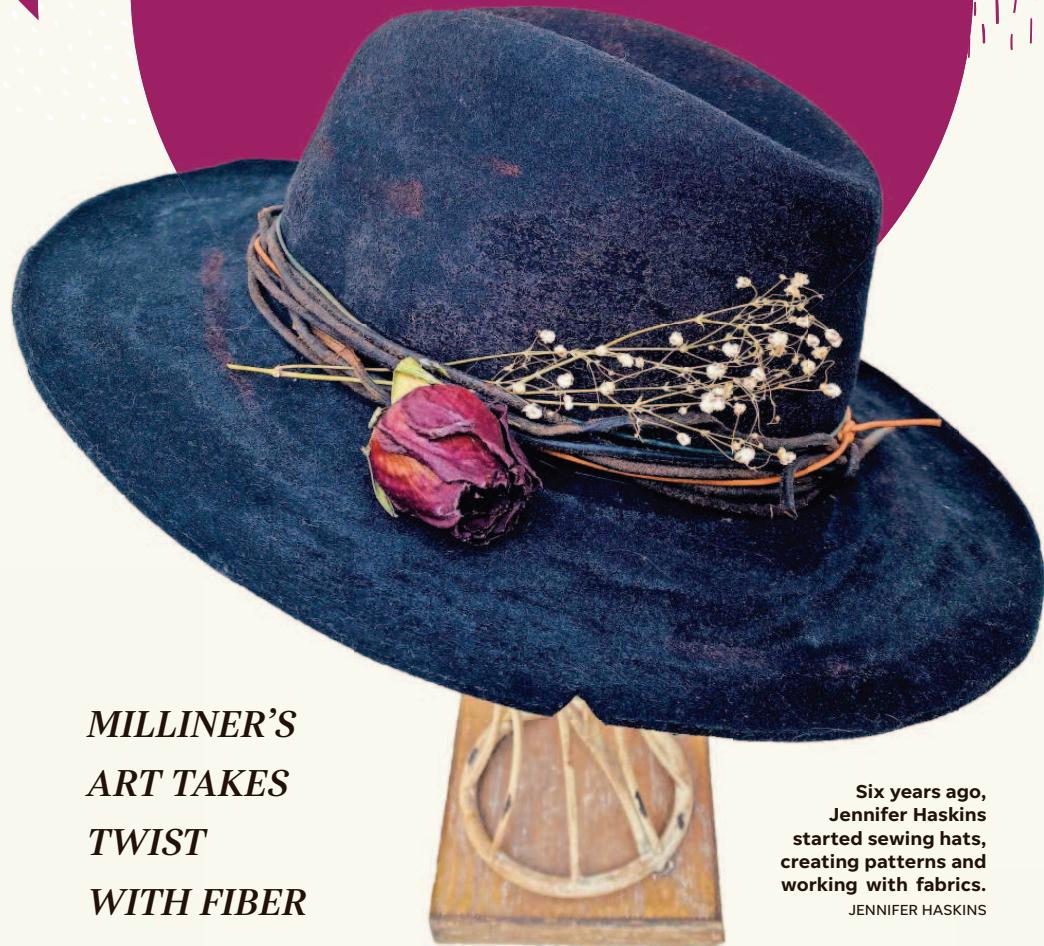


HAT tricks



**MILLINER'S
ART TAKES
TWIST
WITH FIBER**

Six years ago,
Jennifer Haskins
started sewing hats,
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working with fabrics.
JENNIFER HASKINS

Amanda Sieradzki
Council on Culture & Arts

Jennifer Haskins prefers to style herself in all black. The self-taught milliner painted streaks of metallic watercolor on her favorite hat to give the appearance of rust on its black, wool base. A dried rose from a special Valentine's Day bouquet adorns the brim, completing the rugged, edgy look. • Haskins has turned to her fiber-art making as a therapeutic release during these turbulent times. • As the art program coordinator for the Tallahassee Senior Center, she is coming up with creative solutions for showcasing and sharing art while their physical space remains closed due to COVID-19. She recently launched the "Art Potpourri" online exhibit in hopes the virtual gallery will not only keep artists connected, but also provide motivation and inspiration. **See HASKINS, Page 4C**

Haskins

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"I talked to an instructor the other day who said it's so hard right now to bring themselves to make any art and that's the thing that would help," says Haskins. "People who have been coming to the Center weekly for art classes, socializing, collaborating and sharing...that's a huge piece that's been taken away from them and it's easy to fall into a routine where they're not creating. It's important to take the time to get yourself going."

Haskins lets her inquisitive spirit provide her drive with every new hat and sculpture. Her training in elementary and art education introduced her to printmaking, sculpture, drawing, ceramics and art history. She remains an adamant dabbler in many mediums, and her first art memories as a child were fostered by her father, a watercolorist.

"I was using colored pencils for a report on Jupiter and he showed me how to layer and crosshatch," recalls Haskins. "I don't remember anything about Jupiter, but I do remember how to use those colored pencils and how amazed I was by those different techniques."

Haskins was always fond of building an art tool collection, which partly led her to hat-making. Six years ago, she started sewing hats, creating patterns and working with different fabrics and natural fibers. Eventually she pored over books and took on more advanced techniques, such as creating hats from one continuous piece of material.

Haskins steams her wool to open up its fibers, then lays it on the wood-block form to style it into different shapes. She is fearless in her approach, painting an entire hat blue just to see what will happen, or sourcing chicken feathers from her backyard to add some embellishment.

"It does have such an interesting history whereas we aren't wearing hats the way we have in the past," says Haskins. "It's a unique way to express yourself as well as having function whether it's for warmth or sun protection."

Right before quarantine, Haskins was able to take a soft sculpture workshop at the Center with local artist Linda Hall, which expanded her own approach to the fiber arts. Two works Haskins made during that workshop are currently featured in COCA's "Creative Tallahassee" online exhibition.



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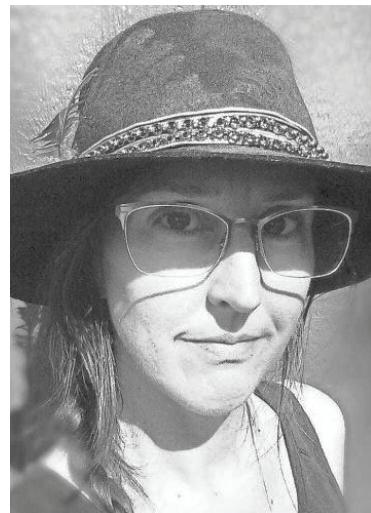
Her pod-shaped, "Don't Feed the Wolves," grew from a hand-sewn beret filled with wool and joined with papier-mâché and paper clay to form the canine's head. The mouth is sewn shut with Haskins's stitching, which she says represents not feeding into dark times or allowing them to consume you.

The second piece, "Overwhelmed" was formed from another hat, and is covered in fabric strips cut from hand-sewn neckerchiefs. Haskins knotted and wrapped the form of a rabbit with a wet-felting technique she learned from millinery.

"As I've moved into more soft sculpture pieces, there's definitely still some

elements of hat-making," says Haskins. "These pieces were emotions that weren't completely raw at the time, they had been processed, but were still a part of my experience. It was something that I wanted to express creatively and visually."

While Haskins misses seeing everyone as well as the social aspects of hanging the artwork, coordinating events and organizing receptions, she is hoping to offer more virtual options for networking in the fall. The Center continues to offer virtual art classes and workshops via Zoom, which Haskins says also has the ability to reach beyond the Tallahassee community.



Jennifer Haskins, the art program coordinator for the Tallahassee Senior Center, is coming up with creative solutions for showcasing and sharing art while their physical space remains closed due to COVID-19 JENNIFER HASKINS

If you go virtually

What: Tallahassee Senior Center for the Arts Online Gallery

When: Ongoing

Contact: For more information on the "Art Potpourri" exhibit or to register for virtual classes visit tallahasseeseniorfoundation.org.

In addition to the "Art Potpourri" online exhibit, she has spearheaded the "Small Art, Big Impact" fundraiser to keep the art program thriving as it runs on a reduced class schedule. Senior Center artists will create and donate one-of-a-kind handcrafted greeting cards for purchase. Haskins says all cards will be available on the website, and proceeds go towards supporting art programming.

"It's important to connect with tangible things right now," says Haskins. "A bright piece of art with a message from someone you love inside can make a big difference."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).