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Do you know Feltmaking?

Q. What is it?

A. There are three common methods of feltmaking.

1) Wet felting (also called traditional felting) is an ancient process that involves these actions:

- * Beginning with a pile of loose wool
- * Adding a little soap and water
- * Pressing the fibers until they hold together as cloth
- * Vigorously working the cloth to shrink and strengthen it



2) Needle felting

A process in which sharp, barbed needles are poked down through loose fibers, entangling them into a dense mat. Initially used in industry to create padding and factory felts, the process has been adapted by crafters, doll makers, and other fiber artists surface embellishment, “painting” with wool, and for sculpting felted figures. Also called dry felting.



3) Nuno felting

A technique, named by Polly Stirling in the mid-1990s, that involves felting loose wool fibers into cloth, usually silk. The fibers travel through the weave of the cloth and entangle on the back side; as the fibers shrink, a strongly textured felt/fabric hybrid is generated. Europeans first developed something similar, called laminated felting, in the 1980s.



Q. Is it hard to do it?

A. Not at all. Feltmaking is a forgiving and flexible process. Anyone can learn to make felt in a matter of minutes. It's easy enough for even small children to do, so it's a wonderful activity for parents, teacher, and babysitters.

Q. What is it that makes feltmaking so alluring?

A. Feltmaking is at once deceptively simple and endlessly complex. Feltmaking can be much more sophisticated than most people realize, so it's also a perfect medium for creative people who seek a challenge. In fact, there are so many subtle things to learn in feltmaking that some artists have chosen lifelong careers as professional feltmakers.