

Jewel in crown for acclaimed stage and screen designer

By Kat Wong

Updated January 25 2024 - 10:10pm, first published 10:02pm



Rosie Boylan's decades-long millinery career is driven by passion and has earned her an honour. (Bianca De Marchi/AAP PHOTOS)

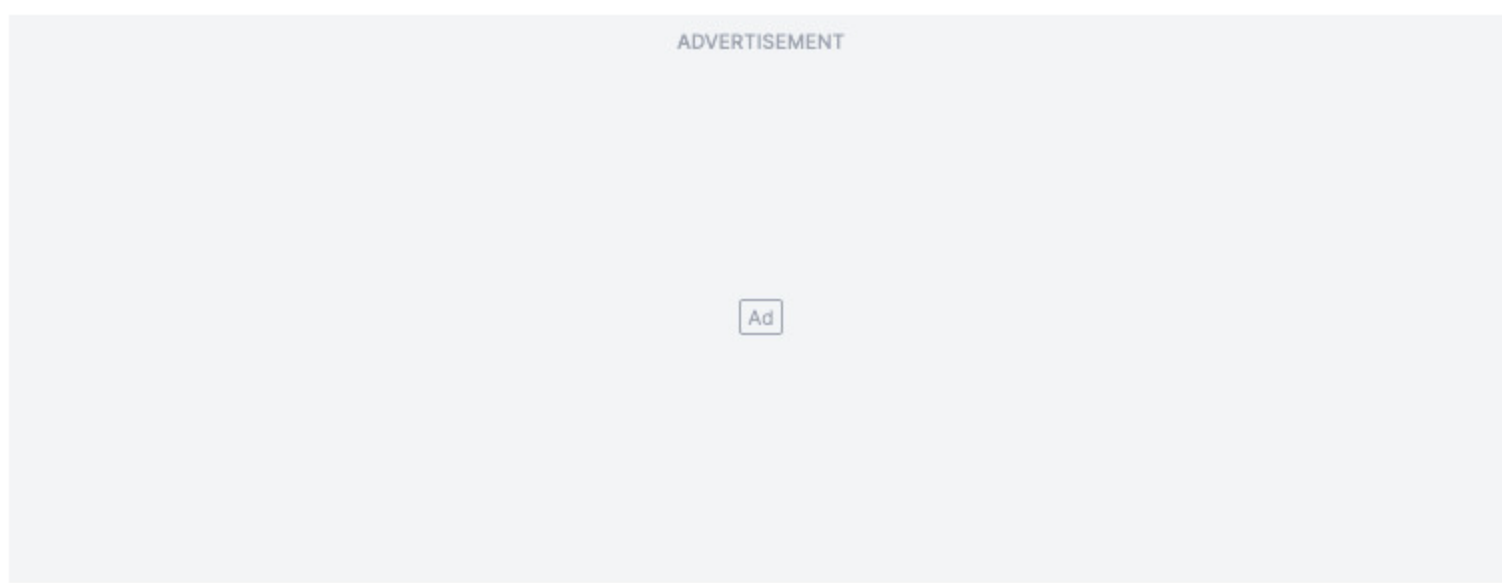
An artist, a sculptor, a teacher – Rosie Boylan is a wearer and maker of many hats.

To many Australians, millinery is a dying profession but Boylan's illustrious career would prove them wrong.

Over the past four decades, she has created some of the most iconic headwear to hit the big screen.

A jewel-encrusted top hat worn by Nicole Kidman as she descends from the ceiling in a flurry of confetti during Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge*, was born from Boylan's hands.

As were the 1920s-style pieces that adorned the crowns of Carey Mulligan and Elizabeth Debicki in the opulent 2013 adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*.



Both films won Academy Awards for costume design.

Boylan's work has also taken centre stage in musicals like *The Lion King*, *Les Miserables*, *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

All of this blossomed from an Adelaide theatrecraft course she took years ago.

To Boylan, a hat is more than just an afterthought, it is a sculptural form that speaks to its wearer.

"I love the way a hat sits on the head, how it slices through the air," she said.

"The hat is the last thing that's put on, it really seals the look for the character and performer – and so it's a very special part of the whole look that defines a person."

And despite the rise of ready-made clothing, many hat enthusiasts have begun to recognise this as well.

In fact Boylan opened her own Sydney hat shop partially because she disagreed with fast-fashion options.

During appointments, she gets to know her clients intimately, examining their features, taking their measurements, and walking them through styles that will complement their faces.

To Boylan, some of the best parts of her career are the moments of human connection: talking to customers, passing on skills to students at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, travelling to the Pacific and supporting local women in their hatmaking ventures.

"I must be crazy (to do it all) ... but do I love it," she said, crediting the work of fellow creative and leather worker Cheryl Rounsefell, with whom she has made a lot of hats and drank a lot of tea..

On Thursday, Boylan was awarded a Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia for her work as a milliner, adding another feather to her already highly decorated cap.

Boylan was one of many recognised for their service to the creative and performing arts sectors in the 2024 Honours List.

Musical conductor and director John Foreman has been appointed a Member (AM) to the Order, along with former TV presenter David Koch.

Margaret Fink, the producer of critically acclaimed 1979 Australian film *My Brilliant Career* is appointed an Officer (AO) to the Order, with the citation: "for distinguished service to the arts as a film and television producer, and as a supporter of the visual arts community".

Photographer and artist Bill Henson is appointed an AO for distinguished service to the visual arts and to the promotion of Australian culture.

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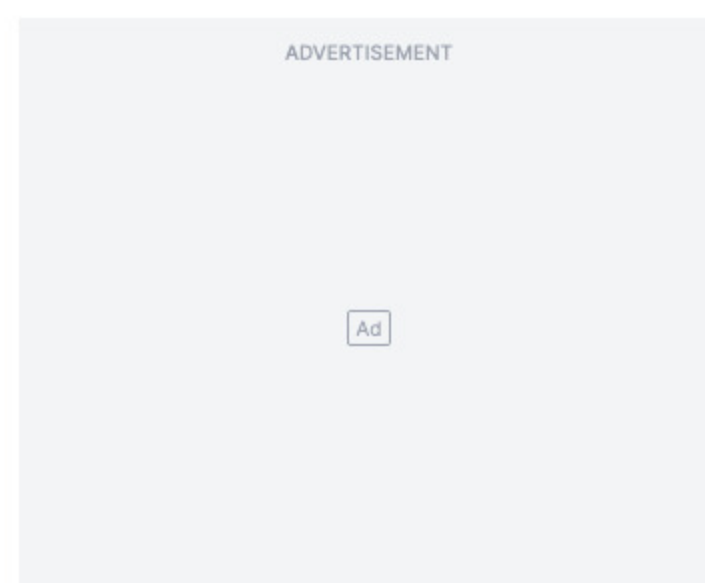
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