

*Akchurina-Muftieva N.M., doctor of Art History, professor, professor of the Department of Fine and Decorative Arts, State budgetary educational institution of higher education of the Republic of Crimea "Crimean engineering and pedagogical university named after Fevzi Yakubov", Simferopol, e-mail: Akchurina\_05@mail.ru*

### **Creative innovations in the art of felting**

**Abstract.** The paper summarizes the experience of modern masters, artists, students, and teachers from art universities in developing new methods and technologies for creating artistic works made of felt, as well as passing on traditional techniques to younger generations. General approaches to solving issues related to the creation of artistic works using felting technologies have been systematized. The importance of reviving felting practices within higher education institutions is highlighted, especially in the context of ongoing efforts to improve and develop new technologies, technological techniques and avant-garde and post-avant-garde solutions.

**Keywords:** felt art, fashion design, methods, innovative technologies, contemporary artists, Center for Artistic Felt.

The study of the process of creating artistic felt products at the present stage faces a number of problems, both fundamentally scientific—such as reflecting the mentality of the Russian people in art or the specifics of the forms of artistic thinking of the people—and purely practical ones—the influence of traditions on contemporary art, the development of crafts, the mastery of new technologies and trends in modern production and the transfer of traditional industries to the younger generation, etc.

The aim of this article is to identify new methods and technologies for creating contemporary artworks from felt based on the works of modern masters and artists, as well as students of art universities, including those specializing in decorative and applied arts and folk crafts at Fevzi Yakubov Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University.

General theoretical and methodological issues concerning the study of felt have been addressed by T.H. Masalimov, A.G. Yanbukhtina and F.Sh. Khuzin. The topics of tradition and innovation in Azerbaijani felt art have been explored by H.V. Asadov and K.M. Aliev; Uzbekistani felt art has been examined by E.F. Gul and N.R. Akhmedova; Kazakhstani felt art by A.A. Bekulova; Kyrgyzstani felt art by B.E. Tashtobaev; Bashkortostan's felt art by A.G. Yanbukhtina and T.H. Masalimov; and Tatarstan's felt art by L.G. Gritsenko and A.K. Akhmetshina.

The archetype of felt art involved the creation of utilitarian objects necessary for personal and intra-familial use. Historical changes in the societal structure—specifically, the disintegration of tribal communities—led to a partial or even complete loss of the semantic significance of these artifacts. However, this process

stimulated the evolution of craftwork geared towards external realization. The knowledge that has survived to the present day in the field of felt art has materialized into unique artistic and technical methods, imparting extraordinary structures and ornamental richness to the products while generating original constructive and narrative solutions. Generations of experience across various cultures have blurred the boundary between the concepts of felt craft, which defines the production of functional items, and felting as a branch of decorative art, producing items with aesthetic value [1]. Modern practitioners, drawing upon the legacy of previous generations, introduce novel forms and rhythms into their creations, while the accelerated development of felting reflects shifts in technological aspects and the demands of the times.

The era of globalization emphasizes the process of integrating folk crafts and materials into contemporary cultural contexts, contributing to the revival of decorative-applied arts, including the artistic processing of felt. To preserve and advance this art form globally, the International Association of Feltmakers (IFA) was established in 1984. The goal of the Association is to preserve traditions and implement new techniques in the artistic processing of felt through the activities of regional groups, journals, exhibitions and educational events. Among feltmakers worldwide, there exists interaction and mutual learning facilitated by the Internet, which actively promotes the exchange of experiences and knowledge, contributing to the expansion of felt applications [2]. This exploration of directions in felting art is fundamental to its development, facilitating the transition from decorative-applied arts to an original pictorial technique.

The renaissance of felting art is supported by the introduction of new technologies and diverse materials, which stimulate industrial tool production for felt processing and lead to the emergence of new methodologies. For instance, the addition of needle-punching techniques, involving the interlocking of fibers using specialized needles, to the wet felting technology based on mechanical wool treatment in an alkaline environment. Currently, yarns used in felting are combined with various materials such as silk, linen, cotton, bamboo and protein milk fibers. Traditional felt-making methods are complemented by innovative approaches like “nunofelting”, which involve combining wool fibers with fabric [3, p. 171].

Among contemporary artists, it has become popular to experiment with felt-processing techniques, combining them with modern materials. Their creative works incorporate narrative and ornamental motifs from various cultures. There is a pronounced trend toward incorporating felt elements in fashion design. Both domestic and foreign designers show increased interest in using felt due to the revival of folk crafts. The unique properties of felt offer extensive opportunities for its application in the manufacture of decorative items, accessories, footwear, and inclusion in clothing collections.

Artistic processing of felt represents one of the most promising areas in textile design, combining traditional materials with innovative technologies. This process opens up possibilities for creating avant-garde and exclusive clothing collections that meet the demands of the modern market. Felt is a versatile material that allows

both the revival of traditions and the creation of items corresponding to future visions.

Masters and artists, continuing folk traditions, create felt products that are highly artistic examples of contemporary applied art. Their work demonstrates that studying traditional samples has become a stimulus for creativity.



Fig. 1. R. Filipova. Fragment of a tapestry in the "artprotis" technique

Archaic forms, images, and traditional technologies drive artists to seek new avant-garde and post-avant-garde innovations. For example, tapestries made from colored wool using the "artprotis" technique, first patented in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, gained recognition in many countries. The art form "artprotis" involves laying out colored carded wool according to a sketch onto a cotton fabric and then hand-stitching it. In addition to wool, various laces, ribbons, fabrics, and

yarns are also utilized. The final stage in creating a tapestry involves stitching the wool to the base on a special machine using nylon threads [4] (Fig. 1<sup>24</sup>). Today, an analogy of this technique is employed in what is known as "wool watercolor," where pictures are created from thin layers of colored felt fibers arranged over a sketch and secured under glass in a frame.

Particularly noteworthy is the work of Azerbaijani artist R. Abdulguseynogly, who employs various technological techniques in his narrative compositions using felt. Over many years, he has experimented and sought new ways to convey his ideas and thoughts. He creates appliqués on felt using fabric, felt and colored cord. His ornamental compositions are achieved through stitching felt and felting patterns from colored wool [5]. Abstract compositions made from contrasting cords of varying thicknesses carry specific themes despite lacking real-world subjects or characters.

L.M. Kaljurand from Tatarstan uses synthetic felt in her distinctive panels. She has patented a method for making tapestries from synthetic fibers by pressing them under high temperatures and pressure [6]. The author's works, which include flowers, landscapes, still lifes and more, are remarkable for their color combinations and compositional arrangements (Fig. 2<sup>25</sup>). The technology of pressing synthetic fibers has found application in Kazan and continues national traditions.

---

<sup>24</sup> Fig. 1. Artprotis – a type of non-woven tapestry. Ideas and inspiration in the Masters Fair magazine: [website]. – URL: <https://www.livemaster.by/topic/105922-artprotis-raznovidnost-netkanogo-gobelena> (accessed: 16.08.2025).

<sup>25</sup> Fig. 2. "My Birch May": Lyalya Mukhamedovna Kaljurand's Exhibition / Art16.ru - Culture and Art in Tatarstan : [website]. - URL: <https://art16.ru/reportage/2011/05/20/may-moy-berezovyy-vystavka-lyali-muhamedovny-kalyurand> (accessed: 14.08.2025).



Fig. 2. L.M. Kaljurand.  
Non-woven tapestry.  
Colored synthetic fiber



Fig. 3. H. Sharipov. Panel  
“Melody of Kurai”.  
Felt mosaic, drape

H. Sharipov is a representative of the Muslim avant-garde in Tatarstan, who rejects realistic depictions of objects in his work, opting instead for a conditional type of artistic generalization. In felt mosaics, the artist focuses on elements of ornamentation and symbols. The author's technique of joining individual felt pieces seamlessly is used to create mosaics dedicated to the everyday life and history of the people (Fig. 3<sup>26</sup>).

The method of connecting separate parts without fixing them to a base is based on the technology of Tatar leather mosaic. The same technique is also used by the artist to create monumental works that harmoniously fit into the interiors of public spaces [7].

Reviving the ancient craft of felting in its original form under modern conditions is unacceptable and impractical. Copying traditional ornamental plots and images leads to the impossibility of contemporary perception of an artistic work. The revival of felting at the Pedagogical University named after M. Aknulla became the goal of the Honored Artist of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bashkortostan T.H. Masalimov. Based at the university, the Center for Artistic Felting was established with the aim of solving technological and figurative tasks through the integration of craftsmanship and creativity. Under his guidance, students incorporate themes from folklore, ornamentation, and symbolism in their works, interpreting them in a modern way.

Additionally, efforts are being made to improve and develop new technologies and techniques: for instance, the use of textile interlining between layers of felt has led to improved durability of the products and enhanced the working process [8].

Working with felt allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of decorative imagery, its principles of formation, and transformation. The creation of an artwork begins with an imaginative task and the search for a sketch, as well as exploring new methods and techniques to reveal the texture of the material, which enables maximum impact on the viewer. Creative narrative and

<sup>26</sup> Fig. 3. Melody of Kurai. Sharipov Hamza. Original Works of Art Art Most : [website]. - <https://art-most.com/product/melodiya-kuraya-2-2/> (accessed: 13.08.2025).

technological explorations in working with felt are conducted within the field of study of "Decorative and Applied Arts and Crafts" at the Fevzi Yakubov Crimean Engineering and Pedagogical University. In working with felt, not only its natural and aesthetic characteristics are studied, but also its plastic possibilities as a textile material. Emphasis is placed on their aesthetic content and folk traditions, addressing issues such as composition, color harmony and stylistic unity. Decorative panels, paintings and costume collections are created from felt.

Introduction to felt begins in the first year during a workshop on decorative arts. Students initially explore the properties of wet felting while creating souvenir "felt boots-whisperers" and learn the technique of "wool watercolor."

The softness and flexibility of felt naturally integrates into modern clothing, making it unique and elegant. When applying various artistic decoration techniques, the author must skillfully combine felt with primary materials. Students gain their initial experience using felt in wet felting techniques during their third year: they complete trial projects involving individual elements and small rugs by embedding patterns into the main fabric. An example of incorporating felt elements into costume designs can be seen in Y. Guseva's collection of costumes in the Russian style. Here, felted flowers and boots adorn costume designs on details made from woolen and denim fabrics (Fig. 4<sup>27</sup>).



Fig. 4. Y. Guseva. Collection of Costumes in Russian Style. Supervisor: V.A. Levitskaya



Fig. 5. L.M. Smolskaya. Panel inspired by Ukrainian folk painting, 2012. drape, cordochese fibers, felting technique

In the fourth year, students become familiar with dry felting techniques as well as needle-punching techniques. One of the earliest diploma projects (2012), executed using the needle-punched felting technique, is "Panel inspired by Ukrainian folk painting" by L.M. Smolskaya. The compositional center of the panel features birds commonly found in Ukrainian folk art, while the lush floral compositions framing the central part are inspired by Petrykovka painting (Fig. 5).

<sup>27</sup> Figs. 4-8. Photo by the article's author.

This vibrant and colorful panel, intended for a public interior, serves as a tribute to folk art, providing a foundation for discovering new plastic means.

I. Razgulyaeva utilized both dry and wet felting, as well as needle-punching techniques on fine woollen fabric in her graduation project titled "Russian Souvenir" (Fig. 6). In this creative work, ornamental compositions typical of Russian folk crafts are woven into costume designs that serve a dual purpose: as runway outfits paired with kokoshniks and as everyday wear without headgear.



Fig. 6. I. Razgulyaeva. Collection "Russian Souvenir".  
Graduation project. Supervisor: V.A. Levitskaya

Extensive research in the field of traditional and contemporary felting is carried out by students during their master's studies.

In her graduate project "Magic of Russian Felt" Crimean felt artist and Master's student of the Department of Decorative Arts V. Glinka explored the history of the ancient craft, highlighted regional traditions of felting in Russia and analyzed contemporary artistic and technological trends in the realm of ethnic costume collections. Based on this research, she created an authorial collection of seamless outerwear items made from different types of felt fibers combined with the "nuno-felt" method, drawing inspiration from Russian folk crafts (Gzhel, Khokhloma) and ancient Russian motifs (Fig. 7).

Each of the three coats was made using a different technique and wool of varying quality. The semi-fitted A-line "Gzhel" coat was created using the wet felting technique with fibers from local "village" sheep wool of the Gypsy breed, white in color and viscose. The design on the upper part of the front panels, back, and sleeves was achieved using the "wool watercolor" technique with free wool and viscose fibers during the layout stage and further embellished (on the finished garment) with a decorative cord made from white and blue yarn. The role of lining is fulfilled by a layer of viscose felted onto the main fabric of the coat. The "Ancient Russian Motifs" coat, a demi-season straight silhouette with a round yoke, is made

from German - Australian merino wool and viscose. From the hem to the top of the garment, the wool is felted in a gradient stretch from dark to lighter shades. At the hem, sleeve bottom and yoke, a "cucumber" pattern is applied using the nuno-felting technique with cut-out fragments. The finished item is embellished with beadwork, glass beads and small pearls. The "Golden Khokhloma" coat is made from black Italian – Australian merino wool and viscose fibers. The standing collar, sleeves along the armhole in the upper part are decorated with a design inspired by the Khokhloma folk craft, achieved by felting fragments cut from "viscose paper."



Fig. 7. V. Glinka. Collection of seamless felt outerwear "Magic of Russian Felt": a - coat "Gzhel", b - coat "Ancient Russian Motifs", c - coat "Golden Khokhloma". Master's thesis. Supervisor: M.B. Grigorieva

The study of semantics and morphology of traditional ornaments in felt products of the Great Steppe peoples, particularly those of Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Tuva, is the focus of A. Pugach's master's research. Based on this research, an authorial collection of outerwear called "Pret-a-porte de Luxe" "Heritage of the Great Steppe" was developed. The concept of the project was based on the ethnic motifs of the Great Steppe peoples. Stylized felt ornaments, combined with depictions of cultural elements from these nations, served as the unifying factor.

Ornaments in the author's interpretation were created using the modern "nunofelting" technique, which involves punching wool onto a woven fabric base (Fig. 8). Three costume-like women's outerwear pieces represent reinterpreted cultural images of the peoples of Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Tuva. The silhouettes of the costumes emphasize the integrity of the images, while the decorative elements carry the full depth of meaning of traditional ornaments and aesthetic concepts of these peoples. The basis for the decorative solution was stylized geometric, zoomorphic, phytomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs. To complement the

images, depictions conveying the lifestyle and environment of nomads were introduced.



Fig. 8. A. Pugach. Outerwear collection "Heritage of the Great Steppe":  
a. - Mongolian costume, b - Tuvan costume, c - Kazakh costume.  
Master's thesis. Supervisor: N.M. Akchurina-Muftieva

Studying various types and techniques of felt helps students gain a deeper understanding of the fundamentals of decorative-applied arts, the principles of transforming natural forms and their broad application in designing contemporary fashion collections and decorative art objects.

Thus, the main directions for developing creativity in artistic works with felt involve progressively creating pieces from studying themes of folklore, ornaments and symbolism through modern interpretations and creative adaptations, facilitated by improving and inventing new technologies and technical approaches.

The incorporation of traditional ornaments into contemporary artworks and costume designs helps preserve folk traditions, deepens our understanding of the nature of decorative imagery, its formative principles and transformations, enabling the integration of traditional elements into modern felting art. Combining the traditional material of felt with innovative technologies opens up opportunities for creating avant-garde and exclusive clothing collections that meet the demands of today's market. Felt is a versatile material that allows us to both revive traditions and create objects that align with future visions.



## References

1. Oktyabr'skaya I. V. Xudozhestvenny`j vojlok kazaxov Altaya. Istoriya i sovremennost` / I. V. Oktyabr'skaya, S. K Suraganov // Narody` Evrazii. Tradicii i sovremennost` : materialy` kazaxstansko-rossijskogo seminaru. – Astana, 2012. – S. 99-103. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.
2. Yadamzhav, Cz. Mongol Ardy`n Xe`e` Ugalzy`n E`x Dursuud (mongol'skij nacional'ny`j ornament) / Cz. Yadamzhav. – Ulaanbaatar, 1985. – URL: <http://monornament.bsu.ru/gallery/item/?id=43> (data obrashheniya 09.08.2024). – Tekst : e`lektronny`j.
3. Avdeeva O. G. Xudozhestvennoe vojlokovalyanie kak sovremenny`j sociokul'turny`j fenomen / O. G. Avdeeva, E. L. Antonova // Nauka. Iskusstvo. Kul'tura. – 2017. – Vy`pusk 1 (13). – S. 167-173. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.
4. Korshun K. Artprotis – raznovidnost` netkanogo gobelena / K. Korshun. – URL: <https://www.livemaster.ru/topic/105922-artprotis-raznovidnost-netkanogo-gobelena> (data obrashheniya 10.05.2024). – Tekst : e`lektronny`j.
5. Alieva K. M. Azerbajdzhanskije vojlochny`e izdeliya: tradiciya i sovremennost` / K. M. Alieva // Materialy` Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma «Iskusstvo vojloka v tyurkskom mire: istoriya i sovremennost`». – Kazan` : Zaman, 2013. – S. 66-70. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.
6. Gricenko L. G. Iskusstvenny`j vojlok v tvorchestve kazanskix xudozhnikov (L. Kal'yurand, D. Basy`rova i dr.) / L. G. Gricenko // Materialy` Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma «Iskusstvo vojloka v tyurkskom mire: istoriya i sovremennost`». – Kazan` : Zaman, 2013. – S. 143-146. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.
7. Axmetshina A. K Intarsii Xamzy` Sharipova / A. K. Axmetshina // Materialy` Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma «Iskusstvo vojloka v tyurkskom mire: istoriya i sovremennost`». – Kazan` : Zaman, 2013. – S. 150-152. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.
8. Masalimov T. X. Novy`e napravleniya v rabote s vojlokom (iz opy`ta raboty` Centra xudozhestvennogo vojloka pri Bashkirskom gosudarstvennom pedagogicheskom universitete im. M. Akmully`) / T. X. Masalimov, E`. E`. Purik // Materialy` Mezhdunarodnogo simpoziuma «Iskusstvo vojloka v tyurkskom mire: istoriya i sovremennost`». – Kazan` : Zaman, 2013. – S. 26-30. – Tekst : neposredstvenny`j.