



by Ilona
MILLINERY

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OUT OF THE SEA FELTMAKERS 2022

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THOUGHT PROCESS AND INSPIRATION

theWI
INSPIRING WOMEN



As a member of the Women's Institute I feel an obligation to uphold the "End Plastic Soup" campaign through my millinery work. This campaign is about exploring the extent of micro-plastic pollution in our waterways that originates from synthetic fibres when they are washed.

I feel that I can do my bit for the campaign by not adding to the micro-plastics in water. I try to use sustainable, natural, eco-friendly and biodegradable materials across all my work. In this project I have used wool felt, a mixture of vintage and cotton thread, natural mother of pearl chip beads, cotton-covered millinery wire and 100% cotton petersham ribbon.



Vintage & Cotton Thread
Mother of Pearl Chip Beads



PANTONE

Very Peri
17-3938

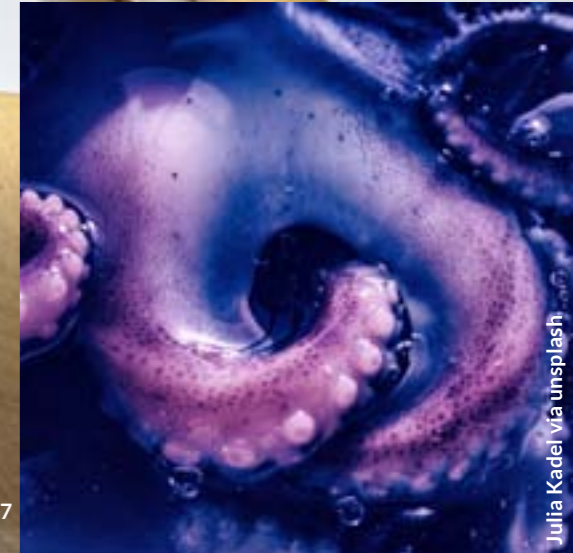
Purple Wool Felt Sample



Hat Block GMB FB77

To make my design on trend, I started off by looking at the Pantone colour of the year 2022 – Very Peri. The closest felt hood I could find to "Very Peri" was a deep blue leaning purple. I considered dyeing a felt hood to a lighter periwinkle colour, however I decided that this would prolong hat production in the workroom. Moreover, it would be easier to reproduce this hat for commercial purposes from ready dyed materials.

Thinking about the creatures that inhabit the seas brought my mind to octopuses. They are fabulous beings – beautiful, intelligent and colourful. I had the perfect hat block in mind: with its curves it reminded me of octopus tentacles. I didn't want to just block a single shape, as on its own I thought it was too boring. Instead I blocked 2 shapes, wired them, and started playing with how I could combine them into 1.



Julia Kadel via unsplash



Serena Repice Lentini via unsplash

At this point I wanted to decide on how to trim and decorate the hat. Another aspect of sea life are oysters and muscles and I decided that natural mother of pearl buttons or beads paired perfectly with the deep purple colour of the felt hood.

First I thought I could re-create octopus' suckers with discs of felt adorned with mother of pearl buttons. I had seen this technique used on vintage felt hats (using sequins and beads), but after creating a sample I decided that it would be too literal an interpretation and not very elegant on this hat shape.

Instead I sourced some mother of pearl chip beads in multiple sizes, and scattered them down the curve of the hat concentrating them above the left eyebrow. They are stitched on using waxed cotton thread using invisible stitches inside the felt. This beading technique accentuates one of my favourite properties of felt as a material – and I wanted to leave the hat unlined to show that the stitches are completely hidden. I hid my start and end knots under the beads and used a dab of glue under those beads for extra security. (A more comprehensive list of production notes will follow later in this document).



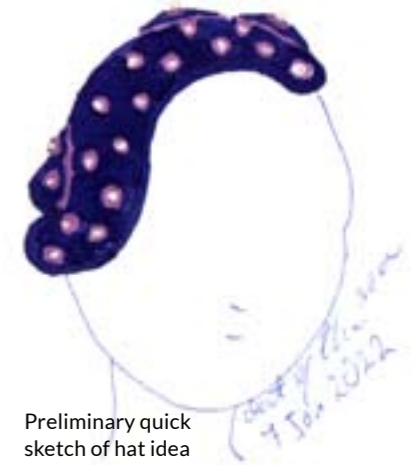
Sample of felt discs with vintage mother of pearl buttons



Stephanie Harlacher via unsplash



Playing with positions for combining the 2 hat shapes into 1



Preliminary quick sketch of hat idea



After a lot of contemplation and experimentation I decided to be brave and cut into 1 of the shapes. I wanted to attach this cut plain shape to the beaded one in a way that suggested 2 octopus tentacles wrapping around the wearer's head. I used the bit I cut off to "plug the gap" at the back of the hat to give it a larger base. This had the added benefit of turning the hat into a more vintage style – which I think is always a plus. I put a bit of extra wire into that piece to give it extra stability. The peak of the hat should sit above the wearer's right eyebrow, while the beading balances the shape above the left eyebrow.



Cutting into the plain shape

One of the harder aspects of my design to execute was hiding the joins of the felt on the inside of the hat. For this I used 100% 15mm cotton petersham ribbon in purple to match the felt colour. First I covered the smallest join. Then I used longer pieces of ribbon, which I curved using an iron into the "S" shapes of the joins. I then sewed on more petersham ribbon to the remaining edges, curving it into shape with an iron.

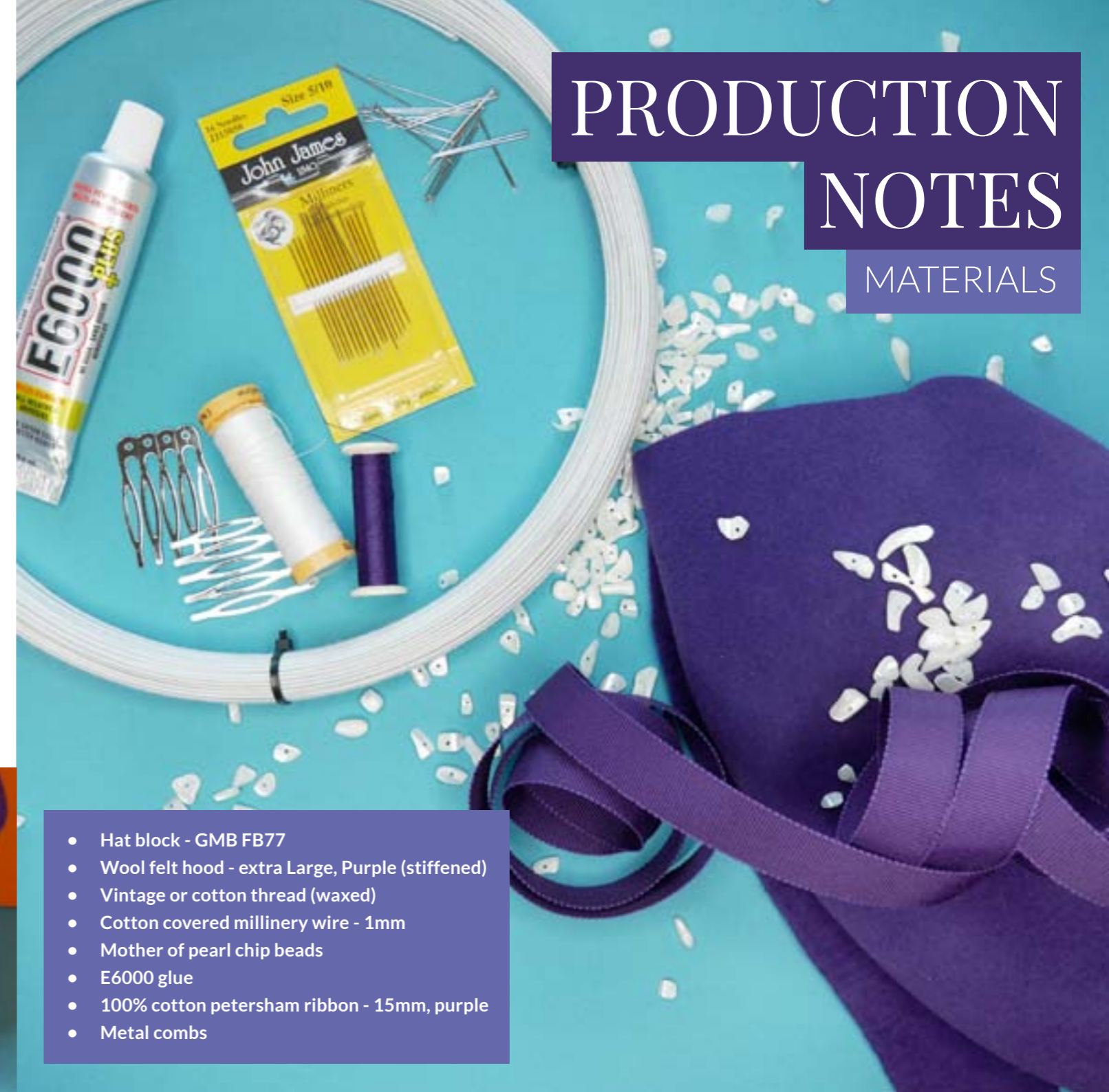


Re-wiring the cut edge

As for the fastening, I wanted to avoid using materials that would not be sustainable, so I couldn't use elastic. Instead I have used 2 mini metal hair combs positioned at the back of the hat. The hat itself has a lot of wire running through it, so in addition to the comb, the hat can be bent to fit the wearer's head. ■



Finished insides of the hat



PRODUCTION NOTES

MATERIALS

- Hat block - GMB FB77
- Wool felt hood - extra Large, Purple (stiffened)
- Vintage or cotton thread (waxed)
- Cotton covered millinery wire - 1mm
- Mother of pearl chip beads
- E6000 glue
- 100% cotton petersham ribbon - 15mm, purple
- Metal combs

PRODUCTION NOTES

ORDER OF OPERATIONS



1

Block the stiffened wool felt. Use the side of the hood, so that there is enough felt to block a second shape.



2

As part of the blocking process brush the felt using a soft bristle brush.



3

Form the millinery wire into the shape of the block. Join the wire with a 5cm overlap.



4

Stitch the wire to the felt shape. Repeat steps 1 to 4 to create a second shape.



9

Cut the excess felt off from the back left of the shape.



10

Cut the wire and re-shape it to conform to the new shape. Stitch everything down.



11

Use the cut bit of felt to "plug the gap" at the back of the hat.



12

Add wire to the edge and stitch it down.



5

Position the beads with pins. Concentrate the biggest beads above the left eyebrow arch, and scatter the smaller beads down the "tentacle" shape.



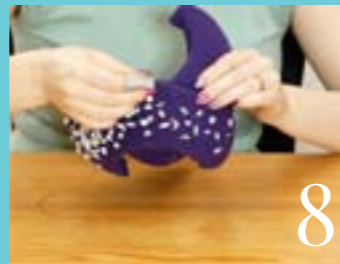
6

Sew the beads on using waxed cotton thread. Hide all the stitch work "inside" the felt.



7

The start and end knots should be hidden above the felt, but under the beads. Secure the knots from the thread under the beads using some glue.



8

Stitch the 2 felt shapes together. The 2 "tentacles" wrap around the right of the head. Use waxed thread and invisible stitches.



13

Measure and cut petersham to fit over the joins of the felt. There should be 3 joins to cover, as well as the outer edge. The 2 mid lengths are "S" shape, and the outer edge is a "C" curve.



14

Attach the curved petersham over the joins in the order shown in the picture. The ribbon needs to be stitched down both sides using invisible stitches.



15

Sew on the label and the metal comb fastenings. The combs go at the back of the hat. If the hat is worn with a slicked back hairstyle such as a low bun, this comb position will counter balance the hat and push it forwards on the head. ■



<https://youtu.be/dMbkp-x8afc>
Watch the making process by watching this youtube video (clickable link).



Oil pastels
Poppy oil
140GSM cartridge
Digital manipulation



Lumix G80
25mm lens
3 point lighting

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