

Issue 211
October 2023



Showtime for Hats

Felt Choices

Feather Crown Tutorial

Blocking Valleys

**HATalk**

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Cover & Back Page
Image courtesy of [Ben Meadows](#)
Hat made by [Ellie Vallerini](#) in collaboration with
costume designer Rosa Dias. Hat worn by Paul Kaye as
D.I. Tanner in Channels 4's *Year of the Rabbit* (2019).

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From Idea to Reality:

Curating Showtime for Hats



*Showtime for Hats is an exhibition of iconic headwear made for theatre, film, TV and opera by milliners in **The British Hat Guild**. The exhibition is free and will be open until 27 October 2023 at Hat Works in Luton, England. Featured headwear includes Timothy Dalton's topper from 'Licence To Kill' (Lock & Co Hatters), Michele Pfeiffer's stunning lace hat from the film 'Cherie' (Sean Barrett), Paul Kaye's felt trilby for 'Year of The Rabbit' (Ellie Vallerini), Ian McKellen's extravagant panto hat from 'Mother Goose' (Claire Strickland) and Eddie Redmayne's helmet from 'Cabaret' (Noel Stewart). Milliner **Claire Strickland** (pictured above) is the creator and curator of this exciting new exhibition. She gives us the inside scoop on how she pulled it all together and some of the challenges she faced along the way...*



I graduated from university in 2007 and have been making hats for theatre and film ever since. At first my millinery started off as another 'string to my bow.' I made all sorts, including fake food, puppets and severed heads! However, I fell more and more in love with hats and, from 2010, decided to specialise only in headwear. Through hard work, skill, keeping in touch with contacts and definitely a little bit of luck, I have made hats for English National Opera, The Globe, Secret

Cinema, Punchdrunk, Doctor Who, Bridgerton Series 3 and more.

I joined The British Hat Guild in 2021 and last year decided to put forward this exhibition as a project that they could fund. I wanted this exhibition to celebrate the hidden world of making hats for stage and screen. The craftsmanship and creativity that goes into making this kind of headwear is often a collaboration. It is the costume designer's idea and the hat maker's realisation and creation of that idea.

The aim of this exhibition is to inspire other milliners and people working in the costume industry. Did you know that directors, lighting designers and producers often veto hats?! Many times, costume designers have to fight to keep them in the show. But think about how many iconic characters from film wear hats. Many movie posters

would not be the same without a hat. The audience's favourite character often wears a hat. Headwear should be recognised as an integral part of a costume, a part that can enhance character development, storytelling and visual impact.

I got the green light and funding from The British Hat Guild, and started organising Showtime for Hats in January. I like to push myself out of my comfort zone and enjoy the challenge of a new experience. This certainly did that! Where to find a venue? Which hat makers to choose? How to find the hats?



Headdress from 'The Magic Flute' by Scottish Opera | Photographer James Glossop | Costume Designer: Simon Higlett | Milliner: Sally-Ann Provan

Early on Culture Trust Luton offered us Hat Works, which is a perfect venue. The oldest hat factory in Luton and now a flexible workspace for emerging creative entrepreneurs. It's just a two minute walk from Luton train station, which is only a 35 minute train ride from Kings Cross St Pancras Station in London.

I think I said at the beginning that I would stage the exhibition again in London. Well, I was totally naive about the amount of work it would take to organise. If you are interested

in seeing the hats then come to Luton - I won't be doing it again!

Luton is the home of British hat making; it has been associated with plaited straw hats since the middle of the 16th century. Millinery suppliers like Baxter Hart and Abraham, Majesa and Randall Ribbons are still based here and the football team is nicknamed 'The Hatters.' Also, there is currently a huge exhibition of over 200 hats called [Hats Made Me](#) running at the nearby Stockwood Discovery Centre.

It's open Wednesday to Sunday until 10 December 2023, so if you pick the right day you could see both.

I am so thankful to Yona Lesger (Curator of Significant Collections, Hat Industry & Headwear at Culture Trust Luton) for helping me with the object insurance and loan agreement forms. Another early success was the headwear suggested by Ellie Vallerini, Noel Stewart and Sally-Ann Provan. Their pieces had brilliant, very high resolution images, which we could get copyright sign-off to

use. (This project has taught me so much about copyright and image licensing!) So right from the start of February I could start reaching out to press with the help of Bee Smith, another milliner in the Guild.

I spent most of August working full-time on the exhibition and did have a few crisis moments. Like when I misread a letter from Sands Films and later realised that I did not have a hat for legendary theatrical milliner Jane Smith after all. Or when I almost sent the A6 booklet to the printers with a spelling mistake in the title of a major film. Then I managed to send the A1 posters to the printers at a resolution of 85DPI instead of the recommended 300.

Luckily teamwork saved the day and Yona spent a huge amount of time helping me proofread and write copy for the booklet. Josephine Willis helped me think of another hat to represent Jane. And Fiona from Petershams Millinery Supplies helped me with an outside design eye for the printed guide. I can definitely say I am a much more confident graphic designer now! (I used [Affinity Publisher](#) for anyone who is interested.)

All the hard work paid off and installing the exhibition was pretty



Ian McKellen in 'Mother Goose' panto | Photographer: Manuel Harlan | Milliner: Claire Strickland | Costume designer: Liz Ascroft | Costume Supervisor: Sarah Holland | Costume Maker Janet Weston



easy with no drama. The poster with the low DPI was fine! You couldn't tell any difference between it and the 300DPI ones. In my post-printing panic I found a website that said this often happens with posters. I still don't really understand why...

Showtime for Hats is free and open Monday - Friday in September and Monday - Saturday in October 2023. The headwear is a diverse collection from the world of theatre, film, TV, opera and the West End. I will be there on Saturdays in October, to share insights and answer any questions. I'll also be doing free demonstrations on using millinery materials, so come say hi and grab your free booklet! Further information, demonstration



Bonnet worn by Emma Mackey in the film 'Emily' | Costume Designer: Michael O'Connor | Milliner: Jo Willis



times and recommended London trains can be found on [The British Hat Guild website](#).

I'm now focused on organising an exciting panel discussion called [Exploring Millinery in Costume Design and Creation](#) which will take place at the Hat Factory Arts Centre in Luton on 14 October. Noel Stewart will be chairing the panel and will be joined by some award-winning costume designers, including Hayley Nebauer and Liz Ascroft, to chat about how, why, and when millinery can be employed to enhance and elevate costume design.



Bonnet worn by Emma Mackey in the film 'Emily' | Costume Designer: Michael O'Connor | Milliner: Jo Willis



Eddie Redmayne in 'Cabaret' | Photographer: Marc Brenner | Milliner: Noel Stewart | Costume Designer: Tom Scutt | Costume Supervisor: Lucy Martin | Costume Maker: Will Skeet | Make Up Supervisor: Guy Common





Ian McKellen in 'Mother Goose' panto | Photographer: Manuel Harlan
| Milliner: Claire Strickland | Costume designer: Liz Ascroft | Costume
Supervisor: Sarah Holland | Costume Maker Janet Weston



Hat worn by Michele Pfeiffer in the film 'Cherie' | Costume Designer: Consolata
Boyle | Milliner: Sean Barrett



Bonnet worn by Emma Mackey in the film 'Emily' | Costume Designer: Michael O'Connor |
Milliner: Jo Willis

Find out more about Claire Strickland
at www.clairestrickland.com. For more
information about the free Showtime for
Hats exhibition and how to get tickets
for the upcoming panel discussion, go to
www.britishhatguild.com.



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Guy Morse-Brown

Hand-crafted Wooden Hat Blocks

The Heart of the Hat

A discussion on felt with Robert Gault - Part 1



160 gr dress weight nutria in gunmetal grey (Sunrise Hat Supplies)

Editor's Note: Felt production has been an integral part of the hat trade for centuries and fur felt hat making is a recognised heritage skill. We believe that it is important for modern hat makers who work with fur felt to have access to accurate information about how to use and source materials ethically and sustainably. However, we are also aware that the use of animal products is a difficult and emotive subject for many and apologize in advance for any discomfort caused by the content of this article.

The alpha and omega of hat making resides in the choosing of the felt. The felt is the heart of the hat. In my hat making journey I quickly learned that choosing the right felt for the hat, a felt whose qualities best match the intended use, was the critical first step in a hat's creation.

Types of Fur Felt

There are four types of fur felt commonly used in contemporary hatting: Rabbit, European Wild Hare, Coypu (nutria) and, of course, Beaver. I have listed them in ascending order of quality and price and I will discuss their individual qualities and usage later in the article. Wool is not a fibre I work with, so I have left it out of this discussion.

Rabbits are raised/farmed primarily as a food source and their felt is a by-product of that industry.

Coypu are native to South America. Cousin to the beaver, the coypu is a semi-aquatic rodent (read large rat!) and produces a wonderful felt called nutria. It was introduced into the southern USA early in the 20th century and breeding farms have since popped up all along the Gulf Coast of the USA. As these farms became popular along the southern coast, it wasn't too long before escapement and prolific rodent

breeding patterns led to the copyu becoming an invasive pest species. They continue to cause great harm to the coastal marshlands and the state of Louisiana currently offers a per tail bounty on these animals.

European hare, a similar species to the rabbit but larger, offer a felt that is judged superior to the felt of the domestic rabbit. It retains the softness of rabbit felt but is a bit plusher and harder wearing. Hares are trapped in the wild, not farmed.



Fur Felt Hat Bodies (L to R)

- Copper beaver & rabbit 50/50 blend, 220gr
- Natural 100% beaver, 160gr
- Grey rabbit velour, 140gr
- Pink nutria, 160gr
- Oyster 100% beaver, 95gr
- Black rabbit velour, 140gr

Beaver is solely sourced by wild trapping. Canada, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Scandinavia all have trappers that earn their livelihood through the trapping of fur bearing animals. In Canada alone there are 60,000 active trappers and 25,000 of them are Indigenous Canadians.

In 1997 initiatives were taken to codify universal standards on humane trapping methods. In 1999 the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards was agreed upon by Canada, the European Union and Russia. It now stands as the universal standard on humane trapping methods. All traps used by the signatory countries must comply with the standards set by AIHTS.

I am certain we all have personal opinions on the trapping of animals, but perhaps it is of some comfort to know there are now standards that exist in much of the world to ensure that trapping is done in the most humane manner possible. As well, trapping is a way to control populations. Left unchecked, beaver populations can cause ecological damage. Their efficiency and industry in tree cutting can be, if not carefully managed, much too much of a good thing.

So if I, as a custom hat maker, have to help a client choose a felt, what criteria do I use?

Quality & Weight

Dress weight rabbit felt has a softer hand, a lighter feel. It produces a very good hat. A well made rabbit felt hat will last a lifetime and beyond if cared for properly. I also offer vintage hat restorations and 90% of the hats I restore (from the 1940s, 50s and newer) are made from rabbit felt. They look great and they last. I love working with beaver but with the current growing gap between rabbit and beaver felt pricing, I stress to my clients that rabbit fur felt also makes



140gr velour (long haired finish) rabbit in a camel colour. This hat has a pencil curled brim to add structural stability so that even with the light weight felt it still holds its shape. (Ukraine)



95gr dress weight 100% beaver in commando green. Soft, plush felt that replicates closely the wonderful hand of vintage felt from the 1930s and 40s. This felt is the closest to replicating that vintage feel that I have found in a contemporary felt. (FEPSA)

a great hat and, with the proper care and attention, it too can be a hat that is passed down to the next generation.

Dress weight beaver is a better felt, of that there is no doubt. All fur has a scaly keratin outer layer. The particular keratin structure of beaver fur makes it naturally more inclined to the felting process. The beaver hairs naturally tend to felt and produce a plush, luxuriant yet dense and hardy felt. A perfect product with which to produce a hat. When you place a beaver felt beside a rabbit felt, you can see and feel the

difference. The beaver felt is plusher, more dense without necessarily being stiffer, and has a natural sheen to the surface. Now for the highly subjective question: Is beaver worth all that extra money? That is for the client to decide. My job as the hatter is to make certain that whatever they choose, the hat fits its intended purpose.

European hare is considered a step up from rabbit but I don't have any clear opinion on this. I have never worked with it. None of my suppliers offer it. I own one hare hat, commissioned from a fellow custom hatter. Yes, it is a nice felt but I cannot discern any substantive difference between it and my rabbit felt hat.

Nutria was once a common felt choice for the western market. It is lighter and somewhat less dense than beaver. It has the nice soft hand of rabbit but still makes for a very hard wearing hat. Hence it was a very good fit for the working man's hat in the western market the first few decades of the 20th century.

Price wise it sits between rabbit and beaver. Stetson made a goodly number of nutria hats into the 1930s and 40s and Stetson nutria hats are prized amongst collectors. I have one from the 1930s and it looks as



A 140gr rabbit with extra pouncing to thin out the felt. Texas based client wanted a shoulder season felt hat for those warm days just before the summer heat and Panama straw weather arrives. (Tonak)

new, although I am sure it wasn't worn out on the range all that much.

Regardless of the type of fur felt that you choose, there are also a multitude of other factors that need to be considered. The felt's weight and the amount of stiffener (shellac) are key ones.

In terms of the felt's weight there are two general categories - dress weight or western weight. Dress weight (fedora stylings) range from as low as 95 grams (gr) to a high of 160gr.



An 'outdoorsy' hat for a lady. 160gr dress weight rabbit in granite. (Ukraine)

Western weight runs over 160gr to a high of 250gr. So you can see that there is a huge variance between the low of 95gr to the 250gr high of the maximum western weight. Now add into that the amount of stiffness and the range of choice becomes huge.

All fur felts are stiffened during the felting process to some degree. I will discuss this a bit later. But let me say at this point, the variance in weight and the variance in the amount of stiffener added makes a huge difference in the feel or the 'hand' of the felt.

Intended Use

So determining the best felt to meet the client's wants and needs requires a bit of exploration. An inquiry process between client and hatter.

The first question I ask a prospective client; to what use will you be putting the hat? Dress wear, casual wear, outdoorsy/hiking, or perhaps a combination?

Knowing this points me in the right general direction of which felt to choose. If the answer is the desire for a more formal dress wear hat, the next question is the preference in feel. As I mentioned above, the feel of a 95gr felt varies greatly to that of the 160gr. I stock FEPSA's 95gr 100% beaver felt with medium stiffening and it comes as close to that wonderful soft, malleable feel of a vintage hat from the 1940s as



140gr heathered long hair rabbit felt. Hard to tell from the pictures but the overall grey colour of the hat is made up of multiple fibre colours in a melange. (Tonak)

I can find. Its hand has the feel of a fine vintage Borsalino and makes a wonderful dress or even casual hat.

If there are budget considerations, I would suggest a 140gr rabbit felt from Tonak. It has the softness but is less dense and less substantial than the beaver. It still makes up a wonderful hat, just not with the same substance and plushness as the beaver felt. But you do get a very nice hat for about half the price of one made from beaver.

Rabbit felt capelines are also offered in a 120gr weight from many millinery suppliers (rather than hatting suppliers). In general, this weight is too light and floppy to be used to make fedoras. Rather, it can be used but requires the application of stiffeners to give it the substance needed to hold its shape. I have



Silverbelly 160gr dress weight. Some clients prefer to receive the hats with the open crown. This way they get to crease it themselves to add a personal touch. This brim also has a vintage grosgrain ribbon binding the brim edge. This adds structural stability so even with the lighter dress weight it holds the wider shape.



Western weight 210gr rabbit in pecan. (Ukraine)

used many 120gr millinery felts, purchased cheaply as 'second or B grade' when I was learning the craft. They were available at bargain prices and were great felts on which to learn. Relatively cheap, I could ruin one and not feel terrible for it.

If the client is looking for a 'Weekender' or 'Country Gentleman' style to wear while watching his daughter's football match, or a hat

to venture into the outback, I would point them towards a different option. I would suggest a move to the 160gr from HUUST in either rabbit or beaver. Not only are these felts much heavier weight but they also have more stiffener added. They will make up a true rugged felt more suited to a hat that will be put through its paces.

Also in consideration is the 160gr dress weight nutria, if you have the funds and desire a step up from the rabbit. Like rabbit, the nutria felt is available in a wide palette of colours, from jewel tones and pastels to the classic neutral greys and browns. It is more 'beaver like' in its qualities than the rabbit and fits the niche between rabbit and beaver nicely, both in quality and price.

Western weight felt is a very different beast to work with. You can imagine the contrast between a 95gr felt compared to one weighing 250gr. Then, add in the greater amount of stiffener existing in western felts and you end up with a very different feel. They approach a cardboard like stiffness that can be softened some in the pouncing process but will still finish up as a much stiffer final product than a dress weight felt. I have a few western weight felts in stock (beaver and beaver/rabbit



Nutria 220gr western weight in rain cloud. With the wider brimmed hat, it sometimes makes the most sense to go with the heavier western weight in order to achieve the structural integrity it provides. A dress weight would not hold that brim as well as the western.

blends) that are so thick and stiff that even wet blocking and copious steaming still wreaks havoc with my arthritic hands. But if you are a working cowboy and require a hat that will withstand any and all types of weather, dust, dirt and horse hooves, then you do need a robust hat made from the more substantial 250gr felt.

There is one caveat to using the heavier and stiffer western weight

felt. Because the felt is heavier and stiffer, the finished hat has a more pronounced rigidity and thus the fitting of the hat (both size and head shape) becomes more critical. A poorly fitted western weight hat is not likely to mold itself to fit the customer's head shape. Whereas the 95gr dress weight allows for much more leeway. Its softness lends itself much more easily to the molding of the client's head. I am a long oval and I have an 'off the shelf' western weight hat in regular oval that, a decade later, still resists any movement towards conforming to the shape of my head.

In parting let me stress, take the time in your initial consultation(s) with the client to discern the budget, the intended usage and expectations so that you are clear on the answer to the all important question;

"To what purpose will this hat be put?"

Then you will be better equipped to discern which felt best fits this purpose and you will be well on your way to choosing the right 'heart of the hat.'



Robert Gault, owner of [Wolfbrae Custom Hatters](#), is a custom hat maker based in Vancouver, Canada specializing in creating the classic fedora look for men and women.

He takes great pride in his craft, replicating the classic fedora stylings of the first half of the 20th century. Robert considers himself most fortunate to have been mentored by, now retired, Master Hatter Art Fawcett of Vintage Silhouettes fame.

His work can be seen on Instagram [@gaultrobert](#) and he would be pleased to answer any questions that this article evokes. Email questions to mail@hataalk.com.

Hat of the Month

by Maria Curcic

This month, we're spotlighting a whimsical beret made by Maria Curcic, a milliner and artist from Victoria, British Columbia in Canada.

How did you create this hat?

This design began as a sketch. I used a wool felt to create the blocked base. I have collected lots of odds and ends from clothing over the years. I keep unique buttons and other finds to use in my headpieces. This beret represents one of my early attempts at fabric beading. I made the leaves using buckram, I drew out the pattern, used a white pencil to indicate the placement of each leaf on the beret and then hand sewed each onto the beret. The bees came from a vintage dress which I decided to up-cycle. The inspiration came from spending time in my garden and appreciating nature. I love sitting on my swing and listening to the bees hum while they forage. This piece is eminently nature inspired, as is much of my work.



Tell us about your millinery journey so far.

I began designing hats and headpieces around 1985. I was born in Paris and, with a strong European appreciation for fashion and style, I began creating hats for high-end boutiques in Canada and the USA in the early 1990s. The popularity of my designs led me to open my own store, Le Chapeau Rouge, in Calgary in 1994. I shifted my attention to wholesale in the late '90s, providing hats to over 15 stores across Canada and the USA. I am a graduate of Interior Design from Mount Royal University, as well as a graduate of The Alberta College of Art and Design. My creations have been featured in multiple fashion magazines and some of my hats were used in the costuming of the first season of CBC's 'Frankie Drake Mysteries.'

Today, I focus my attention on custom creations and one of a kind pieces of wearable art. I am a recognized artist (www.curcicfineart.com) and a DJ at RadioRadio.ca. My creative talents ensure that each design is unique and memorable.



To see more of Maria's hats and headpieces, visit www.mariacurcic.com.

Image Credits:
Petite beret with sequins
Model: Sanja L.
Hat & Photography by Maria Curcic

2023 HATalk Competition
The Elements:
Earth
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Paradise Wonder

Feather Crown Tutorial

Hat designer [Lilia Fisher](#) is known for her bold seasonal collections and creative feather work. In this tutorial, she explains how to make a fan-shaped feather crown, a design that she calls 'Paradise Wonder.'

Lilia wore this feather headpiece to the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year (inset right). As you can see, it creates a striking silhouette. This is a great project for beginners because it requires minimal tools. Lilia used crow and goose feathers in her design but you can substitute other types of feathers instead.



What You Will Need

- 15 - 16 crow feathers
- 25 goose feathers
- Scissors
- Pins
- Rhinestone glue (e.g. Zhanlida B6000)
- Hot glue gun
- Black rhinestones
- Felt
- Brooch
- Needle & matching thread
- 10cm hat elastic
- Awl (piercer)
- Headband



Step 1

Attach a hat elastic to the headband by sewing it to the outside ends. The elastic shown is about 10cm but you can use a longer or shorter one depending on the head size. Using a hat elastic will give a better fit and ensure that the piece stays securely on the head.



Step 2

Cut the goose feathers into approximately 1cm pieces as shown. Curl the sides of each feather piece by twisting the corners inward while carefully pressing the cutting edge of the scissors against the feather. Maintaining the intensity of pressure, gently run the scissors along the feather from the centre to the edge. Alternatively, instead of curling, you can slightly fray the feathers instead.



Step 3

Prepare the crow feathers by trimming off everything except the top triangle on both sides. If the feather is uneven, level it up with scissors. Colour any white parts of the feather with a black permanent marker or acrylic paint.



Step 4

Find the centre of the headband and mark it with a pin. Measure 1.5cm from each side of the centre and mark these points with pins as well. Beginning at one end, glue the goose feather pieces onto the headband in an overlapping chequerboard pattern. Keep adding feathers in this way until you reach the first pin.



Step 5

The goose feathers should now cover one side of the headband completely. Add extra feathers to cover any gaps if needed.

Repeat this process to cover the other side of the headband with goose feathers. Stop at the opposite pin, leaving the centre empty.



Step 6

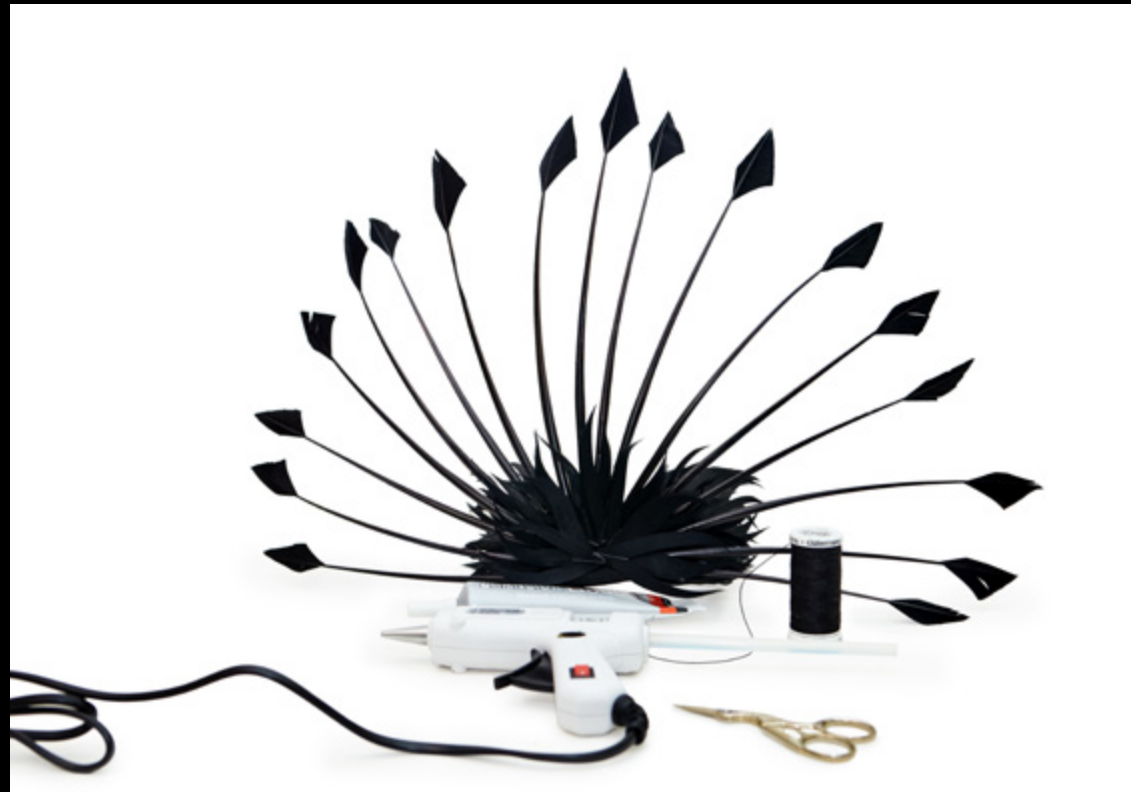
Use an awl to make tiny holes in base of the crow feather quills. Cut out a felt circle (approx. 10cm in radius). Sew the feathers along the top half of the felt circle, going through the holes that you made, to create a fan shape. If the feathers are too brittle to pierce, glue them to the felt base instead.

Place the straightest and most beautiful feather in the middle, and the two shortest ones on the edges. Fill the space between symmetrically, maintaining equal intervals.



Step 7

Fold the felt in half, covering the ends of the feathers with the bottom part of the circle. Glue or sew the felt circle closed, hiding the seam. Glue the felt semicircle base onto the centre of the headband, removing the pins you added earlier. Add some extra goose feathers to hide the felt.



Step 8

Finish off the centre of the headpiece with a decorative brooch. Use rhinestone glue to attach it and then carefully sew the corners to the felt base if possible. Decorate the tops of the long and base feathers around the brooch with small black rhinestones.



Your Paradise Wonder feather crown is ready!

About Lilia

Lilia Fisher, a talented millinery designer, was born in a small village in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia. From a young age, she had to work to support her family, selling homemade pastries by the shore of Issuk-Kul Lake. Little did she know that one day, without any external financial support, she would have her own fashion show in Milan and her hats would be appreciated by leading magazines, influencers, and celebrity stylists in London, New York, and Los Angeles.

Lilia creates limited edition capsule collections of high-end hats that range from casual trendy fashion items to vibrant art-pieces. Her ready-to-wear hats are crafted with the finest quality fabrics and materials sourced from Italy, France, Czech Republic, Great Britain and the USA. All of her creations can be custom ordered in preferred colours, altered in design, and personalized with decorations, some of which she hunts for at the vintage markets of Paris and London.



For over 10 years, Lilia has also created made-to-order couture headpieces, paying special attention to the desires and tastes of each client. Today, the brand is physically based in Moscow, Bishkek and Nice, but ships worldwide.

Despite going global, Lilia strives to be a sustainable brand that works with local small workshops and is not in a race to produce a fixed number of collections per year. She creates pieces that don't go out of fashion and are long lasting. She also takes care of each creation by providing her clients with refreshing, resizing and recycling services to extend the lifecycle of her headpieces.



@liliafisher
@liliafisher_shop
www.liliafisher.com

Q&A:

Your Hat Making Questions Answered

Question: How do I block the valley of my pork pie crown hat block?

Answer by Catherine Morse-Brown of Guy Morse-Brown Hat Blocks

Even if you have a hat block with the pork pie style indentation built in, it can be difficult to form a neat valley on the top of the crown. Thankfully, there is a special tool for this exact job called a **tipper** (also known as a creaser). Tippers help to push felt into the hollowed tip of a crown on hat styles like trilbies, fedoras and pork pies. Each tipper is custom-made to fit with a specific wooden block, so they have to be created at the same time.



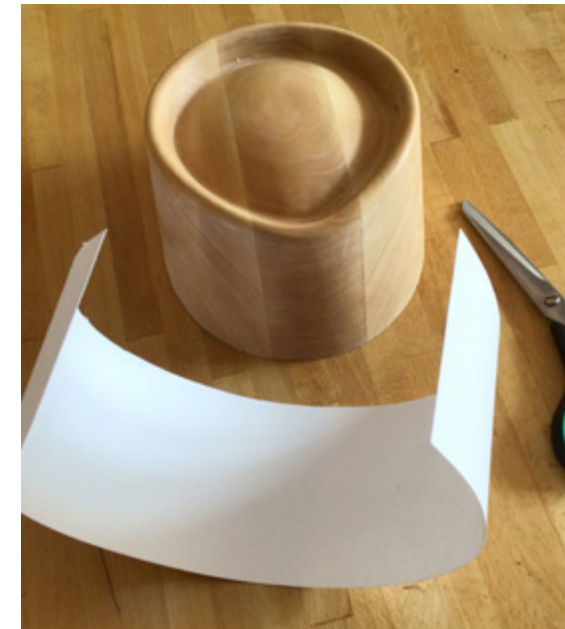
This is a pork pie style crown block (**CB248**) with a matching tipper. Once you have blocked your felt on a block like this, you can simply place the tipper on top of it and then put a heavy item (eg. a book) on top of the tipper to weigh everything down. Leave the whole thing to dry and then remove the weight and tipper. Underneath, you should find a lovely valley formed in your felt crown.

If you don't have a tipper to go with your crown block, you may be able to create a makeshift one with some thick cardboard. This approach will work best if the bottom of the pork pie indentation in the hat block is level and has a sharp corner.

All you will need is a strip of thick, strong cardboard and some scissors. Corrugated cardboard won't work. Cut the strip so that it is wider than the height of the dome in the centre of the hat block, with parallel and straight sides.

Next, put one edge of your card into the indentation on the crown and bend it into a cylinder shape. It should sit exactly in the indent and the ends should overlap. You will need to pinch the cardboard at the front to form the tip of the valley. Once you've got a good fit, cut the cardboard to the correct length.

Have a question? Email us at mail@hataalk.com



Cardboard cut to roughly the correct size with an overlap.



Cardboard inserted into block's indentation with a pinch at the front.



Cardboard strip held at the correct measurement after pinching and fitting.



View from above.

When your cardboard 'tipper' is fitted correctly over your blocked felt crown, place a book or other weighted item on top to hold it in place and create pressure (above left). When the felt is completely dry, remove the weight and cardboard to reveal your valley.

If the indentation on your block varies in depth, it can be quite difficult to cut the card to exactly the right size. It is possible but it will take a bit more time and patience. You will need to pinch and crease the cardboard until it matches the indentation. Most importantly, make sure the top edge is level.



To get blocks with custom tippers, visit www.hatblocks.co.uk.

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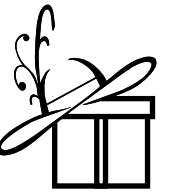
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October HATalk Give Away



This month, we're giving away a set of traditional flower making tools from Guy Morse-Brown Hat Blocks.

The art of flower making goes hand in hand with millinery. Traditional flower making involves shaping fabric petals with heated metal tools and this 4-piece set is the perfect starter collection.

The set includes an arrowhead, a curved point (rat tail), a 15mm ball and a 30mm ball. The tools are stainless steel with hardwood handles. The stainless steel is polished, making it very smooth to use on silk. The tools won't rust or tarnish and have better heat retention than either brass or steel, allowing you to work for longer without needing to reheat as often.



Last month's winner was Margaret K. from Australia. Margaret won a Fashionary Headwear Sketchbook. The October Give Away will close on 15 October, 2023. No purchase is necessary. For full terms and conditions, visit [our website](#).



Milliner Anne Tomlin uses a ball tool to shape the petal of a [silk abaca rose](#).



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