

LORI MASON: FULL BIOGRAPHY AND WORK

Based in Portland, Oregon, Lori Mason is an award-winning fabric and textile artist who creates three types of quilts:

- **Memorial quilts**, made with keepsake fabrics, that celebrate the life of someone who has passed away.
- **Special event quilts**, also made with keepsake fabrics, that commemorate a special event such as a wedding, graduation, retirement, birth or milestone birthday.
- **Studio collection quilts**, a platform for Lori to freely improvise with pattern and fabrics. Quilts can be commissioned or purchased from an existing collection in Lori's studio.

Quilts made with keepsake fabrics are created from clothing and other materials belonging to the person whose former life, or special event, is being honored.

A key part of Lori's design process is working with the honoree's family and friends to understand the meaning and emotions attached to each piece of the clothing or fabrics provided to her. The emotions behind those choices guide her designs and her memorial quilts become a way for survivors to reconnect with the one who is gone through a physical medium.

"It's a sincere honor to be entrusted with keepsakes that carry such an intimate connection to someone else," she says. "Death and loss sever our real-time connection with someone we love, but memorial quilts restructure that pathway to connection through a beautiful, tactile, intensely personal object."

Lori's Early Career

Born into a multi-generational family of artists and architects, Lori studied at the Oregon College of Art and Craft, where she focused on print-making and fiber arts, then later studied surface design for industry at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York.

In her early career, she worked as a textile designer for Nike. Then, in the late 1990s, she moved to a studio in the industrial district of Portland, Oregon and founded Lori Mason Design offering quilts, pillows and other textile products and selling them in national venues such as the Renwick Gallery's ArtsMart in Washington DC, the Smithsonian Craft Show and the Philadelphia Museum Craft Show.

Memorial Quilts

Her first memorial quilt was for a friend whose father had died, made with the only keepsakes available: a collection of his ties. "When I brought the finished quilt to her," Lori says, "I was struck by the power of her emotional response to it and how comforted she felt to be reminded of her dad every time she walked past the quilt."

Soon after, Lori's much-loved grandmother died and the family women gathered to go through her closet. Memories of shared moments with her grandmother were triggered by the things Lori found in her closet, and she set aside four garment groupings of what would become four different memorial quilts. "Being able to work on this series of quilts," Lori says, "to handle materials that my granny had touched and worn herself, was a deeply grounding experience. My grief was transformed from what had felt like a desperate, clawing sensation to one of acceptance and, surprisingly, even joy."

After those initial memorial quilt projects, Lori began to hear more and more stories about how much people wished that keepsakes from loved ones could be repurposed into something new. It became clear how instrumental her memorial quilts could be in healing and transforming grief.

Special Event Quilts

Lori also designs custom commemorative quilts for major life events. Her recent projects include "Childhood Favorites" quilts made from favorite clothing that children have outgrown, graduation quilts with clothing worn during high school or college, a quilt made from dance costumes, and quilts to commemorate weddings, retirements, births and milestone birthdays.

Studio Collection Quilts

Lori's studio collection quilts are a platform for her to freely improvise with pattern and a variety of fabrics. Recent works include a quilt made from repurposed Eileen Fisher clothing, a tartan series for family clans and "Colony," a quilt made from Lori's Woodland Collection of fabrics.

Uniquely Personal, Transformative Works from Keepsake Fabrics

The power of Lori's creations lies, not only in beauty and craftsmanship, but in her work with the honoree's family and friends to understand the meaning attached to each piece of the clothing or fabrics they provide to her and allowing that meaning to guide her designs. The result is a transformation of keepsake fabrics into unique textile artworks that evoke deeply personal emotion, memory and meaning for their recipients.

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