



Felting is, of course, only one of many creative expressions, so what makes it unique? Answers to that question will surely vary as widely as the medium itself, but just as the diversity in felting is united by the magic of the wool, some of our reasons for felting may share commonality.

Felting is not only a familiar stuff of childhood, but an alluringly tactile one. As infants, it may have offered us gentle first connections to newly discovered senses of touch and smell. With no stitch, no weave, no imposed structure, it's unassuming. Because the felting process is forgiving and works in such a broad way, it feels welcoming to everyone and the many techniques of making felt offer endless open doors into the alchemical magic of the wool fiber. But I believe the most seductive thing about felt lies in its duality.

Something that can be at once simple and yet endlessly complex holds great power. When I felt, I'm humbled by the energy and knowing that I feel in my hands which leads to quieting of other distractions, especially mental thought. The simplicity is profound in the Church of Wool. Every wool has a distinctive voice which is expressed through the dynamic patterns and movement of its fibers during the felting process. Identify this dialog and you will learn to truly listen. Participate in this dialog and you will learn to relinquish control, allowing your hands to directly respond to the material. Strain to hear a mixture of wools and you'll find yourself in the balcony choir.

Felting is certainly a magic trick, a metamorphosis. I felt for the thrill of riding the magic. For me the process itself is often more thrilling than the outcome, which is why I have an ever-growing row of sample books! The broad diversity of the medium is also a strong draw for me. I love the personal challenge of making sheer cobweb one day and a hard, sculpted piece the next. Something utilitarian followed by something made purely for artistic enjoyment. It's an endless, changing journey.

—Chris White



I grew up with a felting mother, which meant I was sure that *felt* was the one thing I would not do! Wanting to venture in something different to that of my parents, I started down the path of photography, soon to realize that it was not for me.

What did I see myself doing through the years? Sewing! I love constructing and sewing garments. After studying at E.I.T (Fashion Institute of Technology) in NYC I came to realize how limiting fabric could be (unless you have an awful lot of money). I started looking at felt with new eyes. I finally had the information I needed to see felt not just as a craft and art form that my mother did, but as one of many fabrics in the world, and a particularly exceptional one at that!

With felt you not only have the fulfilling quality of making your own fabric and then a garment or accessory (which could also be with knitting and weaving), but a freedom within the craft that is exceptional and seemingly limitless. To have a fabric with no set grains, to be able to mould your fabric to your figure or any form, to be able to sew your fabric without the concern for edges unraveling, to be able to push texture to the extreme, to be able to mix media whether it be other plant and animal fibers and fabrics, or even bizarre objects such as stones, to not have to work within the confines of a grid or the structure of straight edges, to be able to sculpt in this very same medium with a slight variation of technique, to be able to make a highly textured summer wrap one day and a heavy duty flat blanket the next, are a few examples of felt's seemingly boundless abilities.

To me felt is the most exciting, versatile and new fabric. Felt has been used for centuries for things like carpets, hats and dwellings but has really evolved into something so cutting edge and ever changing that it seems constantly new.

—Myfanwy Stirling

Why Felt



Felting making is my passion. I love it. I dream about felt. I lose myself in it and I find myself in it. For me it is creative, vibrant, fun, and challenging. It is a very simple process yet its applications can be as complex as I like. Where do I gain my inspiration? I gain inspiration first and foremost from deep within myself—from my life experiences. Inspiration from the beautiful rural setting I live in and the natural world that surrounds me, inspiration from other artists in many different mediums. I love shape and form and texture. The vibrant colours and textures of the fibres and fabrics I use feed my soul. I learn so much about myself making felt.

Felting making is an ancient textile art with a long and fascinating history. It is also a fabulous contemporary art form that has many practical and modern applications. Whilst it is quite simple to learn, mastering the medium can become an all consuming passion. I love felt because it is so versatile and the finished product has so many practical applications. Felting provides me with a creative outlet that is both unique and full of challenge. For me it is always the process that intrigues me and fires my imagination. The finished product is often far from my thoughts. I learn so much by playing! I am continuously refining my skills and learning from many other talented fibre artists and students who so generously share their wealth of knowledge with me.

After quite a few personally challenging years I am enjoying creating a cohesive body of work which I plan to develop over time. The felting I have engaged myself in over the last few years has been mostly therapeutic. I am pleased to now have the energy to create in a much more ordered, structured and directed way. I have made a vow though to never lose the playfulness that has sustained me whilst wading through life's difficulties. I am so grateful for my creativity. It has indeed been a good friend!

—Wendy Bailley



Felt? Basically, because I see felting as a wondrous process and a means to a compelling and versatile textile end.

As a "maker" and fibre worker for over fifty years, the quest for textiles that meet my needs for creating functional, wearable and utilitarian goods, has been an evolving, integral part of my life's work. Though deeply appreciative of the rich artistry and quality of world textiles which I have researched and sometimes use, I also need to create my own. Spinning, dyeing and weaving fabrics, from wool carpets to silk yardage took me on a journey that in time, pointed to a fabric previously unknown to me—hand made felt.

Sue Freeman's book, *Felt Craft* probed me to learn more about this exciting material, which culminated in my desire to shape new and experimental felted materials. Nuno felt is a term that I coined with the help of my friend and colleague, Sachiko Kotaka, as we returned from the Sydney Craft Festival in the early 1990's. We were attempting to describe the experimental felt creations featured in our exhibit and fashion show, which had attracted much curiosity, hesitancy, and few sales. I sensed that a descriptive title would give necessary credence to the contemporary felts we were excited about creating, and a sort of "handle" for future development and reference.

The word "nuno" in Japanese language means "cloth". Thus, nuno felt suggests combining cloth and felted wool fibers. This is a generic term, meant to be used and shared by any who find it appropriate. Nuno is a common word in Japan. For me it is a beautiful soft word that fitted perfectly with what was beginning to evolve.

Through the transformation of component fibers which interlock irreversibly, their colors that brew and blend in unexpected ways, and layered additional materials which imbue felted cloth with texture and visual dimension, I find great pleasure and fascination in exploring variables. The physical process too, is engrossing both mentally, and in the resultant activity of the hands. Hands have innate ability of expression and artistry emanating from the spirit within.

—Polly Stirling