

## **All Things Millinery**

In January milliners from around the world convened in Wagga to discuss and celebrate all things millinery. The International Millinery Forum attracted milliners from USA, the Netherlands, London, Hong Kong, Sydney, Queensland, Canberra, Melbourne and Wagga. Hat making has made a come back in recent years with hats becoming increasingly popular. Hat making is a real art form and with milliners from all over the world, the participants at the forum were able to take advantage of the international viewpoints, skills and techniques.

Wagga has a lot of talented milliners and it is great to see millinery being recognised. We are great believers that hats are a fantastic accessory, a mood setter and allow you to express your true personality. You can have as many moods as you have hats. We were privileged to participate in the International Millinery Forum and be invited to MC the Cocktail Hat parade and Gala Dinner.

The Forum opened with the Cocktail Hat Parade held at the beautiful and historic Borambola homestead. What a beautiful place to hold a hat parade with the foothills of the Snowy Mountains and the Murrumbidgee River as the background. Those who attended were privileged to experience a hat parade of world-class milliners from around the world as it is a rare opportunity to have so many milliners all in one place. Each of the tutors who participated in the International Millinery Forum had the opportunity to parade two of their hats in front of keen and enthusiastic milliners.

It was a week packed full of artistic creations, designs and inspiration, a chance to build networks and come up with new ideas and ways to create different pieces of millinery artworks. It was a week of workshops and presentations where participants learnt how to dye feathers, create lace cloches and turbans, produce hoods made of handmade felt, make silk roses, wire hats, hat brims, free form embroidery and learn great feather techniques for all those trims. We are sure that all the participants took home lots of useful skills and ideas.

The final event for the 2009 International Millinery Forum was the 1920s themed SA Brown Gala dinner held at the MTC Race Course. It was wonderful to see so many people dressed in the theme and you could almost imagine that you were back in the 1920s.

The 1920s were a flamboyant period in history and a time when fashion and hat styles changed dramatically forever. This time of liberation, especially for women set the stage for many future fashion styles. Short skirts and hair cuts became popular and Coco Chanel promoted the new fashions.

The 1920s was also a time when milliners were influenced by designs from Asia and the Middle East. Turbans and tiaras were recreated and cloche hats were all the vogue. When you stop and think about it, the 1920s provided the foundation for a lot of fashion in the following decades. They influenced and set in motion many of the styles we still see today.

At the Gala Dinner we were treated to a great range of entertainment with a 1920s theme including music and dancing by local by artists as well as a hat parade by local milliners and students from the Riverina Community College. Much of the entertainment was by local singer and entertainer, Lindsay Whitehead. His act was accompanied by several 1920s dance routines by the Wagga Foxtrot Dance Studio.

At the end of the dinner the especially designed artwork was auctioned off and proceeds given to the Blue Hat project. The Blue Hat project is a worthy cause that creates awareness of depression and creative ways to enhance the lives of those who suffer from it.

As with all large events there is a lot of behind the scene action. The assistance of the small group of local milliners who have helped with the registration, trade expo, workshops, the cocktail party and the gala dinner needs to be acknowledged. The staff did a fabulous job of helping the forum run smoothly. They wore many hats during the week from garbage collectors and cleaners, electrical experts, tea and coffee ladies and sourcing materials and supplies.

A big thanks must go to Linda Tillman, event organiser of the forum for all her efforts for making this extraordinary event such an enormous success. A special mention also has to go to Rose Organ who is a first class millinery teacher in Wagga. She is a truly dedicated teacher who gives so much of her time and knowledge to her students.

Thanks must also go to the sponsors as it is their support that enabled the forum to go ahead and be a success. The proud gold supporter for 2009 was SA Brown who is Australia's oldest millinery supplies specialists. The silver sponsors included The City of Wagga, Torb and Reiner, Quest Serviced Apartments, Regional Express, De Lew Designers Australia, Izziana Image Consultants and the Wagga Business Guide

It was an amazing week, lots of fun and by all accounts everyone had a great time. We look forward to the next forum with more new ideas, creations and inspirations.