

[An article, written by Mary-Clare Buckle, from the Summer 2004 edition of Echoes, the magazine of the International feltmakers Association, discussing feltmaking, her work as a felt maker, her influences and the techniques she uses](#)

I come from an artistic family - my brother Chris (along with the Feltmaker Phil O'Reilly) taught me on Foundation at the Surrey Institute. One of those chance life decisions then meant I ended up studying for a jewellery degree, instead of textiles. I designed and made jewellery for many years, exhibiting both here and abroad (thanks to any of you that have bought pieces off me at IFA conferences).

I knew about feltmaking through Vicki Brown (author of the book *Feltmaking*) who I was also at college with, but it took me a while to find someone to learn from. I eventually found Yuli Somme at a Festival, and later Rachael Cornish in Devon. My first pieces were made from local wool and all hand-carded (!) and were dreamy semi-abstract flower pictures (inspired by the work of the artist Odilon Redon). They were also extremely brightly coloured, since I had been freed from the constraints of making jewellery, where it is difficult to use colour easily.

In 2000 I had a great time as part of the *Millefleurs* carpet-making team - hello to all my friends I met then!

I now tend to make my work very fine, thanks to finding Ama Bolton's IFA meetings nearby, in Wells, and learning how to do make gossamer felt. I also later discovered a way of getting very fine layers off my drum-carder, by rolling the wool and silk fibres from the carder onto a cardboard tube (but pulling off the last bit otherwise you can't find the end of the fibres and unroll it). I mount the finished pieces between clear polystyrene sheets. When the pieces are then hung on nylon line, a little away from the wall they can interact with light falling on and through them and give an impression of the piece floating in three dimensions - hence 'Floating Felts'. Unlike conventional framing, the eye of the viewer is not constrained by a rectangular frame, but can instead stray onto and off the piece.

I have been tending to incorporate gold motifs from my jewellery designs and other fibres and these have been selling well (but I do find myself having to explain endlessly what felt is!) Amongst these pieces have been *Jack* - an abstracted image of the Union Jack and a commissioned piece, *Sam* (the American Flag). The prints of these pieces shown together gave a rather more political message than I had intended and have been causing some controversy, of course.

I have also been producing what I call 'Artlights', which are backlit with a 2D bulb. The felt piece is suspended a few inches away from the light, but not boxed in, so light also shines on the wall (see the image of *Waving*). I am hoping to produce some work in collaboration with an electronic engineer with slow flashing lights. My latest work includes using Christmas lights or LED's behind the piece and - inspired by the UV environment in nightclubs - incorporating UV-reactive fibres, which are then lit with a blacklight-blue tube hidden in the frame to make them glow (see the image of *Burning his Roses*).

I have also recently been combining transferred (ironed on) digital images with a felted wool background. I discovered that it also worked to iron on images, cut them out and then felt them into the piece, which meant it had a more 3-dimensional feel to it. I have also been transferring photographic images using Dylon *Image Maker*. The first piece, *It's Raining Men*, was originally inspired by the *Weather Girls* song (also, of course, recently covered by Geri Halliwell). I want to do a companion piece - *It's Raining Girls* with images of female celebrities ... and I'm working on getting a London Gallery to take on the project as a joint publicity venture. I am also considering a series of 'tourist cliché' pieces - a London-themed piece, in which it is 'raining' tourist clichés such as red phone boxes and beefeaters, double-decker buses, etc. I was runner-up for a major commission at Dorset County Hospital, on an Australian theme, and produced a number of mock-ups for the proposed work (see image of Sydney Harbour picture).

I have also been producing a number of pieces in which the design has been inspired by the way that tiles are used decoratively in the Middle East and North Africa (I have family in Morocco). Pieces such as *Me and You*, *Kiss Kiss* and *Café del Mar*.

At the moment I'm working hard promoting my work. My husband Andrew is a website Designer and general computer expert (www.andrewgreen.biz in case anyone wants a website!) and has designed my website. I've had quite a lot of press in local (and not so local) papers and Andrew has produced a presentation booklet which I've been sending to Interior Designers. This has been quite successful and

I've had some commissions. Money permitting, I'd like to do something really big - maybe for my first solo exhibition coming up in the autumn at *Forest Arts* in Hampshire, but please let me know if you know of anywhere that might like to exhibit my work.

I have just become the Dorset/Hants IFA regional contact (with Eileen Sarup), so I would love to hear from any local members.

If any IFA members would like to come and see me in Abbotsbury during Dorset Art Weeks (29th May-13th June), they would be very welcome, or for that matter anytime - my studio is open all year. Or if you are too far away, please have a look at my work virtually on www.1-art-1.com and email me your comments.

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