

Fibre crafts

Nora Kennedy

Fibre art:

Collective term, coined in the 1970s, for creative, experimental fibre objects. A wide range of techniques is used, often in combinations that encompass both traditional (e.g. felting, knotting) and modern (e.g. photographic transfer) practices. The eclectic range of materials includes many not previously associated with textiles, such as paper, wood, iridescent film, nylon mesh and wire.

The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art

What is felt?

Felt is a compressed fabric made of wool. Felt is made by matting and compressing wool fibres, often using heat, moisture and friction, to create a dense cloth.

Felt

Felt is the earliest known form of textile fabric; it dates back thousands and thousands of years. Felt can be created from raw woollen fibres, with minimal processing and little skill necessary. It has played a very important role in the lives of humans throughout history; it is renowned for its ability to keep people warm and dry. Felt has commonly been used for many purposes. It has been used as tent covers, rugs, tomb covers, socks and cushions, to name a few (Smith & Walker, 1995, para. 1). Today, felt is used for various

purposes. It is used in pianos to deaden the sound of wood touching metal, it is used as industrial roof insulation, as a protective layer in some packaging, and the list goes on (Harris, 2006).

Crafters and artisans have been felting wool into beautiful objects for years, and today, with growing popularity of upcycling, crafters have been creating beautiful objects and clothing from old woollen sweaters.

References

Harris, G. (2006). *Complete feltmaking: easy techniques and 25 great projects*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Smith, S., & Walker, F. (1995). *History of Felt*. Retrieved from <http://www.felt-art.com/content.php?id=8>

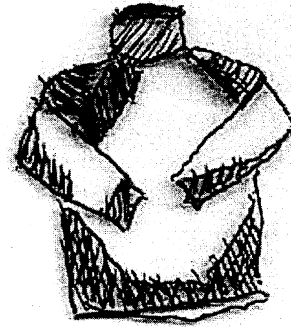
Programming Ideas

At one point in everybody's busy life they have thrown a wool sweater into the washing machine and then into the dryer by accident. Without intending to, you have created felt. By using felted sweaters, here is a great programming idea for the creation of a felted cell phone case.

Felted Cell Phone Case

Materials:

- Felted wool sweater (washed in hot water and then dried in the dryer)
- Embroidery thread
- Pins
- Wool scraps
- Buttons
- Glue
- Yarn or string



- A. Measure the cell phone's length, width and height. Write it down.
- B. Using the felted sweaters as fabric and a pair of scissors, cut one rectangle just a little wider and taller than your cell phone.
- C. Cut a second rectangle the same width as the first rectangle, but add 7-12 centimetres in height to the piece of fabric. This will act as the back section of the case.
- D. Decorate the smallest rectangle by sewing contrasting shapes and patterns on it for adornment (using other felted sweaters and buttons).
- E. Once decorated, line the two pieces of fabric up at the bottom (be sure to face the decoration on the inside). Sew up three sides (use blanket stitch or running stitch).
- F. Once sewn, flip the case right side out.
- G. On the flap that extends, cut a hole slightly larger than a button that will be sewn on the front of the case, sew around the hole for reinforcement.
- H. Attach a button on the front of the pouch.

Fibre Arts Resources

Books

- Girars, S. (2008). *Sweater surgery: how to make new things with old sweaters*. Beverley, MA: Quarry Books.
- Pace, M. (2006). *Felt it! 20 fun and fabulous projects to knit and felt*. North Adams, MA: Storey.
- Swenson, A. (2007). *Not your mama's felting: the cool and creative way to get it together*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Vickrey, A. (1997). *The art of felting: basic techniques for making jewelry, miniatures, dolls, buttons, wearables, puppets, masks, and fine art pieces*. New York: Watson-Guption.

Electronic Resources

- BChydro – For Generations – News. (19 January 2009). *Transform your favorite old sweaters into cosy new treasures* (blog). Message posted to https://www.bchydro.com/news/articles/conservation/transform_your_favourite_old_sweaters_into_cosy_new_treasures.html
- Craft. (2009). Felted Sweater Flowers with Betz White – Craft Video Podcast. (webcast) Message posted http://blog.craftzine.com/archive/2008/02/felted_sweater_flowers_with_be.html
- Craft Gossip.com – every little bit of craft gossip. (25 March 2009). Felted knitted carrot pattern by me! (blog). Message posted to <http://felting.craftgossip.com/category/uncategorized/>
- White, B. (2009). Betz White: felted wool artfully stitched. (blog) retrieved from <http://blog.betzwhite.com/>