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Ashley hand towel

OBJECT | PART OF HISTORY COLLECTION



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Item details

Name

Ashley hand towel

Production

St. Fabiola; maker/artist; 2020; Wellington

Classification

towels

Materials

cotton, thread

Materials Summary

100% cotton towel

Registration Number

GH018322

Credit line

Gift of Kirsten Sutherland, 2020

Overview

This hand towel, created by Wellington embroidery artist Kirsten Sutherland of St Fabiola, features an embroidered image of Dr Ashley Bloomfield surrounded by love hearts. It materialises New Zealand's 'Covid-19 crush' on Dr Bloomfield, and relates to the government's health advice about hand washing. This is the first Ashley hand towel Sutherland produced, but she was quickly run off her feet with orders and made hundreds more for customers.

Dr Ashley Bloomfield, Director-General of Health, was widely praised for his calm and clear communication during the national lockdown in 2020. In the first two months of the Covid-19 crisis Bloomfield fronted more than 40 press conferences, and the 1pm briefings led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Dr Bloomfield were appointment viewing. Songs were written in Bloomfield's honour, thousands of people called for him to be nominated as New Zealander of the Year, and his fans called themselves 'Bloomers.'

This adoration of Bloomfield was reported on nationally and internationally, although some commentators were concerned that the 'deification' of Bloomfield left little room for necessary scepticism and scrutiny of the Ministry of Health's performance. Bloomfield himself called for several reviews of the government's response to the pandemic. Nevertheless, for many New Zealanders Bloomfield's leadership was a real comfort at a time of national crisis.

Sutherland started selling Ashley hand towels after sharing the idea with her family and finding that it struck a chord with them. The response to the hand towels was immediate and Sutherland received orders for more than 800 towels. They were so popular that they were mentioned in a *New York Times* article as an example of Bloomfield's newfound celebrity.

As well as paying tribute to Dr Bloomfield, the hand towel signals the importance of hand washing as a way of stopping the spread of Covid-19. Sutherland encouraged customers to let the soothing image of Bloomfield guide them through safe hand washing and drying practice. The government's advice to New Zealanders was that they should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

References

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- Mediawatch. 'Increasing media resistance to the deification of Dr Ashley Bloomfield.' *Radio New Zealand*. 22 April, 2020. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mediawatch/audio/2018743685/increasing-media-resistance-to-the-deification-of-dr-ashley-bloomfield>
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- St Fabiola. 'Ashley Hand towel.' <https://stfabiola.co.nz/products/ashley-hand-towel>
- Sutherland, Kirsten. 2020. Personal communication with curator.

Associated places



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TOPIC

Kowheori-19 | Covid-19

Related objects (5)



OBJECT

Be kind Covid-19 poster

New Zealand Government

2020

GH025559



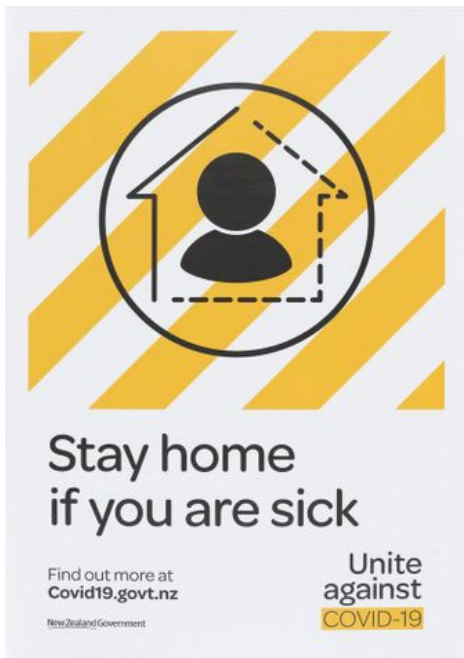
OBJECT

Cough or sneeze into your elbow Covid-19 poster

New Zealand Government

2020

GH025560



OBJECT

Stay home if you are sick Covid-19 poster

New Zealand Government

2020

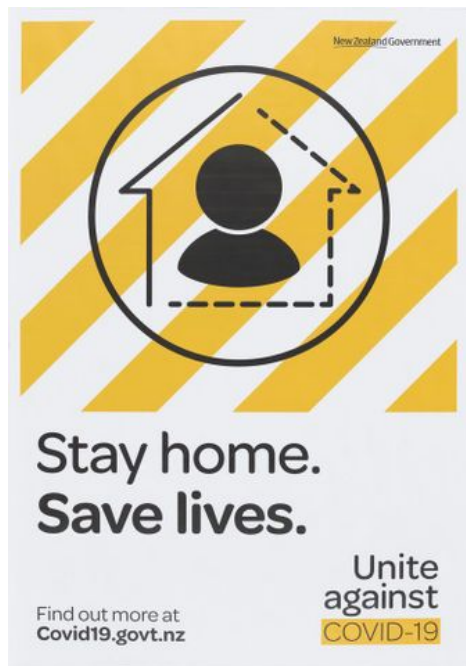


OBJECT

Washing and drying your hands kills the virus Covid-19 poster

New Zealand Government

2020



OBJECT

Stay home. Save lives. Covid-19 poster

New Zealand Government

2020

GH025563

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Category

Made of

cotton
thread

Type of

towels

Depicts

Government officials

Influenced by

Communicable diseases
public health

Place

Made in

Wellington (New Zealand)

People & Organisations

Made by

St. Fabiola

Depicts

Dr Ashley Bloomfield

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