

Dandelion Field

Sherry Schofield, Kent State University, USA

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Within my creative design work, I have been focusing my energies on felting. It has many unique qualities, and the process of creating the felting is rewarding and relaxing. As I continue to work with the process, I keep trying new techniques. The goal of this design was to incorporate minimal waste techniques with the shrinking abilities of felt to create a design with controlled fullness, but just a single center back seam.

As I was thinking about the end goal, I was thinking about smocked garments, and how the smocking process both controls and creates fullness; as such, smocked garments became the inspiration for this piece. I decided to see if fabric could be gathered, then the gathers held in place with felting, rather than being tied or knotted.

So I started with a 4-yard piece of silk organza on the cross-grain, hoping to take advantage of the selvedge for the hem, and just having a single seam at center back to connect the pieces. I inserted rows of gathering stitches on approximately the top 1/3rd of the fabric, placing the stitching with a general garment shape in mind in terms of neckline and shoulder. I left a small amount of fabric at the top for the neckline and space at the bottom for the skirt. Once shirred, the garment was loosely fit to a size 12 form, the largest form available to me, knowing that the garment would shrink during the felting process. The lowest row of shirring was placed at the waist, with no allowance made for arms at this point.



I then created a sheet of pre-felt, the first step in the felting process, and similarly fit it to the size 12 form. The layer of pre-felt and the organza were placed on top of each other, and then loosely needle felted in place to keep the layers together. Then the layers were wet-felted, making sure that the wool fibers worked their way through the gathered organza.



Once the pieces were dry, I intended to place in on a smaller form for final shaping. Unfortunately, although I knew that the garment would shrink during the process, I did not allow enough for shrinkage. The smallest form available to me was a size 4, and the bodice did not even fit around that form. As to not waste the product, I decided to add loops at center back so that the garment could be laced onto the form. To accommodate arms, I had to cut semi-circle shapes from the bodice. The top edge was trimmed to an even width to create the neckline ruffle. Edges were finished with a picot machine. Cut edges were finished with a silk binding. An additional skirt was hand stitched to the inside waistline edge for modesty purposes. Finally, left-over felt was cut into circles and hand applied, with a bead, over the surface of the garment in a meandering pattern, which reminded me of

a field of dandelions ready to go to seed; and hence, the garment was titled.