Entangled: Fiber to Felt to Fashion

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Sharon Kilfoyle

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Kent State University Museum
May 8, 2014 – February 15, 2015

Sherry Schofield and Sharon Kilfoyle, Guest Curators

The Kent State University Museum is pleased to host this invitational exhibition of felted work by fifteen contemporary textile artists from the United States and Canada. Felt is legendary as one of the oldest materials from which garments have been made. Created primarily of wool fibers that have been manipulated with pressure and moisture so that the fibers interlock, traditional felt is non-woven. Although wool is not the only fiber that can be felted, the physical properties of wool fibers felt more easily to form a strong bond. In this exhibition the majority of pieces are made in the nuno felting technique developed by Australian Polly Stirling in the early 1990s. The word nuno is derived from the Japanese word for cloth. Nuno felting techniques are simple, and allow the blending together of fabric and wool in the felting process. It has inspired designers to create sheer fabrics that are easy to drape and to sew into elegant garments. Fiber artists and designers are experimenting with the parameters of this process, and the result has been an amazing array of fabrics, styles, and aesthetics, as well as surprising combinations of fabrics, wools, and synthetic embellishments. By hand dyeing both the felting fibers and the base textiles, the artists achieve imaginative patterns of color and texture and create garments unique in both silhouette and style. Our focus in this exhibition is the use of felt in elegant garments, using both seamless and sewn felt techniques, and showcasing both sheer elegance and sturdy construction.

We would like to thank our guest curators Sherry Schofield and Sharon Kilfoyle for so diligently discovering the artists represented in the exhibition and inviting their participation. We would also like to thank the artists for agreeing to lend their work for this exhibition. We hope that the variety and proficiency of technique of these selected artists may inspire you to experiment with your own felted creations.

Jean L. Druesedow, Director
Kent State University Museum
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The Kent State University Museum is supported through a sustainability grant from The Ohio Arts Council.
1. LOVE IN SEVILLE
Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk organza
Artist’s statement:
Inspired by Rossini’s opera *The Barber of Seville*, this two-piece gown is a celebration of Rosina’s willful independence and her success in outwitting her guardian to get the man she wants for her life. The charming comedic style of the opera, coupled with colors in paintings of the period, provided additional inspiration. The gown was designed for the Dallas Opera Luncheon and opening night in 2013.
On loan from Elizabeth Anyaa
L2014.9.1 ab

2. ENCHANTED DREAM
Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk crinkle chiffon
Artist’s statement:
Falling into bed after a productive and creative day, I saw in my mind’s eye a welcoming darkness inviting me to explore my “To Create List” for the next day. As I surrendered to the request, a white light penetrated the darkness creating the colors, texture and form that inspired this dress.
On loan from Elizabeth Anyaa
L2014.9.3
3. SOUTHWEST DREAM
*Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk*

Artist’s statement:
Zion National Park inspired the color combination of this vest. The colors of the sandstone and waterfall are the elements of inspiration. This signature design can be worn in four different ways.

Lent by Marjolaine’s Touch, Chestertown, NY L2014.4.2 ab

4. MAUI DREAM
*Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk*

Artist’s statement:
While on vacation, I was inspired by the tropical gardens of Maui and saw this new creation in a dream upon my return. It is filled with the vibrant colors of flowers, my favorite theme in my creations.

Lent by Marjolaine’s Touch, Chestertown, NY L2014.4.1
5. **EBB AND FLOW**

*Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk*

Artist’s statement:
This collaborative design project used repurposed fabric in a way that depicts the elemental cycles of nature’s opposing elements. The fabric designer created two nuno felt pieces that harmonized with a silk sari, and the clothing designer created an outfit infused by all of the fabrics. Certain parts of the felted fabric gave inspiration to the clothing designer for the pattern pieces.

Lent by Kim Hahn  
L2014.12.1 a-c

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6. **FOLIAGE**

*Felted and dyed wool*

Artist’s statement:
Striving for, finding, and capturing beauty is the essence of creation through nature’s resources, while pushing its boundaries.

Lent by the artists  
L2014.15.1
7. BUCKEYE BUTTERFLY
Nuno felted and dyed wool, silk, and printed silk
Artist’s statement:
Nature was my inspiration when I made the first butterfly shawl. With my love for nuno felting it all seemed to fit perfectly.
Lent by the artist
L.2014.3.3

8. PEACOCK BUTTERFLY
Nuno felted and dyed wool, silk, and printed silk
Artist’s statement:
Having had success with the butterfly shawl, I knew the next step was to make a seamless jacket in the butterfly theme.
Lent by the artist
L.2014.3.2
9. SUMMER ROSE

Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk

Artist’s statement:
Keeping with the inspirations from nature, and my love of flowers, this jacket emerged using the same technique as I used in my butterfly garments.

Lent by the artist
L.2014.3.1
10. **ATMOSPHERIC**
*Hand-dyed and felted silk sliver, mohair and alpaca locks and merino wool roving with hand-dyed silk crepe and silk chiffon fabric*

Artist’s statement:
Ellipsoidal in shape, like so many of the map projections that express a view of the earth as a two-dimensional plane, this piece, with its highly textured and vibrant blue and green hues, draws inspiration from the planetary and the celestial. *Atmospheric* is a fully reversible vest made entirely by the wet-felting technique of layering very thin layers of fiber on and between layers of open weave silk fabric to create a highly textured, completely reversible cohesive fabric without stitching or sewing of any kind.

Lent by the artist
L.2014.11.1

11. **UnKIMONO**
*Felted and dyed merino wool, tussah silk sliver and cotton gauze*

Artist’s statement:
*UnKimono* was created by wet felting many very thin layers of hand-dyed and un-dyed silk sliver and merino wool roving. Inspired by my experience flying over (and landing on) the frozen Bering Sea in a small aircraft, this piece draws inspiration from that vast white world: from the textures and patterns that emerge in an aerial view of the constantly shifting landscape of cracks and seams in the pack ice.

Lent by the artist
L.2014.11.2 ab
12. THE RAINBOW BUBBLE SCARF
Felted and dyed wool
Artist’s statement:
Is a joyful piece that recalls the knee dropping beauty of light shining through the stained glass windows of Notre Dame Cathedral. Droplets of color danced across the stone floor. This piece was started in Paris.
On loan from Leslie Samson
L2014.7.6

13. A VEST OF TWO RIVERS
Nuno felted and dyed wool, silk, and polyester
Artist’s statement:
An “Homage to Flowing Waters” – a Kilfoyle in Gaelic or a Brusenbach in German, this vest is inspired by the movement of our lives like water – sometimes structured, sometimes wild - like rivers, like friendships, like sisters by choice.
On loan from Leslie Samson
L2014.7.1
14. **DARK WINTER COAT**

*Nuno felted and dyed wool, angora wool, and silk*

Artist’s statement:
The *Dark Winter Coat* celebrates a winter so sharp that it cracked. Shards of felt glisten against a mottled background of angora as soft as snow. The fossil buttons connect to the ancient nature of felt.

On loan from Leslie Samson
L2014.7.2
15. INDIGO KIMONO
*Felted and dyed wool*

*Artist’s statement:*
This piece was created as a contemporary interpretation of the kimono, for an exhibition entitled *Wrapped*, in 2010. Inspired by the West Coast seascape and creatures found in tidal pools.

On loan from Jessica de Haas
L.2014.6.2

16. ORGANIC LACE DRESS #4
*Felted wool*

*Artist’s statement:*
Inspired by some discarded industrial thread spools found in the alley outside my studio, I wanted to create a lightweight yet durable, lace-like fabric. Playing with the juxtaposition of softness vs. strength, shadow vs. light, and positive vs. negative.

On loan from Jessica de Haas
L.2014.6.3 a-c
17. SHIBORI WRAP TOP AND SKIRT
Nuno felted and shibori dyed wool and silk

Artist’s statement:
Stimulated by the pattern and texture that can be created using *arashi shibori*, I set out to make a light-weight wool and silk felt. I wanted to showcase both the crisp, visual lines and also the tactile nature of the ridges created by the resist. Shown with green nuno felted skirt

On loan from Jessica de Haas
L2014.6.1ab, 4
18. WHEN THE WIND BLOWS  
Nuno felted and dyed wool, silk, and shibori dyed silk  
Artist’s statement:  
This reversible wrap-around coat resembles tree bark in winter that resists the wind with strength and élan. I constructed it using a nuno felt collage technique in a double layer. Creating this hefty and large nuno felt garment was an exercise for me, since I usually produce sheer and delicate designs.  
On loan from Sharon Kilfoyle  
L2014.10.2

19. TRASH TO TREASURE  
Nuno felted and dyed wool, silk, and novelty yarns  
Artist’s statement:  
I found and procured the fibers for the nuno felt in this dress on the floor of a weaving atelier in Paris, France, and added them to silk scraps I dyed to match. This was used in my Paris American Academy design class to exemplify the repurposing and recycling of fibers using nuno felt.  
On loan from Sharon Kilfoyle  
L2014.10.1 a-c
20. BOUND TO BE NOTICED
Nuno felted and dyed wool and eco-dyed and shibori dyed silks

Artist’s statement:
Evocative imagery using the natural colors derived from California eucalyptus leaves expands creative expression using botanical printing on silk and wool. Complex layering gives the design dynamic energy and visions of a gentle breeze blowing through the trees.

On loan from Marilou Moschetti
L2014.2.4

21. KALLYMENIA SESSILIS PLU 1852
Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk

Artist's statement:
Mother Nature provides a fantasy of play and the possibility of endless visual change in kallymenia sessilis (seaweed) as she roils about in the sea. The dynamic energy of movement, growing, and ceaseless feeding, challenges the limitations of aesthetics, and draws a visceral and evocative response, leaving one wondering where she will end up - drifting at sea or on the beach.

On loan from Marilou Moschetti
L2014.2.1
22. WHEN IT SNOWS, IT SNOWS
Nuno felted and dyed wool and silk
Artist’s statement:
Arachnids weave beautiful webs, which inspired the creation of this shawl. Using a variety of fine silks and wools, and combining them with ribbon, lace and beads visually draws the viewer into a grid of distinctive lines, holding the imagination. Draped on the body, shape shifting with movement, the piece provides elegance with only the use of traditional black and white.
Lent by the artist
L.2014.2.3

23. BEYOND IMAGINATION
Felted and dyed wool and silk
Artist’s statement:
The combination of diverse natural materials and sensuous contours evoke the spirit of simple elegance. The dress was born without pattern, grid or line, yet innately suggests imagination and romance. Visually organic, the piece could be considered ageless and said to combine old world with new age felt.
Lent by the artist
L.2014.2.2
24. ALMOST FAMOUS AND PENNY LANE

Nuno felted and dyed wool, printed silks, shibori dyed silks, and glass beads

Artist’s statement:
The inspiration for this jacket and dress began with the long locks that come from the rare breed sheep, Teeswater. The locks reminded me of the coat that Kate Hudson wore in the movie “Almost Famous”. I wanted to create a look that was a nod to the rock and roll spirit and would access the inner rock and roll chick in us all.

On loan from artist Barbara Poole
L2014.8.1, 2

25. BEYOND GEOMETRY

Felted and dyed wool jacket; knitted wool dress

Artist's statement:
I was inspired by the simplicity of repeating circle shapes creating complexity in textile design while simultaneously inspiring garment shape.

Lent by the artist
L2014.13.1 ab
26. LAKE EFFECT
Felted and dyed wool and silk
Artist’s statement:
This dress uses new and recycled materials to create felt textures that result in a free-flowing fabric inspired by the colors and flow of water.
On loan from artist
L2014.5.1

27. UNTITLED
Felted and dyed wool and silk; silk flower
Artist’s statement:
This hip-hugging nuno felt ensemble incorporates heavily textured, recycled materials that result in free flowing fabric layers with felted rose details. The felted lace top has a rose brooch.
On loan from artist
L2014.5.3, 5 ab
28. **UNTITLED**

*Felted and dyed wool and cotton*

Artist’s statement:
Treasured antique lace finds rebirth as a decorative element in this nuno felt dress.

On loan from artist
L2014.5.2

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29. **UNTITLED**

*Felted and dyed wool and silk*

Artist’s statement:
This nuno felt swing coat features felted surfaces highlighted by recycled sari silk fibers and pieces of the silk skirt that inspired my color choice. Its collar is made from Shetland sheep raw fleece.

On loan from artist
L2014.5.4