benson & Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards were pivotal in the rising profile of New Zealand fashion. Established in 1964 the awards grew to become New Zealand's premier fashion design event. With an open entry policy they provided a launch pad for aspiring designers and transformed amateur dressmakers into fashion stars.

When Dreams Turn to Gold showcases selected designs, film footage and photography that provide a changing view of the Benson & Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards (BHSFDA) over four decades. Extending from the high-style of the 1960s through to the 1990s and the emergence of a distinctive New Zealand fashion identity, the show includes works by major designers alongside personal stories of innovation and success, *When Dreams Turn to Gold* highlights the importance of these awards in shaping New Zealand's fashion history.

1968

MICHAEL MATTAR

[1920-2004 New Zealand]

Evening ensemble – culottes and jacket

1968

Velvet, silk, cotton, polyester, rayon

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Creative Award for Design winner

A legendary figure in New Zealand fashion history, Michael Mattar was a regular entrant into the Benson & Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards (BHSFDA) and had a string of successes in the late 1960s. Creating bespoke garments from his elegant Taumarunui boutique, Mattar was a prominent high-society designer at this time. This elegant combination of a simple silhouette, flashes of dramatic colour, and a delicate beaded fringe has all the hallmarks of a Michael Mattar design. Its chic, feminine styling played into the popular expectations of a fashion-hungry audience.

Although the BHSFDA did not include a Supreme Award until 1971, in the public mind the top eveningwear winner was always the standout, this garment has come to be seen as the foremost design of the Awards in the Sixties. In 1994 it was featured on a Telecom phone card commemorating 30 years of the BHSFDA.



1969

MICHAEL MATTAR

[1920-2004 New Zealand]

El Matador 1969

Wool, taffeta, beading

On loan from the MTG Hawke's Bay

Collection of the Hawke's Bay Museums Trust,
Ruawhara Tā-ū-rangi

Wool Board Award winner

Michael Mattar was a bespoke designer; his garments were handmade, with attention paid to detail and glamour. Custom design and luxurious fabrics were his signature, seen here in the details of *El Matador*, made from a fine wool knit, embellished with hand beading.

The Wool Award was created in 1965, donated by the New Zealand Wool Board for the most outstanding wool garment appearing in the competition. The Wool Board played a prominent role in the New Zealand fashion industry at the time, and the Wool Board sponsorship of this category represents a strong link between the Awards and New Zealand's primary industries.



1971

ANNIE BONZA

[b.1940 New Zealand]

Red and Orange dress (missing original hotpants) 1971

Polyester georgette chiffon, braid-work using rayon cord

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Evening and Hostess Wear
section winner

In 1971, when this striking dress won the coveted Evening and Hostess Wear section and a cheque for \$250, Annie Bonza was one of the hottest names in New Zealand fashion.

Bonza (then Annie Cole) had received her training in Auckland's fashion industry in the mid-1950s, later moving to Sydney where she developed a distinctive design style featuring embroidered decoration and braid work. Despite her high-fashion training, she was a creative spirit and was drawn to the artistic potential of fashion. Returning to Auckland in 1968, she established her own boutique that catered to pop stars, artists and the young and hip. With her designs featuring on the televised music show *C'mon*, by the early 1970s Bonza had reached celebrity status.

This ensemble from 1971 marks one of the peaks in Bonza's remarkable career in fashion. Youthful, colourful and modern, it was a bold entry by a designer full of energy and momentum. It was worn on the catwalk by Maysie Bestall-Cohen, one of New Zealand's most popular models of the time who, from 1982, became the organiser and public face of the BHSFDA.



MARITZA TSCHEPP

Supreme award winning ensemble 1977

Organza, synthetic lace

Courtesy of the Eden Hore Collection, Central Otago District Council

Gown of the Year winner

Supreme Award winner

Educated at Waitaki Girls High School, Maritza Tschepp hailed from a fashion family, with her mother Marjory establishing the *Maritza* boutique in Oamaru in 1966. Tschepp studied clothing and textiles at Wellington Polytechnic and in 1979 moved to London to attend the Royal College of Art. Her career highlights include working for the Chelsea Design Company and making stage garments for The Thompson Twins. Tschepp continues to live in London, and teaches in the field of craft and sewing. Her designs tended towards an ethnic style, seen here in her voluminous layered skirts and cowl headress. It was an exotic approach that captured the attention of the Naseby-based fashion collector Eden Hore, who added Tschepp's winning design and other garments from her *Bosphora* label to his collection of New Zealand couture fashion.

The Eden Hore collection is unique and important in New Zealand as a rare private collection of couture and bespoke fashion, with an emphasis on garments from the 1960s and 1970s. Hore was a sheep and cattle farmer in Central Otago, and his fashion collection developed from his initial interest in seeing the end uses of primary materials grown on farms like his own. He took a close interest in pageants and awards, and his collection soon extended to include garments by New Zealand's leading designers. As the premier Fashion Awards of its day, the BHSFDA provided an important source of garments for Hore's collection. He often purchased award winning entries, meaning that his collection came to reflect the changing character and variety of designers that participated in the Awards.



1979

JO DUNLAP

[New Zealand]

Leather / deerskin ensemble 1979

Leather, deerskin

Courtesy of the Eden Hore Collection, Central Otago District Council

Women's High Fashion Daywear Award nominee

With its complete celebration of leather and hide, it is easy to see how this 1979 ensemble by Jo Dunlap fitted with collector Eden Hore's interest in fashion and primary industries. With leather from Tasman Tanneries, paired with rustic panels of deer hide, brought together in a chic, uniform-styled design, Dunlap's entry had a natural fit with Hore's collection of bespoke New Zealand fashion.

Despite training as a nurse and teacher, Jo Dunlap had a strong creative drive and had worked as a photographer, display artist, fashion designer and dressmaker. Dunlap looked to fashion awards as an opportunity to show her design work, also entering the Australian Gown of the Year contest which she won in 1976.

The BHSFDA played an important role in providing a public platform for emerging New Zealand fashion designers. By the 1970s, other fashion awards had emerged in New Zealand that had a stronger emphasis on commercial or 'professional' labels. The BHSFDA remained open-format, bringing together designers across the full spectrum from graduates to amateurs to manufacturers.



1984

KERRIE HUGHES

Wool Ensemble with cummerbund 1984

Wool, goat hide

Collection of The Dowse Art Museum, gift of
Caroline McDonald 2000

Leisure Lifestyle Section nominee

Wool has played an important part in the New Zealand fashion story, representing a connection between the worlds of design, manufacturing and the primary industries. This fine wool pantsuit, by Wellington designer Kerrie Hughes, shows the dual influences of European fashion and Polynesian pattern that became prevalent in New Zealand fashion design in the 1980s and reflected a growing return to, and emphasis on, natural fabrics. The cummerbund is made from suede, goatskin and wool.

Hughes was a graduate of Wellington Polytechnic, and in 1980 opened *Svelt* with fellow graduate Di Jennings. At *Svelt* the two designers worked independently of one another, creating one-off garments that were dramatic and highly individual. The BHSFDA represented a public platform that suited both designers' approaches and they were regular entrants. *Svelt* relocated to Auckland in 1982, and in 1986 Hughes left New Zealand to complete her Masters in Fashion and Design at St Martins School of Art in London. Her unique and independent design approach continued to attract attention in London. Working in partnership with Penny Meachin, Hughes launched *Idol* in 1989, which would continue until 2000 when Hughes returned home to New Zealand.



1986

KONSTANTINA MOUTOS

Black velvet gown with diamante straps

1986

Velvet, diamantes

Collection of Konstantina Moutos

After Five High Fashion winner

Supreme Award winner

The BHSFDA launched countless careers over its thirty year duration. Yet few have endured in the public imagination more than that of Konstantina Moutos – a graduate from Wellington Polytechnic whose rise to success in the mid-1980s had all the elements of a fashion fairy-tale.

Moutos first hit the headlines in 1984 as a fresh-faced 20 year old, winning the Young Designer, Wool and Supreme categories of the BHFSDA. In 1986 she became a sensation, when her dramatic black velvet evening gown saw Moutos receive the Supreme Award for an unprecedented second time. With its plunging backline, slung with diamante strands, Moutos' garment combined glamour and sensuality with an authentic success story that won hearts the nation over.

Moutos established her own label, *Konstantina*, following her 1984 win, and in 1987 showed the line in the non-competitive manufacturers section of the BHFSDA. In 1991 she relocated to Athens, where she has continued to work as a designer. She remained connected with the Awards, sitting on the judging panel in 1991 and 1997.



1988



LISA MCEWAN

La Bombe (originally entered as **Le Bom**) 1988

Dupion silk, crushed velvet, tulle, diamantes

Collection of Lisa McEwan

After-Five High Fashion Award,
highly commended

Wild applause greeted Lisa McEwan's anti-nuclear statement when it appeared on-stage, the high-profile status of the BHSFDA making it an ideal platform for art-political statements. McEwan harnessed this power in *La Bombe*; an extravagant sculptural design that brought the nuclear mushroom cloud to the catwalk. This was a highly topical issue in New Zealand in the wake of the 1985 bombing of Greenpeace ship the *Rainbow Warrior*, and the passing of the New Zealand

Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act (1987) which opposed nuclear testing in the South Pacific. A graduate of Wellington Polytechnic, McEwan entered a number of other garments in the BHSFDA that more closely reflected her commercial design practice at the time. McEwan is currently a lecturer in fashion design at Auckland University of Technology.

La Bombe reflected the increasing presence of 'wearable art' in the BHSFDA; a flow on effect of the recently established Wearable Art Awards (est. 1987). In 1993 BHSFDA introduced an Avant Garde Section, formally acknowledging the impact of wearable art on New Zealand fashion. The Avant Garde Award was also designed to make the BHSFDA attractive to a wider range of sponsors, as the organisation began to consider future funding avenues after the passing of the Smokefree Environments Act (1990), which signalled an end to tobacco sponsorship.

1989

DI JENNINGS

[b.1952 British]

Coat dress and hat 1989

Wool, beads

Collection of Maggie Morgan

High Fashion Daywear Award winner

A bold and fearless designer, Di Jennings was a British-born graduate of Wellington Polytechnic. Since immigrating to New Zealand in the early 1970s, Jennings had become closely connected to the Māori community and shared a social circle with a group of highly political Māori radicals who supported her design approach. Her garments often looked directly to Māori culture, appealing to female activists looking for clothing that would express their politics and culture. With fellow designer Kerrie Hughes, Jennings' boutique *Svelt* became legendary in fashion circles in the early 1980s.

While it might have been less strident than some of her Māori-inspired designs, this entry in the 1989 BHSFDA captures a mood of change within New Zealand fashion and design. With its strong contrast of yellow and black, fashionable silhouette and sculptural hibiscus motifs, Jennings entry speaks to a newly forming sense of New Zealand as a modern Pacific nation.



1989

ANNIE BONZA

[b.1940 New Zealand]

Kiwi Music Dress 1989

Stretch cotton, decorative braid-work and
appliqué, various textiles
Courtesy of Sally Ferguson

Lifestyle Award winner

Bonza had three garments nominated in the 1989 awards. A Rarotongan-inspired garment was nominated for the After Five High Fashion category, and she received a Highly Commended in the Fashion in Wool Award for a floor length coat called Aotearoa. However, it was the jaunty *Kiwi Music Dress* that caught the judges' eye and captured the public imagination. Bonza had last entered the awards in 1971 with her striking red and orange eveningwear ensemble. Her success had seen her profile rise rapidly in the fashion world, but by the mid-1970s she was burnt-out, later withdrawing to Rarotonga away from the public eye. In 1984 Bonza returned to Auckland, establishing herself as one of a new wave of designers who sought to embrace their Kiwi identity. The *Kiwi Music Dress* fused Bonza's past and present, paying homage to her days designing for the hip music show *C'mon* while simultaneously celebrating up and coming musicians such as Dave Dobbyn.



1991

SARAH CHISNALL

[New Zealand]

Tartan ensemble (hat by Di Powell) 1991

Wool, cotton/lycra, sequins

Collection of Sarah Chisnall

Young Designer Award winner

Sarah Chisnall first entered the BHSFDA in 1988, continuing to submit designs every year until the show folded. In total she had 24 nominations, with accolades including the Young Designer Award in 1991, and a Highly Commended in the High Fashion Collections Awards (1997). She had two garments nominated for the 1991 Young Designer Award, which was open to designers between the ages of 18-25. Her winning tartan 'tap pants' and Lycra top were imagined as club wear.

Chisnall was 23 years old when she accepted the Young Designer award. A self-taught designer, she ran the boutique *Sugoi Hot Couture* in Christchurch with her mother Janet. Chisnall's story reflects the history of home sewing in New Zealand, and potential for the BHSFDA to transform home sewers into industry professionals. She was taught to sew by her mother at a young age, and despite wanting to continue training, tertiary fashion education was financially out of her reach. For Chisnall the awards 'showed that we could create garments on a home sewing machine, just as well as professionals.'



1992

MARGO BARTON

[New Zealand]

Black swimsuit and hat

(from a collection of three) 1992

Nylon lycra and nylon net; straw hat

Courtesy of Margo Barton

Collection Award nominee

Barton, who first entered the BHSFDA in the 1970s, is a Dunedin-based milliner and designer and Academic leader of the Otago Polytechnic School of Fashion. This swimsuit is part of a collection nominated for the first Collections Award, established in 1992. Barton's inspiration was Hollywood star Esther Williams; a competitive and synchronized swimmer and actress who made a series of films called "aquamusicals" in the 1940s and 50s. As a boutique swimwear collection it provided a point of difference to the Expozay and Moontide labels showcased in the non-competitive Manufacturers Section, which had a strong focus on New Zealand style.

Barton's collection capitalised on the commercial possibilities of Lycra. During the 1980s Lycra became more prominent in New Zealand fashion as the result of the establishment of the Du Pont Lycra Design Awards (1980), an award created for design school graduates. This filtered into the BHSFDA where the innovative use of Lycra in swimwear, sportswear, streetwear and clubwear became evident. In 1992 a high number of BHSFDA nominees using Lycra were inspired by the 'underwear as outerwear' look; reflected in this case by Barton's opulent swimwear that harnesses all the glamour of vintage Hollywood eveningwear.



1991

SHARON NG WITH RALPH HOTERE

Black Window Dress 1994

Hand-printed silk, mesh

Collection of Sharon Ng

Avant Garde Award nominee

Like Martiza Tschopp, Sharon Ng was educated at Waitaki Girls High School before entering the two-year Wellington Polytechnic clothing and textile course. The daughter of Chinese migrants, the influence of Ng's heritage can be seen in the clean sculptural lines of her *Black Window Dress*, which includes elements of the traditional cheongsam.

Ng's *Black Window Dress* was created in collaboration with Dunedin artist Ralph Hotere; it's textile design an extension of his Black Window series. The garment is made from pieces cut from squares of silk, screen-printed by Hotere and featuring a sand wash finish. Ng, a former lecturer in drawing and design at Christchurch Polytechnic, was a regular entrant in the BHSFDA during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1991 she won the Cathay Pacific Lifestyle Award and in 1994 she received a Highly Commended in the Collection Award.



1994

MARK VAN ROOSMALEN

Menswear ensemble 1994

100% wool suit, (replacement collar, cravat, hat)
Courtesy of Mark van Roosmalen Bespoke Tailor

Menswear Award winner

Supreme Award winner

Mark van Roosmalen is a Christchurch-based tailor and graduate of Wellington Polytechnic, who went on to gain a huge national profile after winning the Supreme Award at the 1994 BHSFDA. It was a win that prompted headlines declaring 'Kiwi menswear had been rehabilitated,' a reference to the chequered history of the Menswear Award in the BHSFDA.

The Menswear section of the BHSFDA had been removed after 1979, when the judges felt that the standard was so low that no prize was awarded. Menswear was reinstated in 1988, with van Roosmalen winning the category. Buoyed by this success, he continued to enter the Awards, receiving Highly Commended citations on five separate occasions. van Roosmalen's day in the golden spotlight came in 1994 when this smartly tailored suit won him his second Menswear Award, later taking out the coveted Supreme Award.



1995

KRIZ HEMA

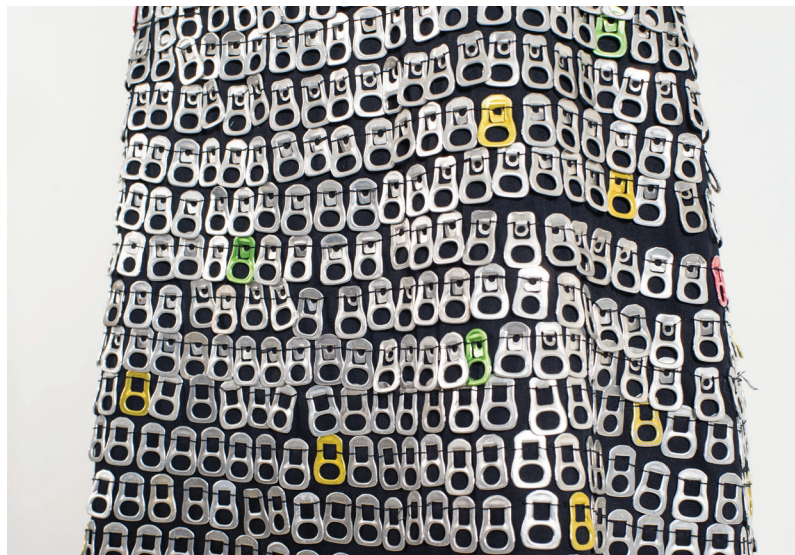
Dress and pillbox hat 1995

Cotton, metal

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Young Designer Award winner

Kriz Hema's dress and pillbox hat is made from more than 1000 aluminium pull-tabs, inspired by an acquaintance that had a collection of these objects. Judges called it 'footpath fashion,' with Hema scouring the pavement for extra tabs after exhausting this initial collection. Hema's design approach reflected an interest in recycling, evident in garments submitted in both the BHSFDA and the Wearable Art Awards. The year after Hema's win, Waitakere City Council (Auckland) launched the Trash to Fashion Award, encouraging the use of fashion made from recycled organic and non-organic materials. Hema, of Ngati Kahungunu and Hawaiian descent, was celebrated as an example of Polynesian design success in the BHSFDA. The Wellington-based designer is a graduate of the Bowerman School of Design, and for a time in the 1990s ran the label *Anonymous Catastrophe*.



1995

WORLD

[1989- New Zealand]

21st Century Origami dress 1995

Cardboard, raffia

Purchased with funds provided by the Charles Edgar Disney Art Trust, 1996

Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum
Tamaki Paenga Hira, 1996.56.5

Avant Garde Award winner

The *21st Century Origami dress* has been written into the history of the innovative New Zealand fashion label WORLD, founded by designers Denise L'estrange-Corbet and Francis Hooper. The pair very nearly didn't enter the awards; busy with an expanding business and disillusioned with the response to their previous entries, they had forgotten to submit their entry for the 1995 awards. A phone call from Maysie Bestall-Cohen and a 48-hour deadline galvanised the duo into action, and armed with supplies from Whitcoulls they came up with the *21st Century Origami Dress*. Made from two pieces of cardboard, the ensemble won the Avant-Garde section and \$5000 in prize money, propelling WORLD into the national spotlight. A miniature of this design was later recreated as a costume for Mattel's iconic Barbie doll, to celebrate the toy's 45th birthday.



1997

FRASER CROWE

Dual Outlook 1997

Lycra; nylon monofilament; copper wire;
polyester/copper fabric

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te
Papa Tongarewa

Avant Garde Section winner

Supreme Award winner

Featuring prominently in publicity material for what had become the Smokefree Fashion Design Awards, Fraser Crowe's *Dual Outlook* responded to a design brief asking entrants to 'Imagine what life would be like in the year 2005.' Designers Kim Fraser and Deborah Crowe were interested in exploring technology and its impact on our lives. They conceptualised *Dual Outlook* as creating for the wearer a 'safe space' away from the demands of technology and a kind of cloak in which to 'observe the accelerated change.' The skirt of the garment is made from a polyester fabric coated with copper, which was used as electrical shielding tape in the computer industry. The woven visor is a handmade textile, reflecting Crowe's weaving skills and interest in unusual fabrics, including wire and elastic.

The conceptual and sculptural nature of *Dual Outlook* represented a meeting point between art and fashion, and became the first example of New Zealand fashion to be featured on the pages of *Art New Zealand*. Crowe and Fraser met when they were lecturing in fashion at the Manukau School of Visual arts, Fraser with a background in fashion design and Crowe in fibre and sculpture. *Dual Outlook* was Crowe's first foray into the BHSFDA, while Fraser had entered earlier Awards, winning the 1989 Leather Award (with Maria Scally) and receiving a Highly Commended in After Five High Fashion in 1991. In 1998 Fraser Crowe won their second Avant Garde Award for *Pace Breaker*, as well as the award for best High Fashion Collection.



1997

LINDAH LEPOU

Black Beaded Dress 1997

Mesh crepe, cowrie shells

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Kimono Bomber Jacket 1997

Silk, dacron

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Avant Garde Award nominee

Lindah Lepou describes her work as 'Pacific Couture', consistently producing designs grounded in her Samoan, English and Scottish ancestry. She is influenced by the use of natural fibres and materials, as well as Japanese aesthetics. Lepou's 1994 entry in the Avant-Garde section was her 'flax tutu' (made from pandanus fibre), which was later acquired for the collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. In 1995 the BHSDA added an Oceania section, reflecting the increasing influence of Polynesian design on New Zealand fashion.

Lepou's Kimono Bomber Jacket and Black Beaded Dress, entered into the 1997 Avant-Garde section, was described as 'Polynesian dressing for the Millennium.' Lepou continued to build on her interest in the meeting point between European, Japanese and Polynesian traditions, and in 2005 won the Westfield Style Pasifika Supreme Award for *Cocomono*, described as an example of 'Asia Pasifika.'



1998

FIEKE NEUMAN

Distracted 1998

Wool, acetate, leather

Collection of the designer

Men in Fashion Award winner

Fieke Neuman's conceptual approach to menswear belies her Southern New Zealand roots. Described as an 'outfit for the distracted poet' with 'sleeves that bend the wrong way, trousers that need shortening and a jacket covered in stains' Neuman's design illustrates the evolution of menswear in the BHSFDA. *Distracted* was inspired by a poet Neuman knew: 'a harried, busy, wordy man, surrounded by towering piles of books and scribbled sheets of paper. Hints of sartorial elegance but no time or inclination to organise his clothes properly.'

Neuman started designing women's clothing and colourful men's shirts in the 1980s, while working as a curator at the University of Otago Anatomy Museum. In 1997 she left her curatorial position to complete a Diploma in Fashion at Otago Polytechnic, subsequently establishing her label *Fieke*. She initially focussed on made-to-measure garments, later wholesaling to stores around New Zealand. Neuman had also entered womenswear in the BHSFDA, but it was with menswear that she found success in the competition format.



1971 Women's Daywear and Supreme Award winner

Designed by Philip Shortt

Modelled by Genny Higgs

Photography by Wallace Britton

Courtesy of Josephine Brodie



When Dreams Turn to Gold

The Benson & Hedges and
Smokefree Fashion Design
Awards 1964-1998

by NATALIE SMITH

Until its demise in 1998 the Benson & Hedges and Smokefree Fashion Design Awards (BHSFDA) were New Zealand's premier fashion event.¹ The awards toured the country from the mid-1970s and were also televised, playing a pivotal role in the promotion of New Zealand fashion. They brought together makers and designers from the regions and main centres, raising the profile of manufacturers and independent designers, and transforming home sewers into national fashion stars through an open entry policy that encouraged anyone with design aspirations to 'have a go'. The diversity of entries did, at times, cause tension but this was a positive force in helping to re-define New Zealand fashion as we know it today.

Launched in 1964, the overarching narrative of the BHSFDA was that the awards could turn fashion design dreams into reality, creating the moment when dreams turned to gold. Prior to 1970 prizes were awarded for sections only; in 1971 awards coordinator Josephine Brodie launched the Supreme Award, drawn from the winners of each section. Wanganui-born Philip Shortt won the first Supreme Award, helping him gain a QEII Arts Council scholarship to study at the Royal College of Arts (RCA), London. After graduating, Shortt worked in Rome as a design assistant for Valentino and later in London for the House of Mansfield. His career highlights include dressing Margaret Thatcher and designing the British policewoman's uniform, which is still worn today. He credits the BHSFDA with opening doors he could only dream about.²

The BHSFDA was the brainchild of the late Jeannie Gandar, deputy head of school and senior tutor in Clothing and Textiles at Wellington Polytechnic. Gandar's motivation was twofold: One, she was president of the New Zealand Modelling Association, and opportunities for professional catwalk modelling in New Zealand were limited at this time. Two, the awards provided an opportunity for students to showcase original designs. Over the years a significant number of winners have been Wellington Polytechnic graduates. Since its inception, coordination of the awards has remained within New Zealand's modelling fraternity. Josephine Brodie, who modelled the first award winning evening gown, took over the running of the event from Gandar in 1965. During her tenure she signed a contract with the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation to televise the event, raising the profile of the awards and designers. In 1982 another prominent model, Maysie Bestall-Cohen, took over organization of the competition until it folded in 1998.

Under Bestall-Cohen's direction, changes were made to the format of the Awards. Ending the national tour, she instead instituted a 'Highlights Parade' and a nomination system, the latter to cull entries down to a manageable number.³ Nominated garments (nominees) appeared in the live televised show; while garments that did not make nomination, but were worthy of being shown, were paraded before the audience prior to the start of the televised event in the Highlights Parade. Bestall-Cohen created controversy in 1982 when the Supreme Award was restricted to manufacturers only and awarded to the label *Hullabaloo* by Thornton Hall for a highly commercial design. In response to the furore Brian Hall of Thornton Hall responded 'Fashion is directional not extravagant.'⁴ Independent designers immediately protested and in 1984 a non-competitive manufacturer's showcase was born to meet the needs of the commercial fashion entrants.

The 1982 controversy highlighted an ongoing tension within the awards: between commercial viability and creativity; manufacturers versus individual designers; and the amateur versus the professional. These tensions were manifest in individual makers' discourses of creation and shaped by external forces such as the Smokefree Environments Act (1990), which set a sunset clause on tobacco sponsorship. Rather than becoming a negative force, these individual and societal-level factors continuously worked to redefine New Zealand fashion.

Designer Michael Mattar credited the BHSFDA with expanding his profile beyond his hometown of Taumarunui and establishing his reputation nationally. In 1968, as a relative unknown outside the Waikato, Mattar took home three of the four major awards at the BHSFDA. While acknowledging he had a solid client base, his success greatly increased national demand for his work. Mattar was a traditionalist, emphasizing femininity and rejecting the influence of the Youthquake: 'I don't like 'gear', Mod clothes, gimmicky trends or jazzy frou-frou nonsense on clothes...'⁵ In 1972 an awards reviewer argued the emphasis on tradition in BHSFDA discouraged young designers: '... fashion is a young game (not chronologically, but in spirit) and the contest is getting a bit jaded and middleaged.' The writer noted '... one young designer saying last year that she couldn't be bothered entering because some smart silk design would win.'⁶

In the 1970s glamour merged into fantasy wear and the Woolgrowers Award for Handcrafted Wool Fashion (1977) was established, sponsored by the New Zealand Wool Board as a means of bringing 'skilled creative craftspeople into the ambit of the Benson & Hedges.'⁷ This paved the way for June Mercer of Palmerston North to take home the 1978 Supreme Award for a natural wool, hand crocheted ensemble of leggings, cardigan, skirt and cape, described as an 'authentically New Zealand garment' for her use of wool.⁸ In 1986 the Woolgrowers Award was withdrawn by the Wool Board, which felt it was in conflict with the new trend for high fashion hand knits and doing the 'wool craft industry in New Zealand more harm than good.'⁹

New Zealand's reliance on Britain as its primary export market was threatened when Britain joined the European Common Market (EEC) in 1973. From 1978 farmers were offered subsidies and manufacturers offered export incentives; import controls which had existed since WWII, limiting the availability of good quality textiles as a way to protect New Zealand wool, were also maintained.¹⁰ In 1984 the Fourth Labour Government swept into power instigating a raft of neo-liberal reforms and removing subsidies and tariffs, trade liberalisation flooded the market with cheap imported apparel which had a significant impact on local manufacturers. Labour intensive businesses, such as lingerie manufacturer Bendon, closed factories and outsourced offshore where labour was cheaper,¹¹ and a new market for designer clothes at home and abroad emerged.¹² Diversification became an essential survival strategy for New Zealand designers. Knitwear manufacturer and BHSFDA entrant Tony Milich argued that the removal of subsidies required apparel manufacturers to establish a point of difference to pitch themselves on the global export market.¹³

Embracing this new climate, the BHSFDA of the 1980s focused on the export potential of primary products: 'As NZ can rely less and less on traditional dairy products and frozen lamb', argued Awards publicist Joan Gilchrist, 'It may have to rely more on the fine leathers and beautiful wools, crafted and woven and designed into fabulous fashion for export dollars.'¹⁴ Leather became 'the new darling of the designers,'¹⁵ linked with European conspicuous consumption – a '... throw-away approach to luxury' drawing heavily on an "Italian ease" aesthetic.'¹⁶

A 1986 Awards press release singled out three designers as having export potential: Konstantina Moutos, whose asymmetric black velvet dress took the Supreme Award; knitwear designer Roz Mexted, who won the Wool Board Award, and Trish Beach the High Fashion Daywear award.¹⁷ Beach went on to win the Supreme Award in 1987 for a luxury leather outfit. Beach's use of leather and Mexted's use of mohair utilised new materials available to designers as a result of farmer diversification after the demise of subsidies. The removal of subsidies from wool and weedkillers had increased demand for angora goats, who could 'turn weeds into mohair.'¹⁸

Despite textile innovation, the debate around traditional style versus street style, which emerged in the 1970s, continued. Designer Marilyn Sainty argued that prizes were going to conservative 'Dynasty style' garments, when casual street style influenced by alternative cultures was where fashion was at.¹⁹ As the decade drew to a close Annie Bonza's *Kiwi Music Dress*, which won the 1989 Leisure Lifestyle Award, heralded a fresh direction with Bonza stating: 'I 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.'²⁰ For Bonza, Kiwi pride meant 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.'²¹

As perceptions of New Zealand design changed, so too did discourses of creation. Where in the past newspaper headlines had trumpeted the transformation of home-sewer into national fashion star,²² by the late 1980s tertiary education options for fashion design had increased in New Zealand, producing designers 'hungry' to make their mark in the industry.²³ Marty Samuels, who won the 1993 Supreme Award for a garment influenced by Polynesian design, embodied this change. Deciding the BHSFDA was the promotional vehicle he needed to kickstart his career, Samuels borrowed \$2000 and produced five entries within six weeks, going 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.'²⁴ His determination was coupled with a Kiwi 'No.8 wire' attitude; using the handle of an aluminium meat tenderiser which he rubbed against a concrete path he created an 'elegant aluminium fastening for an elegant grey jacket.'²⁵ New Zealand fashion was not literally 'the wool off the sheep's back' image, argued Samuels; it was a 'sophisticated design identity... I'd like to go over there and show them we're not just a country full of sheep.'²⁶

In 1995 the final Supreme Award under the era of tobacco sponsorship went to Kylee Davis and Jason Crawford for a three piece collection of asymmetric fine and heavy gauge knit separates, incorporating industrial details such as copper and adjustable leather straps.²⁷ This collection nodded to trends such as the edgy knitwear produced by international fashion conceptualist Margarita Robertson of the Dunedin-based NOM*d label –influences that blended local and global.

In 1996 the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) took over as naming rights sponsors of the Awards for a three year term, giving organisers the chance to find new backers. The HSC obliterated all references to the Europeanized notions of glamour signified by the gold branded sponsor's product. Publicity material proclaimed Smokefree would 'take the ash' out of fashion, implying an industry that had burnt itself out, was irrelevant and now dead. Using a pounamu (greenstone) pinhead, Smokefree resurrected the fashion awards as fresh, young and cutting edge. This was an image aligned with 'Brand New Zealand'²⁸ and exemplified in the 1997 Supreme Award winning design *Dual Outlook* by Fraser Crowe (Kim Fraser and Deborah Crowe), later described by Smokefree as having a 'strong art beat' and by judge Konstantina Moutos as 'international' in standard.²⁹

1998 was the final year of the Smokefree Fashion Awards, with organisers unable to secure ongoing sponsorship. It was a stellar night for Dunedin with three Dunedin-based designers, all Otago Polytechnic graduates, winning awards. Fieke Neuman won the Menswear Award; Vaughan Geeson the Young Designer Award and Richard Moore's snowboard/streetwear look took home both the Collection and Supreme Awards. Their success was an indication of how far the event had come from its Wellington origins, also reflecting the diversification of tertiary fashion education in New Zealand.

As the nation's premier fashion design event, the BHSFDA played an influential role in shaping and tracking change in New Zealand's fashion history. Over four decades, the Awards provided a launch pad for aspiring designers and transformed amateur dressmakers into fashion stars. In doing so, it contributed to the development of a globally-focussed and highly professionalized fashion industry and embedded a story of Kiwi style that remains firmly within the public imagination.

1. The event underwent several name changes during its life. Tobacco company W.D. & H.O. Wills (NZ) Ltd, sponsored the first awards known as the Wills Award for Design (1964), section winners received a Golden Rose and in some media coverage of the event it is referred to as the Wills Gold Rose Award for Design. In 1965 the awards became known as the Benson & Hedges Award for Design and in 1971 they became the Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards existing under this name until 1996 when they became The New Zealand Smokefree Fashion Awards.

2. Philip Shortt email communication with Natalie Smith, 21 June 2015.

3. *Fashion '94*, Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards programme. MS-Papers-7026-18. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

4. Brian Hall quoted in Claire Regnault, 'The Nineteen Eighties: On the Make' in *The Dress Circle: New Zealand Fashion Design Since 1940*, ed. Lucy Hammonds, Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins, and Claire Regnault (Auckland: Godwit, 2010), 247.

5. 'World's Fashion Leaders – Paris, Rome, London ... and Taumaranui?' (1970) newspaper clipping Michael Mattar Scrapbook, CA00103400200010015. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

6. P.R. 'N.Z. fashion – way-our or back-to-front?', *Thursday* 26 October, 1972, pp. 39, 41.

7. G. G. H. Gilmour, 1977 Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards programme. MS-Papers-7026-10. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington

8. Josephine Brodie, Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards (1978) New Zealand On Screen <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/benson-and-hedges-fashion-design-awards-1978-1978>.

9. Bill Rushworth, Personal Communication from Bill Rushworth, Manager, Apparel Products, NZ Wool Board to the Benson & Hedges Fashion Design Awards (1985). MS-Papers-7026-14. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

10. Jenny Carlyon and Diana Morrow, *Changing Times: New Zealand Since 1945*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press 2013), 3, 187.

11. Carlyon and Morrow, 295-6.

12. Carlyon and Morrow 303-305; Doris de Pont, *Homesewn*, (Auckland: Penguin, 2012).

13. P. Mills, (1998) 'Tony Milich, New Zealand's Own 'Mr Fashion' Speaks Out', Newspaper clipping MS-Papers-7026-59. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

14. Joan Gilchrist, Press Release (1986). MS-Papers-7026-15. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

15. Cecilie Geary, 'In Skin', *More*, February 1987, 62; S. Clements, 'Leather Moves On' *Fashion Quarterly*, Winter 1989, 158-166.

16. Anon. 'Brigid Brock Profile of an Individualistic Designer', *New Zealand Fashion Quarterly*, Winter 1986, 35, 37.

17. Gilchrist, Press Release (1986).

18. J. McKenzie, 'Goodbye Baa-Lams Hello Kidstuff' *More*, October 1985, 67.

19. Vanya Body, 'Fashion Awards Tend to Overlook Originality', 17 March 1986 newspaper clipping. MS-Papers-7026-14. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

20. L. Hodkings, 'Light-hearted, colourful mini-dress wins long-range double for Annie', *Star Sunday* 12 March 1989, n.p. Newspaper clipping. MS-Papers-7026-49. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

21. J. Binsley, 'Joke' Dress Wins Award', *Auckland City Harbour News*, Thursday 23 March 1989, 3.

22. "Surprises in National Design Award Contest; Wellington Housewife Wins a Gold Rose Trophy" (1970) Michael Mattar Scrapbook, CA00103400100010019. Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand.

23. Lucy Hammonds, 'The Nineteen Nineties: Search for Style', *The Dress Circle: New Zealand Fashion Design Since 1940*, 299.

24. *Fashion '94*. MS-Papers-7026-18. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

25. Ibid.

26. Cathrin Schaefer, 'On a Mission', *More*, February 1995, 39.

27. M. Berryman, 'Blooming of Design Savvy and Talent' (1995). Newspaper clipping. Maysie MS-Papers-7026-53. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

28. Natalie Smith, 'Gold, Ash and Greenstone: The Smokefree Environments Act (1990) and the Rebirth of New Zealand Fashion' unpublished conference paper presented at the *End of Fashion*, College of Creative Arts, Massey University: Wellington, 8-9 December.

29. The New Zealand Smokefree Fashion Awards press release, 30 April 1997. MS-Papers-7026-38. Maysie Bestall-Cohen Papers, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

