

About the Artist and Her Work

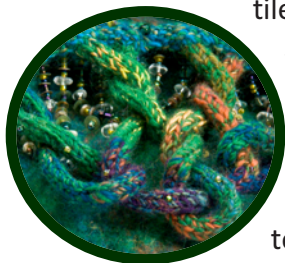


It took Laura Artates a while to recognize that her life's calling was there in front of her all the time. It was only a few years ago that she realized she'd never gone more than a few weeks, usually no more than a day or two, without working with fiber in some way.

"No other work compels me in the way that fiber art does," she says. "And so, it seems I have found my calling after all, and I embrace it with all of the years of experience and training that I have managed to accumulate in my "spare time" over the years."

Unlike traditional craft artists who often focus narrowly on one tradition, Artates has retained a bit of her "jack-of-all-trades" nature. She combines wet felting, handspinning, knitting, weaving, embroidery, beading, crochet, and other techniques in her pieces.

Artates' work is influenced strongly by her exposure to historical and anthropological textiles and research. Her use of color



stems from the qualities of color variation found in naturally-dyed and hand-made textiles, as well as the subtle and sometimes dramatic colors and patterns found in natural stones, wood grain, and other natural materials.

Her design is influenced by the simple, functional ways that traditional designs evolve from the forms available to suit the needs of a culture.

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FOUNDATIONS IN FELT
by Laura Artates

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**Unique textiles hand-crafted
from the ground up**



Fine natural wools and silks, and natural and glass beads provide luxurious texture and contrast using materials that have decorated the body and the home for thousands of years. Artates combines these elements into organic and richly colorful one-of-a-kind works that are both cutting-edge and timeless.

THE ARTIST AT WORK: CREATING FELT-BASED TEXTILES

The multi-step process of creating each unique piece begins with selecting the fibers and colors for the project. Natural colored or dyed fibers are selected and combined to produce the desired surface design or texture effects. If the project requires details using handspun yarn, a portion of the fiber is set aside to become yarn at this time.



Adding silk to surface of wool layers

The creation of the base textile uses a process involving hot water, soap, and agitation referred to as "wet felting." One of the most versatile traits of hand felting is that pieces can be created in three dimensions by using various patterns or forms on which to create the felt.

Many of Artates' pieces are created using inflatable balls of various sizes as the base. The fibers are built up in layers evenly around the outside of the ball, and soap and hot water are carefully added to start the formation of the felt.

Felting the wool around the ball



Making a flat sheet of felt

The layers are compressed and rubbed against the surface of the ball and a textured surface until the fibers lock together and shrink tightly around the ball. Then the felt is carefully cut open to allow the ball to be deflated and removed before the final hardening and shaping is completed.



The same process is used to make flat sheets of felt, by laying the wool and other fibers

Cutting partially-felted sheet into strips for weaving



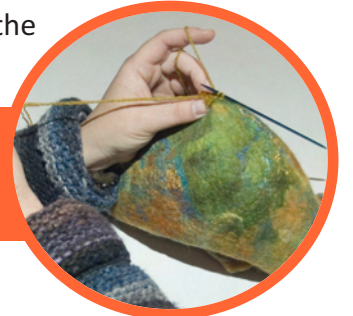
out in layers on a flat surface. The wetted fibers can then be agitated by hand and the felting is accomplished by compressing and rubbing. Often bubble wrap (yes, bubble wrap) is used between layers of wool to make a roll that can be compressed and worked to create the felt.

Artates creates her woven felt artwork by partially felting flat pieces of felt using her signature surface design techniques. She then cuts the flat felt into strips and weaves the strips in

various patterns. The woven strips are then rewetted and the felting and fulling process is completed, creating unique effects for two dimensional textiles.

Additional details and embellishments are added using handspun yarn made from the same fibers as the felt.

Sewing onto felt to pick up stitches for knitting embellishments



Artates has developed her own technique for picking up stitches onto a knitting needle, which allows her to add knitted edgings, embellishments, and structural elements to her work. She also uses the handspun yarn to add embroidered elements.

Hand-beading adds the final touches to the work. Artates uses a variety of glass and natural material beads to complement the felt. When complete, the felt may be reinforced using the traditional method of impregnating the felt with shellac. This adds stiffness and water repellency to the felt, if desired.

Beading a felt vessel

