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**Deconstructed Hat:  
Exploring the Potential of Upcycling and Database-Driven Narratives in  
Developing a Concept for a Headwear Label.**

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**MA Thesis**

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## Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Acknowledgements	5
Preface	6
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Motivations	7
1.2 Thesis Structure	8
2. Vintage and Pre-Used Clothing in Brand Identities	11
2.1. Creating Garment Narratives	11
2.2 Value of Garments Historically	12
2.3 Aesthetics of Poverty: Historic Narratives in Brand Identities	14
2.4 Deconstructed Fashion	17
2.4.1. Background	17
2.4.2. Analytical Creation and Destruction	19
2.4.3. Trace	21
3. Felt and Upcycling Hats as part of Deconstruction	23
3.1. Felt as a Material	23
3.2. Pre-used Hats as a Vessel for Storytelling	24
4. Research Method	26
4.1. Object-Based Research	26
4.1.1. Database: Specifications of Object-Based Research for a Headwear Label	27
4.2. Choosing Vintage Hats for Upcycling from a Headwear Label Perspective	31
4.3. Literature Review of Felt Headwear of Tallinna Moemaja: Analysing Database Hats Based on Oral History and Documentary Research	32
4.3.1. Background	34
4.3.2. The Popularity of Felt Hats in the Estonian SSR	35
4.3.3. Categorising the Artefacts: The Supporting and Limiting Aspects of Dating and Contextualising Tallinna Moemaja Hats	37
5. Collection	44
5.1. Inspiration & Process	59
5.1.1. Blue Round-topped Tall Hat	62
6. Findings	66
7. Conclusion	70
8. Kokkuvõte	72
9. Bibliography	75
10. Appendix	79
10.1. Database Entry with Checklist and Reflection: ‘Tallinna Moemaja 3’	79
10.2. Database	81



## Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate the potential of upcycling and database-driven narratives in the development of a concept for a headwear label based on my existing namesake label. Due to the increasing environmental crisis, wasteful modes in the fashion industry and the value inflation of garments, the themes of reusing, recycling and upcycling continue to be relevant. To counter the throw-away culture in fashion, I aim to contextualise and add value to my creations through three different aspects. First, I am considering my practice in the framework of deconstruction fashion. Next, I am analysing how an archive database of vintage hats could inform my design process. Finally, I will be exploring the possibilities of incorporating pre-used felt material into the final hat designs.

The main focus of my research is to determine how to preserve the narratives of vintage hats when deconstructing them. Deriving from the primary question, I explore how to embrace the flaws of vintage felt and turn them into assets, as well as analyse the usefulness of an archive database for narrative creation.

The thesis is employing object-based research which is conducted on collected vintage felt hats. The information is recorded in a database consisting of 45 hats. The data was collected by close observation of the items and was analysed with the aid of archival and documentary research as well as oral history.

One of the key findings in this MA thesis is that the archive database functions as a central tool in the preservation of the historical context and physical properties of the vintage hats. I found that thanks to the careful documentation of the items in the database, I was motivated to use the original components of the hats, emphasise their historical background, and subvert the conventional notion of what a hat is made of. Working with pre-used felt material supported turning the imperfections into focal points or functional elements, as well as using piecing to create bigger hats out of smaller ones.

By creating value around upcycled hats, I hope to bring people to repurpose already existing resources. Additionally, other designers could use this thesis to plan their design approaches.

**Keywords: deconstructed fashion, upcycling, felt hat, database, narrative, hatmaking, brand identity**

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## Preface

To me, using creativity together with hand skills has always seemed like an attainable way to improve one's way of life. This started in childhood: seeing my mother sewing clothes for clients and herself at home or reupholstering our old furniture, and my father having a library of tools for every task and being able to fix anything. I believe this, after getting my BA in scenography, prompted me to study tailoring, further developing my admiration for manual handcrafts and my appreciation for natural fibre textiles.

Throughout this journey, I have also had an inclination towards dress history – a curiosity regarding how things were made, how they shaped our world and vice versa. Upon continuing my studies at the Estonian Academy of Arts in fashion design, I was most excited about the prospect of getting acquainted with hatmaking, as felt headwear seemed to be more closely related to the past than anything else we wear today.

In the autumn of 2019, I had the opportunity to take part in the millinery course taught by Eia Radosavljevic from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The timing of the next couple of years favoured deeper exploration of the practice. I began making hats on my own, and one by one, started selling them online – the LIIS KALDA headwear label was born.

From the onset, I wanted to conduct a sustainably minded practice: first, by producing made-to-order hats, and later, also incorporating vintage textiles and upcycling. I believe that using pre-loved materials and historical references offers imaginative and unique ways of designing products, while conveying engaging stories, which is why I decided to write my thesis on this subject.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Motivations

‘87% of the materials and fibres used to make clothing will end up in either incinerators or landfills’, amounting to up to 92 million tonnes going to landfills each year (Ruiz, n.d.), as the world produces, consumes, and discards at an ever-increasing rate. The speed of today’s fashion dictates that new goods must be created as a replacement for yesterday’s outdated trends. To sustain and profit the industry, production costs are cut to a bare minimum or lower. This by extension has drastically reduced the garments’ value on various levels – be it material<sup>1</sup> resale value; aesthetic value due to rushed work; moral value as a result of underpaid labour; social value because of short-lived trends; sentimental value which has no time to build up when items are worn only a few times etc.

On the other hand, among these unwanted and discarded garments are also precious natural materials which could still be benefited from and saved from landfills. An example is the fur felt, usually consisting of rabbit hair, which is used in hatmaking and millinery<sup>2</sup>. Fur felt has properties suited for upcycling, yet it is underutilised for repurposing in the fashion sector as a main source of material. The more common method for hatmakers is the re-blocking of misshapen hats to restore them to their original form (Lock & Co. Hatters, n.d.) or the one-off cases where used hats are remodelled upon the client’s request<sup>3</sup>, while the focus remains on producing products from new material.

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<sup>1</sup> Here the material is referred to as economic resale value. However in the context of the 19th century and earlier, the textile material value itself was equivalent to monetary value. (Lemire 2005: 29-48)

<sup>2</sup> Although felt is handled by both hatmakers and milliners, I am mainly using the hatmaking term in this thesis, as this was traditionally more closely related to the process of blocking (moulding) the felt hatbody over a wooden (or other type of) hat block with the aid of moist steam and physical pressure, as opposed to decorating the hats with added embellishments by milliners.

<sup>3</sup> The Italian hat brand Jcosky posted on Instagram stories about turning a client’s worn Borsalino fedora into one of their own smaller-sized caps.

Jcosky, Hatmakers, Holy head, blessed hat, Padua, Italy (Instagram), accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/jcoskyhats/>.



While most natural fur felt – new or pre-used – has favourable properties (i.e. softness, breathability, insulation against the cold and heat (“Material Guide - Fur Felt.”, n.d.)), an added benefit of incorporating the pre-used vintage felt hats is their superior quality and versatility compared to some of the newly manufactured felt hatbodies. Not only does upcycling save resources, but it is also the more ethical choice in terms of animal welfare.

The scope of my research will remain within the boundaries of the 45 vintage hats collected for upcycling purposes that I have acquired from second-hand shops or via donations over the past year or so. After I noticed being instinctively drawn to certain types of headwear in terms of their colour, texture, thickness and consistency, I feel motivated to analyse these inclinations on a more systematic level.

By conducting this study, I hope to offer a value-led solution against the discarding of natural fur felt material. Furthermore, this research will build on existing accounts of designers using upcycling and historical narratives in crafting their brand identities and will suggest a felt headwear viewpoint into the discourse.

## 1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis explores how to enrich and evolve my existing headwear label by introducing a concept for contextualising and enhancing the value of the hats I produce.

To begin with, I am thinking about my practice as it relates to the theory of deconstruction fashion. Following that, I will be examining how compiling a database containing previously used felt headwear might support me in my design approach. Since I am making use of upcycling in my work, I then need to be strategic about how to include any flaws in previously used felt into the completed hat designs.

The primary question in my study is:

- How to preserve the narratives of vintage hats when deconstructing them?

The latter paves the way for the following sub-questions to be raised:

- How to embrace the flaws of upcycled felt and work with them?

- How useful is an archive database for narrative creation?

The first question is the key focus of this research and will set the foundation for the subsequent questions, connecting the theory with physical applications and assessing its relevance.

The following section will provide a brief summary of the thesis structure which consists of seven larger segments. First, the introduction describes the problem as well as states the research aim, objectives and questions.

The second chapter opens with a subchapter that defines the idea of a narrative in the context of brand identities, based on the connection that the products have to their historical background. The following subchapter gives an overview of what was considered valuable in garments historically and how contemporary fashion designers play on these themes. The subsequent subchapters will delve deeper into the causes and relevance of deconstruction fashion and its specific concepts revolving around destruction versus construction, and traces of meaning in garments' design and use.

The third chapter will look into the felt material – structure, properties, value of benefits of preferring pre-used vintage hats. Moreover, it will place it in the context of deconstruction fashion and describe its differences in aspects usually explained regarding woven textiles or alternative materials.

The fourth chapter introduces the method of object-based research and its modifications to fit the requirements of my thesis. Along with demonstrating the use of a database in a current fashion brand, I will emphasise its primary characteristics from my work's perspective. The other subchapters will clarify my choice of research objects and will give an example of researching the background of a group of vintage hats through a literature review.

The fifth chapter begins by presenting the upcycled felt headwear collection and follows up by explaining the inspirations and process behind it. The subchapter will feature an item from the collection, describing the melding of theory, research, traditional practice and felt properties into a final product.

The sixth chapter will state and evaluate the findings of the method, tools and technical knowledge which came up in the course of this thesis.

The final, seventh chapter concludes the thesis and answers the research questions. It will reflect on the limitations of my study. Finally, it considers how the research could be developed further as well as its future use for my practice.

## 2. Vintage and Pre-Used Clothing in Brand Identities

### 2.1. Creating Garment Narratives

Well-documented clothing – for which we know the context of their creation, use and ownership(s) – can give us an understanding of the time, place and people they belong(ed) to. As time passes, the garments may gain historical, cultural, educational, monetary or emotional value, depending on their rarity and provenance. These high-value artefacts are usually found in museums and in the private collections of dress historians, having little to do with the items people wear every day. What if there was a way to instil a similar kind of significance onto the clothing and accessories made and used now (, without the extra waiting period.) Would it change the nonchalant way in which garments are minimally used and disposed of?

In my personal experience, the connection with a garment is stronger when I know more about it – it has meaning for me. By extension, I am also less inclined to dispose of it when it no longer is “in fashion”.

For new clothes, the accounts of meaning and significance are crafted into product and brand narratives, carrying their corresponding values, aspirations and stories. A narrative is a way to build desire, trust and belonging – making it a way to distinguish something from an anonymous mass of objects or manufacturers.

In this thesis I am going to use the term ‘narrative’ as the story of an item which includes the background information (original maker and style, dating and historical context, material properties etc.) of the source vintage hats and – after the hats have been completed – also the making and elements of the final upcycled hats. The item’s narratives are generally going to be non-linear and evolving, pieced together from fragments of information – intended to evolve and retain knowledge. However, this flexibility makes them difficult to express and display concisely. For the purposes of this research, the narratives will remain open and will only be condensed into

short, more definitive product descriptions displayed with their corresponding hats for the TASE graduation exhibition<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2 Value of Garments Historically

The existing cultural framework for clothing, in which we comprehend its economic and life cycles, has not always operated in this linear way. The following chapter is meant to provide an overview of different perspectives and issues regarding clothes as material worth that persisted in Western society over the last few centuries.

People aspire to own a piece of clothing because it is loaded with a potential promise – to look, feel and perform better; to gain the position or attract the partner one desires. As a result, this would repay in happiness and fulfilment. Subsequently, the garment is kept because it retains a power; reminds them of the important times, places and people in their lives; and possesses a guarantee of economic well-being. Hence, a garment can carry different kinds of values – material, aesthetic, sentimental, social etc. – simultaneously; have one dominating over the other(s); or completely cancel out the less desirable value(s), depending on the situation. I will look more closely at how these variables affect the ownership of garments, as well as the completeness of their form, and the length of their existence. Therefore, the following paragraphs will also shed light on how garments' value has changed over time from a historical perspective.

Throughout history, clothing has frequently served as a symbol of a person's 'financial and spiritual worth' as suggested by different accounts from Socrates and the Bible to Erasmus and Shakespeare. (Mikhaila, Malcolm-Davies 2006: 10) It was essential to dress in the best possible way and in coordination with one's status, rank, age, gender and profession, as this directly reflected upon their virtue, wisdom, superiority or lack thereof. This idea carried over to the 19th century and became synonymous with 'respectability' which people of all classes could buy and pawn as necessary. 'Respectability was a bed, bedding, kitchenware, but above all, suitable clothes.' (Stallybrass 1998: 192)

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<sup>4</sup> 'TASE is the annual graduation show of the Estonian Academy of Arts. It presents the final projects of Fine Arts, Architecture, Design, and Art and Culture faculties' master's students, along with the final artworks by Fine Arts and Design faculties' bachelor's students.' (Sova 2022)

To invest for the future meant to invest in clothing<sup>5</sup> as good quality clothes would retain their value for decades and could confidently be turned into monetary funds. They could be resold as is or ‘taken apart, stripped of their ornaments and sold as separate pieces’ (Frick 2005: 16) as well as repeatedly pawned and redeemed. (Stallybrass, 194) For the rich, this meant that a high-quality garment would hold its value despite their age and previous use. When Marco Parenti, a 15th-century Italian silk merchant sold his wife’s wedding dress and a pair of gold-embroidered sleeves after 43 years, he received 57 florins for these two items, which would have been sufficient to feed, house, and clothe a four-member household for a year. (Frick, 16-17) To contrast, the working class depended on their personal items and clothes to last throughout their use as well as repeat visits to the pawnshop. This could happen on a weekly basis – after being worn on Sunday, the same clothing was pledged again on Monday – or when strikes and festivities occurred, where in return for pawning their tools, they could buy out their best clothes. (Stallybrass, 194)

Clothing served as one of the most universally accepted types of alternative currencies in England from the 17th to the mid-19th century, which in turn affected the purchasing choices of working-class people. Basic textile knowledge was common among the wider public, particularly the women, who cared for textiles and clothing in the home and engaged in the trading of them. Because the worth of garments was widely understood, it was easy to evaluate and turn wares into cash in shops, pubs or during house visits as well as request credit from pawnbrokers. Considering the straightforwardness of these transactions, a working-class person would always consider the resale value of the goods they wished to purchase in addition to aesthetics and practicality. (Lemire 2005: 34-35, 40)

A garment’s value was determined by several factors, including fashion, the origin of the item and where it was sold, but the more tangible value was stored in good quality materials, which were less influenced by outside variables. Clean and intact silks, wools and linens were still prized after the fashions had changed. This explains how many of the 18th-century silk dresses are remade from earlier dresses which used a lot of fabric, allowing for remodelling. (Clark, Palmer

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<sup>5</sup> The word ‘invest’ derives from Medieval Latin *investire*, from Latin, to clothe. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “invest,” accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/invest>.

2005: 9) Therefore it is no wonder that even in the more periphery headwear realm of the early 20th century Estonia, being one of the central points of my research, the advertisements in newspapers offer services for re-dyeing and reshaping customers' old hats<sup>6</sup> which shows that natural felt material was equivalently appreciated for repurposing as woven textiles were.

Sentimental value, on the other hand, was to be “detached” from a garment if it was intended for resale. For 19th-century pawnbrokers, only the object's exchange-value mattered and anything that could take away from it – idiosyncrasies and personal histories – was removed. (Stallybrass, 195-96) This would indicate that the items that were most often going in and out of the pawnshops – those belonging to the working-class – would continuously be stripped of their significance, stories and relations to their previous owners, repeatedly creating gaps in the items' narratives.

So much of people's chances to move up in the world depended on their appearances and “respectability”, which in turn created a vicious cycle of poverty. Because looks mattered, the only ones who could take advantage of it, were the ones, who already looked the part. Those who did not, would still attribute great value to owning personal items and clothing, perhaps more than the rich did. The past working-class people's relationship with and understanding of clothing is something that a group of today's designers look to and even romanticise.

### 2.3 Aesthetics of Poverty: Historic Narratives in Brand Identities

Since the 1980s, a lineup of avant garde designers, beginning with the Japanese Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo, have created a movement that encapsulates the allure of imperfection and the darker undertones of our material society. It enticingly patches together

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<sup>6</sup> Kübaratööstus "Mavo". *Päewaleht*. Tallinn, May 27, 1934: 9

"Kübaratööstus „Mavo". Harju tän. 34, puhastab ja värwib igasugu daamide ja härrade kantud kübaraid kõige paremini." ['Hat manufacturer Mavo. Harju st. 34, cleans and dyes any type of ladies' and gentlemen's worn hats the best.']

P. Aru. *Aadressleht*. Tallinn, October 1, 1929: 6

"Daamid ja härrad! Laske kõik omad vanad kübarad uueks teha, neid puhastatakse, värvitakse ja vormitakse kõigis moe värvides ja vormides..." ['Ladies and gentlemen! Let us renew all your old hats, they will be cleaned, dyed and shaped according to all fashionable colours and forms...']

designers working in a similar aesthetic, and their devoted audience, who see and appreciate the lasting value in their timeless creations.

‘The beauty of poverty’, as described by Bonnie English, was introduced to the world in one of the fashion and glamour capitals of the world, Paris in 1981 with the joint-collection of Yamamoto and Kawakubo. Among the booming exuberance of the 80’s fashion scene, people were astonished and disdained over what the two designers had brought with them – the Japanese post-war sensibilities of their childhood, laced with grimness and scarcity. Their inclination, however, was to show the Western population how elegance could be found ‘in their black shrouds, beauty in the unfinished, and strength in the enveloping falls of the fabric.’ (English 2011: 38)

When talking to the filmmaker Wim Wenders in the late 80s, Yamamoto expressed his disappointment with his contemporary – prosperous Japanese society who, he felt, had lost their connection to and the understanding of the meaning of objects by participating in overconsumption. He was saddened to see how the Japanese assumed they could buy everything. As a response, Yamamoto said he would happily return to the era when things were difficult to obtain and people had no choice but to wear simple garments, like work clothes. (Wenders 1989, 1:06:11) Although his statement should be taken with a grain of salt, when delving deeper, it is possible to see where he was coming from and how this lure of the past still haunts us today.

There are two ideas that stand out to me in Yamamoto’s mindset where the past is romanticised due to dissatisfaction or overwhelmedness in contemporary society. First, the notion of an item of clothing being part of one’s identity is near-impossible with overconsumption and fast fashion. Yamamoto ruminates on how for working-class people in the 19th century, dressing for fashion took a back seat over dressing to survive in the colder climates. He goes on to say that ‘the coat is so beautiful because you feel so cold and you cannot make your life without this coat. ... it looks like your friend, [it] looks like your family.’ (Wenders, 1:04:35) The beauty of an item reveals itself in its function and frequency of wear.

The other aspect of longing for the past, which Yamamoto hints at in the film, when looking through the old photography books of working-class people, is the pride over one’s profession. This pride reveals itself in the way people carry themselves while their picture is taken



and in the signs of wear in their work attire. (Wenders, 1:03:28) This type of pride is hard to come by today – perhaps a bit more in countries with stronger trade unions – but the general hierarchy of pride resides in best paid professions, i.e. CEOs, medical professionals, corporate lawyers (Garg 2023) – positions unobtainable for many.

We do not mistake the aesthetics of poverty for ‘true poverty’ – it is an implied, artistically scenic display of yearning for the friendly vagrant hobo of the early 20th century. It could appear through Christian Francis Roth’s FW 91 collection (Roth 2014) of visible patchwork clothing and hats pieced together from multiple colours of felts (Richard and Koda 1993: 101-02), or the way Yamamoto uses the same references for his designs repeatedly so that the garments are easily paired with items from earlier or later collections. The latter could reflect the mindset of a 16th century person that would build up their wardrobe over time due to the high cost of each item. (Mikhaila, Malcolm-Davies 2006: 10-11) Also, the way Yamamoto almost designs “the same garment” over and over echoes Stallybrass’ description of Karl Marx’s coat, as well as many of Marx’s contemporaries’ clothing, which went in and out of the pawnshop to accommodate the wearers’ needs for survival time and again. (Stallybrass, 1998: 184-203)

Surely, there lies a paradox between the intention with which these clothes are made and the reality of who can afford to buy them. Designers like Uma Wang, Paul Harnden Shoemakers, John Alexander Skelton, ARCHIVIO J.M. Ribot etc. do not cater to the working-class budget nor market their approachability. (Stoppard, 2022) London designer By Walid takes it a step further by not just making expensive clothing out of expensive fabric, but by using rare antique textiles, like 19th century silk opera gloves or Chinese silk embroidery for unique vests (“Jackets.” By Walid)– to compose the look of a crafty nonchalant vagabond.

Even if some of these higher-end avant garde designs remain out of budget for most, there is still an option for preferring clothing that exists outside of trends and relies more on quality materials, thoughtful construction and immaculate sewing, resonating clothing that was made to last and held its monetary value. As we, as a society, are currently at the peak of abundance in terms of material possessions and choice, it is a good time to evaluate which items to invest into.

## 2.4 Deconstructed Fashion

The late 80s and 90s of the 20th century brought on more analytical creation and consumption of garments, as affected by the uncertain state of the world at the time. Designers and brands made it integral to their practice and identity to critically examine and comment on these themes. They were looking at the ways in which things had been done traditionally, and took them apart, piece by piece, in order to draw attention to how these antiquated modes of thought could be turned around, in search of progress. The same principles also appeared in their use of pre-used garments, in relation to the ensuing environmental crisis and shortage of available resources.

### 2.4.1. Background

The term deconstruction was first used in the 1976 book *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida (Gill 2016: 315) and is described in the Encyclopedia Britannica by Jonathan Culler as:

A form of philosophical and literary analysis, derived mainly from work begun in the 1960s by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida that questions the fundamental conceptual distinctions, or 'oppositions,' in Western philosophy through a close examination of the language and logic of philosophical and literary texts. ... In popular usage, the term has come to mean a critical dismantling of tradition and traditional modes of thought. (Culler 2008)

Deconstruction encourages rethinking the tradition of doing things – reevaluating the language and texts that are the foundation of these institutions, and the structures which these institutions have built. (Then & Now 2017) Amy Spindler interprets Derrida's deconstruction as a reaction to staid literary analysis which disputes that due to the complexities of language and usage, no work can have a fixed meaning. (Spindler 1993)

According to Amy Spindler's 1993 *The New York Times* article 'Coming Apart', Bill Cunningham was the first to mention 'deconstructionism'<sup>7</sup> in the context of fashion in the 1989

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<sup>7</sup> A commonly held belief suggests that the term 'deconstruction' had already been used to describe the Japanese designs from the early 1980s (i.e. by Rei Kawakubo for Comme Des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto), however this was done only retrospectively. (Granata 2013)

September issue of *Details* magazine, referring to the work of Martin Margiela<sup>8</sup>. Though there are many interpretations and key points of deconstruction in fashion, some of which will be addressed later, ‘Cunningham used the term in its literal sense of undoing, taking apart a garment’ (Granata 2016). He described the structure of Margiela’s designs as being ‘under attack, displacing seams, tormenting the surface with incisions’ as well as suggesting a ‘fashion of elegant decay’. (Cunningham 1989: 246)

Another term ‘given to these often difficult and challenging clothes’ was *La mode Destroy* describing their ‘paradoxical appearance’ of being ‘structurally revealing, disassembled and unfinished’. (Gill 2016) Gill has previously also included descriptors such as “coming apart”, “recycled”, “transparent” and “grunge”. (Gill 1998: 25)

The 90s designers were reacting to the excess of the 80s as well as political and economic instabilities. The obsession with the power suit, the perfectly toned body and gilded extravagance did not seem too relatable for the youth of the 90s who were confronted with insecurity caused by the Gulf War, the division of the Soviet Bloc and the Global Recession. The themes of nihilism and grunge took over as the younger generation felt disappointed with their predecessors. (Anti Fashion 2012) When writing about Margiela’s 1989 show held at a Paris “ghetto”, Cunningham expressed how the crumbling walls had been a foreshadowing of the Fall of the Berlin Wall in November (Gill 1998: 33) and had mirrored the breakdown of Eastern European political and social order. (Cunningham 1990)

Furthermore, Alison Gill proposed in 1998 that the practices of aesthetic patching, reworking and repurposing of already existing garments ‘might reflect what it is to live with an “ensuing” environmental crisis’ which could result in drastic resource cuts. The image created by these design practices corresponds with the environmental imperative of ‘reduce, reuse, recycle, recover’, hoping to draw attention to the need for better waste management and efficient resource usage. (Gill 1998: 33)

When looking at the 90s through a Zeitgeist reading, what occurred in fashion (but also in music, film etc.) could easily be traced back to some of the social, economic, ecological and

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<sup>8</sup> Other designers most often associated with the term include Karl Lagerfeld (for Chloe, Fendi and Chanel) (Harold and Koda 1993: 96), as well as Ann Demeulemeester and Dries Van Noten. (Gill 1998)

political issues of that era. Even if this ‘cause and effect’ approach is just one way to examine the occurrence of ‘deconstruction fashion’(Gill 1998: 33-34), it does explain, in part, why it was not just a passing philosophical trend and is still of interest for emerging designers who are having to respond to similar issues, if not on a greater level (i.e. the expanding climate crisis). (Roberts-Islam 2020)

The last few years have revealed more vulnerabilities in social systems around the world and have created the urgency for deconstructing institutions and their narratives. Since 2020, COVID-19 and the ensuing recession brought out weak spots in social politics and in economics, such as in clothing production and trade. Many businesses were forced to restructure their operations in order to survive, weighing between financial stability and the social security of their workers. (Roberts-Islam 2020)

In an interview titled ‘Why Deconstruction Still Matters’ (2008), Jonathan Culler expresses the continuing need for discourse to ‘question what is seen as natural and commonsensical’ in order to spot the “natural” brought on by history. He encourages thinking about how things could have been different, and therefore, could be different in the future. He highlights this influence in the changes of social and political spheres in regards to gender, sexuality and identity, and notes how much the feminist theory and the queer theory have gained from these “theoretical debates”, advocating for change. (Culler 2008)

This would suggest that deconstruction is still relevant in literary, political, pedagogical as well as in economic discourse, and as a consequence, could be both reflected and showing an alternative to tired ideals in fashion – in what designers create and what values the consumers seek out.

#### **2.4.2. Analytical Creation and Destruction**

Martin Richard and Harold Koda describe the distinction between ruined or damaged clothes created with the goal of ‘refurbished vitality’ and what has been referred to as ‘deconstruction’ in high fashion as being a process of ‘analytical creation’. The measure of dissecting, examining and disrupting the contrasting elements has a connection to the

‘enchantment of ruins, the longing tradition of enjoying the remnants for their evocation of what had existed previously.’ (Richard and Koda 1993: 94) For designers, it is a chance to build upon, interpret or reimagine the garment’s purpose, construction or the ideas traditionally linked to it.

Richard and Koda also note that the popular-culture correspondent to that is recycling<sup>9</sup>, where ‘worthy constituents’ of an older item are turned into components for successive generations, with the cultural baggage removed. (Richard and Koda, 96) When Margiela used surplus army socks to construct a sweater or turned tinsel decorations into a jacket, he did not intend to completely erase that baggage, but to silently attest to ‘its past life.’ (Teunissen, Ferwerda, Jonkers 2003: 53) Yet, these elements borrowed from history do not ask for us to analyse the past, but to start a conversation about the present, (Evans 2003: 10) stating that the past has already taken place but can be looked at ‘through a new prism’. (Dristopoulou 2017: 16)

With deconstruction, not only are the concept and tradition dismantled, but also the physical object itself. In that sense the vintage garment is deliberately destroyed which means that the repurposing always comes with the prospect of ‘failure, or the risk that garments are simply destroyed, left ravaged or misinterpreted as an intentional destruction, a nihilism and an uncompleted text.’ (Gill 2016: 318)

The uncertainty of never being finished continues from disassembling to reconstruction where structural discrepancies may occur. Questions on whether to conceal it, redesign it, leave it exposed, or completely abandon the project will then arise. Although some of the deconstruction, choice making and damage repair could happen during the process, it harks back on the deliberate ‘expressions of failure’ where Margiela seemingly attempted to fit large sleeves into significantly narrower armholes, doubting the need to finish. (Gill, 329)

Regardless of the multiple ways in which an item could be deconstructed – backwards from a finished garment or showing the process of making – the finished “unfinished” pieces will be left in a limbo of making and destroying. (Harold, Koda, 96-97) Both analytical creation and

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<sup>9</sup> Richard and Koda do not specify whether they’re talking about ‘recycling’ as breaking an item down to its fibre contents in order to reuse it, or creating something out of an item in its current state, alluding to ‘upcycling’. Their 1993 essay could as well refer to both terms without drawing a distinction between them, as the term ‘upcycling’ was only coined in 1994 by the German engineer Reiner Pliz (Aguileta de la Garza, Fernando. “What Exactly Is an Upcycling Collection and Why Are Brands Doing It?”)

destruction are affected by the occurrence, reading and interpretation of traces embedded within the garment's physical body or in the cultural context.

### 2.4.3. Trace

Derrida talks about trace in the context of spoken and written discourse where 'no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present' and that the text itself is 'produced only in the transformation of another text.' (Derrida 1981: 26) Alison Gill reiterates Derrida's sentiment by saying that 'the trace activates the evidence of original writing, what is absent and not seen...'. (Gill 2016: 322) This indicates that all elements are compilations of previous elements – revealed by their traces.

Gill interprets Derrida's 'trace' and its value in fashion as 'tracing elements of meaning', such as developing and deciphering conceptions of traditional garment design and use. Physical traces, which would normally be hidden in the completed garment, can also be read as deliberate departures from the norm. These would actualise as unerased pencil markings on fabric, visible linings, everted seams and darts. (Gill 2016: 321)

In the context of fashion and clothing made out of woven textiles, Gill contemplates over the importance of seam as a trace:

The seam is a trace of garment production that cannot be fully concealed: (...) it functions as a hinge, interface and borderline between two pieces. It is both essential to structure and overall garment shape, and it resides on the surface and below. The seam is an interface holding the inside and the outside, depth and surface together (...) When conceived along these lines, the exposure of a seam is a radical element in the vocabulary of deconstruction fashion to think about the juxtaposition of meanings and materials... (Gill, 321-22)

For felt hats, the overall shape and structure does not necessarily depend on the seam, although it can. The form of a hat is much more reliant on the interlocking fibres in the felt – the density, the type of fibre and finish which affect the malleability and how well it holds its assigned contour. So what is the equivalent of a "seam as trace" in a felt hat? Is a moulded bend or concave less of a trace? Does counting as a trace entail that it can never be removed without visible

markings? Or are some traces better left temporary, as are the life stages in the case of repurposed, upcycled hats.

If the intention were to completely remove the traces of its past life from an existing garment or hat, would it even be possible? The wrinkles in the elbows of a jacket or sleeve were referred to as "memories" by 19th century clothing makers and repairers. The wrinkles were a transcript of the body that had lived in the clothing, memorising a persons' interaction with the garment and their respective composition. (Stallybrass 1998: 196) Similarly, 'marks and strains of wear, as well as decomposition from the effects of light, moisture, pests, and soiling' (Mida and Kim, 2018: 17-18) all build up layers of "life" which become ingrained into the garment.

In addition to the more personal "memories" and traces specific to a single item and its past, there will certainly be 'traces from [the] collective fashion history' on which to expand on. (Gill, 322) No item of garment can be created in a vacuum – without prior awareness of at least a small selection of its predecessors or of a technique used to conceive it. Once the logic is established, it can then be disestablished, to make place for new ideas. Warwick and Cavallaro, as quoted by Gill, have made their connection to a palimpsest where the 'fashion's text' is compared to a manuscript, effaced of its original writing in anticipation of a new one. (Warwick, Cavallaro 1998: 153; Gill, 322) In the case of vintage hats as palimpsests, the new narratives are created on top of old ones, without denying that a prior 'text' or narrative existed.

The traces, and by extension the narratives, are recorded in the central material of this research – the felt – which differs from woven textiles. Therefore, how the material conceals and reveals these traces is different and often unpredictable. Much of it is left up to chance, as is the case with the creation of the material itself.

### 3. Felt and Upcycling Hats as part of Deconstruction

#### 3.1. Felt as a Material

‘Felt is a non-woven material which is created by the compression of wool [as well as fur, hair and animal down], with the help of moist heat and rubbing but without the use of a binding compound.’ (Evers 1987: 8) It does not have axes and is made up of randomly interlocking spiral strands of fibre – tensely bound by chance into interconnected meshworks that have ‘nodes that will never touch’. (Thompson 2011: 22)

Feltmaking could go back to as early as human awareness, being one of man’s earliest technologies. When animal skins were worn, the wool or fur closest to the body would have produced a layer of felt when exposed to persistent warmth, sweat and abrasion. (Donald 1983: 65, 61) The chance creation of felt is illustrated in the tale of St. Clement, the patron saint of hatters, who was said to be on the run from his persecutors, stuffed his sandals with fleece hanging from the bushes to soothe his aching feet. By completion of his journey, the friction and sweat of his feet had produced a pair of felt socks. This experience allegedly inspired him to begin felting and hatmaking methodically. (McGavock, Lewis 2000: 9; Thomson 1868: 27)

Felt has also played an integral part in the lifestyle of the nomadic people, such as the Central Asian (Turko-) Mongolian tribes, who depended on felt covered tents for insulation against harsh climate conditions and allowed them to re-settle on various terrains with ease. (Evers 1987: 8-13; Thompson 2011: 31)

All hair, wool, fur and animal down possess the great ductility, flexibility, elasticity and tenacity that plant based fibres lack. (Thomson 1868: 11) The most used materials for hatmaking during the second half of 19th century, as listed by John Thomson, were ‘furs of the beaver, the otter, the rabbit, the hare, a species of the muskrat, (...) the monkey, (...) the seal’ as well as ‘Saxony and Spanish wools and the hair of camels and goats.’ Most of these animals were said to outturn five or six qualities of goods, collected from different parts of the same skin and priced accordingly.



Further valued were the furs of the animals originating from cooler regions and that were hunted during the winter months. (Thomson, 20)

Fur felt remains a valuable and expensive material to this day, although on an industrial scale, the fur fibres are limited to just a few animal species: mainly the rabbit, hare and beaver.

### 3.2. Pre-used Hats as a Vessel for Storytelling

Compared to the 19th century, the awareness and consideration of animal welfare and the ideas of sustainable consumption have drastically changed our inclination towards producing and using animal-based products, especially related to fur. As a hatmaker, I feel the inclination and pressure to produce ethical products which put me in a place of choice – either to only use wool felt, which is of lesser quality than fur felt, and that lacks the kind of properties necessary for more detailed hat shaping<sup>10</sup>, or to use fur felt, conflicting with my values. Thankfully there is an alternative in the form of upcycling from vintage felt hats which allows me to repurpose some of the already existing felt and keep the hats from going to landfills just yet, offering them a chance at a new life.

Repurposing old hats, while manually taking them apart, has the added benefit of learning about their conception – the techniques and materials used; when, where and by whom they were crafted; as well as the people and occasions they were created for. Although understanding the dress artefacts becomes harder, the further removed we are from the period of their creation (Mida and Kim, 2018: 7), analytically dissecting it allows us to see it from a distance necessary for reinterpretation. The added layer of time and contemporary mindsets encourage the reevaluation of tradition and experimentation in creation. When creating my own work out of pre-used felt material, it automatically carries the cues of passing time and being in a state of change. Both the past and current makers as well as wearers of the same body of hat become interconnected through this object, often unbeknownst to one another.

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<sup>10</sup> These characteristics will be addressed in section ‘4.2. Choosing Vintage Hats for Upcycling from a Headwear Label Perspective’

Looking back on the possible failure aspect of deconstruction within hatmaking and re-blocking of pre-used felts, there is always the chance that the material may rip or break unexpectedly due to hidden structural issues. Though initial shock may call for the need to conceal it in some way or disregard the project altogether, the chance happening offers a way to re-examine the appeared trace, to question the cause and to propose that the trace be considered and displayed as part of the item's narrative.

If one can look beyond the failure and destroying aspects of deconstructing felt hats, the re-blocking and re-assembling allow us to build up several layers of narratives within the same item. The felt material is regenerative up to a point and the concept of deconstruction is indefinite and broad enough not to restrict us with notions or ideals of "finished" or "flawless" products. This would also indicate that the deconstruction process could be practised multiple times.

But how can we find these narratives? How can we make sure that we are not missing out on any important clues, considering that felt might conceal and reveal its traces in different parts of the deconstruction process? How do we record, connect and interpret this fragmented information in a way that makes sense for the maker as well as the potential wearers and brings forth the value of the garment? I believe that in order to begin answering these questions, I must first learn to see.

## 4. Research Method

### 4.1. Object-Based Research

‘Each artefact has a narrative embedded within the garment’, which, once it is discovered, could significantly impact its ‘relative importance and value.’ (Mida and Kim 2018: 27) But not all items come with provenance records and information attached to them, especially outside of museum settings. Some of the knowledge could be recovered through close examination of dress artefacts – looking at the specifics of cut, structure, and decorative elements, indications of how the garment was used or modified over the years, the relation of the clothing and its components to the body, and the time and place from which it originated. This in turn, can serve as source data for studies that examine fashion and clothes from historical, sociological, psychological, and economic perspectives. (Mida and Kim, 11)

As dress artefacts are categorised within material culture, the methodology used to research them falls under material culture analysis. (Mida and Kim, 11) The oft-cited article “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method” by art historian Jules David Prown, gives advice on conducting object-based research. (Mida and Kim, 20) Drawing from Prown and other dress curators’ and historians’ work, Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim have narrowed it down to address specifically dress artefacts in their book “The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion”, which I will be referencing for the purposes of this thesis, and adjusting it further – to explicitly relate to felt headwear, and aid in the process of upcycling.

There are three principal stages for carrying out object-based research in the field of clothing:

‘**Observation:** Capturing the information from the dress artefact

**Reflection:** Considering embodied experience and contextual material

**Interpretation:** Linking the observations and reflections to theory ‘ (Mida and Kim, 27)

The 'Observation' phase's objective is to gather sufficient factual data to enable the creation of a comprehensive summary of the artefact that could provide a visual representation of the item. I will be following the Observation Checklist<sup>11</sup> for dress artefacts, that encompasses aspects such as 'elements related to construction, textiles, labels' as well as 'evidence of use/wear/alteration'. (Mida and Kim, 29)

In the 'Reflection' stage, the researcher is expected to make more personal notes<sup>12</sup> about the garment, describing its look, feel and smell, as these could indicate personal biases and the 'shifts in cultural beliefs' from the creation of the garment up to now. In this phase, it is also important to collect and analyse 'other sources of contextual material, such as provenance records, identification of similar garments in other collections, supporting images and textual material.' (Mida and Kim, 30-31) Alexandra Palmer has described 'her methodology as a combination of object analysis, oral history, archival research, and other documentary research.' (Mida and Kim, 21) All of these aspects will also be included in my research within this thesis, and recorded in my personal database.

The compiled data from observing and reflecting on the dress artefact will feed into the 'Interpretation' phase where the researcher deliberates on their previous experiences as well as on fashion theory, related to the item. This phase is considered to be the most imaginative part of object-based research as intentions for doing the research differ and could be used to support various questions and hypotheses<sup>13</sup>. (Mida and Kim, 31)

#### **4.1.1. Database: Specifications of Object-Based Research for a Headwear Label**

The first main difference between how and what object-based research is practised for in traditional dress studies and in my research, is whether the item is treated as a time capsule to be preserved in its acquired state, or in the latter case – as an item on a continuous journey in its use cycle. Once dress artefacts go under the care of museum, university or private collections, while

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<sup>11</sup> Samples of the Checklist and the Reflection questions with my database entry can be seen in Appendix 10.1.

<sup>12</sup> See note before.

<sup>13</sup> In this thesis the 'Interpretation' phase takes place in section '4.3. Literature Review of Felt Headwear of Tallinna Moemaja: Analysing Database Hats Based on Oral History and Documentary Research.'

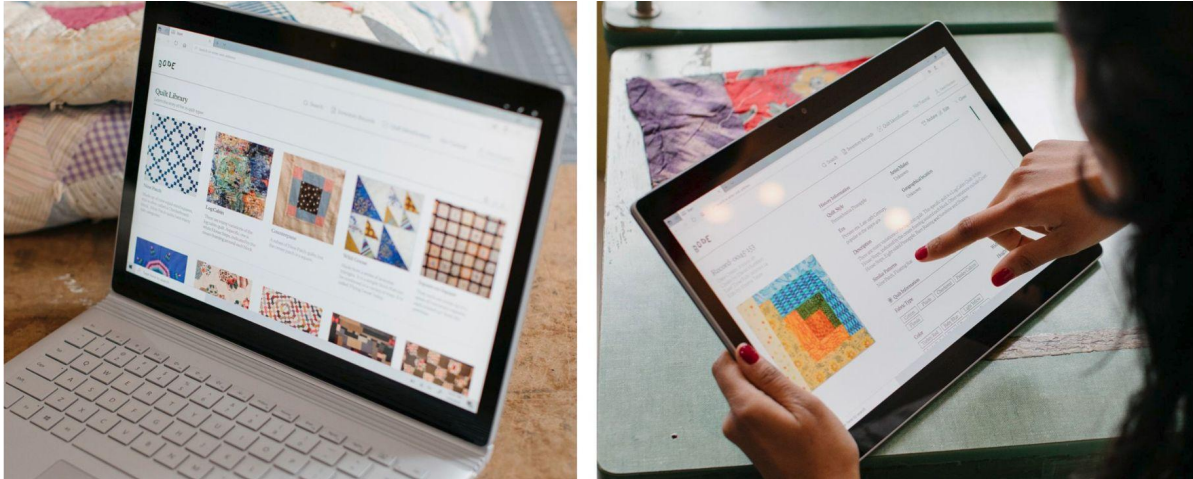
their biography is unfolded, they should ‘never be worn or altered again’. (Mida and Kim, 26) Although preserving their narratives is important for me, in my approach the vintage hats are brought in for upcycling and are primarily chosen for their material attributes and prospective resale value rather than to be conserved for their historical significance, design, provenance, etc.

Another factor should consider the mass of items in need of processing, when upcycling. Since the attention is divided between many items concurrently, instead of deep-diving into the ‘Observation’, ‘Reflection’ and ‘Interpretation’ phase of every single item, it is important for me to find ways for simplifying, grouping and asking more general questions about dating the period, brand and the originating country that the hat is from.

A contemporary example of preserving historical narratives in fashion is the Bode Vault (ill. 1-2), an AI-infused technology developed together with BODE and Microsoft, which ‘compresses the brand’s vast collection of vintage quilts into a single user-friendly program’. The photo recognition software in the program ‘provides a quilt’s country of origin, historical context, and even personal anecdotes. With every search, [the staff] can edit the pattern’s entry and add more information—from stitch counts to past owners—thereby nurturing the AI’s self-sufficient growth.’ (Osterman 2020) As the brand continues to expand, BODE uses the historical motives and the stories connected to them as inspiration for reproduction textiles and garments. The information is then compiled into product descriptions. While the vault itself is only accessible to the staff, the product descriptions are displayed on their webshop.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The product description on BODE’s webshop states that the Oxford Short Sleeve shirt was made of reproduction screenprinted and quilted fabric, inspired by a quilt originating from the 1940s-1950s. “Patchwork Oxford Short Sleeve Shirt,” BODE, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://bode.com/collections/shirts/products/patchwork-oxford-ss-shirt>.



ill. 1-2, The Bode Vault, created by Bode and Microsoft. Photos by William Jess Laird, 2020.

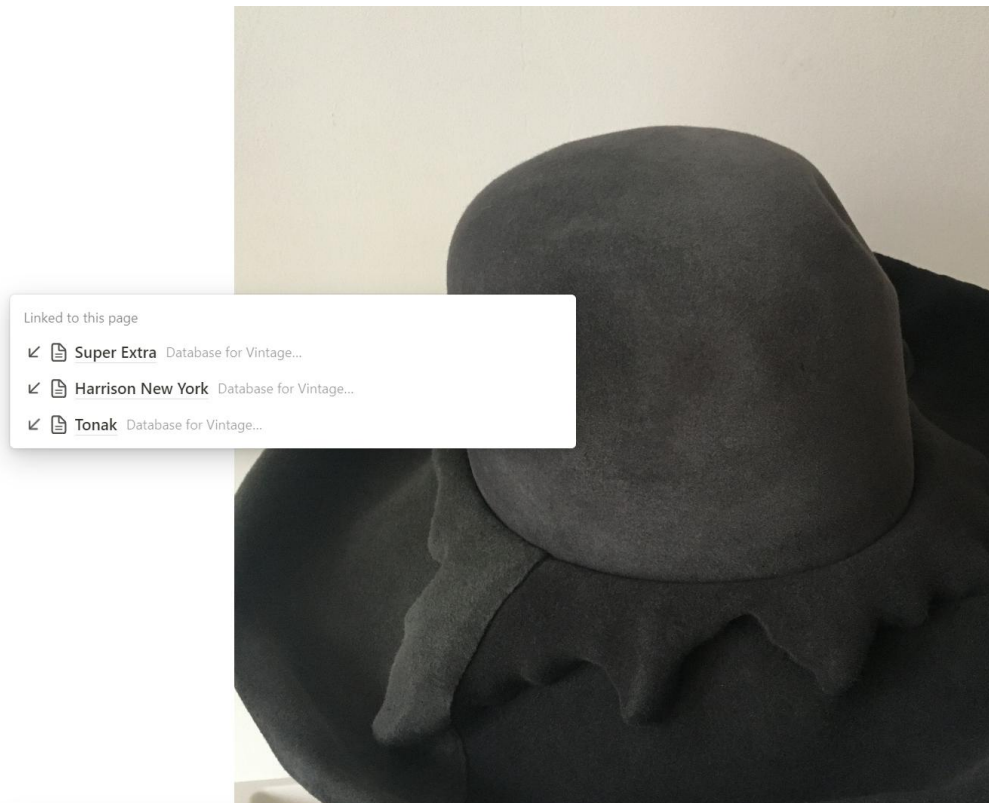
While my data recording options do not quite match that of BODE's, I managed to find an easy-to-use alternative in the form of Notion, a free 'productivity and note-taking web application'. ("Notion (Productivity Software)") It offers organisational tools and allows me to store photos of the vintage hats, add notes to them (i.e. the 'Observation' and 'Reflection' checklists), and most importantly, assign relevant tags which allow me to filter and group the items according to my preferred properties. The database is viewable with the link: <https://graceful-cross-392.notion.site/fcdccbeb668a42a28e33892bbb18c776?v=0e669243d982422cb51ee5262b29556e>

Some of my most frequently used and essential properties include:

<b>Status</b>	Helps to determine whether the vintage hat is still in its original form; disassembled and removed of its embellishments; in the shape of a cone hatbody after being washed; reblocked into a new hat; sold; not fit for blocking.
<b>Hat Style</b>	Broad indication of the shape: fedora, toque, cloche, beret, pillbox, floppy hat etc. Will give me an idea of the size the felt could be reblocked into, as well as the shape it is most likely to hold.
<b>Gender</b>	The originally assigned gender for each hat. Provides context about the item's narrative. Useful for filtering based on felt density. (Men's hats are heavier. Could imply the use of beaver hair fibre in the finer quality men's hats.)
<b>Felt Type</b>	Material finish: plain/smooth, velour/peachbloom, melousine, embossed etc.
<b>Main Material</b>	Usually marked as 'fur felt' in the database, suggesting rabbit, hare, beaver etc. Could occasionally indicate 'wool felt' or different types of textile etc.

<b>Weight</b>	Broadly divides the material into: ‘light’, ‘medium’, or ‘heavy/dense’. Gives me an idea on how detailed blocking the material can handle. (Useful for cross-referencing the ‘gender’ aspect.)
<b>Colour</b>	Most straightforward use is for grouping similar shades in order to compose a cohesive-looking collection or a single hat made out of multiple felts. (For historical context: could help to identify the common colours filtered by era, gender, location, designer etc. Could also signal at which colour hats are more likely to end up in second-hand shops or discarded due to changes in fashion or people’s tastes.)
<b>Potential Cone Size</b>	Marks the measurement taken from a vintage hat, ideally before it is washed. On a brimmed hat, it is measured from the edge of the brim, over the crown, to the edge of the brim on the other side – provides a more accurate material size. (Might be applicable to determine how the brim and crown sizes have changed over the decades. Could lay the ground for a hypothesis that smaller hats are more likely discarded as they are more difficult to reshape.)
<b>Felt Condition</b>	One of the most important properties when upcycling. Can be used to record anything from smell, fading/discoloration, insect damage and moth larvae, holes and cut slashes, pin and seam holes, dirt from wear, as well as glue, grease, makeup, and soot stains. Items with similar issues could be grouped together and handled accordingly.
<b>Date/Decade/Period</b>	One of the main properties for putting hats into context in this thesis. (Felt hats made in the second half of the 20th century could be more difficult to date due to their classic styles and colours, compared to hats earlier in the century. Many hats in the database do not have labels, indicating that they could be made by individual milliners working at the request and preference of the client’s taste, instead of following the latest trends as applied in mass production.)
<b>Label</b>	Holds a lot of potential for creating context around the items. Allows grouping and comparing of hats made by the same designer/manufacturer, and finding cues on dating them – referencing the changes in font and label styles over time. (The lack of a maker label could pose a dead-end in terms of finding out the hat’s origin, but not always, as identifying and cross-referencing items with similar artefacts found in museum databases can provide valuable clues.)
<b>Made In</b>	Pinpoints the originating country (and city) of the vintage hat, as written on the label, or found out through documentary research, provided the item has a brand or a store label attached.

The database also includes such properties as ‘related websites’, ‘acquisition date’, ‘donor’ and ‘stitch types’, as well as the internal database linking between the source vintage felts and the finished product (ill. 3), all of which can be easily edited or added to in real-time (i.e. if a tag is renamed on one item, it automatically corrects it everywhere in the Notion database’s properties). For a maker, the Notion-based database is easy to use and modify according to needs.



ill. 3, Internal backlinking in the Notion database between the finished hat and its source vintage hats. Author's collection, 2023.

#### 4.2. Choosing Vintage Hats for Upcycling from a Headwear Label Perspective

As a maker of a small brand with limited resources and storage space, it is essential to determine beforehand, what kind of materials I value and am looking for to create headwear. Naturally, my awareness of felts will evolve with time and practice, so having a centralised space in the form of a working database to record this information is very useful.

In my current practice, I have been leaning towards using fur felt over wool felt. Since 'fur is finer and softer than wool' (Thomson 1868: 11), it is easier to mould it into intricate shapes which the material will also retain for longer. As vintage fur felt hats seem to be more readily available in the second-hand marketplaces than wool felt hats, it makes sense to take advantage of this, considering that vintage fur felt, in that particular price range, is also generally of a better quality than new fur felts offered by contemporary suppliers.



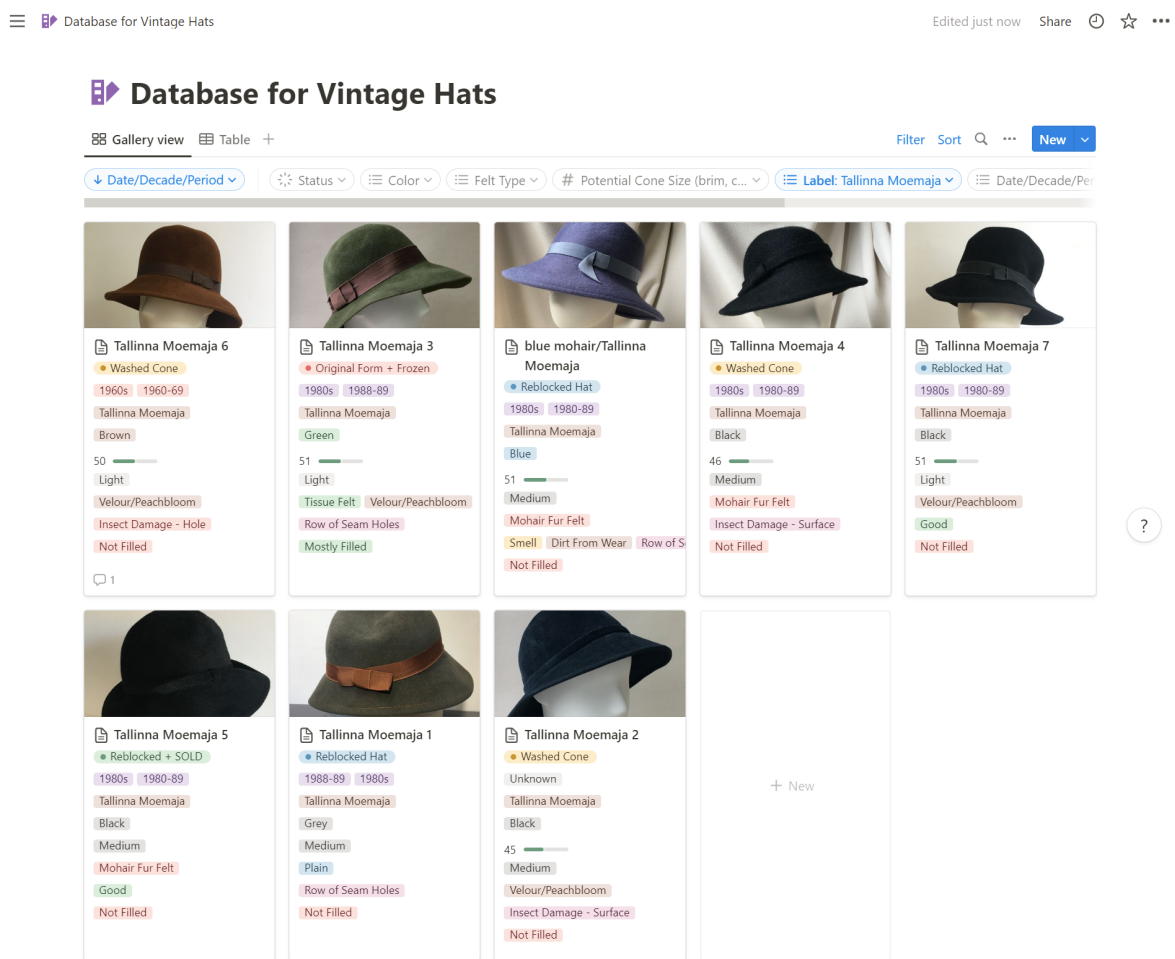
My mindset revolving around what kinds of hats to choose or rule out in terms of upcycling, is to make use of the vintage hats that are no longer in their prime condition – either faded or discoloured, damaged by moths, bearing dirt and grime from wear, or stained. I look for potential in terms of their size and material qualities, keeping in mind to opt for more ordinary-looking hats, which come by more often, and leave the novelties for others that might still appreciate them in their present form. This involves sometimes letting go of hats I have bought or acquired otherwise that still appear to be in mint condition and could potentially serve prospective wearers.

When seeking for vintage hats with a certain mental image of a future collection in mind, one can hardly expect to find items in every imaginable colour to suit their taste. In the case of hats that are donated to me, it is even harder to anticipate the colour combinations that come into my possession. One option would be to experiment with overdyeing the felts in a different colour, which has a level of unpredictability involved. However, dyeing vintage hats, that are already more structurally fragile, in boiling water should be practised with caution as ‘boiling extracts gelatine of the hair and makes the nap brittle.’ (Thomson, 48) In that sense, I find it is better to use the vintage hats that are already in favourable shades, before rushing to alter their current colour. In order to avoid discarding the already acquired items with less pleasing colours, further consideration should be put into how to approach it. However, given the time constraints, this will not be explored in this thesis.

#### **4.3. Literature Review of Felt Headwear of Tallinna Moemaja: Analysing Database Hats Based on Oral History and Documentary Research**

When attempting to compile the origin aspect of the narratives of several artefacts simultaneously, it makes sense to group them by the maker or manufacturer, provided there is either a designer or a store label, provenance records or any other documentation present. The information gathered from a label on an item ‘can be invaluable in helping to provide the social and cultural context for a garment’. (Mida and Kim, 2018: 55)

In light of this, since 8 hats out of 45 of my database entries<sup>15</sup> (ill. 4) had the label Tallinna Moemaja, the legendary Tallinn fashion establishment, I proceeded to study the fashion house's history and hat manufacturing further. The stories surrounding the fashion house – its designers and make-do mentality regarding material deficiency over the decades – are well documented in books and articles. However, the headwear manufacturing could use further exploration, to add onto general production numbers and editorials in the house's own magazine *Siluet*, especially since the latter did not often reflect the reality of what was actually mass produced and available on the market. (Saar 2023)



ill. 4, Tallinna Moemaja hats in the database. Author's collection, 2023.

For information gathering about Tallinna Moemaja, I used archival and documentary research such as contemporary as well as retrospective articles and interviews published in

<sup>15</sup> Liis Kalda's personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Gallery View, 2023

newspapers and magazines; audiovisual and still images of fashion demonstrations; the fashion house's magazine *Siluet* that ran from 1958 to 1992; online museum database (muis.ee) featuring items in the collections of Eesti Rahva Muuseum<sup>16</sup>, Eesti Ajaloomuuseum<sup>17</sup>, Tallinna Linnamuuseum<sup>18</sup> and Viljandi Muuseum<sup>19</sup>; as well as online auction sites. I also relied on oral history by interviewing Kai Saar<sup>20</sup>, who worked as a designer in Tallinna Moemaja from 1977 until 1997. Information gathered from these sources is compiled in the following literature review, sections 4.3.1-4.3.3.

#### 4.3.1. Background

Tallinna Moemaja opened its doors in the spring of 1957. In 1966, after acquiring the headwear department from one of the republic's sewing factories, headwear production began. ("10 Aastat Tallinna Moemaja." 1967) The hat workshop was located at Suur-Karja 19, on the second floor, sharing the building with Kergetööstusministeerium (Ministry of Light Industries). The designers were working a couple of houses away, at Suur-Karja 13. (Puppart, Ojavee 2019: 108; Saar 2023)

Only a year after the department's creation, the number of designed headwear models reached 350, with an overall production of 45 000 pieces of felt hats within that first year. By then, the fashion house employed 250 workers ("10 Aastat Tallinna Moemaja." 1967) and 21 designers. Although the headwear department had Sirje Arit in their ranks, (Puppart, Ojavee, 112) clothing designers also contributed to hat design. (Saar 2023)

All Tallinna Moemaja designs, including headwear, had to be approved by the arts council. (Puppart, Ojavee, 110) Only a handful of sample sets were created to display and introduce the latest fashions to the public - the majority of items were designed for mass production. ("10 Aastat Tallinna Moemaja.", 1967.)

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<sup>16</sup> Estonian National Museum

<sup>17</sup> Estonian History Museum

<sup>18</sup> Tallinn City Museum

<sup>19</sup> Viljandi Museum

<sup>20</sup> Liis Kalda's personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Tallinna Moemaja. Kai Saar - Recorded Interview 18.01, 2023

For several decades, designing felt headwear was a natural part of composing whole outfits for designers of Tallinna Moemaja, especially for early Spring, Fall and Winter seasons. Full body sketches were complimented with small drawings and notes on the hat – regarding the shape and variations. Designers were in direct contact with the headwear workshop and ordered samples for their own designs. The designer’s sketch informed the hat block maker of the proportions and the size of the hat, after which the wooden block was carved and handed over to the headwear workshop. (Saar 2023)

#### 4.3.2. The Popularity of Felt Hats in the Estonian SSR

Wearing felt hats was seen as “Western” and was not much practised in the rest of the Soviet Union - not even in the capital, let alone in Central Asia. The former designer of Tallinna Moemaja, Kai Saar reminisces about her years studying in Moscow between 1972-1977, and how she hardly saw anyone wearing felt headwear there. She notes that the custom of putting on a felt hat in Estonia was an anachronism from the 20s and 30s – the first period of independence - and looked towards European fashion. It also occurred somewhat in Latvia and Lithuania. (Saar 2023)

The popularity of hats in the region during these times could hint at why a great number of Tallinna Moemaja hats are still available in second-hand shops, and how a few of them have come to be in my possession (through selection not necessarily based on the brand). Another sign of the widespreadness of their mass-produced headwear could be illustrated by the existence of two near-identical green hats – one in my database (ill. 5-6); the other in the collection of Viljandi Muuseum, bought in 1989 from the Viljandi department store<sup>21</sup> (ill. 7).

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<sup>21</sup> Viljandi Museum (Viljandi Muuseum), VM VM 11365:8 E 2553: green velour felt hat manufactured by Tallinna Moemaja and purchased by Riita Arros from Viljandi department store, 1988-89  
<https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/1414217>



ill. 5-6, Tallinna Moemaja, green velour felt hat, 1988-89. Author's collection, 2023.

Eesti Muuseumide Veebivärv

Esileht Otsing **Muuseumide kogud**

kübar

Muuseumide kogud ▶ Viljandi Muuseum ▶ Etnograafia

Tagasi otsingusse Eelmine 9 / 9 Järgmine Trüki

Viljandi Muuseum

Muuseumikogu	<b>Etnograafia</b>
Number	<b>VM VM 11365:8 E 2553</b>
Nimetus	kübar
Hinnang museaali kultuuriväärtuse kohta	
Olemus	kaabu/kübar
Dateering	1988 - 1989
Originaal	originaal
Kollektsioon	rõivastus ja lisandid 1946-2000
Seisund	hea
Eritingimused	eksponeeritav tavatingimustes
Eraldatavad osad	Materjal veluur Värvus roheline Möödud ümbermõõt: 55.0 cm

kübar (VM VM 11365:8 E 2553); Viljandi Muuseum; VMVM11365\_8E2553\_1\_pisipilt.jpg

VMVM11365\_8E2553\_1\_pisipilt.jpg  
Suurus 32 KB  
Litsents Kasutusõigused määramata

VMVM11365\_8E2553\_1.jpg  
Suurus 32 KB

ill. 7, Tallinna Moemaja Hat, VM VM 11365:8 E 2553: green velour felt hat, 1988-89, in the collection of Viljandi Museum. Image retrieved May 16, 2023. <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/1414217>

### 4.3.3. Categorising the Artefacts: The Supporting and Limiting Aspects of Dating and Contextualising Tallinna Moemaja Hats

The following sub-chapter will give a summarised overview of the information gathered through observing the hats in the database, interviewing Kai Saar, documentary research as well as some of my thought process regarding dating and contextualising the database hats.

According to conversations with Saar (Saar 2023) and to information gathered from documentary research and personal observations, the predominant characteristics of the materials used to make felt hats at Tallinna Moemaja were:

<b>Felt material</b>	Fur felt (excluding beaver)
<b>Felt type</b>	Smooth, velour, melousine, mohair
<b>Felt weight/density</b>	Thin, medium, heavier (but not as heavy/dense as felt for men's hats traditionally since Tallinna Moemaja did not produce men's felt headwear)
<b>Felt sourced from</b>	East Germany

Aspects that could support general dating of Tallinna Moemaja felt hats:

<b>Felt hats were not upcycled (reblocked or redyed) within the fashion house</b>	Could be dated to a single period based on time of manufacturing.
<b>Tracing back to its designer</b>	Some hats could potentially be dated by way of connecting to their designer through referencing <i>Siluet</i> editorials and extant fashion sketches where the author is named. (Although this did not result in present matches in the database.) <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Most of the design sketches were discarded after Tallinna Moemaja was sold in 1995. Kai Saar kindly shared some of her sketches with me which did not currently yield any matches from the database, but will be saved for further referencing. (Saar 2023)

<b>Labels with different fonts and colours</b>	Through cross-referencing with museum artefacts it is possible to place certain database entries within their general time periods: 1960-69 based on the earlier style font and text <sup>23</sup> ; 1980-89 green <sup>24</sup> or yellow font <sup>25</sup> .
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### Limiting variables when dating and attributing felt hats to Tallinna Moemaja:

<b>Slower pace of changing fashions during the Soviet era</b>	Lack of urgency for reblocking headwear according to latest trends – could span over long lengths of time and not help indicate the era.
<b>Small and simple adjustments that could refresh the headwear style</b>	I.e. the look of more traditional brimmed hats could be changed by flipping the brim up or down; tilting the hat to one side; changing or removing the ribbon; pinching the crown to resemble a fedora etc. – This should be taken into more consideration when photographing the vintage hats for the database to get the most accurate representation.
<b>Accuracy of cross-referencing with <i>Silnett</i> editorials when similar hats appear in different times</b>	Accurate dating is complicated by the occurrence of hats with similar characteristics in different issues of the magazine, as well as the poor print quality – especially for darker hats. It could decrease the chance of spotting the hat’s earliest appearance in an issue. This is illustrated by the two wide-brimmed black Spanish hats that were featured in 1987 autumn and in 1990 spring issues (Stranberg 1987: 44-49; Raid 1990: 4-9), as well as the blocked felt berets with stalks in 1979 and again in 1986 (Heapost 1979: 6; Akberg 1986: 26, 29, 30).
<b>Using wooden hat blocks results in classic styles</b>	Creating wooden blocks for shaping hats is laborious and material-consuming (compared to pattern drafting). The blocks last for a long time so they are used over and over, with minimal changes made in the finishes of hats rather than their shape. Some of the vintage hat blocks in my own studio date back to the 50s and 60s. This explains why some hat styles are dubbed classic or timeless, and keep reappearing season after season, making them more difficult to place within a certain period.
<b>Unlabelled hats</b>	Not all hats left Tallinna Moemaja with their branded labels attached. For instance, the sample models only had a tag with a serial number. The samples were sometimes sold through the warehouse, allowing for the circulation of unlabelled Tallinna Moemaja felt hats among the

<sup>23</sup> Liis Kalda’s personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Tallinna Moemaja 6. Database entry, 2023

Tallinn City Museum (Tallinna Linnamuuseum), TLM \_ 32357 H 3954: hat made from green felt, oval-shaped ... Tallinna Moemaja label sewn in, 1960-69 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4405014>

<sup>24</sup> Liis Kalda’s personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Tallinna Moemaja 7. Database entry, 2023

Tallinn City Museum (Tallinna Linnamuuseum), TLM \_ 32358 H 3955: hat, grey felt, oval-shaped ... grosgrain ribbon inside, Tallinna Moemaja label sewn in, 1980-89 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4405015>

<sup>25</sup> Liis Kalda’s personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Blue Mohair/Tallinna Moemaja. Database entry, 2023

Tallinn City Museum (Tallinna Linnamuuseum), TLM \_ 32105 H 3869: hat, pink mohair felt ... Tallinna Moemaja label sewn in, 1980-89 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4285281>

	public. Another chance for these no-name products to spread was in the case of unofficial orders produced outside of working hours (aka <i>haltuura</i> ). (Saar 2023)
<b>Custom work</b>	Tallinna Moemaja started accepting official individual custom work at the end of the 1980s and regularly during the '90s. Clients could order a felt hat of their choosing, provided that the headwear workshop had a corresponding hat block in their selection. The finishing details, such as the width and the seams on the brim, were completed based on the customers' preferences. (Saar 2023) When compared to mass-produced products, this diverted the hats' style from the design house's oeuvre and makes the dating more difficult.

As a result of the previous insights, a few hypotheses could be made on the 19 unlabelled vintage hats in the database:

Given their strong resemblance to items in *Siluet*, some of them could possibly be either sample versions or unofficial orders from the fashion house. Such as the pair of light blue hats (ill. 8-9) that I purchased together from a second-hand shop – very similar in shape and colour – one of which has the Tallinna Moemaja label while the other does not. It could be possible that the unlabeled item was either made as a sample or as an unofficial order, also by the fashion house.

The lack of linings and minimal ribbons among the unlabelled hats, would hint at them originating from Tallinna Moemaja. Furthermore, as the fashion house did not use millinery elastic in the hats, it also excludes the one unlabelled vintage hat with the elastic<sup>26</sup> from the group.

However, when inspected further, all the labelled Tallinna Moemaja hats seem to have a similar kind of grosgrain ribbon on the inside, albeit in different colours, whereas most of the unlabelled hats do not have anything on the inside, or have a headsizing ribbon made out of the same felt<sup>27</sup>. This proposes questions such as: could these be sample/unofficial Tallinna Moemaja hats; or perhaps these were made as custom orders in the late '80s or '90s – as inserting an inside headsizing ribbon made of felt would be more effective for altering the hat sizes for customers' heads than the ribbon.

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<sup>26</sup> Liis Kalda's personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Navy Velour. Database entry, 2023

<sup>27</sup> Liis Kalda's personal database, folders not numbered: Database for Vintage Hats. Beige Melousine. Database entry, 2023



The more I look at the hats in the database, the more details reveal themselves, but with that also come further questions. If a piece of the puzzle seems to fall into place, it could have a ripple effect in dating and attributing the hats to specific makers. Or it could raise hypotheses with questionable factual value. Nevertheless, it teaches one to closely look and see the small connections, accumulating valuable information over time – and also transmitting the value over to the newly made hats.

## blue mohair/Tallinna Moemaja

Status	Reblocked Hat
Hat Style	Floppy Hat
Gender	Womenswear
Felt Type	Mohair Fur Felt
Composition	Natural
Main Material	Fur Felt
Weight	Medium
# Potential Cone Siz...	S1
Felt Condition	Smell, Dirt From Wear, Row of Seam Holes
Stitch Types	Machine-stitched
Acquisition	Before 2023
Date/Decade/Period	1980s, 1980-89
Color	Blue
Label	Tallinna Moemaja
Made In	unknown location
Related Links	Empty
Checklist	Not Filled
Donated by	Empty
Thesis Hats	Blue
+ Add a property	

● Add a comment...

1 backlink



## blue mohair 2

Status	Reblocked Hat
Hat Style	Floppy Hat
Gender	Womenswear
Felt Type	Mohair Fur Felt
Composition	Natural
Main Material	Fur Felt
Weight	Medium, Heavy/Dense
# Potential Cone Siz...	46
Felt Condition	Smell, Pin Holes
Stitch Types	Combination
Acquisition	Before 2023
Date/Decade/Period	1980s, 1980-89
Color	Blue
Label	No Label
Made In	unknown location
Related Links	Empty
Checklist	Not Filled
Donated by	Empty
Thesis Hats	Blue
+ Add a property	

● Add a comment...

1 backlink



ill. 8-9, Similar blue felt hats in the database. The one on the left is made by Tallinna Moemaja, ca 1980-89. The hat on the right is unlabelled. Author's collection, 2023.





## 5. Collection

Hats by Liis Kalda, 2023

i, ii, iii

Grey Pieced Hat

h 18 cm, d 41.5 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, leather, vinyl, paper.

ix, x, xi

Navy Double-Brimmed Bowler

h 21 cm, d 29 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, leather, paper.

iv, v

Black Toque with Chinstrap

h 16.5 cm, d 23 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, metal.

xii, xiii

Beige Melusine Helmet

h 15 cm, d 21.5 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, metal.

vi, vii, viii

Blue Round-Topped Tall Hat

h 26.5 cm, d 31 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, metal.

xiv, xv, xvi

Taupe Capotain Hat

h 23 cm, d 32 cm

Fur felt, ribbon, leather, vinyl, paper.

xvii, xviii, xix

Black Lacquered Bowler

h 17 cm, d 25.5 cm

Fur felt, ribbon.

Photography by Holger Kilumets, 2023

































## 5.1. Inspiration & Process

The notions of lost memories and the habit of collecting objects with their potential resale value in mind – as present within my collection – are illustrated by Peter Stallybrass and Ellen Ross when talking about the possessions of the poor. When an item was purchased, it was pre-programmed with calculations of future pawn shop visits. ‘The objects were in a constant state of being-about-to-disappear’ and had little chance of preserving the owner’s memories within, let alone become heirlooms. Any object that still had exchange value was susceptible to being pawned. (Stallybrass 1998: 196) Ross calls this assortment of objects – anything from ‘jam jars to old clothes’ – the “bank” of ornaments’ as it symbolised the limited resources that could still be converted into currency during times of need. (Ross 1993: 46-47)

This concept is reflected in the symbolic ornaments on the surface of the hats, as well as in the idea of incorporating the “less valuable” pre-used material to turn it into something more valuable. For surface details, I used architectural plaster ornaments<sup>28</sup> (ill. 10-11), acquired from someone that used to decorate interiors. Plaster itself is porous and fragile as well as easy to mass produce when moulds are available. Coating the plaster ornament makes it more resilient, although not indestructible, against steam and physical force applied while blocking the details into the felt. (ill. 12-14) The plaster ornament may or may not survive the blocking, while the impression left on the felt is stiffened and becomes a part of the valuable felt material, heightening it further. Both the added visual value and the historical narrative value embedded in the felt combined, aspire to produce a meaningful object.

The collection features ornaments, such as scrolls (ill. viii, ix, xii, xix), a Rococo frame (ill. ii), a sun rosette (ill. xiv), smaller whole leaves and rosettes as well as broken pieces of scrolls and leaves (ill. v), chosen for their recognisable and organic appearance, which compliment the round shapes of the hats and freeform brims. Additionally, these ornaments are relatively readable when blocked into felt, compared to other tested shapes (ill. 12).

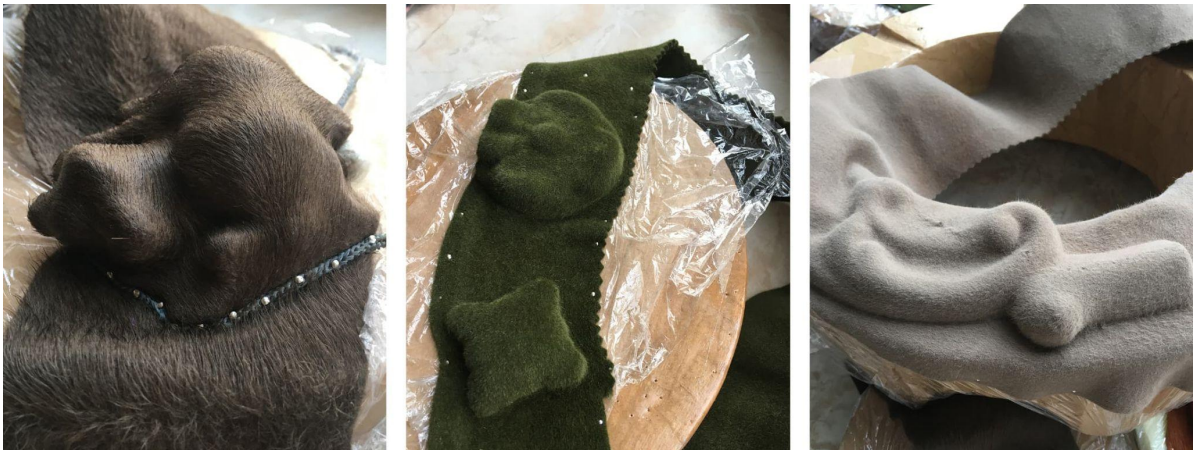
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<sup>28</sup> I have also implemented ornaments on my previous hats: either to play with the scale of modular blocks, juxtapose the idea of mass-produced elements with handmade ones, as well as to question the function of wearable ornamentation.



Left: ill. 10, Coated plaster ornaments attached to the wooden hat block. Author's collection, 2023.

Right: ill. 11, Blocking the vintage felt over the plaster ornament and the brim block. Author's collection, 2023.



Left: ill. 12, Melusine felt blocked over an organic-looking undecipherable ornament, shellacked on the outside. Author's collection, 2023.

Middle: ill. 13, Velour felt blocked over symmetrical ornaments. Author's collection, 2023.

Right: ill. 14, Smooth felt blocked over a c-scroll. The additional connecting elements were cut off from the plaster ornament in later use. Author's collection, 2023.

Direct influence on the shapes and silhouettes I chose to use for the collection can be seen on the pages of *Silvett* magazine: for brimmed hats, mostly between 1965-75; and the

toque/helmet styles during 1967, 1977-78. I was drawn to experimenting with accentuating the crowns which create an animated, upward movement.

The brims are pieced together from several vintage hats: either to extend the material further; create a double brim; or play with the ideas of up-down, inner-outer – questioning the traditional basic elements that make up a hat.

The physical attributes of the pre-used felt hats - mainly the damaged areas – also fed into the design process. Sometimes, altering the placement would solve the issue, such as by strategically inserting a chin strap (ill. v) or a wind trolley into the slash (ill. ix). Other times, the imperfections were left unconcealed as a physical reminder of their previous life, to pose questions or pique interest in the garment. These highlighted flaws could be anything from a hole, placed directly over an ornament to increase its noticeability (ill. ix), to a row of needle holes that resemble lacework (ill. vii).

I wanted to incorporate the thinner vintage melousine felts, which are excellent for blocking intricate details but have difficulty maintaining the shape on their own. Depending on the desired appearance, I shellacked<sup>29</sup> the hat's inside or outside, referring to traditional stiffening methods (Thomson 1868: 31-35) but simplified the recipe by reducing the various components to only the essentials. Additionally, the stiffened hard hat look evokes the recollections of an Estonian shepherd from the late 19th century who valued a hat, made by regional hatmakers, that was so stiff one could sit on it. (Piiri 2017: 131)

As an example of incorporating the theoretical aspects of deconstruction, the practical properties of observation in the database and the historical context of the pre-used hats, a more detailed overview and thought process behind one of the upcycled hats in the collection will be given in the following section.

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<sup>29</sup> Shellac is a natural 'resin produced from a secretion of the lac beetle (*Laccifer lacca*).’ Anthony Beech, “Shellac,” Building Conservation, accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/shellac/shellac.htm>.

### 5.1.1. Blue Round-topped Tall Hat

The tall hat (ill. 15) is made from two similar-looking vintage hats (ill. 8-9): both are cornflower blue and look like they could have originally been made on a similar hat block. The one with a baby blue grosgrain ribbon bears a Tallinna Moemaja label, while the other does not have any labels. Based on the style of both of these hats and the yellow font<sup>30</sup> on the labelled hat, I would date them somewhere between 1980-1989.



ill. 15, Liis Kalda, Blue Round-Topped Tall Hat, 2023, upcycled vintage felt, author's collection. Photo by Holger Kilumets, 2023.

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<sup>30</sup> The yellow font on the Tallinna Moemaja label can also be seen on three hats in the collection of Tallinn City Museum (Tallinna Linnamuuseum), which are all dated between 1980-1989.

Tallinna Linnamuuseum (Tallinn City Museum), TLM \_ 32105 H 3869: hat, pink [beige] mohair felt, round top, narrow upturned brim in the back, inside Tallinna Moemaja textile label, 1980/1989

[https://www.muis.ee/en\\_GB/museaalview/4285281](https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/4285281)

Tallinn City Museum, TLM \_ 32106 H 3870: hat, beige felt, round top, narrow upturned brim in the back, inside brown grosgrain sweatband and Tallinna Moemaja textile label, 1980-1989

<https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4285282>

Tallinn City Museum, TLM \_ 32359 H 3956: hat, brown felt, oval shape, upward turned brim on the sides, grosgrain ribbon around the hat, inside grosgrain sweatband, sewn inside Tallinna Moemaja label, 1980-1989

<https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4405016>

The two hats appear to be made from rabbit fur felt and have a textured, unsanded feel, although the unlabelled one is much coarser and denser. On acquisition, both had a musty smell and the labelled hat also featured dirt from wear. Additionally, pin and seam holes were visible on the pair.

On the upcycled hat, the heavier felt was chosen for the brim and top area to make them sturdier, whereas the softer felt was used for the middle, crown area, since it was more suitable for blocking the detailed c-scroll ornament. A row of previous machine-sewn stitch holes runs all around the mid-area of the crown and across the ornament – visually breaking it into two sections.

All seams were sewn by hand to make them as invisible as possible. The similarly coloured felts also contribute to the “seamless” look, yet it is apparent that the hat has been made from different materials, alluding to the discrepancies in texture, weight and shade, as well as the overlapping edges at the seams. It also harks back on the visible patching of Christian Francis Roth’s FW 91 collection (Roth 2014), mentioned earlier.

Although barely noticeable, the brim is turned inside out, having the coarser hair texture on the upper side instead of underneath – playing with the idea of inside versus outside.

The freeform crease running all around the brim adds some support while looking like it has seen some wear – as though it has been crushed by multiple times being taken off the head and put back on again (i.e. for greeting someone).

The c-scroll ornament, historically appearing on furniture or as a support for the cornice (Boyce 1996: 79), stands out from the otherwise smooth surface of the crown, seemingly put on a mantle for display and conveniently separated from it, if required. The ornament is also the only part of the hat that has been stiffened, making it slightly more substantial and resilient than other parts, especially compared to the softer middle area with stitch holes.

The most challenging area in the hat-making process was handling the row of previous seam holes, particularly prone to ripping while blocking the very tall crown. The proximity and three-dimensionality of the ornament increased the risk in the damaged area, further stretching the holes near the back of the scroll. As a result, the unconcealed, fragile and lace-like seam holes juxtapose with the sturdy interlocked structure of the felt and its coarser texture.



Another technical challenge was aligning the top and the sides of the crown since they were moulded on different hat blocks. This was solved by leaving a three centimetre overlap which added support and created a smooth continuation on the outside.

The inside sweatband was created using a patchwork of new and upcycled grosgrain ribbon from the original hat (ill. 8). The felt hat band from the other initial piece (ill. 9) was repurposed as hanging straps, reminiscent of hat ties that gather into a wind trolley at the lower end. (The trolley head can be inserted into the top button hole of a coat or a jacket to keep the hat from blowing away in the wind.)

I chose to combine the two vintage source hats into one larger piece because they were bought at the same time, looked relatively similar, and could possibly both originate from Tallinna Moemaja, as suggested in the chapter about the institution's hats in my database. The colour and style combination of the upcycled hat, on the other hand, was inspired by the round-crowned taller hats which appeared in the *Siluet*t issues of 1969 winter, 1970 spring, 1971 nr. 4 and 1972 nr. 2 in shades of lighter blues to muted greys and beiges (ill. 29-35). Fusing the closely linked source material and visual inspiration in a revitalised form could be interpreted as one of the ways the vintage hats' narratives are preserved – by extending the local fashion history – which, as a result, increases the emotional value of the item.



The lighter blue and pastel coloured taller round-crown Tallinna Moemaja hats featured in *Siluett* between 1969-1972.

ill. 16, "Kas oskate salli kanda?" [Can you wear a scarf?], 1969/70. – *Siluett*, winter, pp. 14-15. Photo by B. Mäemets.

ill. 17, "Kapriisne kevad." [Capricious Spring], 1970. – *Siluett*, spring, pp. 4-17. Photo by B. Mäemets.

ill.18, Cover photo. 1971. – *Siluett*, nr. 4. Photo by B. Mäemets.

ill. 19, "Mantlid." [Coats], 1971. – *Siluett*, nr. 4, pp. 4-11. Photo by B. Mäemets.

ill. 20, 21, "Enne talve." [Before the Winter], 1972. – *Siluett*, nr. 2, pp. 4-17. Fashion sketches in the article by Mari Kanasaar, Vilma Sepp. Photo by B. Mäemets.

ill. 22, "Mantlid." [Coats], 1971. – *Siluett*, nr. 4, pp. 4-11. Photo by B. Mäemets.

## 6. Findings

In this section I am listing and evaluating the results that were drawn from the theoretical and practical parts of the work. The aim of the thesis was to give meaning to products – the upcycled felt hats – through three main aspects:

- 1) **The philosophical framework of deconstructed fashion**
- 2) **Object-based research with the help of a database of collected vintage hats**
- 3) **Upcycling pre-used felt hats and incorporating their imperfections into the designs**

The first point is the hardest to assess as this would require further work into setting up ways to measure the added value, either through client feedback or interviews. As a conscious maker, it does give me the context and reassurance for inquiring about certain aspects of the process - creating meaning for myself. However, this thesis does not go far enough into how to record and analyse the different values and whether they actually reflect in the final products.

Secondly, using the method of object-based research together with the database as a tool presents the following insights:

- The database functions as a central recording and systematisation tool for the vintage hats. It helps to gather and cross-reference the information between the items and documentary sources, revealing their background and historical context. I am then able to include this insight in the product stories and descriptions (as a shortened version). These product stories/descriptions could include aspects such as where the hat was originally from; if some of its imperfections were turned into design assets; if the final product features some original details; whether it was initially made for women or men etc.
- Because all original elements of the hats – grosgrain ribbons, felt hat bands – were recorded in the database and therefore traceable back to their sources, I was able to clean and prepare them for upcycling without losing their context. I was able to see these elements, which I would have thrown away earlier, in a new light, and this inspired me to reuse them in the making of the new hats.

- Working simultaneously with the physical hats in the database as well as historical instructional and visual representations – like Thomson’s “Treatise on Hat-Making and Felting” and the issues of *Silvett* magazine – inspired me to look at the traditional notions of what makes up a hat, more than I have done in my previous projects. I was intrigued by deconstructing the classical elements of felt headwear – some of which are no longer in regular use, such as wind trolleys and visible lacquering on the outside.
- It is effective for creating a visual library; stock-keeping; internal linking between source materials, finished products and compiled information about frequently occurring brands; as well as filtering based on similar attributes.
- Brand labels provide extra information about vintage hats, allowing further research.

**Limitations:**

- Thorough observation and recording before disassembling the vintage hats provides the maximum amount of information for narrative and product descriptions. This means that items must be inspected and reflected upon before taking photographic snapshots and, certainly before taking them apart, cleaning and preparing for upcycling. However, observations are more fruitful when there is some prior research done and knowledge obtained on the item in question. With all this in mind, logistics and time management around safely storing the acquired vintage hats can become difficult. As a result, I fear that this process may alter the findings in the observation phase.
- Technical considerations (colour, size, condition) often outweigh the research and narrative aspirations.
- Personal conflicting values between research and preservation of artefacts versus production and sales.

Thirdly, the following perceptions are revealed through upcycling and navigating material flaws:

- Some imperfections may be left visible or even highlighted, if the style supports it. (I.e. tears, holes or faded areas if the intended look is closer to avant garde/artistic “workwear”/grunge etc.)
- Certain flaws can be turned into intriguing and/or functional details. (I.e. the placement of the hole changes the position of the chin strap; a hole can function as an opening for hooking a wind trolley etc.)
- Several small hats can be used to make one large hat, or to replace a damaged area by piecing or patching.

### **Limitations:**

- Vintage hats that are too small might be difficult to upcycle on their own, but they can be incorporated into hats consisting of several different felt colours/textures/densities/sizes.
- Vintage hats that are unsuitable for upcycling can be used as sizing tools for other hats.
- Very detailed ornaments cannot be blocked onto vintage mens hats as the felt is traditionally thicker and denser. However this is also why they are more resilient and do not require overall stiffening for support.
- Material availability varies seasonally – vintage felt hats are taken off the display of second-hand shops in the spring and summer months, leaving little time to prepare upcycled hats for the autumn/winter season. A possible solution would be to directly contact the shops and sorting centres for better access to resources.
- Collecting suitable coloured felts for a cohesive larger hat/collection can be time consuming. Opting for over dyeing could damage the felt and waste material. (Both of these reasons explain why I chose not to use the more “difficult” colours nor experiment with dyeing in this thesis.)
- Possible insect contamination: whenever I bring a hat, which may or may not bear visible signs of insect damage, into my household, I need to make sure that all surrounding textiles are protected from possible pests by freezing the new acquisition in my small kitchen freezer, compressed into a zip-lock bag.

- ▷ Hereof the work presents the most valuable lessons learnt when working with vintage felt hats, that could be of most use to other creatives. Early signs that warn against possible unexpected changes or damages (rips and tears) in the blocking process are as follows:
- Previously machine-sewn hats tear and show widening holes more visibly than hand-sewn or lightly tacked hats.
  - Excessive amounts of moth larvae or bite markings on the surface of the felt.
  - Very thin felts.
  - Spots which previously had lumps of glue or sticky areas.
  - Spots where a decoration had previously been sewn to the hat with a very thick needle and thread or several times in a small area.
  - Repeatedly blocked and stiffened hats where the stiffener has accumulated into one area, leaving it hard and unmalleable compared to the rest of the felt.

## 7. Conclusion

The final chapter will conclude the study by going over the key research findings related to the research aim and questions, discussing their importance and use for the future. It will additionally assess the limitations of the study as well as suggest possibilities for future use of this research.

This study aimed to contextualise and elevate the value of my created hats by answering questions on how to preserve the narratives of pre-used hats when they are deconstructed. I also wanted to know how to turn the material imperfections into benefits when working with vintage felt as well as how useful an archive database is for creating item narratives.

The findings indicate that preserving the narratives is possible under suitable conditions by close observation of vintage hats and recording the information in the database, which became a central tool in the process. I discovered that the thorough documentation of the vintage hats inspired me to utilise the prior components of the hats, highlight their historical context, and challenge the idea of what comprises a hat, providing additional opportunities for developing the items' narratives. Moreover, the outcomes showed that leveraging pre-used felt permitted accentuating the flaws or turning them into functional elements, along with adopting piecing to create bigger hats out of smaller ones.

As a result of this research, a collection of seven upcycled felt hats was produced, utilising full hatbodies and pieces from fourteen different vintage hats. Additionally, the created archive database serves as a practical tool, both in the context of the research as well as a stand-alone device for stock-keeping and streamlining the phases of upcycling for a small brand.

This research was also addressing the problem of wasted natural fur felt headwear. Incorporating the material into my work process allows me to use some of this valuable textile and salvage it, while refraining from using new felt – benefiting the environment. An added gain is the good quality, versatility of material types and textures as well as flexible pricing of these pre-used resources. Along with opening up new starting points for developing headwear designs, the previously owned material allows for the telling of more engaging stories about products.

This research helped me contextualise the practice of upcycling for myself. Looking at the theory of deconstruction fashion made me see the traces in worn vintage hats as passages towards

understanding their creation and use. It also made me reevaluate the stains, holes, and discoloured areas of the felt material as something to be left exposed and put on view as signs of their past lives.

The research findings indicate that there is further potential for using pre-used felt in the fashion industry, mainly for headwear, but it could also spread into other areas of clothing and accessories. Additionally, the thesis could be used by designers, makers and researchers to plan and structure their own strategies for designing.

The limiting aspects related to the observation and recording of data from vintage hats involve high levels of control of my time schedules and surroundings, as the most informative and versatile results are obtained right after the newly acquired vintage hats have been brought into my studio. Another time factor concerns the seasonal availability of vintage hats and random colour selections. These could be solved separately by contacting the clothing sorting centres and exploring dyeing options. Another way to go about it would be to collect the hats over a longer period of time, in the chance that the pace of production and sales is not the primary requirement (i.e. for art projects).

Technical properties of the felt material (colour, size, condition, etc.) frequently take precedence over research and narrative goals, but the more unexpected combinations could be reevaluated as something of interest rather than a disadvantage. In addition, conflicting personal values between research and preservation of artefacts versus production and sales could slow the process on either side. Further consideration must be put into whether the intention is to grow as a brand or create items that are more akin to works of art.

My plans for the future include showing the headwear collection in the TASE exhibition together with product descriptions derived from item narratives. I will also be including these product descriptions on my website once the items are made available for sale. Additionally, the idea is to better incorporate the overall background on my upcycling practice and the contextual narratives into my brand identity and present it on channels that reach my audience.

To sum it up - all objects, old or new, are continually on the verge of disappearing. Nevertheless, the stories embedded in previously owned items can live on in the repurposed headwear. It is the mental shift of dismantling antiquated notions of worth and value that provides a basis for reconsideration of ideals and ultimately helps to notice that we already possess greater resources and a richer cultural past than most suspect.



## 8. Kokkuvõte

### **Dekonstrueeritud kübar: väärtustava taaskasutuse ja andmebaasipõhiste narratiivide potentsiaal peakattebrändi kontseptsiooni väljatöötamisel.**

Maailmas toodetakse, tarbitakse ja visatakse tekstiilesemeid ära üha kasvaval määral, mistõttu jõuab igal aastal põletusahjudesse ja prügilatesse miljonites tonnides jäätmeid. Tänapäeva rõivamoe tootmise ja tarbimise kiirus tingib pideva vajaduse uute esemete järele, et asendada aegunud trende. Tööstuse kasumlikkuse tagamiseks on tootmiskulud langetatud võimalikult madalale ning see omakorda on vähendanud rõivaste väärtust eri tasanditel. Mõõnaseisus on nii rõivaste majanduslik edasimüügi väärtus; tööga kiirustamisest tingitud esteetiline väärtus; alatasustatud tööga põhjustatud moraalne väärtus; ja sotsiaalse väärtuse vähenemine mikrotrendide külluses. Lisaks on tekkinud riiete sentimentaalse väärtuse põud, kuna neid ei kanta piisavalt kaua, et jõuaks tekkida isiklik side.

Teisalt on nende ära visatud toodete hulgas ka väärtuslikud naturaalsed materjalidest esemed, mida oleks võimalik muul moel kasutada. Üheks selliseks näiteks on karuslooma – peamiselt küüliku – karvast vilt (*fur felt*), millest valmistatakse kübaraid. Karvavildil on väärtustavaks taaskasutuseks (*upcycling*) sobivad omadused, kuid selle kasutamine ei ole moe alal laialt levinud. Osad kübarsepad taastavad küll vormi kaotanud peakatete algse kuju ning mõned teevad kliendi soovil nende vanast kaabust teise mudeli põhjal värskema, ent peamiselt keskendutakse siiski uuest materjalist toodete valmistamisele.

Käesoleva magistritöö põhiküsimuseks on: kuidas säilitada kasutatud *vintage*-kübarate lugusid (*narratives*) neid samal ajal dekonstrueerides (*deconstruction*)? Sellest lähtuvad alaküsimused on: Kuidas vildi taaskasutamisel selle vigu ja puudusi väärtustada? Kui kasulik on arhiivandmebaas toodete lugude jutustamisel?

Minu magistritöö lähtekohaks oli 45 vildist *vintage*-kübarat, mida olen kogunud viimase paari aasta jooksul nii taaskasutuskauplustest kui inimestelt, kes neid enam ei soovinud ja oleksid

need muidu ära visanud. Kübaraid kogudes ja sorteerides märkasin, et kaldun tunnetuslikult teatud värvi, tekstuuri ja paksusega esemete poole ning soovisin neid süsteemsemalt analüüsida.

Uurimusega soovin kontekstualiseerida ja anda enda loodud peakatetele lisandväärtust ning pakkuda lahendust loodusliku karvavildi väärtustavaks taaskasutuseks. Uurimus tugineb teiste disainerite kogemustele, kes kasutavad oma kaubamärgi identiteedi kujundamisel väärtustavat taaskasutust ja ajaloolisi narratiive, ning esitab sellesse arutellu viltpeakatete vaatenurga.

Magistritöös kasutan objektipõhist uurimust (*object-based research*) *vintage*-kübarate vaatluste (*observation*) ja peegelduste (*reflection*) tegemiseks. Tõlgendusfaasis (*interpretation*) analüüsin tulemusi dokumentaalse uurimuse (*documentary research*) ja suulise ajaloo (*oral history*) põhjal, milleks viisin läbi intervjuu.

Magistritöö teoreetilises osas mõtestan lahti eseme loo (*narrative*) olemuse ja selle olulisuse brändi identiteedi seisukohalt. Annan ülevaate rõiva väärtuse eri aspektidest minevikus ning kirjeldan, kuidas tänapäeva moedisainerid neid teemasid enda loomingus kasutavad. Seletan lahti dekonstruktsionismil põhineva moeloo (*deconstruction fashion*) tekkepõhjused, ajakohasuse ja spetsiifilised kontseptsioonid – hävitamine (*destruction*) ja ehitamine (*construction*); tähendusjalg (*trace*) – rõivaste disainis ja kasutamisel. Lisaks kirjeldan vilti struktuuri, omaduste ja taaskasutatud materjali eeliste seisukohalt ning asetan selle dekonstruktsionismi moeloo konteksti.

Uurimistöö praktiline osa tutvustab objektipõhist uurimust ja täpsustab selle erisusi viltpeakatete väärtustava taaskasutuse seisukohalt. Toon näite andmebaasi (*database*) kasutamisest moebrändi tegevuses ning kirjeldan enda isikliku brändi ja töö seisukohast olulisi erisusi ja võtmepunkte. Lisaks põhjendan uurimisobjektide valikut ja analüüsin kirjandusliku ülevaate (*literature review*) abil enim esinenud kaubamärgi – Tallinna Moemaja – kübaraid.

Uurimistöö tulemusena valmis väärtustava taaskasutuse põhimõttel loodud seitsmest viltpeakattest koosnev kollektsioon, kus põimuvad töö teoreetiline ja uurimuslik osa. Lisaks võib tulemuste alla liigitada ka koostatud arhiveerimise andmebaasi, mis toimib iseseisva tööriistana nii inventari haldamisel kui taaskasutuse tõhustamisel. *Vintage*-kübarate põhjalik dokumenteerimine inspireeris kasutama nende originaalelemente, tõstma esile ajaloolist konteksti ja mõtestama

peakatte olemust. See omakorda annab võimaluse rikastada minu kaubamärgi edasist lugu ja identiteeti.

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# 10. Appendix

## 10.1. Database Entry with Checklist and Reflection: 'Tallinna Moemaja 3'

### Appendix 1: Checklist for Observation

**GENERAL**

1. a. What type of garment is it?  
Floppy felt hat

b. Is the garment intended for:  
Male, Female, Unisex?  
Female

2. a. What are the main fabrics that have been used to make the garment?  
fur felt (velour) - rabbit

b. Are these fabrics predominantly natural in composition (silk, wool, cotton, linen), synthetics or a blend?  
felt - natural, ribbon - viscose or a blend?

3. What are the dominant colors and/or patterns of the garment?  
More green felt, brown ribbons

4. Does the garment have any labels?  
Tallinna Moemaja (mouse letters on a white background)

5. What decade or general period does the garment or accessory belong to?  
1988 - 1989

6. Can the garment be handled easily without causing further damage?  
✓

7. What are the most unusual or unique aspects of the garment?  
Very thin lightweight felt

8. Does the collection have any other garments like it, either by the same designer or from the same period?  
Some manufacturer - mouse name design? Probably also from the same period.

**CONSTRUCTION**

9. Describe the main components of the garment, such as the bodice, collar, sleeves, skirt.  
Crown - natural height, round top, slightly oval  
Brim - medium to wide, slanted, soft and floppy  
Crescent ribbon with a bow (on the right). Tacked to the hat only behind the bow, by hand.  
Similar (but narrower) ribbon on the inside - headsize ribbon. Sewn by machine.

If relevant to your research, note measurements in both imperial and metric measurements such as:

a. Height  
Crown height 17 cm  
Crown height 11 cm  
Hat size / inner circumference  
Sleeve length 54.5 cm

b. Diameter  
31 cm  
Brim width  
20.5 cm  
7.8 cm  
f. Other

10. Does the structure of the garment emphasize one part of the body?  
It slightly covers the eyes and draws attention to the lower part of the face, the jawline and nose.

11. Is the garment machine-stitched, handmade or a combination of these methods?  
Combination

12. How is the garment closed or fastened?  
No fastenings.

13. Are there any front, side, flap, or hidden pockets?  
-

14. Are there any remarkable features in the construction, such as a bias cut, or use of nontraditional materials or structural elements?  
Only structural element is the headsize ribbon - otherwise unstructured.

15. Is the fabric selvedge visible in the seams, and has this been incorporated into the cutting or construction of the garment?  
The brim edge is visible and rounded at the edge. (Not folded and sewn)

16. Is the type of construction consistent with the dating of the garment?  
Yes, however similar hats also appeared throughout the 70s (74, 75, 76, 79).

17. Is the garment reinforced in any way, such as padding, boning, metal hoops, or wire reinforcements?  
-

18. Is the garment lined?  
No

**TEXTILE**

19. What is the dominant textile or material that has been used?  
Is it a natural or man-made fiber?  
Natural fur felt (rabbit?), velour finish, very soft and light.

THE DRESS DETECTIVE

216

20. Has the dominant textile been subjected to a finishing process, such as bleaching, pressing, or glazing?  
Sanding - no long hairs on top, very little on the underside.

21. Have any other textiles been used in the garment or in the lining?  
Only the viscose (blend?) ribbon.

22. Does the garment incorporate a stripe or pattern? Is it woven into the fabric or printed or formed by a different method such as stenciling, painting or manipulation of fabric?  
-

23. Is there any form of applied decoration such as appliqué, trim, lace, beading, embroidery, buttons, ruffles, pleated bands, or bows? Are there signs that any such decoration has been removed?  
Both outside and inner ribbons intact. Same color, different width: hatband - 3.2 cm; headsize ribbon - 2.2 cm. Bow attached very lightly.

24. Has the fabric been reinforced in any way with padding, quilting, interfacing, wires, or boning?  
-

25. Has the textile faded or otherwise changed in color with the passage of time?  
Not really.

**LABELS**

26. Is there a maker label? If so, is the label consistent with the designer's oeuvre and does it offer clues as to dating such as a number or season?  
Yes. Similar hat in Antiques museum in dated between 88-89. Have another Tallinna Moemaja hat with the exact same label (colour) - this indicates the other hat Tallinna Moemaja!

27. Is there a store label to identify where the garment was purchased? Does this reveal anything about the garment's history?  
-

28. Are there any care labels or information about the garment?  
-

29. Are there any size labels in the garment?  
-

30. Is there a marking inside the garment that indicates the specific owner of the garment, such as an embroidered initial, nametag, or laundry mark?  
-

THE DRESS DETECTIVE

**USE, ALTERATION AND WEAR**

31. Has the garment been structurally altered in any way?  
No

32. Where does the garment show wear?  
Very slightly on the brim.

33. Is the garment soiled or damaged in any way? Have seams ripped, silk split, or fabric decomposed? Is there evidence of insect damage?  
Light insect damage under the brim. Some stitches are loose on the bow.

34. Has the garment been dyed to alter its original color? Have trim or other forms of embellishment been unpicked or removed?  
The hatband ribbon has some frayed threads - no maybe these used to be a thread that connected it to the hat... maybe with a ribbon inspection?

35. Does the styling of the garment conform to the predominant fashions of the period, or does it represent a hybrid, perhaps custom-made for the owner?  
Seems like a pretty classic/ timeless style. Fashionable during its time but could also fit easily into the 70s.

**SUPPORTING MATERIAL**

36. Does the collection have any provenance records associated with the garment?  
-

37. Are there any photographs of the garment?  
?

38. Are there any further documents or information about the garment that might indicate the original price of the garment?  
Still need to look at 1988-89 Soviet magazines.

39. Are there any manufacturer, store tags or original packaging associated with the garment?  
-

40. Are there any similar garments by the same designer, or by other designers from the same period, in this collection?  
8 labelled hats by Tallinna Moemaja. Perhaps more that are unlabelled?

Appendix 1

ill. 23, Observation Checklist (Mida and Kim, 2018: 216-219) filled with notes on a vintage hat. Author's collection, 2023.



## Appendix 2: Checklist for Reflection

### SENSORY REACTIONS

<p><b>Sight</b></p> <p>1. Does the garment have stylistic, religious, artistic or iconic references?</p>	<p>2. Is the garment stylistically consistent with the period from which it came? Does it seem to reflect the influences of that period or diverge from it?</p> <p>Yes, but it's also anachronistic of '24-79 floppy hats.</p>
<p><b>Touch</b></p> <p>3. What is the texture and weight of the cloth or other materials used to construct the garment?</p>	<p>Very lightweight and malleable.</p>
<p><b>Sound</b></p> <p>4. Would a person wearing this garment make noise?</p>	<p>Maybe if the brim brushes against the roof/collar.</p>
<p><b>Smell</b></p> <p>5. Does the garment smell?</p>	<p>It has been aired out, so not much.</p>

### PERSONAL REACTIONS

<p>6. What was the impetus to examine this garment? Were you interested in the person who wore it, the maker, or some other aspect of its object biography?</p>	<p>It had a wider brim than I've normally come across; also beautiful slightly unusual color and very soft/light. I liked the texture.</p>
<p>7. a. Did a person who was bigger or smaller than you wear it? Would the garment fit your body?</p>	<p>Some smaller. The brim is smaller than mine - also crown a bit too narrow for my face width. If it fit better, I would wear it. Would fit me with proper padding.</p>
<p>b. How would it feel on your body? Would it be tight or loose? Would the garment cause discomfort or pain?</p>	<p>It would be too tight on me. If it did fit, it would feel very nice and light - could even flip up the brim for better views! Discomfort would be from the brim catching the neck.</p>
<p>8. Would you wear this garment if you could? Is the style and color appealing to you?</p>	<p>Yes. It would look great on someone with wavy undertones in the hair and hair.</p>

THE DRESS DETECTIVE

220

221

<p>10. Does the garment or accessory demonstrate a complexity of construction or element of mastery in the design? Does the dress artifact have a functional component to the design?</p>	<p>Probably one of the most practical, wearable and simple styles. Very simple yet elegant construction. Does the garment seem to express humor, joy, sorrow or fear? Easy-going, simple hat that's usually feminine. Can be worn with dress or more comfortable clothes - more casual than dressy. Brim flips up or down.</p>
<p>11. Did the maker want to invoke emotion, status, sexuality, or gender roles with the garment?</p>	<p>No very drawn to all aspects of this garment. Would wear it if it was my size. Encourage my research but not reluctant to upcycle it.</p>
<p>12. Do you have an emotional reaction to the garment? Can you identify a personal bias that should be acknowledged in your research?</p>	<p>Encourage my research but not reluctant to upcycle it.</p>
<p><b>CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION</b></p>	
<p>13. If you were permitted access to the provenance record for the artifact, what does this information reveal about the owner, and their relationship to the garment?</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>14. Does the museum, study or private collection have other garments that are similar, or by the same designer/maker?</p>	<p>Same maker, somewhat similar in shape, but none that are the same and brim width.</p>
<p>15. Do other museums have similar objects? Can you identify similar objects in online collections of dress?</p>	<p>Vitrolini Museum has an almost identical hat (maker, color, shape, proportions, ribbon); only their version has a brim edge that is folded and sewn by machine (as observed from a photo).</p>
<p>16. Have other scholars written about this type of garment or the designer's work in books or peer-reviewed journals?</p>	<p>Have not seen any particularly about this garment yet. Tallinn Museum has been written about in books and articles.</p>
<p>17. Are there similar garments or related ephemera (advertisements, fashion photographs, packaging, and other print material) available for sale on Etsy, eBay, online vintage retailers, or on auction sites?</p>	<p>Tallinn Museum hats occasionally for sale on etsy, second-hand shops</p>
<p>18. Are there photographs, paintings, or illustrations of this garment, or of similar garments in books, magazines, museum collections, or online?</p>	<p>Still need to check the Schott women from 1918-83.</p>
<p>19. Has this garment, or others like it, been referenced in documents, such as letters or receipts, or magazines, novels, and other forms of written material?</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>20. If the maker of the garment is a known designer, what information is available about them? How does this garment fit into their oeuvre? Have there been exhibitions of the designer's work? Has the designer written an autobiography or been profiled in magazines or journals?</p>	<p>-</p>





















ill. 24, Reflection Checklist (Mida and Kim, 2018: 220-221) filled with notes on a vintage hat. Author's collection, 2023.

## 10.2. Database

### Database for Vintage Hats

88 Gallery view Table + Filter Sort Q ... New

Date/Decade/Period Status Color Felt Type # Potential Cone Size (brim, c... Label Date/Decade/Period Check

 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 6</b>        • Washed Cone        1960s 1960-69        Tallinna Moemaja        Brown        50        Light        Velour/Peachbloom        Insect Damage - Hole        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 3</b>        • Original Form + Frozen        1980s 1988-89        Tallinna Moemaja        Green        51        Light        Tissue Felt Velour/Peachbloom        Row of Seam Holes        Mostly Filled</p>	 <p><b>blue mohair/Tallinna Moemaja</b>        • Reblocked Hat        1980s 1980-89        Tallinna Moemaja        Blue        51        Medium        Mohair Fur Felt        Smell Dirt From Wear Row of S        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 4</b>        • Washed Cone        1980s 1980-89        Tallinna Moemaja        Black        46        Medium        Mohair Fur Felt        Insect Damage - Surface        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 7</b>        • Reblocked Hat        1980s 1980-89        Tallinna Moemaja        Black        51        Light        Velour/Peachbloom        Good        Not Filled</p>
 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 5</b>        • Reblocked + SOLD        1980s 1980-89        Tallinna Moemaja        Black        Medium        Mohair Fur Felt        Good        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 1</b>        • Reblocked Hat        1988-89 1980s        Tallinna Moemaja        Grey        Medium        Plain        Row of Seam Holes        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>La Familiare</b>        • Washed Cone        Mid-20th century        La Familiare        Grey        47        Medium        Melousine        Cut hole/slash        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Åkerlind &amp; Jansons Efr</b>        • Washed Cone        21st century        Åkerlind &amp; Jansons Efr        Black        45        Light Medium        Melousine        Good        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Rabionek</b>        • Original Form + Frozen        21st century        Rabionek        White        51        Medium        Plain        Dirt From Wear Insect Damage -        Not Filled</p>
 <p><b>Tallinna Moemaja 2</b>        • Washed Cone        Unknown        Tallinna Moemaja        Black        45        Medium        Velour/Peachbloom        Insect Damage - Surface        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Lembitu 1</b>        • Original Form + Frozen        Unknown        Lembitu        Beige        45        Medium        Mohair Fur Felt        Pin Holes Insect Damage - Surf        Mostly Filled</p>	 <p><b>Augsburger</b>        • Washed Cone        Unknown        Augsburg        Taupe Brown        51        Heavy/Dense        Mohair Fur Felt        Insect Damage - Surface Dirt Fro        Mostly Filled</p>	 <p><b>black cloche 1</b>        • Disassembled + Frozen        Unknown        No Label        Black        52        Medium        Melousine        Insect Damage - Surface        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Harrison New York</b>        • Reblocked Hat        Unknown        Harrison New York        Grey        44        Heavy/Dense        Beaver?        Good        Not Filled</p>
 <p><b>Super Extra</b>        • Reblocked Hat        Unknown        Super Extra?        Grey        47        Heavy/Dense        Beaver?        Good        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>chocolate kettle brim</b>        • Washed Cone        Unknown        No Label        Brown        48        Medium        Plain        Insect Damage - Surface        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>chocolate melousine</b>        • Washed Cone        Unknown        No Label        Brown        52        Light        Melousine        Good        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Lembitu 2</b>        • Washed Cone        Unknown        Lembitu        Black        48        Light        Melousine Mohair Fur Felt        Shaved Brim Edge        Not Filled</p>	 <p><b>Szaszi</b>        • Reblocked Hat        Unknown        Szaszi        Black        Heavy/Dense        Mohair Fur Felt        Good        Not Filled</p>



Christys' London

Reblocked + SOLD

Unknown

Christys' London

Brown

51

Heavy/Dense

Beaver?

Good

Not Filled



black velour

Washed Cone

No Label

Black

48

Medium Heavy/Dense

Velour/Peachbloom

Dirt From Wear Smell Insect Damage

Not Filled



black kettle brim

Washed Cone

No Label

Black

49

Light

Plain

Dirt From Wear Smell

Not Filled



Tonak

Reblocked Hat

Tonak

Grey

48

Heavy/Dense

Velour/Peachbloom

Smell Dirt From Wear

Not Filled



blue mohair 2

Reblocked Hat

No Label

Blue

46

Medium Heavy/Dense

Mohair Fur Felt

Smell Pin Holes

Not Filled



cream melousine

Original Form + Frozen

No Label

Cream

50

Light

Melousine

Smell Dirt From Wear

Not Filled



burgundy suede

Original Form + Frozen

No Label

Burgundy

48

Heavy/Dense

Suede Velour/Peachbloom

Dirt From Wear Smell

Not Filled



red fedora

Original Form + Frozen

No Label

Red

45

Medium

Plain

Dirt From Wear Insect Damage

Not Filled



navy velour

Reblocked Hat

No Label

Navy

53

Medium

Velour/Peachbloom

Smell

Not Filled



camel cloche

Disassembled + Frozen

No Label

Brown

47

Medium

Plain

Dirt From Wear Makeup Stain

Not Filled



Reslaw (Paul Wesler and Co. Ltd)

Washed Cone

Reslaw London

Green

50

Medium

Melousine

Cut hole/slash Row of Seam Hole

Partially Filled



beige melousine

Washed Cone

No Label

Beige

51

Light

Melousine

Good

Not Filled



pink mohair

Washed Cone

No Label

Pink

54

Medium

Mohair Fur Felt

Fading/Discoloration Insect Damage

Partially Filled



VEB 1

Washed Cone

VEB Vereinigte Dresdner Hutfabrike

Red

45

Medium

Plain

Pin Holes

Partially Filled



green mohair

Washed Cone

No Label

Green

48

Light

Mohair Fur Felt

Insect Damage - Hole

Not Filled



green sporty

Washed Cone

No Label

Green

47

Heavy/Dense

Plain

Shaved Brim Edge

Not Filled



navy velour 2

Reblocked Hat

No Label

Navy

46

Medium Heavy/Dense

Velour/Peachbloom

Cut hole/slash

Not Filled



black velour 2

Washed Cone

No Label

Black

47

Medium Heavy/Dense

Velour/Peachbloom

Dirt From Wear

Not Filled



Haus der Hute Lehmann

Washed Cone

Haus der Hute Lehmann

Black

48

Medium

Plain

Dirt From Wear

Not Filled



KM 1

Washed Cone

No Label

Pink

45

Medium

Velour/Peachbloom

Soot Stains Smell Fading/Discoloration

Partially Filled



KM 2

Washed Cone

Illegible

Red

46

Medium

Velour/Peachbloom

Soot Stains Insect Damage - Surface

Partially Filled



LL Florence

Reblocked Hat

LL Florence

Taupe

51

Medium

Velour/Peachbloom

Insect Damage - Surface Row of Seam Hole

Partially Filled



Taupe mouse

Reblocked Hat

No Label

Taupe

Light

Melousine

Cut hole/slash



VEB 2

Reblocked + SOLD

VEB Vereinigte Dresdner Hutfabrike

Red

Medium

Plain

Pin Holes

Partially Filled



KM 3

Washed Cone

No Label

Purple

47

Medium

Mohair Fur Felt Velour/Peachbloom

Soot Stains Fading/Discoloration

Partially Filled

# Database for Vintage Hats

As Name	Color	Date/Decade	Gender	Composition	Label	Material	Style	Condition	Felt Type	Made In	Potential Core Sz.	Stitch Types	Weight	Acquisition	Donated by
AK 3	Purple		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Topque	Soot Stains	Partially Filled	Unknown local	47	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	Kristel Musbe
AK 2	Red		Women's	Natural	Bespoke	Washed Cone	Topque	Soot Stains	Partially Filled	Unknown local	46	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	Kristel Musbe
AK 1	Red		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Pillbox	Soot Stains	Partially Filled	Unknown local	45	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	Kristel Musbe
red fedora	Red		Women's	Natural	No Label	Original Form + Fr	Fedora	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	45	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
burgundy suede	Burgundy		Women's	Natural	No Label	Original Form + Fr	Floppy Hat	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	48	Handmade	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Rabonck	White	21st century	Women's	Natural	Babonck	Original Form + Fr	Fedora	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Poland	51	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
cream melusine	Cream		Women's	Natural	No Label	Disassembled + Fr	Cloche	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	47	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
blue mohair 2	Blue		Women's	Natural	No Label	Original Form + Fr	Kettle Brim	Small	Not Filled	Unknown local	50	Handmade	Light	Before 2023	
blue mohair/Talima Moemaja	Blue	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	No Label	Rebboked Hat	Floppy Hat	Small	Not Filled	Unknown local	46	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
tonak	Grey		Men's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Rebboked Hat	? floppy Hat	Small	Not Filled	Czech Republic	51	Machine-stitched	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Hans der Hille Lehmann	Black		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Germany	48	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
black velour 2	Black		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Cloche	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	47	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
Alonard & Janons Efr	Black		Women's	Natural	Alonard & Janon	Washed Cone	Cloche	Good	Not Filled	Sweden	45	Combination	Light	Before 2023	
black kettle brim	Black		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Kettle Brim	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	49	Handmade	Light	Before 2023	
black velour	Black		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Beret	Dirt From Wear	Not Filled	Unknown local	48	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
navy velour 2	Navy		Women's	Natural	No Label	Rebboked Hat	Fedora	Not Filled	Not Filled	Unknown local	46	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
navy	Navy		Women's	Natural	No Label	Rebboked Hat	Cloche	Not Filled	Not Filled	Unknown local	47	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
green spory	Green		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Tyrolan All	Shared Brim Edge	Not Filled	Unknown local	53	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
green mohair	Green		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Small	Not Filled	Unknown local	47	Machine-stitched	Light	Before 2023	
VEB 2	Red		Women's	Natural	VEB Verneigte Dr	Rebboked - SOLD	Floppy Hat	Pin Holes	Partially Filled	Germany	48	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
VEB 1	Red		Women's	Natural	VEB Verneigte Dr	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Pin Holes	Partially Filled	Germany	45	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
pink mohair	Pink		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Pin Holes	Partially Filled	Unknown local	54	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
LL Lluemence	Taupe		Women's	Natural	LL Lluemence	Rebboked Hat	Floppy Hat	Fading/Discoloration	Partially Filled	Italy	51	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
belge melusine	Beige		Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Inset Damage - Surface	Not Filled	Unknown local	51	Handmade	Light	Before 2023	
Resaw (Paul Weiler and Co. Ltd)	Green		Women's	Natural	Resaw London	Washed Cone	Cloche	Good	Partially Filled	England	50	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 6	Black	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Washed Cone	Cloche	Good	Not Filled	Estonia	51	Machine-stitched	Light	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 7	Black	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Rebboked - SOLD	Cloche	Good	Not Filled	Estonia	50	Machine-stitched	Light	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 5	Brown	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Washed Cone	Cloche	Inset Damage - Hair	Not Filled	Estonia	50	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 4	Black	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Washed Cone	Cloche	Inset Damage - Hair	Not Filled	Austria	52	Machine-stitched	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 3	Black	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Disassembled + Fr	Cloche	Inset Damage - Surface	Not Filled	USSR	46	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
Talima Moemaja 2	Green	1905 - 1900-85	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Original Form + Fr	Floppy Hat	Row of Seam Holes	Mostly Filled	USSR	51	Machine-stitched	Light	Before 2023	
Lembitu 2	Black	Unknown	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Shared Brim Edge	Not Filled	Estonia	45	Machine-stitched	Medium	Before 2023	
Lembitu 1	Beige	Unknown	Women's	Natural	Lembitu	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Shared Brim Edge	Not Filled	Estonia	48	Machine-stitched	Light	Before 2023	
chocolate melusine	Brown	Unknown	Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Pin Holes	Inset Damage - Surface	Unknown local	52	Handmade	Medium	Before 2023	
chocolate lette brim	Brown	Unknown	Women's	Natural	No Label	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Pin Holes	Inset Damage - Surface	Unknown local	48	Handmade	Light	Before 2023	
La Famille	Grey	Mid-20th century	Men's	Natural	La Famille	Washed Cone	? ette Brim	Cut holes/Slash	Not Filled	Italy	47	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
Super Extra	Grey	Unknown	Men's	Natural	Super Extra?	Rebboked Hat	Fedora	Good	Not Filled	USSR	47	Machine-stitched	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Harrison New York	Grey	1985-89	Women's	Natural	Talima Moemaja	Rebboked Hat	Cloche	Row of Seam Holes	Not Filled	Estonia	44	Combination	Medium	Before 2023	
Christy London	Brown	Unknown	Men's	Natural	Christy's London	Rebboked Hat	Fedora	Good	Not Filled	United States	51	Machine-stitched	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Augsburger	Taupe	Unknown	Men's	Natural	Augsburger?	Washed Cone	Floppy Hat	Inset Damage - Surface	Not Filled	Germany	51	Machine-stitched	Heavy/Dense	Before 2023	
Taupe mouse	Taupe	Unknown	Women's	Natural	No Label	Rebboked Hat	Cloche	Cut holes/Slash	Not Filled	Germany	51	Combination	Light	Before 2023	

ill. 25 on page 81-82, Gallery view of all the 45 vintage hats in the database. Author's collection, 2023.

ill. 26 on page 83, Table view of all the database hats with properties. Author's collection, 2023.

Database viewable with link:

<https://graceful-cross-392.notion.site/fdccbeb668a42a28e33892bbb18c776?v=0e669243d982422cb51ee5262b29556e>