

teacher profile

Vikki Leigh Martin

Our guest milliner this issue, Vikki Leigh Martin, has an impressive background in fashion and teaching. A graduate of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology's prestigious fashion design course, Vikki shares her skills in sewing, garment construction, accessory and headwear making from her wonderful studio in Melbourne, plus other locations.



"I think one thing to remember is that, like the purple and black piece we've made (overpage), it may feel bold when you have it on at home but once you get to the races it will actually seem quite understated. People wear some pretty flash hats there!" - Vikki

A degree in fashion design does not necessarily set you up to run your own business but this did not stop the young Vikki from heading into small business early in her career, opening up a boutique and running her own label. "It was hard, hard work and very long hours but I learned more during those years than at any other time," she says. "I learned about customers, about body shapes and about dealing with market realities."

students can enrol in the 'Introduction to Sewing' course and then move on to 'Start to Sew 1' and 'Start to Sew 2'. The three courses combine to create a 15-week program, complete with manuals and a student work book."

On the day that **'get creative'** visited Vikki had young student, Judith Perl, in the studio. Just out of VCE, Judith is one of the many high school student clients who have studied with Vikki after school, sometimes for pleasure and sometimes to enhance folio work.

While Judith hopes to eventually study music the patchwork dress she made while studying with Vikki earned her an A+ in her art folio and taught her much patience along the way.

"When I arrived in class saying I wanted to make a patchwork dress I had no idea what I was really proposing," Judith says. "If I'd known what was going to be involved I probably would never have done it."

Vikki's move into millinery arose in a roundabout way. "About 10 years ago, while working at Myer, the company's 'Create a Hat' (customising) service began to get really busy," she recalls. When demand became more than "the ladies" (the older doyens who used to run the service) could handle management put a call out to staff to see if there were any designers around who could help. Vikki and a girlfriend jumped at the opportunity.

"I did that for six or seven years and the opportunities it brought my way

were unbelievable," she says. "Myer pretty much forced us to go out and get qualifications; I studied for a year under (Australian milliner) Phillip Rhodes at the Melbourne School of Fashion and at what was then called the Ascot School of Millinery in Surrey Hills ... I also became a member of the Millinery Association of Australia."

Today she offers millinery classes throughout the year along with sewing classes but says the months of August, September and October certainly hot up in terms of demand. "I love making hats and headwear. It's so creative and, let's face it, compared to fashion ... it just has to sit on someone's head. You don't have to worry about people's hip size!"

Like the pieces Vikki made for our readers this month, her classes operate on some basic principles. "I'm all about showing people how to make something they can actually wear; it's not about showing off my skills. I love that we got to use that pillbox shape in the magazine," she says. "Things don't have to get too tricky ... I very much believe in the KISS (keep it simple stupid) theory."

While she loves big, ambitious hats, Vikki says they are often not financially viable or practical for most wearers. "Economics will always be part of the decision ... lime green might be a fashion colour but most women will wonder when else they'll be able to wear a hat in that shade," she observes. **gc**

Our creative teacher this month is

Vikki Leigh Martin

Her specialty

Sewing & millinery

Where she teaches

Victoria and interstate

Find her at

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Vikki eventually closed her boutique and took up part time work in Melbourne's Myer department store but always continued to teach sewing and work for herself. Looking back she says that maintaining work in the retail sector gave her a good perspective on running her own business. "Whenever I wished I could be my own boss I would go back to Myer and just love the fact that someone else was doing all the worrying. Similarly, when I'd had enough of that world, I could go home and appreciate the freedom."

For years Vikki has been an instructor for major fabric related companies, teaching sewing classes on their premises as a contractor. In recent times, however, circumstances forced her to get her own space up and running and, she says, business has never been better.

"I offer a series of training programs, developed with the beginner in mind. Subjects include garment construction, patternmaking, bag making and millinery. If they wish to,





handy hint

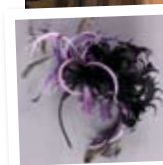
It is easier to work on the headband, fascinator or hat if it is pinned onto a decofoam mannequin head.

pink, cream & olive

materials

- 1 x round base on headband – cream
- 2.5cm cream sinamay ribbon
- melon biot feathers
- olive biot feathers
- 1 x melon goose/biot feather flower
- melon feathers
- scissors & pins
- hot glue gun & glue sticks
- optional – decofoam mannequin head

With the headband onto the decofoam mannequin head, pin through the edges of the round base to hold in place. Create 7-9 cream sinamay loops in different sizes. Position and glue 4 loops on each side of the headband in a figure-8 formation and manipulate as desired. Add the remaining loops to create bulk at the back of the fascinator. Curl melon and olive biot feathers (see refresh on page XX). Create 4 groupings and glue to the cream sinamay loops positioned on each side of the headband. Position the melon feather flower to sit above the right eye then glue in place. Trim melon feathers to create arrow heads and glued in place to create balance.

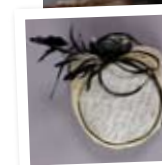


mauve & black

materials

- 1 x round base on headband - black
- 1 x large lilac curly feather flower
- 1 x large black curly feather flower
- purple biot feathers
- lilac biot feathers
- purple stripped coque feathers
- black cocktail feathers
- 2.5cm black sinamay ribbon
- scissors & pins
- hot glue gun & glue sticks
- optional – decofoam mannequin head

With the headband onto the decofoam mannequin head, pin through the edges of the round base to hold in place. Left and right refer to the headpiece facing you. Fold large lilac curly feather flower in half and glue to front left of base. Fold large black curly feather flower in half and glue behind and further to the left of lilac flower. Curl purple and lilac biot feathers (see refresh on page XX). Create 3 groupings using the lilac and purple curled feathers and purple stripped coque feathers. Make 3 loops using black sinamay ribbon and glue one feather grouping to each. Glue into position on each side of the headpiece one on the left and two on the right to create height and balance. Add extra black sinamay loops and black cocktail feathers to create bulk and balance.



black & cream

materials

- 1 x cream sinamay pill box base
- black biot feathers
- black stripped coque feathers
- black/cream sinamay flower
- 1.5m sinamay fabric - ivory
- 4m x 20mm black satin bias
- black thread
- hat elastic with metal ends
- scissors & pins
- hot glue gun & glue sticks
- optional – decofoam mannequin head

Place the pill box base onto the decofoam mannequin head and pin through the top to hold in place. Cut a 10cm wide strip of cream sinamay fabric on bias, 1.5m long and edge with black satin bias binding. note: This strip can be made in sections if the sinamay fabric is only 45-50cm wide. Wrap the edged piece of sinamay around the pill box base and create a bow. Position the bow on an angle over the right eye. Curl black and cream feathers (see refresh on page XX) and combine with black stripped coque feathers to create 4 groupings. Glue the feather groupings in place at the centre and off to the right at the bow. Glue sinamay flower to centre of bow. Attach the hat elastic through the band inside the pill box base.

