

## Case studies - The 17 Guinea Project

### RECIPIENTS OF THE MACHINES

#### Sue Crowle

Sue has been working as a milliner for more than 35 years, starting out as a freelancer working on West End shows. She's been the milliner at the Welsh National Opera since April 1990. Welsh National Opera normally produces three touring seasons a year, with one new opera and two revivals to tour across England and Wales. An exciting part of the job is that you work with different designers every three months to bring their visions to life so you never know what genre you will be creating until you see the designs. She needs to make headwear durable enough to survive years of touring. A fish head and hats she made in 1998 for Hansel and Gretel are still going strong and are currently on loan to the Houston Grand Opera.

Her freelance work includes commissions for Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera, as well as for film, television and theatre productions. She also teaches millinery at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

#### About the project:

My first millinery job was for a manufacturing milliner making hats for high-end shops and department stores around the world from a basement in Soho, London, 36 years ago. Here, the 17 Guinea sewing machine was the workhorse of the workroom, flying through petersham headlining and binding brim edges in a way only these machines can do without squashing a hat. I've not had my hands on one since. I'm so honoured to be included in this loan program and really look forward to exploring techniques with pedal straw and using it for the production of theatrical hats at Welsh National Opera.



Image Courtesy of Jane Webster

## **Claire Strickland**

Claire Strickland studied Technical Effects for the Performing Arts at the University of the Arts London, where she learned sculpting, casting and fabrication. Claire graduated in 2007 and has since focussed on props, wings, masks, headdresses, and hats. She also trained for five years at Lock & Co. Hatters, learning couture millinery skills. Claire has worked on over 30 productions at the English National Opera. She has also made headwear as an outworker and inhouse for many theatre, film and TV productions including *Doctor Who* (2017), *Bridgerton* (Season 3, 2023), and *Queen Charlotte* (2023), and for Punchdrunk, Secret Cinema, the Globe Theatre, and Madame Tussauds.

### **About the project:**

The machine will help me develop my theatrical millinery practice as I will be able to work with straw in an historically accurate way. It will also help me speed up and create hats faster.



Courtesy of Claire Strickland

## **Morley College**

Founded in 1889, Morley College is now a London-wide college with centres in North Kensington, Chelsea and Waterloo.

Here at Morley College, we're proud to offer a diverse array of courses tailored to suit every level of interest and ambition. As Morley's team of tutors are experts in their field, they bring the latest academic and industry knowledge to their teaching. From our unaccredited courses designed for hobbyists and enthusiasts to our esteemed accredited programs like the HNC Millinery and HND Millinery, we provide comprehensive training that empowers individuals to embark on rewarding careers in the millinery industry.

For nearly two decades, our HNC/D Millinery course has been at the forefront of shaping industry-leading milliners. Our students progress into various realms of millinery—from couture fashion to commercial design, theatrical creations, and film millinery. Many alumni have even pursued further education at prestigious fashion colleges, cementing their status as leaders in the field.

### **About the project:**

*Vesna Pesic, Course Director HNC Millinery:*

We are absolutely thrilled to receive one of the 17 Guinea sewing machines from the Culture Trust! This incredible opportunity will empower our students to dive into the art of straw hat making, preserving a craft listed as critically endangered by Heritage Crafts. With just 5-10 individuals practicing this skill, it's vital we nurture and pass it on. We can't wait to embark on this journey of creativity and craftsmanship! Thank you, Culture Trust, for making it possible!

*Kate Thomas, Morley College Student:*

Sewing straw plait is an historic technique which we need to keep alive and being able to learn on a studio-based machine will enable some of us to broaden our practice in this direction. This would be far less likely without getting familiar with a machine in the workroom here at Morley College. Learning straw plait sewing may also lead us to use this method of construction in new and exciting ways.

*Helen Mulligan, Morley College Student:*

In our HNC course, we will so appreciate the chance to use a reconditioned braid-making machine to extend our skills, make beautiful hats and feel at the same time we were continuing the centuries-old tradition of straw millinery in Luton.

*Molly Syrett, Morley College Student:*

As a student, it is important to experiment with as many different techniques as possible, to hone an individual style and approach to millinery design and making. These machines are not particularly easy to come by, and as a beginner it can be overwhelming to know which bits of kit are best to

invest in. Having access to one of these sewing machines will open a whole new world of straw hat making that has not previously been possible.



Courtesy of Morley College

## Lauren Martin

Lauren Martin is a freelance theatrical milliner and costume lecturer at Nottingham Trent University. In 2021 she completed her MA research on 'Millinery and headwear of the 1830s in England' at the University of Huddersfield. She holds a BA in Costume Design and Making and has worked extensively in couture fashion millinery for Philip Treacy and theatrical costume for Sheffield Theatres since 2002. Currently, Lauren's hat making focuses on historic reproductions for museums and heritage organisations. Her current academic research examines 19th-century milliners and headwear, specifically bonnets.

### About the project:

I'm so thrilled to be one of the recipients of the loaned 17 Guinea machines. As a dress historian and a working milliner, having the use of one of these historic machines will not only help me to create some beautiful straw hats, but also to be part of a cohort determined to keep alive the skills needed to use the machines. The machine will chiefly be used to help me make replicas of nineteenth century bonnets and hats, and will be a real help in getting a professional result.



Courtesy of Lauren Martin

## **Sophie Lambe**

Sophie Lambe is a theatrical milliner, primarily working within the film industry. She returned to the millinery world, working in-house in Costume, after raising her family. This was a fairly new concept at the time but millinery has since developed to be an accepted and highly esteemed part of the Costume department. She has valued working with a variety of acclaimed costume designers, encompassing a breadth of design. These collaborations allow her a freedom of creativity. Generally, film work is of a faster pace compared to theatre, with hundreds of hats expected to be handmade, to measure, in days and to a very high standard of finish.

Her work is seen in the following films: *Wicked: Part One and Two* (2024 and 2025), *Snow White* (2024), *Fantastic Beasts* (2016, 2018 and 2022), *Emma* (2020), *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019), *Assassins Creed* (2016), *Paddington 2* (2017), *Allied* (2016), *Bridgerton* (Seasons 1 and 2, 2020 and 2021).

### **About the project:**

I cannot remember the year I started looking for a 17 Guinea machine. I just know it's been a very long time. The machines are a thing of beauty and craftsmanship in their own right but to be a small part of learning how to keep the traditional method of straw hat making alive makes me very happy.

As a theatrical milliner, I have either hand sewn or used the crude method of zigzagging on a domestic machine which were my only options for creating period hats over the years. Using this machine to create beautifully-finished hats fast will be a game changer for me and my team in this world of high-definition video.

I am so very grateful to Yona and the Culture Trust for this opportunity, thank you.



Courtesy of Sophie Lambe

## **Pip Mayo**

Pip studied Art & Design and trained as a teacher at Goldsmiths; then immediately ran off to train as an actor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. She developed a strong interest in new writing, taking part in many play readings and development workshops over her career, as well as working many years at Shakespeare's Globe, and was involved in the training and mentoring of many young actors.

In Summer 2018, seeking a new creative direction, Pip did a short intensive millinery course with Judy Bentinck ... and she was hooked! She went on to train in millinery at Kensington & Chelsea/Morley College. Since graduating from Morley, Pip has worked for several top milliners and has made sustainable hats for private clients as well as headpieces as for theatre productions at Regents Park Open Air Theatre ('Every Tree A Hallelujah', May/June 2023) and for the current UK tour of Shrek the Musical.

Pip's hat 'Jupiter' won 3rd prize in the Annual Feltmakers' Competition, 2023. 'Pink Cardoon' was exhibited in the 'Hats Made Me ...Inspired' exhibition at the Culture Trust's Hat Works (July 3-Aug 5, 2023).

### **About the project:**

I am thrilled to be included in this exciting project and to become the guardian of a working 17 Guinea machine. I'm really looking forward to learning new millinery skills and my plan, as well as making wonderful straw hats of course, is to be able to pass on these specialist skills by offering training sessions to students and other milliners.



Courtesy of Barbara Gorniak

## Liz Crossman

Liz works as a Milliner/Costume Prop maker for film, TV and theatre. Her work ranges immensely from very outlandish concepts to more traditional makes, giving her the ability to understand alternative ways of using all sorts of materials and equipment to suit that particular job. By collaborating with other designers and makers, she explores the boundaries of what is creatively possible within the many different worlds she inhabits.

Her film and theatre credits include: *Star Wars: Andor* (Season 2, 2023), *The Essex Serpent* (2020), *Les Misérables* (2018 and 2019), *Follies* (2019), *Spiderman: Far From Home* (2018), *The Book of Mormon* (2017 and 2018) and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (2016-).

### About the project:

I'm extremely grateful to Yona and the Culture Trust for reinstating these precious 17 Guinea machines and making them available to people such as myself, as working with straw has become a rare and ancient craft. I'm excited to hone those skills and explore what is possible by combining straw and costume.



Courtesy of Liz Crossman



## **Misa Harada**

Japanese-born and a graduate of the Royal College of Art, Misa Harada launched her career in 1998 after creating for the British Royal Family. By 2002, the Misa Harada label was stocked internationally and caught the attention of artists such as Janet Jackson and Britney Spears. Other notable names Misa has designed for include Jennifer Aniston, The Rolling Stones, Beyoncé and the TV series 'Sex and the City'.

Misa's work has been displayed at the V&A's exhibition 'Stephen Jones – An Anthology of Hats' which toured around the world from 2009 till 2011. In 2015, Misa's retrospective exhibition titled 'Hats Off' was held at the Pola Museum of Art in Tokyo.

Misa Harada has seen regular coverage in British and German Vogue, including with a bespoke headpiece for top model Cara Delevingne, now in the Culture Trust collection, and her work has graced the front cover of Tatler, with Cindy Crawford in her signature 'veiled boater' style.

### **About the project:**

This opportunity to hire and train in Guinea machines will allow me to experiment and test new ideas and structures, eventually designing and re-inventing the existing traditional braided hats for the summer.



Courtesy of Misa Harada