

Real Mom

Traci Lamar, North Carolina State University, USA

Keywords: Knit Design, Electronic Jacquard, Family Tree

In all innocence, my daughter's friend asked, "What happened to her real Mom?" But... that is me, I am her real Mom.

Our adoption is open, the children know we chose them and we know our children's birth mother. She is not mysterious, but a real person with a face we know. She has even come to visit. As my children become a little older and more aware, and such questions become more challenging, I find myself focused on what defines a "real" Mom. This piece is one of a set of visual explorations surrounding adoption, its relationship to biological roots, and what makes a "real" family in the context of chosen children. The techniques and motifs in the piece reflect this exploration.



The primary fabric is a 4 color (black, dark brown, heather brown, cream) electronic jacquard knit fabric that I designed and engineered in Lectra Kaledo specifically for this dress, then I knitted it on a Mayer CIE knitting machine. The motifs include a tree of life, melding tree and Celtic knot, in the middle of the engineered design. This interpretation, featuring Celtic knots often interpreted in modern culture as symbolic of eternity, was selected to symbolize the forever family. The tree representation is dual, tree of life and family tree. The vintage lace motif reflects family history. The intertwined trunks represent the joining of two biological family trees into one richer, fuller chosen family. The lace trim and collar drape suggest a wedding, the start of our family, while the leaf pattern in the purchased flounce fabric continues the tree theme.

The somewhat unexpected combination of the materials, playing burned out sheer against heavy cotton jacquard, reflects the joining of disparate histories into family.

My daughters face is knitted into the fabric, peeking around the entwined family trees, because she is at the heart of the exploration. Her face was interpreted from a photograph, controlling how the different colors knitted into the fabric to create shading. The garment was developed through a combination of flat pattern and draping techniques in June 2015.

