

There are other ways to achieve a fabric besides a horizontal and vertical interlacement of threads as in weaving. Felting, the process of permanently tangling together wool fibers into a matted surface using heat, water, and agitation, dates back thousands of years. Wool has unique properties that allow the scales to latch onto one another creating a dense warm cloth.

Because I taught garment making to fiber artists, in addition to handweavers and quilters, I would also occasionally have felters in my workshops. Felted cloth has unique properties that woven cloth doesn't have, such as finished natural edges, and stability on the bias. There are no grainlines in felted cloth. In addition, the scales of the wool fibers can grab onto a gauzy traditional woven fabric creating a felt laminate.

It was important that I learned to felt, making it easier to guide felters in my workshops, learning how to celebrate the uniqueness of the cloth. Felting is a physical craft, hours of rolling and agitation to create a controlled even cloth. I do prefer to weave, there is something about the loom that will always draw me. But I created a few pieces, specifically for workshop purposes, that celebrate this unusual cloth in something wearable.

*Arctic Sky* is handwoven, but I've used the laminate technique of felting wool onto silk to create the piping in the princess seams.

*Winter Landscape* uses the natural edge of the felt, since each of the pattern sections were felted individually. Remaining fibers were handspun into a 2-ply yarn and hand couched over any machine stitching. In *Winter Landscape*, the wool was felted onto a silk chiffon print, a portion can be seen in the folded natural edge of the pockets and cuffs.

*Second Time Around* was created using the leftover scraps from Piroska Toth, a student in one of my jacket workshops, who had created actual felt yardage and so cut into it to create a jacket. She graciously gave me the leftovers and I created this pieced vest, and a subsequent workshop for felters at a felting conference.

-Daryl Lancaster