

# HEART FELT

## AN ANCIENT ART GOES POP

SASKIA EVERINGHAM works with wool, water and heat to create three dimensional, wearable felt sculpture.

Wool fibre can be layered to create an endless variety of textures and forms and has been used by humans to create clothing and objects for over 5,000 years. It is the perfect simplicity of this ancient material that first drew Everingham to felt.

'Felt is seamless, waterproof and insulating. It is evocative of softness and warmth. Wool is also durable and so has been crucial to many cultures', says Everingham.

'It's not as processed as other textiles—it's closer to its original form, but it's also malleable and manipulable.'

Right: King Parrot  
Below: Mood Hat—Angry





Saskia Everingham's Mood Hat  
Main picture: Shocked, Left: Sad



*'Wool has unique structural qualities which means you can engineer shapes.'*

Everingham studied drawing, screen printing and etching at art school, diverting for some years to work in theatre, at the Sydney Opera House. Silk painting drew her back into the visual arts. Looking for a way to give the textile medium more dimension led her to handstitched projects and so the impulse towards creating more sculptural forms evolved into experimentation with felt.

The raw wool is cleaned and carded (combed), then dyed. The skill begins with the way in which you lay the wool down to produce different effects and shapes with the fibres of the wool.

'Wool has unique structural qualities which means you can engineer shapes. Solving structural problems is one of the things I enjoy most about working in this medium', says Everingham. 'The density and different types of wool used are part of the engineering palette, so if you place a thin piece of wool on top of a thick piece before the felting process, that will cause them to shrink at different rates to create a variety of forms. When it's wet and you shape it and let it dry, it will retain that shape—the fibre has memory.'

'I'm a tactile person and so I most enjoy producing items that involve direct touch and shaping rather than via a brush or screen. Felt is very like working with clay but softer and warmer.'

Everingham has incorporated millinery techniques into her work while pushing past typical forms. 'Felt is so light that you can engineer something that is asymmetrical, but still strong enough to wear and so the possibilities are endless.'

Wool also has the ability to hold colour well, so Everingham hand dyes natural wool to create unique colours for specific projects or to create mottled or graded colour.

Left: Black Cockatoo Hat



'Bold contrasting colours or unexpected colour combinations are what stimulates me. And yet the colour can distract from the shape. The balance of form and colour is something I'm still exploring.'

Everingham has recently moved beyond wearable items into other sculptural forms incorporating lights. She enjoys the surprise element of mixing old and new, plastics and natural materials.

'For me, the physicality of sculptural forms is more embodied and less cerebral than two dimensional art.'

Saskia's studio is in the upper Blue Mountains. Someone who has always been drawn to living on the edge, she previously lived by the sea in order to escape the urban environment and has found the same sense of freedom in the mountains.

The constant exposure to nature through the changeable weather, the altitude and the vast swathes of trees informs the aesthetic of her work. When walking through the National Park, Everingham finds inspiration from picking up seed pods and examining the texture of leaves and other natural objects.

'The air, the extraordinary expanse of the escarpment meeting the sky which you experience when living on the edge of a plateau, gives you a sense of freedom. It gives the mind space to run and allows the imagination to ferment.'

Sally Creagh

Saskia Everingham's work can be seen at [www.fojofibre.com](http://www.fojofibre.com)

Left: Gang Gang Hat  
Right: Bluebottle Hat

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