



International  
Specialised  
Skills Institute

**JAGO,**

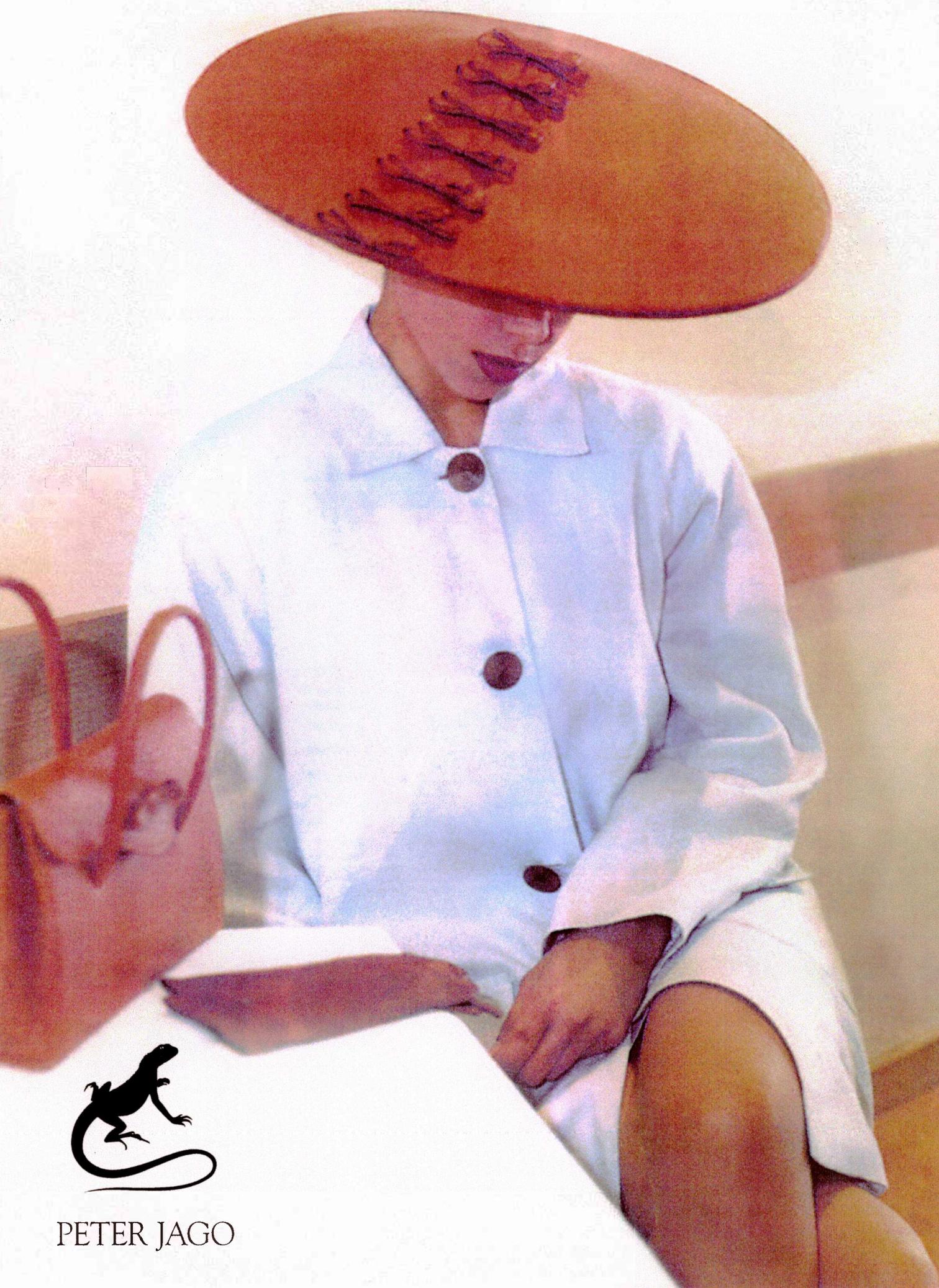
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# ISS MILLINERY REPORT



PETER JAGO

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*Cover Illustration: Emu Leather Hat, Peter Jago Exclusive hats  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION -THE MILLINERY INDUSTRY

### 1.1 A Brief Australian History

Australia has possessed its own millinery industry for only one hundred years and has undergone, in this period, enormous transformation from being purely an artisan's occupation carried out in often cramped spaces and inferior light and safety conditions of a millinery workroom or factory, to the new conditions operating under Occupational Health and Safety regulations with the assistance of computer aided technologies.

The development of industrial mechanization and improved transportation encouraged an idea for a fur felt or fulling foundry, which began in Tasmania nearly ninety years ago. This moved to the mainland of New South Wales, to Sydney where the Akubra hat legend began. This company has relocated its industry to the township of Kempsey where the fur felt is supplied from the Alpine regions of the Snowy Mountain Regions and the Queenbeyan area of the ACT, as this region provided the correct climactic conditions for the feral rabbit's condition and pelt.

Unlike the European rabbit which is farmed, and selected from pure white angora and other species bred specifically for the purpose (such as Belgian Hare etc.) for fur felt manufacture, Australia since the 1930's has experienced the enormous problem promoted by the introduction of an alien or feral species. The rabbit was first released in Barwan Park outside Geelong in Victoria as game for the Churnside family's Western District holdings. The virulent spread of the rabbit so damaged the environment, mainly through soil erosion, that the endemic species of the native underground marsupials have also been threatened by extinction (Bilby and Hairy nosed Wombat).

The eradication programme included fencing, trapping, shooting, and eventually the introduction of the miximavirus. This actually caused a terrible decline in the local manufacturing industry because the pelts were so damaged by the viral impact, that they could not be used for the purpose of making a fur felt hood. The political reason for not having a rabbit breeding programme is obvious, although some states such as WA have licenses available, and SA has also reviewed the concept.

Akubra remains in operation as the most successful Australian hat manufacturer and fur felt producer. Akubra has over 150 employees and has received significant overseas licensing from the American based Stetson label, and has won numerous export awards. Its only rival in the world would be the Borsalino factory which I visited in 1995. Drawing a comparison between these two major millinery manufacturers has been possible because I had formally visited Akubra in 1985.

Allied to the millinery industry have been a lot of small and large scale manufacturers of headwear and milliners who have found enormous demands on their abilities to produce competitive designs and original applications between the 1930's and 1950's. With the post-war recovery and the Pontiff's declaration in the 1960's that head covering was no longer essential inside church, the Sunday hat trade just died. The industry declined further with the enormous bouffant hairdos of the mid 60's and sun protection came secondary to a good tan. By the 1970's the millinery industry was collapsing in on itself; cheap imports and the fad for unisex dressing killed the design style of the hat and the fundamental training remained unobtainable as the milliners closed their *ateliers* and died with their secrets.

Despite the decline in the millinery sector by the 1970's, I myself undertook private millinery tuition in Victoria as there was no recognized training available. It was not

until the 1980's when I got my first break as an assistant milliner to the Australian Opera Company that I really comprehended the enormous historical importance and textile and technical aspects of millinery.

Eventually this led to my training a young apprentice milliner, the first of three trainees. It is a source of great personal pride that the level of training of Sarah Connors - my third, now fully qualified, trainee - was selected by the Industry Training Board as the benchmark for formal training for millinery in Victoria. Her formal millinery training began at Broadmeadows College of TAFE, now Kangan Institute of TAFE, and was completed in the salon of Peter Jago Exclusive Hats.

The training undertaken by Sarah has taken over four years and she is undoubtedly my protégée. It is with a real sense of achievement, therefore, to know that millinery has now formal recognition and that all students of millinery in Victoria can be accredited from the Kangan Institute of TAFE.

## **1.2 International Specialised Skills**

International Specialised Skills (ISS) is an innovative, national independent enterprise which identifies those specialized skills needed by industry, and obtains those skills and knowledge from overseas by building global partnerships through the Specialised Skills Training Fellowship programme. ISS is an enterprise of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, RMIT and the Paladio Foundation.

International Specialised Skills having as its principle strategy the fostering and development of skills in the workplace, has chosen the millinery industry as one area which needs special attention. Some of the reasons that the millinery industry requires

support at this stage can be uncovered by taking a closer look at Australia's own development.

Australia's artisans inherited their skills from the European workshops, that wisdom being transferred across the globe by repeated immigration. This process has produced an industry which to all intents and purposes has no foundations: Australia inherited certain skills from Europe, however without the knowledge and traditions behind the actual skills, the potential for growth and change is limited.

The International Specialised Skills, in its programmes encouraging research and development, hopes to encourage growth in the millinery industry through an examination of the traditions of design and practice latent to the milliner's craft. As part of this process, the ISS in conjunction with a number of agencies, produced the Strategic Industry Training Plan, which aimed to identify a definite strategy for future growth. In order to realize this task, it has been necessary to identify the particular gaps in the industry.

At the time that the ISS Strategic Industry Training Plan was released there existed a serious lack of millinery training available in Australia. Discussions were held with representatives from manufacturing, retail, Government, education and training and areas of study related to millinery design were identified. Those areas that were identified and found to be not currently available in Australia became known as *Skills Gaps*.

### 1.3 The Skills Gaps

The items included in the following list were prepared in co-operation with ISS. They have been arranged according to category, and are listed in order of priority. It has been convenient to number the items as they will be referred to in the text.

#### TECHNICAL SKILLS

1. Processing such as tanning and dyeing, and the specialized manufacturing processes involved.
2. Technology of millinery manufacture in terms of the principle mould (hat block). There are two elements involved: construction utilising wooden blocks, and secondly, casting of wooden blocks to other fabrications (i.e. Plaster and lightweight aluminium casting).
3. The use of the metal block (mould) in manufacturing. Current technology used, i.e. hydraulic blocks.
4. The production of wool and fur felt for the millinery industry, and specifically, the technology involved in manufacturing wool into hat bodies, (i.e. berets) and the methods of dyeing and processing wool felt.
5. Leghorn and Milan, Tuscan or Florentine braid are all woven straw braid fibres; this was once a cottage industry. A knowledge of how this is achieved and when the wheat is harvested for the straw to be bleached and dyed and how production is carried out in regard to other types of straw or fancy braids such as raffia, ramille, ramé, cellophane, crinoline, or Swiss (braided or machined).

#### SOURCING

1. Leather for fashion accessories (i.e. gloves), the source of natural fibre.
2. Information relating to dye possibilities for the Australian rabbit. The European farmed rabbit (white) once processed can be dyed to any colour required. In

contrast, the Australian feral rabbit is of russet colouring in the natural state and therefore has a very limited colour palate as a fashion item.

3. Combinations of wool types and wool types such as llama, alpaca, merino sheep, angora goats.

4. Combinations of fur such as rabbit, fox, mink and camel.

5. The design factor missing within the Australian millinery manufacturing production are those designs that are both seasonal and commercial, yet meet a standard of excellence. The current weakness is that the laws pertaining to the allied clothing and footwear industry have no formal application.

6. The source and availability and manufacturing processes of silk flowers, lace braids, ribbons, genoise velvet and brocades, feather appliqué trims and hat accessories and pins; to be resourced in England and Italy.

## GENERAL

1. The visual merchandising: wholesale and retail.

2. Import and export knowledge.

3. The history of millinery fashion. The handmade techniques and processes of manufacturing a hat from the fourteenth century to today's twentieth century technology.

4. Courses for conservation techniques for maintaining antique fabrications of millinery.

### 1.4 Outcome

The benefit from this award will enhance my knowledge of the millinery manufacturing industry in Northern Europe and how Australian manufacturers will compare on three counts: **Textiles, Technology and Training.**

### **1.5 The Fellowship**

One of the recommendations made in the ISS Strategic Industry Training Plan report was that a fellowship be granted to fund a practicing Australian designer / manufacturer of millinery to travel to Europe to conduct research in a number of areas of industry. This recommendation received enthusiastic support from key representatives of Government, education and training bodies and from various parties within the millinery manufacturing sector.

The then Broadmeadows College of TAFE, now Kangan TAFE, acknowledged the findings of the ISS report and demonstrated a commitment to advancing the level of training in Australia by co-sponsoring the fellowship together with the Industry Training Board of Victoria. I was granted the award in July 1995.

The purpose of the fellowship was two-fold:

- To gain skills and knowledge from recognized centres of excellence for millinery design in Europe with the intention of using this knowledge to improve the level of training for the Australian millinery industry.
- To undertake a comparative analysis of the products of European industrial outlets.

### **1.6 Note on the Text**

Please note that I have included as many details as practical in the text. Further information may in certain cases be read in the glossary, attached. Here you will also find copies of hand drawings and photographs which are intended to supplement conversations with those I met. Certain information and specifically information relating to details of technologies were in some cases withheld from me, especially in Italy. I have tried as far as possible to include technical details, unfortunately some trade secrets are destined to remain just that: secrets.

Questionnaires were delivered to and completed by most of the participants although difficulties were presented by the fact that a number of the companies were taking holidays at the time of my visit.

Many of the photographs in this folio are reproduced courtesy of Michael Prior, and accreditations are included in the text. Unless other wise stated, the prints from photographs are my own.

## ITINERARY

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2/8/95	Depart Italy	
3/8/95	Arrive Melbourne	

**SECTION I**

**THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Located in the ancient Roman city of Bath, The Museum of Costume is an institution offering extensive research facilities through its government funded museum. I met with the Museum Keeper of Collections (Costume) Rosemary Harden. Rosemary gave me a thorough and stimulating introduction to the kind of projects being undertaken at the Bath Museum of Costume and gave me access to a number of items in the millinery collection as I had requested. These were items dating from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century.

I was shown a vast range of examples: headwear examples from the fourteenth right through to the nineteenth century. The museum also holds a collection of antique hat pins which were made available to me.

I was particularly interested to speak with Rosemary on the subject of conservation. This is an area identified by the ISS as one which needs to be developed in Australia. The Museum of Costume is a centre for the conservation of textiles, and offers two accredited diploma courses in this general area:

- 3 year full time course leading to a Diploma in Textile Conservation.
- There are two textile Conservation Studentships offered through the V&A and RCA. These are held once every four years and lead to a Diploma of Conservation.

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*Plate 5*    *Top: Bath Costume Museum.  
The French window with natural daylight is where I studied for the day.  
Bottom: Costume Museum Entrance*

*Plate 6*    *Top: Milan Braid, machine straw braid with fluted fancy braid trim edge. 1880's.  
Centre: Cabriolet Bonnet. Cane or whalebone ribs; oil muslin weatherproof bonnet also called 'an Ugly', 18th century.  
Bottom: Widow's Bonnet in Taffeta, 18th century.*

On my second visit to the Bath Costume Museum I was given a guided tour of the entire costume, millinery and accessory collections in the public galleries.

Appendix III is a catalogue of the patterns and actual measurements and descriptions of the twenty five millinery examples specifically observed in the museum's archives. All the hats and headress were also photographed under extreme, and often inappropriate, conditions. They have been included to support the documentary evidence, attached; see Appendix II.

England has an exceptional factory 'Dents Gloves', the largest and most prestigious factory in Northern Europe.

The company was founded in 1777 by John Dent, in the beautiful Cathedral city of Worcester, England. Here, in an old timber house, John Dent cut his first pair of gloves to sell under his company's name. nearby, also in the year 1777, John Dent's first son John Junior was born, and later, in the same timbered cottage another son, William, was born in 1784. John Junior and William Dent served a seven year apprenticeship which they began at the age of fifteen, and in later years it was the partnership of the two younger sons which founded the dynasty of craftspeople who were to make the name of Dents famous throughout the world.

I visited the Dents Museum, attached to the factory, now located in the country town of Warminster, Wiltshire. The museum's extensive collection includes many examples of 18th and early 19th century gloves; one exhibit in particular has a special place in the Dents history and this is the Coronation Glove of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, which Dents created for her Coronation in 1953.

I had chosen to visit Dents because one of the most important *Skills Gaps* identified by

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*Plate 7 'Hand in Glove on the World' - the Dent's Logo. The hand points to Australia!*

*Plate 8 Top: Curator and Director of Dent's glove company.  
Bottom: Examples of 18th and 19th Century Gloves.*

*Plate 9 Top: Dent's Glove Museum.  
Bottom: Antique equipment dating from 18th to 19th century.*

*Plate 10 Assistant in glove factory gluing the wool lining prepared for the lather glove.  
Heated glove lasts.*

the ISS relates to leather for fashion accessories. It was particularly important to visit Dents as this company is one of the few in the world which has maintained the traditional skills of glove making, and, most importantly, traditions relating to the selection and treatment of the leather used in the gloves themselves.

My meeting with Dents' merchandising director Deborah Moore was very fruitful. She gave me a good deal of information relating to the process of selecting leather and the specific terminology used. I also met with Bob Dent, the manager of the facility, and he took me around the museum and factory. I was also given an introduction to the machines used, gloving terms, and descriptions for operation in the making of gloves. Bob Dent let me have a lot of written material relating to the manufacturing process of leather gloves. I have enclosed all this material in the glossary, and regard it as a highly valuable educational tool.

Although information relating to the manufacture of gloves went a little beyond the initial brief, I was shown how closely in this industry, as indeed is the case in all others, the techniques of manufacture and assembly relate to the material specified. I feel that in this excursion to Dents I fully realized my brief to research leather for fashion accessories.

Junior Hagen is a family business and are manufacturers and stockists of fashion trimmings, specializing in beaded and sequined motifs and trims, suitable for eveningwear. They also stock some braids and laces.

One of the reasons I went to Junior Hagen was to address one of the issues identified in the *Skills Gap* document. This is the problem we experience in Australia relating to the failure to achieve standards of excellence in millinery manufacture. Junior Hagen provide outstanding examples of trimmings and I found it most rewarding to find that standards of excellence can be maintained throughout the manufacturing process. These are skills that I would like to see being applied to the millinery industry in Australia.

Junior Hagen is the major importer of accessories and haberdashery from India, and has received awards by various British trading authorities for doing so. Their imported range includes ribbons, lace, sequin and wooden and bead appliqué motifs. Because Australia imports extensively from South East Asia, it is unusual to come across Indian goods, unlike a lot of the northern hemisphere which imports many Indian goods. It was interesting to see this as Australia does not have these links with India.

I was only able to take a comprehensive photographic record of stock. Again, conditions for photography were difficult and my time span with the managing director and his son was limited.

Alma Leather and Suede manufacture, wholesale, and export leather. I met with Amar Riaz, the company's marketing executive. He gave me a thorough introduction to their market including the details of the processing of the leather and their reasons for developing certain products. Alma Leather & Suede is the largest importer of leather and suede in the United Kingdom. Alma leather also has an accessories division in Turkey which manufactures belts, wallets and bags for men and women. They also import leather for shoes, furniture and upholstery.

Alma holds in stock over a million varieties of leather and suede. Eighty per cent of the leather is utilized for clothing, and not shoes. No exotic or endangered species are proffered or sought, however contemporary exotic prints, metallic finish and embossed hides were available in every conceivable colour and description.

Most of the hides from the pig is imported from Northern and Southern Italy (especially Naples) and Taiwan; pig is generally considered to be the cheaper leather. Goat is imported from Africa and India, and most sheepskin comes from Iceland or Southern Italy. Black Napa is a sheepskin colourway and eighty percent of import comes from New Zealand, the rest from South Africa; low grade sheep and lambskin from India. India also provides a bigger skin in their goat variety and there are five thousand colourways representing the variation available.

Cow hide is tanned in Northern Italy even though Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina are sources of import as well as Japan. It is in Slovenia that most printing is done on hides. Italy holds the most intense concentration for designer leather and dyeing; in other words, top of the range textiles and technology.

Considering the downturn in export, particularly regarding wool and sheep skin, cow hide, pig, feral and domestic goat, there was no identifiable Australian commodity represented by this company.

Limited photographs were available, but examples of the leather hides and types have been collected.

## THE PLUMERY

Wednesday 12th July, 1995

This fabulous company is the only manufacturer of horse hair, feather and wool military plumes in the world. Their customers include The Household Cavalry, The Foot Guards, orders being made up for both British and Foreign armies. The Plumery also supplies theatre, opera and television productions.

My appointment was with Louis Chalmers, the owner and director of the company. Louis had trained as an apprentice with the company when it traded under the Appleton Brothers. When army cut backs made the plumery division of Appleton's unprofitable, Louis bought them out and started up on his own.

Louis had some interesting insights into the traditions of plume making, commenting that the only new techniques were modern glues and dyes, and that these have had little impact on their manufacture.

*"Military plume making is as old as the first stone age warrior put a feather in his hair, peaking during the Roman Empire and again in the 1800's."*

The Victoria and Albert Museum was going to be one of the highlights of the trip, unfortunately their normal services had been withdrawn due to the rehousing of exhibits. Only the Dress Collection and the Textile Study rooms were open to the public.

While this was obviously disappointing as I had hoped to do a good deal of research on the subject of the processing and preparation of fibres, there were many other areas of interest. In particular, the Victoria and Albert presentation of hats reproduced or replicated as exact facsimiles of the original. This provided an enlightening agenda: interpreting antique hats and their correct silhouette and proportion, utilising hand skills in the same way as the originals themselves were constructed.

This was an exciting thing to see as the articles that we have today which are antique, would have been altered substantially by environmental factors. For example a leather lined felt hat of the sixteenth or seventeenth century would neither be the form nor fit that it was originally - mainly due to variations in humidity. And it is precisely because the textiles in hats simply do not sustain that I think this is an invaluable way for students of millinery to comprehend the history of fashion and accessories.

Boon and Lane specializing in the manufacture of aluminium and wooden blocks. I was received by John Boon, co-owner of the company, and he was kind enough to give me a detailed analysis of the production methods of wooden and aluminium moulds in use at their manufacturing plant. He also made available to me the entire day whereby I could observe the entire process of casting a plaster mould, in both factory moulds at both factory sites.

John can be considered to be one of the great authorities on this subject as his plant supplies all the major British based milliners amongst whom: Philip Treacey, Stephen Jones and Philip Somerville. Boon and Lane are themselves a long established company; John has been operating this factory with his partner Peter Lane since 1944 in this northern industrial town of Luton. Luton has long been a centre of millinery trade and indeed still boasts 148 hat manufacturing companies. Of these thirty six have John Boon create and supply their hat blocks.

This was an especially fortunate meeting as the technology surrounding the manufacture and development of moulds for millinery was one of my research priorities. These moulds are the basis of the production of hats, and, as you may be aware, in Australia at present there is virtually no work being done in the area of production of moulds. The moulds that are being used are imported collections, like my own, and are most often casts taken from imported models as required.

The information I was seeking is specific to making plaster moulds from wooden and aluminium blocks. I also wanted to find out about the kind of woods being used for moulds, and John assured me that there are certain types of wood used for particular

blocks and gave me details about the process of their refinement and preparations for use. I gained some very valuable insights from this meeting and with this knowledge I believe that we can positively address the skills gap in this particular area.

The hat mould is made of Newark gypsum plaster. This is contained in a single bag of 25kg which costs a little under nine pounds sterling, or fifteen dollars. Two hat mould masters can be produced from a single bag, and, at Boon and Lane, two new moulds are manufactured approximately every day. Incidentally, the work day for the men in this factory starts at 7.30am and finishes at 4.30pm with a half hour break for lunch.

Wooden moulds are made of these preferred timbers:

- Sycamore - used in men' hat manufacturing - is preferred because of its close grain. Alder is used also for men' hat moulds.
- Lime has created the topper, the bowler, and the boater. It takes five years to air-dry and is usually forty years old when suitable to cut and process. This is the preferred or 'elite' timber for use in womanize' hat moulds. Obeshi is a wood occurring in Africa and is also utilized in women's' hat blocks.

Wooden moulds are going to be increasingly difficult to obtain because those woods need to be specially grown and harvested. There is an opportunity to evaluate the suitability of Australian woods for this purpose. There are a number of small manufacturers of wooden blocks, one in particular in NSW, but the standard and knowledge and skill is primitive and counter productive to the efficient and effective

professional knowledge of skilled artisans who understand the grain and density, where and how to cut and mould the selected timber.

Fortunately because of daylight conditions, I have enough photographic evidence to sustain a strong visual record of the Boon and Lane processes in manifesting a hat block from the mould to casting the aluminium block which melts at 900 degrees Fahrenheit. Boon and Lane do not import Australian aluminium (bauxite) as such, and it was in observing the aluminium moulds that I wondered what opportunity existed here for Australian export in raw material - to have our own manufacturing enhanced by equipping ourselves with the same standards and knowledge found in this unique and still contemporary factory.

Sadly, with the limitations of time, I found out too late that there is a museum of millinery in Luton, and, also, that at nearby Wardvieu Park is a facility which explains straw fibre and manufacturing.

At the Museum of London I was met by Jill Spanner, a textile expert and Curator at the Costume of London History and Collections Department. This department deals specifically with historical information pertaining to London, and it is apparent that the opportunity to apply themselves to such a geographically narrow area of interest has allowed resources to be channeled in very rewarding ways. For the Museum of London presented an exceptional collection of original, and restored workman's clothing and headress.

I had the great privilege of being shown at first hand the oldest felt hat in the collection which dated to the late c.15 or early 16th. This particular example was a Renaissance Picket beret for a man, and also berets worn by infants, amusingly named Plum Puddings. Jill explained that the technical approach of these woven felts - in a manner known as 'fulled', were manufactured in a way that has not yet been correctly deciphered

The oldest straw hat in the collection was an eighteenth century hat known as a 'skimmer' or 'Watteau' which, although of a shark's tooth, hand braided Tuscan straw, had been painted with a thick impasto of gesso in a canary yellow! This had tiny, tiny hand-made straw Cecil Brunner roses inlaid into the shallow crown, and this was finished with a knotted straw trim at the centre back.

Jill explained to me the difficulty in having reference of ordinary folks' or working class hats, principally in that the people themselves would not have preserved their clothing for posterity, the clothes having no intrinsic value. However the value to us of this collection is immense as, although the fabrics were lack-lustre, the techniques involved were not. Jill presented me with an eighteenth century milkmaid's bonnet, rib-corded and

made of linen. This was in exceptional condition and had no particular damage - even to the ruffled Bavolot at the nape of the bonnet. I was also shown a variety of maids' caps and indoor-worn caps of linen, gauze and tulle.

One of the most exciting revelations, for me, was the oldest men's hat from the eighteenth century - a workman's Puddin' domed felt hat discovered only two months previously in the chimney recess of Somerset House. More than likely it was placed there deliberately as they have found shoes and similar items of clothing put in, we assume, to honour the house gods as a votive for good luck.

An exceptional collection of Tudor knitted caps was also provided to me. These were worn underneath berets or as night caps; one example of this had the slashed design so favoured in the Tudor period. Also in the caps selection were men's night-caps from the eighteenth century, one a six inch patterned sectional cap in bizarre silk, and a nineteenth century man's cap in a fancy machine knit, and a nineteenth century man's sectional pattern smoking hat in silk with a gold bullion tassel.

While this collection at the Museum of London was exceptional, there were other items on display other than workingmen's headress and clothing, and one such exhibit deserves special mention. Having already seen in Bath my personal favourite: an 1880's wire framed lace-covered bonnet, I was thrilled to find an earlier example of a wire framed bonnet. Dating from 1840-1850 approximately, it had a Tudor front (which we call a widow's peak) constructed also of black and natural straw braid attached to a wire and net covered frame included the nape drape of a folding wire frame. Decorated with black and white forget-me-nots at the centre back and, composed in the front and behind the peak of the bonnet were ice pink linen roses and light blue violets with black and white

forget-me-knots also. The bonnet strings included were a woven piquet silk ribbon also in black and white

It is interesting to note that a bonnet like this would have been purchased in the early Victorian period as a separate entity to the garment, unlike the situation in the late Victorian period when, under the influence of Charles Frederick Worth, hats and garments were considered together.

The last hat shown, and also the most recent of the hats shown to me, belonged to the 1950's, and was reminiscent of the clam clutch hats designed for the likes of Princess Margaret and Elizabeth Taylor. Designed in two sections using varying and contrasting materials in tones of violet and deep blue, one side was a velvet and esparterie foundation, the other espartrie and blue tulle. Both were appliquéd in iridescent oil-slick cabochon sequins which reflected the colours of a beetle's wings.

**SECTION II**

**ITALY**

Borsalino is the oldest established men's felt hat producer in the world and has been operating in Alessandria since 1857. The peak of production for this truly international company occurred before the First World War when production exceeded two million hats per annum. Its fortunes waned in the coming decades and although the company retained its quality image, the decline of the hat as an everyday item took its toll on the Borsalino fortunes. Today however, Borsalino is making effective new marketing strategies which include product development for both men and women's hat lines developing a range of accessories - a marketing strategy shared by a large number of Italian fashion houses, and a new retail outlet.

I met with Antonio Armella, the Sales Manager. He took me on a thorough guided tour of the various stages of production technologies including hand finishing, packaging and distribution which all occur at the Borsalino factory. I received a printed guide to the production cycle of the Borsalino hat, and some discussion has opened the potential to contain an agency for Borsalino incorporating Peter Jago Exclusive Hats. This will require specific undertakings it involves export and import licensing and so on.

Borsalino produces 50-60 colourways for the Autumn / Winter and Spring / Summer ranges. Originally the company made its reputation on wool felts, however their range today includes 70-75 styles in not only wool and fur felt, but also straw, cloth and leather.

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*Plate 11: Borsalino Shop Front.*

Thirty five percent of fibre for manufacturing the felt hoods comes from Italy however Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and England are all providers in Europe of farmed fur felt. Borsalino has sub-contract licensees to Japan and the USA providing a distribution of the classic styles of Borsalino hats and caps. There is also sub-contractual work provided in Korea, Malaysia and Israel.

There are different gauges for men felt hats to fit and they start at 55cm and finish at 64cm. Rabbit fur is preferred (in Italy called Cornelia) and comes from the Angora rabbit species. Different blends are obtained from different varieties of fur and these mixes are called a *mélange*. The following description outlines the processes involved and, as no photographic equipment was allowed into the factory site, the only way to comprehend the processing is through a general comprehension and rapid note-taking on site.

First, the hair and fur are mixed into a *mélange* and are placed into a blower or separation machine which removes approximately 25% of the heavier hair follicles. Wooden batons bash the felt on a roller system which further refines the felt. There are approximately 60 - 100 processes including selection of quality and weight per felt to regulate the highest grade to the lower grades.

At this point the hoods are further reduced by a chemical process known as 'fulling'. A small quantity of acid is applied to the felt and this process assists in gaining the required dimensions.

The felt is wetted and compressed whilst damp and the fur hoods are folded inside out and rolled. There are 20 steps involved, and hemp or hessian is used to help compress the damp felts. Each hood is weighed and selected by weight and size of felt. Dying may occur at this stage, and is carried out by a skilled technician.

There were a number of processes at Borsalino which I considered to be innovative. One involved the use of shellac as a stiffener, where shellac is placed into the felt hood prior to the hood being blocked or moulded. This was quite a revelation, in that its use differs from the practice of most hat manufacturers who normally use acetate - a dangerous carcinogen. Shellac is non-toxic.

Apparently this process involving shellac is a difficult one. However once completed, the felt then has the edge broken and is further selected for quality. The felt is then compressed onto a vacuum steam funnel and its pre-selected size is stretched over an electric hot block. Further compressing takes place by a hydraulic press method and the brim and the crown are then complete.

Another unusual aspect that I saw in processing was that a peach bloom velour (considered one of the most beautiful finishes of a fur felt) is shaved on a shark skin covered rotary wheel which draws out the long hair in the hood to an even length. And at this point of production a variety of finishes can be obtained such as a smooth finish on the rotary wheel which is still guided and controlled with the felt over a wooden brim.

Refinement continues with the brims being hand moulded over what we call a rolled or kettle edge; canvas bags full of hot sand which weigh, when wet, 150g-170g are employed for this purpose. The hat is then lined in silk and trimmed with a ribbon head band, stamped, labeled and a leather lining stitched inside. The hat is then brushed, passes a further control system and is finally packed with its own hat form - boxed and ready for delivery.

There is access to a Borsalino Museum, but a special appointment must be made, and I had spent such a great length of time observing the processes at the factory that I had to give it a miss. A catalogue has, however, been promised.

There is a list of processes in the glossary, supplied by the Borsalino factory. These follow a more general order than that which I observed and the translation does not altogether convey the processes accurately. The list includes 15 separate processes and I hope that it may be usefully used in conjunction with the text of my personal observations at the facility.

Lying on the outskirts of Milan, De Bernardi is one of Italy's major manufacturer of ribbon and haberdashery trimmings. They also use their design expertise in other areas, doubling up as design consultants. No access to the factory was allowed as such.

One of their strengths is their expertise in dyeing and they have an amazing range of colours. De Bernardi also dye fabrics in very small quantities, and have the resources to dye in batches of as little as 10 metres, although the standard is 25 meters. Their product range includes bias binding in cotton, polyester, viscose, acetate, double faced satin and grosgrain. This range retails in both plain and printed styles. De Bernardi also produce ranges of printed fabrics using a variety of textiles.

They provide for some of the more specialized areas and produce items such as a non-edged ribbon velvet. Velvet is also embossed, edged, crushed through heat processes. Velcro is dyed to specific colour requirements in the dye department; likewise Sariflex or Ribline in which the minimum dyeing is 10-25m.

100% polyester bias is manufactured, and also pure cotton bias binding. A fantastic range of colours is available. It is printed two-fold and three-fold viscose. Acetate bias is also produced, tartan plaid bias is printed, also cotton cord piping and nylon. Iron-on bias is produced in 100% cotton in double-faced satin width; Gallane Roccoco, polyester, pliese (pleated satin) Grosgrain (called camete in Italy). De Bernardi also produce corduroy, printed ottoman on the bias, fancy bias piping, tubular woven cotton, tubular Ivrex, vinyl - flat, tubular and piped, simulated leather which consists of a 56% cotton and 44% polyester mix and is actually flocked in the process. Velveteen and suedette are produced and are in 50% cotton, 30% resin acrylic and 20% flock. Leopard print bias is also piped

and available flat, as is reptile suede in bias, piped and flat. Moiré is also produced on the bias, as is jute which also has a wired edge ribbon, piped and flat. Lino is also produced as a flat fabrication, a 25% wool tartan, madras cotton bias, pure cashmere bias and fancy cotton prints for children.

The extensive range of products goes on to include Regency ribbon, striped cotton, velvet bias, flat and tubular with hat embossed decorative finish, fancy pleated transparent fibre often with floral prints and concertina pleated with fancy printed Valencia flowers. Panné velvet, double faced satin, granular effect and Prince of Wales bias, ruched and printed cottons -for the floristry ribbons- as well as gold and silver net are produced in this extraordinary factory.

This manufacturing base is an important addition to our knowledge of sources. As identified in the *Skills Gap* section (items numbered 5-6), it is vital to have lively sources of trimmings. We need them not only for own retail purposes, but also that they demonstrate a standard of excellence for our own manufacturers to use as a guideline.

As a final note, I mention that it was through personal conversation with S. Bernardi that I gleaned the knowledge of who was the designer of the Borsalino women's headwear and added this to the itinerary.

I was first in the queue to the museum, and, once in, it was an overwhelming experience to visit this most famous museum attached to the La Scala opera house. There were exhibits here of the most ancient examples of Cycladic, Etruscan, Greek and Roman art recording the history of entertainment, including libretto, song, music, opera, dance, theatre, mask, mime, puppetry, set and costume design.

The condition of the artefacts was splendid, but not so the condition of the costumes and the terrible decay and scarrification by moths, natural light, bleaching, prints and photographs, and damp walls having foxed works of art and corroded all sorts of materials and canvas in particular. This has a comparison to the conservation maintained in the English museums, although horrendous was not enough to digress from the supreme interest and observation. Photography was almost impossible due to appalling lighting and reflected light conditions, however, as in all the museums, I collated the catalogue and posters and postcards of inspiration and interest.

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*Plate 12 Entrance to La Scala Museum*

*Plate 13 Mona malibran, painted by Pedrazzi.*

*Plate 14 19th century Sicilian Antique Puppets.*

*Plate 15 Noh Theatre Mask*

Lorenzo Borghi, like the famous Lorenzo the magnificent, was in some ways the jewel in the crown of the vast array of experiences that was my journey in Italy. It was the most personal attribute, and a point of extraordinary comparison, because, at No.5 Via Pieta is the most beautiful shop where I discover a radiant and welcoming Senor Lorenzo Borghi who embraces me and explains that he cannot speak English and I correspond with the same about my fluency in Italiano. However as he speaks French, this enhances our communication and enables me to present for the first time the brief written on the ISS programme and an attached catalogue of my photographed hats and a twenty-five point questionnaire. It was revealed through this that Senor Borghi's millinery design company has been operating since 1953.

Lorenzo's shop I have photographed with permission, inside and out, also his tiny millinery workroom. Unfortunately, photographically, due to humidity and light conditions, the photographs are really only a general record and do not do justice to the situation. Lorenzo took me on a guided tour of his shop, and out to a beautiful tiled courtyard where it is apparent the millinery workrooms are contained. Inside are cupboards full of his supplies of textiles including velvets, silks, organzas and rare felt and rare straw hoods. Storage shelving to the ceiling reveals hundreds of mint condition hat blocks obviously part of the consigned designer range exclusive to Borsalino.

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*Plate 16 Top: Borghi's Shop front  
Bottom: Entrance*

*Plate 17 Top: Stack of Wooden Blocks  
Bottom: His tiny workroom*

He explains that he is sub-contracted to complete all the straw hats sold by Borsalino, yet manufactured here in this tiny room by Senor Borghi.

He is very proud and so excited that I comprehend all the details. He provides every opportunity to enlighten me regarding information about pleated Crinoline (an old concept re-designed), exquisite hand made flowers, and when he asks me where a particular straw hood comes from and I answer that it comes from the Philippines, he laughs and embraces me like a son. After questions regarding chemicals such as glue and stiffener, I ask Sen. Borghi about the manufacturers of the hand made wooden blocks located in Florence - to check that I'm on the right tack - and indeed he answers that this is where approximately 1200 - 1500 blocks are created from his original design.

Although I assume Sen. Borghi to be in his late fifties, I would like to make a very detailed study and account of this highly successful millinery business. I hope to gain a further ISS study grant to follow up this opportunity in acquiring further knowledge from this incredible source of inspiration. His enterprise has as yet no parallel in Australia, and I would like to build upon his knowledge and skill for both my own future development and the training needs of this country.

Da-Me are manufacturers of both hats and accessories. Their range includes wool felts, straws, fake fur, and also a line of soft hats manufactured from a combination of fabrics. This has been a family business of some four generations, for the company has a hundred year history and they now employ 21 people. Two sisters are in charge of the business, Cinza - who has had 18 years experience in the industry - met me, and I had only an hour's appointment to address all my enquiries.

Interestingly enough, this factory runs parallel to Leutenegger in Brisbane and drew therefore a broadly based foundation for comparison. However I was not given at any stage much opportunity for close inspection of the facilities and processes. Myer in Australia buys directly, as does Crochetta - based in Sydney, and Da-Me, I have since found out, also sells directly to Daimaru. Italian designers such as Giorgio Armani, MaxMara, Byblos, Rina Secente and Benetton all have their headware designs manufactured by this company. The English-based designer to the Queen, Frederick Fox, also has his work manufactured here as do German design labels such as Ancini, Beck and Cea.

There are two seasons, and wool felt and straw are all imported items: Panamas from Ecuador, straw hoods such as Balli Buntel come from the Philippines; Pari Sisol and Pari Buntel are imported from China and Taiwan. Da-Me import a small amount of velour from Czechoslovakia. No children's hats are produced in the factory today, because the

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*Plate 18 Top: Antique Hat Box.  
Bottom: Antique Triple Crown 1880's Tuscan straw, hand-woven.*

machinery is obsolete and not concurrent to today's children's headsize. This would open an opportunity to develop a children's range for overseas export.

Galeottipume is a family business specializing in all-feather trims and accessories for millinery and the clothing industries. Galleottipume is located in Firenziola, an ancient county holding of the Medici. It is a family business in its second generation, the parents were French and apparently the mother has been a chemist and the father had organized the feather import. The business has been operating since 1920 and virtually uses the same technologies now as then, only now there are special scissors used, and one other innovative form of technology has been the machining of feathers to cotton tape or rope.

Upon my arrival I was greeted by Guila who is the designer and who, with her brother Guido, has managed the business after the death of their parents. Guila left me in the showroom unattended, and, unbeknownst to me, was watching me on video to be sure that I was not translating valuable samples from the designs of feather fabrications on the hats and clothing displayed in the showroom.

Guila will work directly with designers and stylists using any kind of feather to create hats, jackets, boas - whatever is required, and this includes specialised bleaching, dye-dying, dyes themselves, conditioning, shaving and art feather work. I was not able to observe any of the processes because Galleotipume supply many of the major European fashion houses, amongst whom: Chanel, Dolce E Gabbana, G.F. Ferre, Alberta Ferreti, Genny, Krizia, Montana, Ozbek, Valentino, Versace.

However this did not distract from the fact that they held me in high regard because of my incredible knowledge of the bird and feather types and we got on famously together. The outcomes from this opportunity hold an enormous potential, especially with regard to the ostrich farming in Australia as there are 90 types of pre-selected plumage from this

species. Although I discussed the potential of our own native emu feather, it is not highly regarded, nor is it seen to be of any major interest at present. However Carolynne Bourne and myself are planning some scientific exploration of the medium and will be looking forward to these experiments with emu feather in the future.

Located in a working suburb of Florence beneath an apartment building, I caught a cab from Florence to meet Sen. Gioruo Belluci and Sen. Piero Belucci. This is a father and son business and the father is ninety six years old, a master craftsman who is still working every day hand hewing the wooden hat blocks that form the original designs for each of the millinery houses in the world that require their expertise. The Belluci's create the wooden block that is then cast into an aluminium metal production mould; this process is detailed in the section of Boon and Lane.

With regard to Italian millinery orders, Borsalino is the premier operation on any scale, however according to the Belluci's, the business from overseas is enormous and the demand from Germany, the United States and Canada is part of the export market niche that the belucci business has been filling since 1910.

I request permission to photograph, especially to photograph Sen. Belucci senior who shaves a block using the age-old curved plane. The wood used on site is sycamore and lime and a Malaysian jungle wood. A comparison of Australian wood grains and type, age and availability needs further study. The chock and core of the timber is punched out after an outline is drawn in four units by a mechanical lathe-type drill - this system is a far cry from a handsaw. Attached is the questionnaire: the dialogue is excellent and they would love to work with me in the future.

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*Plate 19*    *Top: Sen. di Piero's Tools.*  
*Centre: Working on a brimmed block by hand.*  
*Bottom: Using the curved hand plane.*

*Plate 20*    *The ancient hand skills of basketry, assumed to be where millinery has its source.*  
*Using willow canes, Florence.*

### 3. VISUAL MERCHANDISING

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This was an area I was especially aware of throughout the trip as a general investigation into visual merchandising has been identified as skills gap here in Australia. Suppliers, in order to be successful and win accounts from prestigious fashion houses are themselves required to have elegant and efficient sales departments. Galleottipiume produce colour brochures in several European languages, and the overall look of the supplier is communicated effectively in this way. Dent's Gloves have a full brochure for visitors, and this is available both to visitors to the museum and to clients. Borsalino have since followed up with a catalogue, and Da-Me also provided a catalogue prior to my arrival in Italy. This is all included in the appendices.

#### **3.2 Window Dressing**

In Bath I had the opportunity to observe visual merchandising of a limited nature. Whilst the one hat shop in Bath which I observed was atrocious, I will say that this is not indicative of the broad based English context. Unfortunately I had not allotted time to specifically observe the area of visual merchandising, but shops retailing other merchandise were inspirational; especially shops selling stationery and gifts.

In Milan however, one of Europe's most powerful industrialized cities, despite an aggressive and oppressive general disposition, the innovation and elegance of the design nobilese particularly in the major shopping mall and arcades off which include such fantastic shops as the Fornessitti which I photographed with its splendid millinery montage as a theme: an exciting method of presenting an almost three dimensional object in illustrative and graphic colour poster.

A jewellery shop using rubber sponges cut into exotic fish took the prize for the most imaginative improvisation. Stunning in its effect and simplicity contrasting with the glamour of the pearls provided for sale. The next example of note was a shop specializing in North American Indian culture brilliantly laid out with the accent on accessibility. The photographs do not attest to the perfection and mood of the interior environment. The finest window display in Milan however, was of candles and candle holders specialist shop, in acid brights of lime, citrus yellow and tango orange. This held an arresting impact and I have recorded this with a photograph.

On the visit to La Scala one could not avoid photographing the Galleria Emmanuel II, the most famous shopping galleria of its time in the world, imposing and brilliantly lit through a glass-domed atrium. Inside the left entrance is the Borsalino shop; this I have recorded as it was sale time and an interesting to view a large scale hat operation in the flux of selling. I have also recorded the exterior of S. Lorenzo Borghi's shop.

Smaller than Milan in scale, the shops in Florence are a continual inspiration due to the high proportion of tourists - visual merchandising is at a premium, especially the area around the Ponte Vecchio. Fashion, jewellery, paper merchants, crockery, leather goods, glass and sculpture provided a never-ending array of ideas. I have a moderate photograph of the strategically located the YSL shop and a couple of the designer store windows.

In Florence I spent most of my time photographing the extraordinary array of statuary and door knockers that indicated the demeanour of this fabulously ancient city of art. As I only had time at night to observe the shopping gallerias, photography was impossible, due once again to problems with reflected light, and the most memorable night time visit was to a paper merchant store opposite the Uffizi with an extraordinary display of papier mache, surrealist artefacts.

Santa Margherita Liguria, once the coastal preferred resort for the nineteenth century English upper class, travellers and literatti such as Oscar Wilde, is now a coastal resort allied to the famous Portofino which lies further north. This provided an interesting array of seasonal visual merchandise, and shops were beautifully laid out in grand old buildings and small cobblestone streets and lanes. Great napery and Manchester features as do shoe shops, children's wear and swim wear. Lying to the south is Rapallo, the preferred shopping area and boasts another Borsalino store. Some of the most refreshing and elegant visual merchandising was provided at a sale at a small women's fashion boutique. I have taken a couple of very fine photographs.

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*Plate 21 Hat Sale in Florentine Men's shop*

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS: TEXTILES

### 4.0 Introduction

In this section I will attempt to draw useful conclusions from each of the stages observed on my trip. The conclusions drawn relate directly to the goals of the fellowship, namely to discover ways of addressing issues outlined in the *Skills Gap*. As it turned out I was unable to research all the areas I had hoped, however, on the other hand, I gained invaluable insight to areas of expertise which were not included on the initial list of undertakings. In some cases these have featured more prominently and will require further development.

In the Skills Gap section, I said that there were specific points of comparison between Northern European and Australian manufacturers, and these are: Textiles, Technology and Training. I am aware that, in order for this award to be of direct benefit to the millinery industry, we must first of all assess how we stand in relation to our European competitors in these three key areas.

The Textiles are broken down into the following categories: Leather, Emu, Straw and Wood. The sections dealing more specifically with Technology and Training cover areas such as the production of the original moulds and conservation.

### 4.1 Leather

Processing such as tanning and dying, and specialised manufacturing processes such as screen printing, gilding, laminating and embossing are not available in Australia to the same technical standard of development as are available in Europe. This fact became increasingly obvious during my visits to both Dent's Gloves and Alma Leather, each of which represent key knowledges and dominance in the leather manufacturing and import

/ export industries in England. The specialised skill and technical application of the Dent's Gloves and accessories is so comprehensive that competition against a company whose establishment dates to the eighteenth century would be impossible.

However I think that there are two specific areas in which Australia can contribute to this industry. The first is to develop Australian links with European industry. I have identified a potential opportunity for Dent's to start an agency and small manufacturing base in Australia, and I think it could be beneficial for the following reasons:

- England needs to develop its market and Australians would benefit through employment and specialised skill ( i.e. training etc.).
- Australia's proximity to South East Asia allows for accessible import. Dent's Gloves already have the gusset woollen glove lining made in China due to the availability of less costly labour. As our relationship to trade in SEA and China is very secure, this would be a recommendation for Dent's to acknowledge the potential for further market development.

The second proposal regards the export of primary product to Europe. It is my opinion that Australia should be in a position to export our wholesale product more proficiently to a northern clime for specialised processing. At present the primary product - animal hide in a refined state - is not being exported at all. The possibilities for development in this sector are discussed at length in the following section.

#### **4.2 Potential for an Australian Export Market**

When I visited Alma leather I was staggered to comprehend the availability of over one million types and variations of hide and skins. Almost all of these represented a cross section of the world's primary produce in the leather-textile area; these details have been covered in pages 16-17.

New Zealand was heavily represented with 80% of black nappa colourway Australia was not represented at all in this sector. My question is why not? Also Australian cow hide and pony were not represented. Neither were crocodile, pig, goat, toad, Barramundi, ostrich. Not even was the new exotic emu hide available.

There is one hide in particular which I think could well be produced and marketed to Europe, and this is peccary. Peccary is a wild boar found in South America and is the preferred leather textile for gloves. It is imported purely because the animal's hide is robust, and, when skinned from the back of the animal, capable of incredible elasticity. This method of skinning does not damage the delicate stomach region - unlike farmed pig which is eviscerated from the stomach. The potential for wild peccary farms has never been addressed and yet it would be entirely suitable and, indeed, already breeds very successfully in the Melbourne Zoo. The controlled introduction of peccary would suit the Australian climactic conditions.

Likewise, although the feral pig has the potential to be, and in fact is, one of the most destructive animals in the native Australian environment, the potential of the wild pig (boar) hide has never had market research or development. Possibly the hide with the greatest export potential is that of the emu, and I deal with this in the following section.

### **4.3 Emu**

Emu bi-products - hide, feathers and oil - have the potential to be market leaders in an international context. Hide from both the body and legs can be utilized; the oil has, in clinical trials, been shown to combat the symptoms of cirrhosis, and there is both a huge variety of feathers and a fantastic yield.

Each of the bi-products is remarkable for either its yield or versatility, or both. For example, an indication of the scale of the feather yield is the length of time it takes to make a pre-selection - literally sort through the feathers: one might spend at least 15 times as long doing an emu as a bantam. The feathers themselves are of such a high quality and style that they could easily be marketed to replace the bird of paradise, with particular application in the manufacture of plumes.

Emu hide scores highly for its versatility. Both of the types of hide in use - that of the body being a smaller grain version of ostrich, and that of the legs having a strangely reptilian character - can be adapted to a wide range of products, mostly accessories.

#### **4.4 Potential for the Export of Emu bi-products**

As a direct result of this ISS project, Peter Jago is now on contract to design for Emu Direct. Emu Direct is a company specializing in emu products for the upper end of the market and is aimed specifically at Japan. The initial undertaking had been to develop shoes with Steven Davies - an ISS Fellowship in Footwear Design - and this has been so successful that Emu Direct are now in the second stage of developing high quality handbags with Louis Ferrier, having already collaborated with Whitney Green. Emu Direct are committed to sourcing and developing a top of the range product specifically with Australian manufacturers. Although these projects are yet in their early stages, the product is already being acclaimed as a success. A creation from Peter Jago Exclusive Hats, in emu hide, won the 1996 Caulfield Fashion on the Field competition, part of the VRC promotion. Emu Direct will take a stand in the forthcoming World Trade Fair on Leather, to be held in Australia in the New Year.

Whilst emu may have the potential to be a run away success, there are significant areas to be developed. Emu bi-products are not well known abroad and this is in part due to the

lack of refinement. Specifically, the leather needs to be refined according to the requirements of the overseas and, particularly, European market. An assessment to define precise finishes and colourways can be done here in Australia (in New South Wales or WA).

Similarly, emu feathers need to undergo a process of refinement. Already Peter has arranged a meeting to discuss with Carolynne Bourne the technology of emu feather refinement. Emu feathers differ from substantially from others in their actual makeup (they are also bifurcated) and as such cannot be dyed by the same process. A separate technology must be developed for emu feather bleaching.

If this technology is developed and emu bi-products can be finished to a level acceptable to European manufacturers then I would propose that links I have established on my ISS funded research trip in Europe be used to market the product. In particular I strongly suggest a liaison with Galleottipiume, a business I visited which specializes in the use of feathers in trims and accessories for the millinery and fashion industries.

#### **4.5 Straw**

It had been my intention to complete a detailed section on the straw manufacture in Europe as a basis on which to build a recommendation for development in Australia. In Europe however, detailed information did not materialize. In Italy the source of Milan braid was hidden from me, being a hefty part of that trade's secrets, and in England the space of time I had allotted to visit Luton - a veritable straw Mecca - was too short to see all it had to offer. A through investigation of straw processing in England would have taken at least one week, and this, sadly, was time I did not have.

Woven hoods are imported to Australia, and these mostly from China and the Philippines. China is the source for woven hoods such as pari-buntal, pari-sisol, baku-buntal, shantung straw and a sewn laichow straw braid. The Philippines are the source for the newly developed fibre sinammey (pineapple straw cloth) banana, raffia and sea grass. Pari buntal sourced from the Philippines is hand woven in China.

China and the Philippines have successfully developed these markets at the expense of western Europe as their labour rates are more competitive and better suited to such a labour intensive industry.

#### **4.6 Wood for hat blocks**

After having followed the processes in manufacturing a hat block from its source woods such as lime and sycamore, it is my opinion that comparison could be drawn to native Australian varieties. Like types of wood could be farmed on plantations for export. The rationale is that we have the space to cultivate trees and the resources for timber production. The question is: could a niche be found?

Lime and Sycamore are comparatively expensive and rare; Australian native woods may be able to compete on price and ready availability. Really the issue here is whether or not the wood can be exported successfully. This whole area needs research on a comprehensive scale.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS: TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

### **5.0 Introduction**

In order that the millinery industry in Australia become thoroughly competitive we must promote a training culture. As I discuss below, a training culture is not evident in Europe and because of this many of the vital aspects of the millinery industry are threatened. It has been assumed that larger manufacturers carry out their own in-house training programmes, appointing apprentices and so on, however this is clearly not the situation, either here or in the European companies I visited.

This analysis of millinery training in Europe and Australia identifies areas which can be developed. Technology and Training are closely dependent in the millinery industry and many of the recommendations I have to make relate to the current state of Technological development in the companies I visited. In Europe I had a unique opportunity to critically analyze the state of the millinery industry and we are now in a unique position to benefit from their combined experiences.

### **5.1 Current State of Training in Victoria**

Millinery training in Victoria is beginning to look forward to a brighter future for young milliners. Accreditation has been achieved for a programme leading to four levels of Certificate, and two further Certificate levels are proposed. The programme was developed at Kangan TAFE with much credit to Gaye Gallagher of OTFE for its continued success. Details of the training programme may be found in Appendix. Melbourne School of fashion is also applying for further accreditation. This training programme is closely connected to my findings, and is an example of how already these findings are bearing fruit. It has been my pleasure to contribute to the programme the

information gathered on this fact-finding trip. So too the ISS, through its funding of my trip, has been able to anchor the development of this programme.

## **5.2 Training in Europe**

In this section I have outlined a number of strategies which would encourage the growth and development of the millinery industry in Australia. In researching the areas of Technology and Training in Europe I was surprised to discover that training across Europe is poor. The major millinery manufacturing bases are not supported by official programmes, and a high number of the houses are family businesses with specific training being handed on only within a family.

To this extent, my research in Europe yielded only one significant example of training development that we can use to train our students, however I did gain an important picture of the state of the industry. The picture that I wish to communicate is one of diminishing human resources and I feel that it is vital that we act now to get our students trained in the skills on which the success of the millinery industry in Australia may rest.

The one example of a training programme which Australian millinery would benefit from examining is the Diploma course in conservation at Bath, and I will discuss this area first. As a general guide, this section refers directly to the sections in the text referring to Boon & Lane, England; Borsalino, Alessandria; Lorenzo Borghi, Milan; Sen. Belluci G. Piero, Florence and, to a lesser extent, Da-Me, also in Florence.

## **5.3 The Basis for Growth**

The newly established training programme to which I have been referring is comprehensive and encourages development in many diverse areas. One of its main benefits is that it allows for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and this is a strategy

which has the potential to significantly enhance the state of training. RPL is an incentive for established designers without 'formal' training to enter these courses at an advanced level and will hopefully encourage milliners to advance their skills. A more important outcome of encouraging established milliners to engage in further training is that it will give the educational / training bodies further information about the state of the industry and thus enable these bodies to build programmes around the specific needs of the millinery community. This accredited RPL course is thus the first step in advancing the development of millinery in Australia.

#### **5.4 Conservation Training**

This programme therefore is an important part of an ongoing process. The findings of my report can contribute also to developing further stages of a strategy for enhancing training in Victoria. Based on my visit to Bath, I propose that the next area to go on the millinery educational curriculum is a specific course to show how to protect our national collections. This area needs extensive further development.

For example, I myself have just completed conservation and restoration of five hats that I designed and made for Prue Acton between 1987 and 1991. This collection was donated to RMIT but now forms part of the Museum of Victoria's Social History Collection. The restoration carried out on these hats was in accordance with the proper procedures of conservation, as I understood them, which I learned from my trip to the Bath Costume Museum. These techniques were new to me and I know that they add value to the social and historical content of the hat.

It is important that these proper techniques are used in conservation and restoration. My findings at Bath have allowed me to identify a Skills Gap in this area of millinery education and I would like to see an accredited conservation and restoration course

established in Australia. In Bath there is an excellent 3 year full time course in Textile Conservation and I see this as an example of what we might hope to achieve.

### **5.5 Training for Hat Block production**

The traditional hand carved wooden block has been the source of molding a hat since Egyptian times. Sen. Belluci di Piero is 96 years old and has been a hat block-carver since he was 15. The company has been operating since 1910 and his son who is in his sixties is following the knowledge of his father's traditions but utilizes computer operated technology to aid the production of the wooden hat blocks. I was greatly surprised when I learned from S. Belucci that there is no training programme available for those who wish to learn the skills of producing an original hat block. Belucci's son is completing a business course and stands to inherit the family business, and in this way only will the skills be passed on.

It is my recommendation that a specialized training needs analysis is made to what is, in Europe, the key historic site of this rare and endangered world class skill. The millinery industry can directly benefit because the Australian hat block industry is, by contrast, in its fledgling stage - we are speaking of a single manufacturing base in Newcastle. Whilst the product they supply lacks a comprehensive design skill, it is a start, and it could be used as a base on which to improve and develop knowledge. I strongly urge that a training initiative be established in conjunction with this workshop.

### **5.6 Training for the production of plaster and aluminum moulds**

Boon and Lane undertake specifically to mould a hat block from wood. The wooden block is then cast in plaster, and from the plaster mould a light weight aluminum mould is cast. Individual milliners can also present their designs in a simple form (*esparterie*) and have them made up and cast into a metal mould. The ready availability of such

technology ensures that milliners can create new ideas and shapes and allows for innovation in the market.

Since Boon and Lane have been producing hat blocks for 36 years, they are a fundamental authority on the subject in England. It would appear that this is a benchmark for further specialization. Training is not addressed at Boon & Lane and the new trainees have no specific training prior to entering the factory. This is an enormous skills gap area and it is threatening the very survival of the hat blocking industry, as the production and supply of moulds to milliners is the vital umbilical cord to production of hats. Without an original hat block design being created and interpreted, there is no competitive hat fashion industry.

### **5.7 International Exchange**

Since there is no specific training at Boon and Lane, a programme needs to be developed. The owner, Peter Lane, was very open to this opportunity because, as he remarked, referring to the current status of the trainees at the factory, “we just put up with what we get”. And in fact the situation in Australia is not dissimilar. It is not however a question of ‘putting up’ with the trainees available, it is a case that there is no opportunity for young people to train because the industry doesn’t take them on, and there are no formal training programmes. For example, there is no provision in the progression through Certificates I to IV of the new training programme for making hat blocks.

The production of both wooden blocks and of cast aluminum blocks is an area that needs development as it is fundamental to the industry design practices. This is a fantastic opportunity for Australia to provide an educational development programme in conjunction with Boon and Lane, possibly funded through ISS. Such a project would fundamentally change the appearance of millinery in Australia and is a major

development opportunity. The best demonstration I can provide of the potential for expansion into this area is the fact that many of the bigger Australian milliners have their blocks imported from Luton: Boon and Lane supply to Kaminsky, Kosmo and Melbourne Hats.

### **5.8 Wool or Fur Felt Production**

Wool was identified as an area needing further knowledge as wool felt production has nearly ceased on the local Australian market. China has to a great extent taken over the wool felt production, and it seems that there are opportunities to export wool for felting, and raw fur cutting, to China for processing.

However a more immediate initiative can be undertaken to provide training and support for the Australian millinery industry. It is my suggestion that an initiative be developed with Akubra. Akubra have their own technologies for felting and may be in a position to accept trainees, possibly working along the same lines as Kristine Oss, the first millinery trainee in Victoria who is currently undergoing training at the salon of Peter Jago. My expectation is that Kristine is the first of a number of such trainees.

APPENDIX I

PETER JAGO : CURRENT  
PERSPECTIVES

## APPENDIX I

This appendix gives a personal insight to the career and interests of Peter Jago. The outcomes of the ISS funded trip to Europe have led to a number of interesting developments which perhaps lie outside the scope of the official ISS document. It is of interest to record such details in this way as it conveys just how wide reaching the effects of such a trip can be.

The photographs which accompany this section are all courtesy of Michael Prior.





## **PETER JAGO: CURRENT PERSPECTIVE**

Peter Jago is the designer and inspiration behind the highly successful Peter Jago Exclusive Hats, recently featuring in an episode of Clive James' *"Postcard from Melbourne"* and well known for his fashionable creations on and off the field.

Peter, recently having resigned from teaching at Kangan TAFE after five years, has since July 1996 undertaken the formal training of Kristine Oss - the first millinery trainee in Victoria. Peter's former trained assistant Sarah Connors had been the benchmark for millinery training in the state and has since started a successful career in the UK. Peter is entering his fifth year as the millinery teacher at The Melbourne School of Fashion.

### **ISS Educational Programmes**

As part of their obligations as recipients of an ISS research grant, Peter Jago and Steven Davies - an ISS Fellowship in Footwear Design - made the first presentation to eighty people at a luncheon at La Strada Restaurant, Armadale. Called *'Top to Toe'* it is a synchronized visual presentation of Peter and Steven's findings. The event was a rewarding opportunity for Peter to share his findings with those who may never read the report, and also a valuable forum for discussion.

The second official presentation was held on April 30th 1997 at the Kangan Institute of TAFE and was attended by members of staff and industry. A third was held at the Gordon Institute of TAFE on July 23rd, 1997.

The presentation of findings from Peter's research were further shared by members of the public during the millinery workshops *'Chic to Cheeky'*. These were short millinery

courses run in May 1997 at the Multicultural Centre, Faraday St., Carlton and included a lecture and slide show similar to that of *'Top to Toe'*.

Such was the success of these gatherings that Peter was invited to give a further presentation to the Embroiderer's Guild of Victoria on July 13th 1997. This session was attended by one hundred and fifty members - one of the largest ever meetings of the Guild.

### **Cultural Exchange Initiative**

As a direct result of contacts made during the ISS funded research project in Europe, Peter has attracted an initiative to take a 'Retrospective of 100 years of Millinery in Australia 1880-1980' to the Bath Costume Museum as part of a cultural exchange. This unique exhibition contains contributions from a wide range of sources, including fifteen private sources, and is of great historical and social interest. The Bath Costume museum has excellent collections and is the leading millinery resource centre in Great Britain, and it is a great honour that such an exchange should be proposed.

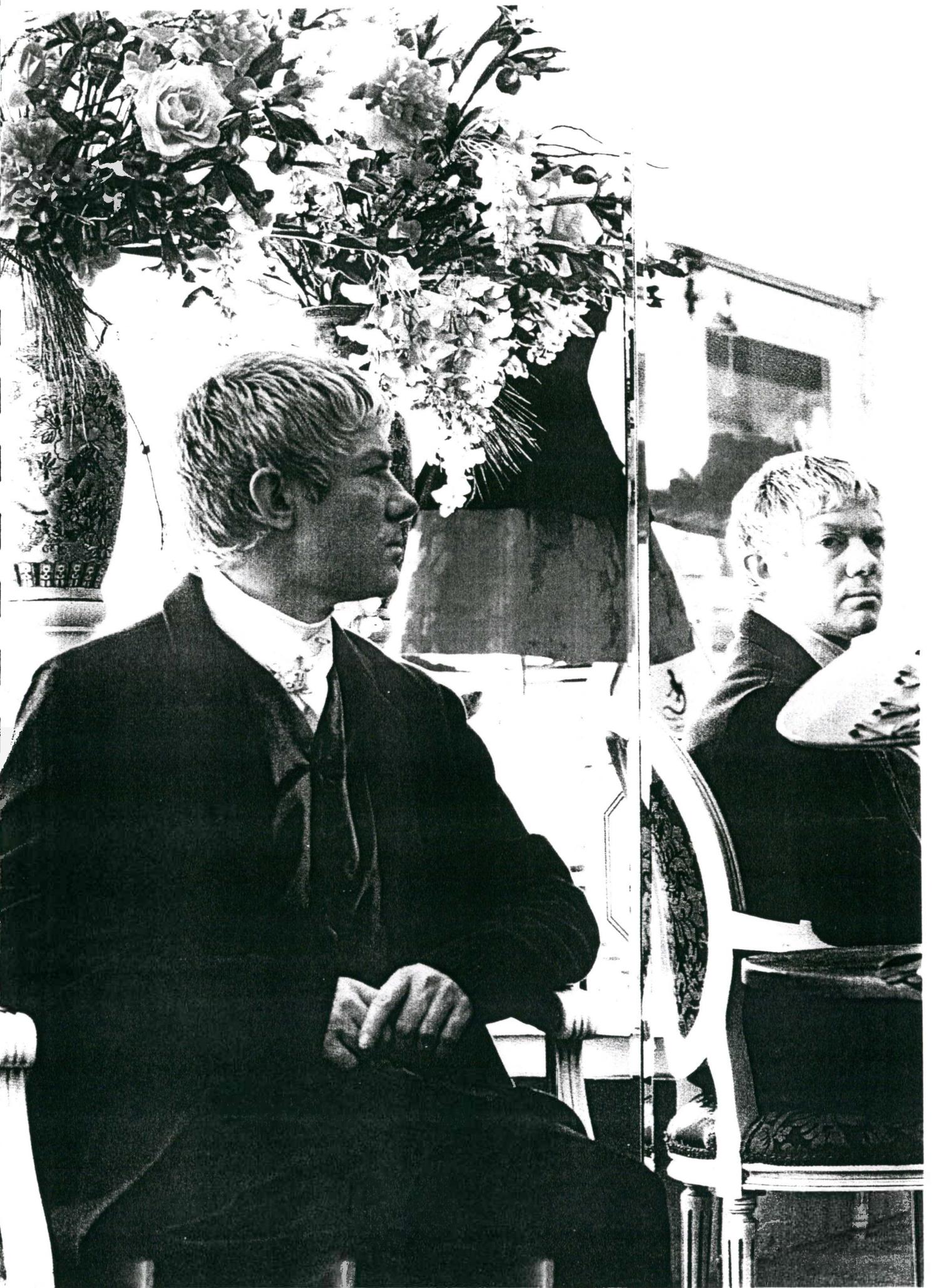
This historic exhibition has already been shown in Australia: arranged by Pauline Moffat it was shown on October 28th 1997 at the Melbourne Sofitel at a VRC Spring Carnival luncheon. The event attracted six hundred people, and was comprehensively recorded by the photographer Michael Prior. Reproductions of part of this exhibit are included in these folios. Those in attendance also had the opportunity to view hatpins from Peter Jago's previously unseen collection, unique in Australia.

### **Presentation with the Australian Ballet**

It is planned that this very special exhibition will be enhanced and developed through an initiative with the Australian Ballet School in association with the Australian Ballet.

Peter has met with two representatives - Greg Romanes, General Manager, and Heidi Malouf, Development Officer to discuss a millinery and dance extravaganza to celebrate one hundred years of millinery in Australia. As part of the proposal, the existing millinery collection will be enlarged through further contribution by private collectors and possibly also through museum and national trust loans.

This millinery and ballet extravaganza has already undergone its first strategic planning and will be shown in Melbourne around mid-June 1997. It presents a great opportunity for the Multi-cultural Foundation of Victoria and the ISS to be involved and I call upon the ISS to fully support this venture. Further it is requested that the Chairman Sir James Gobbo, in his capacity as Governor of Victoria, or his wife Lady Shirley Gobbo, will officially open this event.



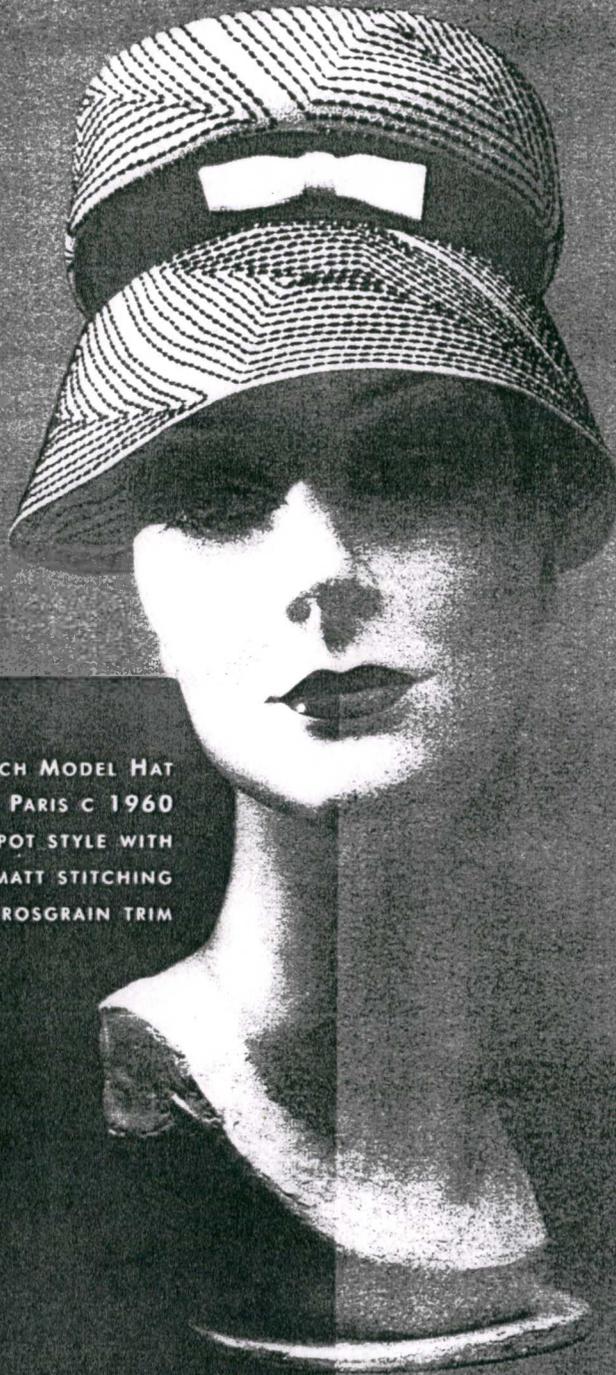
APPENDIX II

PHOTOGRAPHS - PRINTED FROM  
ORIGINALS

## APPENDIX II

This selection of 60 laminates is an important technical resource. it is part of a visual record accesses via catalogues, postcards and antiquarian prints and engravings. it provides a historical location for much of the costume and represents actual hats and headdresses. These laminates belong to the Kangan Institute of TAFE and will form part of an access library.

MELBOURNE CUP CARNIVAL LUNCHEON



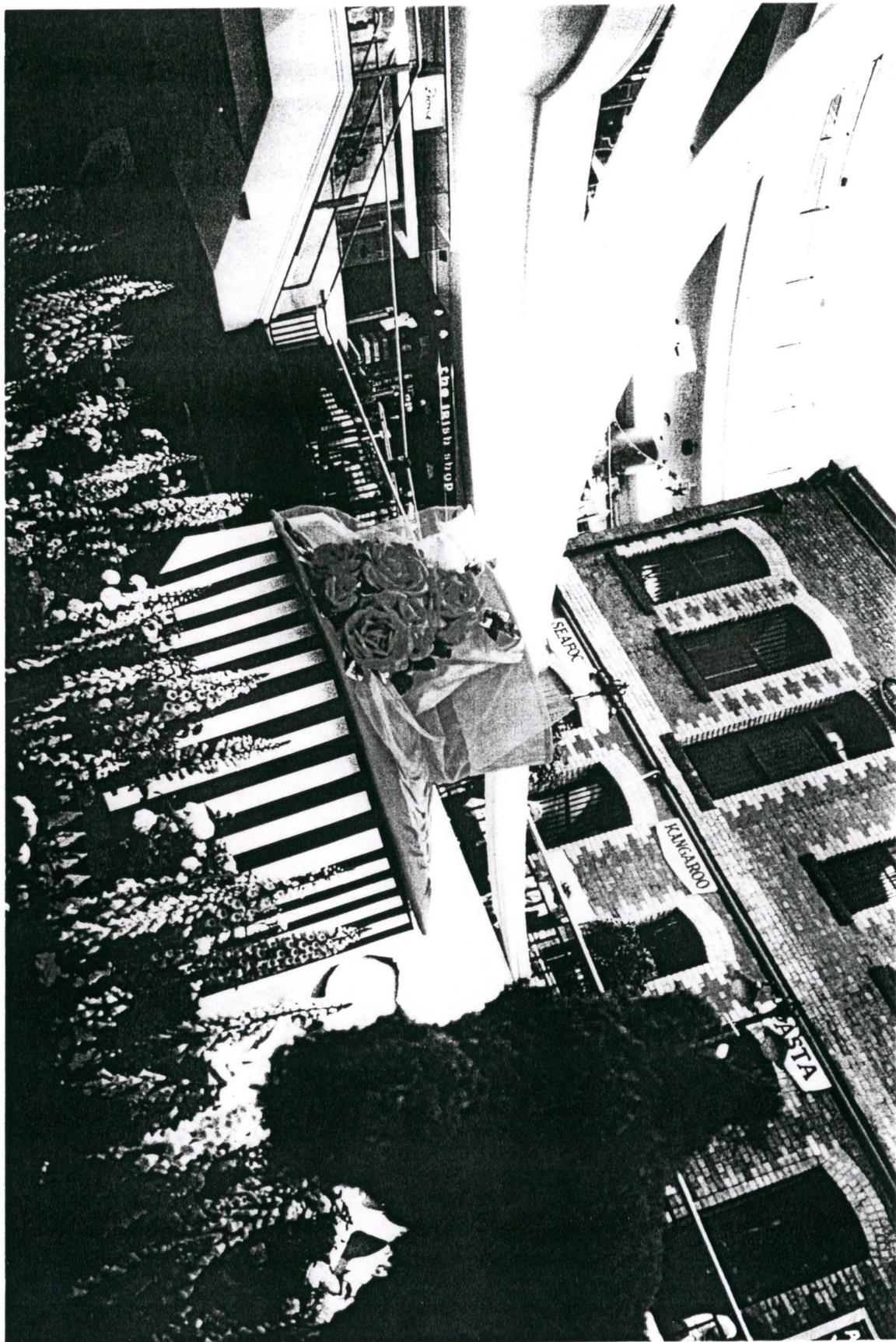
IMPORTED FRENCH MODEL HAT  
BY CHAPEAUX DIANE PARIS C 1960  
FLOWER POT STYLE WITH  
APPLIED MATT STITCHING  
AND GROSGRAIN TRIM

*100 Years of Millinery*



1880

1980



APPENDIX III

ORIGINAL DRAWINGS AND  
PATTERNS

### APPENDIX III

These original drawings were made at various stages throughout the trip. Many of them correspond to the photographs and they are intended to provide a further technical resource. They include details of measurements, patterns and contain diagrams of detail and fibre and textile description.

APPENDIX IV

100 YEARS OF MILLINERY

# APPENDIX V

## THE NEW AUSTRALIAN TRAINING SCHEME

APPENDIX VI

CATELOGUES FROM INDIVIDUAL  
COMPANIES VISITED

## APPENDIX VII

### SHORT COURSE PAMPHLET: ART, DESIGN & COMMUNICATION

APPENDIX VIII

MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF  
FASHION FILE

APPENDIX IX

CURRENT PETER JAGO  
CATELOGUE

APPENDIX X

EMU DIRECT  
FILE

