



The Worshipful Company of Feltmakers of London

Autumn 2014

**News Letter
Supplement
- Felt its
many uses**

Overview

A natural, warm material, Felt is the plainest form of wool, and for the past few years it has been presented at the biggest and most popular European design fairs in a multitude of forms extending from decoration, to jewellery. felt continues to be used within the textiles industry for fashion, such as hatmaking and sculptures.



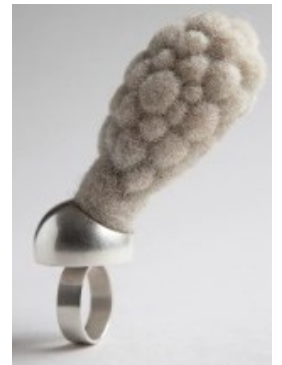
New Techniques

Different techniques within felt making have emerged, these include dry felting (needlepunch), using half felts, making 3-Dimensional objects, layering, embroidering, cutting and slashing to produce textured surfaces. While machinery is used today to accomplish many of these tasks, the processing requirements remain unchanged. Until the late nineteenth century mercury was used in the processing of felt for hatmaking. It was discovered to have debilitating effects on the hatter causing poisoning that led to tremors, hallucinations, and other psychotic symptoms. The term *mad hatter* is associated with the hatter because of the [psychosis](#) that stemmed from the mercury poisoning. Hats of wool felt remain popular and are primarily worn in the winter months.



Jewellery

Increasingly within modern jewellery, felt is being more experimented with, both in combination with natural minerals and by itself. Felt beads and flowers are among the most popular pieces. Its recognition as jewellery has meant that artists such as Swiss designer Karin Wagner, in 2003 won the 'designer of the year' award at Munich's Inhogenta Fair.



Furniture

The development of new felting techniques has allowed its increasing use for furniture. Above is a chair made from using 10mm technical felt and 750 sheets of gelatine with laser cut aluminium and nylon thread finishes. The artists involved are drawn to felt because of its renewable values, sustainability and new fabrication techniques.

Changing opinions

The curator of the recent exhibition 'Black sheep – the darker side of felt' explains that using felt to make three-dimensional work, highlights the many contemporary applications of this ancient material beyond its stereotypical 'fuzzy felt' reputation.



Felt in Industry

Felts use ranges from the automotive industry, to musical instruments and home construction. The types of felt use in these industries are SAE grades, needle blended synthetic, wool, polyester, polypropylene, orthopaedic, wicking, felt tape and sheet felt.



Automotive

In the automotive industry both standard and custom automotive needle punch wool and synthetic felt are used. This is available in rolls and sheets in thicknesses from 0.040 in to 3 in and in widths up to 84 in.

Applications include a damper, which damps the vibrations between interior panels and stops dirt entering into the ball/cup joints. Additionally, it is used on the underside of a car bonnet to protect the body.

Glass industry

Felt is useful within the glass processing industry, from bench recovering to transit of glass. For example, cladding and cushioning felts are widely used in autocut and manual tables, glass-carrying vehicles, trolleys, racking and separator pads.

Products used in this sector would be industrial felt, polishing felt and felt tapes.

Musical instruments

Felt is used extensively in musical instruments such as, accordions, drums and pianos. The most commonly used felt parts in the piano are known as damper felt.. This comes in mostly green or red, to dampen noise and sound from the keyboard.

In some instances, white or grey wool felt is used in organs to reduce the internal residual vibration and sound that can occur. Alternatively, higher density parts are used in percussion instruments, such as pedals for the drum.

Home Construction

Pressed Felt (also known as Technical Felt, Industrial Felt, Fulled Felt, Woolfelt) is manufactured by blending, pressing, fulling and drying, to produce a non-woven homogenous mat of fibre, which can exhibit a wide variety of properties depending on the final hardness, thickness and blend of wool used in its make-up. Pressed Felt is known to exhibit a number a key properties which makes it one of the most flexible natural textiles still in use around the construction industry.

Roofing felt was introduced primarily to act as a secondary barrier against wind-driven snow and rain, but its use also causes a reduction in air movement within the roof space.

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