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Memento in time

Robin Getsug Taple turns the fabric of people's lives into adornments for their homes

by Carol Nigrelli

The middle of the handcrafted pillow features a picture from a magazine ad circa 1950. A young girl in a pink dress and her brother sit on the floor beside a teal Christmas tree opening their gifts. The girl's open mouth conveys gleeful surprise—Santa has brought her a View-Master.

"The pillow is part of my Holiday Collection 2004," said Highland Park resident Robin Getsug Taple, founder of Memento: Adornment for the Home. "I often use non-traditional colors in my creations. I let the colors in the illustration lead me."

Such colors also add to the beauty of Taple's Hanukkah designs. Another ad, dating from the mid-1940s, shows two young children gazing at a menorah. Taple wrapped the illustration with a combination of textured wool in pale gold and deep blue felt. She embellished the pillow with vintage buttons sewn onto a band of gold silk, with the word "Light" repeated on the trim.

Taple's accessories for the home, which also include holiday ornaments, sachets, fine linens, door hangers and textile wall pieces, are the culmination of a 20-year career in interior design. She dreamed for years of starting her own business, creating a collection of fine art keepsakes in her favorite medium: mixed-media collage.

She even came up with a non-traditional

name. Memento, a play on the word "memento," is meant to convey a "keepsake in the moment," she said.

Memento pillows, though not designed to cradle a head, may very well comfort the soul. Taple's designs push emotional buttons by rekindling memories of home, family, friendships and childhood. She accomplishes this by using old photographs, art, poetry and prose surrounded by vintage fabrics, buttons, beads and trimmings.

"I scour estate sales, antique sales and eBay for vintage items," she said. "I have hundreds of old magazines in the house, mostly *House Beautiful* and *Good Housekeeping*. Ads from the '40s and '50s inspire me."

Taple's family and hometown also inspire her. Born and raised in Highland Park, she attended Highland Park Senior High School and graduated with a bachelor's degree in interior design from the University of Minnesota. She met her husband, Loren, "when we were both in nursery school," she said. They live near the College of St. Catherine with their three children, not far from both of Taple's grandmothers. "I didn't stray very far," she said with a laugh.

If Taple's neighborhood roots run deep, so do her artistic collaborations. A black-and-white picture of a young girl ice skating that graces one of her pillows was snapped years ago by her father, photographer Don Getsug, whose work has appeared in *Time*, *National*



Highland Park resident Robin Getsug Taple snuggles with some of the throw pillows she has created for her home adornment company Memento. Photo by Brad Stauffer.

Geographic and *Life*. St. Paul fiber artist Sara Langworthy added the velvet trim and poet Mary Logue supplied the accompanying text:

... Though I skate
for an hour I go
nowhere,
and I will do it
again. Circling
has its own purpose.
Ask the moon,
the earth.

Taple's elegant simplicity in capturing a nostalgic moment caught the eye of Michele Gaten, the owner of the Pull Out A Plum Salon & Gallery in Edina. Gaten was touring an American Society of Interior Designers showcase house in the Ramsey Hill neighborhood this spring when she spotted 15 of Taple's pillows displayed in the third-floor game room.

"She got on her cell phone and called me almost immediately," Taple recalled. "She said she wanted to come over to my shop. I don't have a shop. I work out of my house."

"I just fell in love with her work," Gaten said. "It's incredible. The instant you set your eyes on the pillows, you're drawn in by their charm and mix of media."

Needless to say, Pull Out A Plum is one of the retail outlets that sells pieces from the Memento Collection. They can also be found

at La Pera on St. Clair Avenue, the Lilydale Club on Highway 13, Gallery 360 in Minneapolis, Good Life Gallery in Wayzata and Nest in White Bear Lake.

Taple's holiday ornaments start at \$12, the door hangers retail for around \$32, and the larger pillows sell for \$200 and up, depending upon the amount of work.

Along with her signature line, Taple also offers heirloom pieces tailored for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions. People can supply their child's artwork or an old family photograph and she will turn it into a personal keepsake.

Pieces from the Memento Collection will be included in the Textile Center's Holiday Show, which will run through December at the Textile Center on University Avenue. Other upcoming shows for her collection include Minnetonka Art for the Parks on November 6, the Good Life Gallery Show on November 16-18 and the National Council of Jewish Women's Palette of the heART on November 20.

Taple is also a 2004 McKnight Foundation recipient for the Family Housing Fund's "Home Sweet Home Again" art exhibit, which seeks to raise awareness of homelessness and the need for affordable housing. The traveling exhibit will open on January 27 at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis.

For more information on Memento, visit www.momentoinc.com.