



As soon as I returned to Edinburgh from New Zealand, I enrolled in evening classes at the College of Art and started to make felt at home, whenever I had the time (and the kitchen) to myself. It was soon apparent that I needed a proper space to felt in and so I took on a studio.

Having never known anything about feltmaking, I was completely taken aback by just how much I loved it. 10 years on, I am better placed to understand the reasons for the instant attraction (my husband would probably call it infatuation). As a child at school, I was keen on art but, by third year, my marks had dwindled to 'Fair'. Art was dropped as a subject, never to be revisited. What did remain was a tremendous love of colour. I took photographs, painted every room in my house in brilliant hues, and am drawn to the flamboyant when it comes to art, décor and fashion.

My first feltmaking attempts were pretty chaotic. Colour was king, technique very secondary. I had not developed any real sense of design, but loved playing with all the different textures that can be achieved in feltmaking. However, as time has gone on, I have learned techniques from some of the great international feltmakers and used them as a basis for creating my own style, working with wools and silks to create art pieces and wearable accessories.

I discover ideas for textures, shapes and colour combinations from all around, in the natural environment but also in architecture and art. My camera is always with me and my photographs often focus on details that otherwise might escape attention: patterns in ice, rocks and pebbles, rust and peeling paint, seaweed and sand, railings and doors, flowers and insects.

I make nuno-felt scarves...lots of them. These combine merino wool with silk (from my charity shop stash), decorated with a variety of natural, brightly dyed fibres. The trick is to blend colours to create a rich, overall design, pay attention

# WHO AM I?

New Zealand, 2007.

Having signed up for a feltmaking workshop, I arrived at my tutor's house, was shown into a basement garage where the floor was filled with every imaginable colour of hand-dyed wool tops, handed a basket and told to fill it. I was enchanted.

# I AM HEATHER POTTEN

to detail and make sure that each piece is finished properly to create durable, fine felt. The design of each scarf evokes an image and an atmosphere, some exotic, some closer to home. I am also fascinated by seamless felt, ranging from fine felt reversible cowls to hats and bags. I enjoy the challenge of creating templates that will produce a piece that is the right size and shape. Moulding and shaping felt is extremely satisfying.

I am now a full-time feltmaker. Each year is different but always interesting, with a combination of exhibiting, running and attending feltmaking workshops, giving talks and collaborating with other textile-lovers. Most recently, I participated in the first ever Nepal Textile Adventure, including feltmaking at the Association of Craft Producers in Kathmandu. My next big trip is to Latvia, where I am helping to organise (and teach at) the first Latvian Alpaca Adventure.

And it all started that day, 10 years ago, when I attended a feltmaking workshop in New Zealand.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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### IMAGES

1. Heather Potten

2. Vessels

3. Nuno-felt cuffs

4. Hat

### PHOTO CREDIT

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