



Second Prize – Anna Kittson

First Prize – Nora de la Quintana

'Disturbing the Grid' was inspired by grid structures in architecture and Lucio Fontana's monochrome 'Slash' paintings. The result was a beautiful black and white headpiece full of movement.

Feltmakers Design Competition 2020

by Rachel Trevor Morgan

'From Words to Ashes' was a witty and well-balanced headpiece representing declining reading patterns and illustrating the fact that physical books are slowly disappearing.

The annual Worshipful Company of Feltmakers Design Competition is now in its 26th year. Started by Liveryman William Horsman, it is now one of the main competitions in the millinery calendar. The competition was set up for the industry, and aimed at millinery students, apprentices and milliners who are within two years of starting their own label. It is very much hoped that prizewinners will go on to work within the trade and make it their career. We encourage colleges taking part to include the Design Award in their syllabus where possible, serving as a challenge and focus for the students.

Working through different inspirations, close-up images of coral and studies of leaf structure, Leah experimented with laser-cutting techniques to create a beautiful and vibrant headpiece.

Third Prize – Leah Hislop

Sarah Cant, Course Director at Morley College Chelsea, acknowledges that the Feltmakers Design Competition is a highlight for the students: "It is hard to overemphasise its importance to millinery students – as a motivation to create ambitious work, as a recognition of their achievements, and as a support as they progress their work on the course and beyond." On the HNC [Higher National Certificate course], they have created a project specifically focused on innovation with felt in order for students to create the best possible entries to the competition. "Students who win prizes in the competition experience such a huge boost of confidence at a key moment in the course, just when they are working on their final collection projects. The financial side of the awards is also hugely beneficial to the HNC students, who are at the end of a very intense academic year, working on their most important work yet, and most often, with reduced resources. Finally, the industry opportunities connected to the first prize are indispensable to any student setting out on a career in millinery."

As well as the financial prize, the winner is also given two weeks' work experience in Rachel Trevor Morgan's workroom and two weeks' experience at Walter Wright Hats in Luton – two very valuable opportunities. The importance of gaining experience in established businesses is vital to understanding the industry as a whole.

The Design Competition judging was due to take place on April 1st at Haberdashers, but with Covid-19 and lockdown we were unfortunately forced to cancel. Thanks to Liveryman John Horn, all the entries had been sent through to Barford Brothers (dye works) in Luton until the judging, so that is where they sat while we all waited for lockdown to lift. At first it was hoped that it was only the judging in London that was being postponed, but it soon became clear that the normal gathering was not going to be allowed any time soon. It was therefore decided that as soon as it seemed reasonable, the judging would be taken to the hats in Luton. On July 16th a very reduced judging panel of Rachel Trevor Morgan, Noel Stewart and Bill Horsman met to look at the hats and go through all the entries.

The competition rules state that the hat or headpiece designs must contain a large proportion of felt; other than that, students have a fairly free hand. However, the hats do need to work as an item of headwear. They don't have to be commercial (there is a separate prize for that) but they do need to be able to be reproduced in a workroom, and they do need to fit the head or be on a structure that stays on the head comfortably. However beautiful or innovative a design is, it will not win if it isn't able to be worn.

There are three main prizes, which are awarded to designs that fit the overall categories and stand out for whatever reason. There are then four additional prizes that are awarded for specific criteria. The Commercial prize really speaks for itself: this is awarded for a design that is easily worn, easily reproduced and easily sold. Then there is a prize for Artwork and Presentation. Artwork is a vital part of a submission, which gives the student an opportunity to explain the inspiration behind their design and also to explain to the judging panel the processes that have gone into the final piece. This particular criterion is often overlooked by entrants but is a further opportunity to show off creativity and serves to back up a design. For the Craftsmanship prize, we focus on the quality of the finish and of the millinery involved. For the Innovative Use of Felt prize, judges are looking for something new and original. But as ever, it is not just about an interesting take on felt: the submission must work as a hat/ headpiece in its own right. Overall we are seeking originality, craftsmanship, a degree of commerciality, wit, and something we have not seen before. We often see students looking at past years and reimagining former winning designs – actually, we want to be surprised!

Florence Baverstock's beautiful drawings, artwork and inspiration boards were outstanding. Once again, Northampton College lead the way with artwork.



Artwork and Presentation Award – Florence Baverstock



Design Award Winners

First Prize (£1,500)
Nora de la Quintana
 KCC/Morley College

Second Prize (£1,000)
Anna Kittson (Stefanou)
 KCC/Morley College

Third Prize (£750)
Leah Hislop Northampton College

Special Category Awards

The Craftsmanship Award (£250)
Sarah Blackmore
 KCC/Morley College

The Commercial Appeal Award
 (£250) **Tina Williams** Hereford @
 Ludlow College

The Innovative Use of Felt Award
 (£250) **Stefania Belfiore** Italy

The Artwork and Presentation Award (£250) **Florence Baverstock**
 Northampton College

This year we had a particularly good uptake in entries, with over 40 hats being submitted from the UK and Europe.

We were very sorry not to be able to share our event with the Lady Mayoress and Sheriff's Consorts as is usual, especially as this year's Lord Mayor, William Russell, is a Liveryman in the Feltmakers Company. We were also very sorry not to have the opportunity of showing all the winning designs at the Annual Mansion House Banquet.

I very much hope that colleges and new start-up businesses can navigate their way through these very challenging times.

Tina was inspired by the 75th anniversary of VE day. Her headpiece was a modern interpretation of a turban style worn by women who had been drafted. Tina's headpiece was perfectly on trend. A wide felt headband with a cluster of handmade felt poppies inspired by the remembrance poppy. Beautifully made and easy to wear.



Commercial Appeal Award – Tina Williams



Craftsmanship Award – Sarah Blackmore

'Hyperfelt' was inspired by the graphic painting 'Hypermass' by artist James Roper. "An explosive demonstration of the diverse properties of felt", it was a collage of curves and contrast. This piece was beautifully crafted and fun.



Innovative Use of Felt Award – Stefania Belfiore

Taking inspiration from the Colosseum, Stefania's hat was perfectly executed.