



Cave art inspires modern wall hangings

Jennifer Alexander first became interested in using felt as a surface to stitch into over 15 years ago when she was a City & Guilds creative studies student.

Her original feltmaking skills developed when she became a member of the International Feltmakers Association and her work gradually developed a wider perspective to include large wall hangings along with a range of accessories including bags, scarves, hats and slippers.

She works from Millside Farm at Galston in Ayrshire, South West Scotland, and now uses a variety of plant and animal fibres and draws on a range of different skills involving felt, hand-made paper and silk papermaking. Last year she was one of the first to receive the new C&G Diploma in Feltmaking

‘Felt is one of the oldest textiles known to man and in fact pre-dates woven material’ she says. It is made from layers of woollen fibres compressed by varying combinations of heat, moisture, alkalinity and friction.

Jennifer has devised different ways to use the wool from her own flock of pedigree Lleyns, but she also works with fleece from her Zwartbles and Blue Texels, pictured above.

‘Colours within Blue Texel wool range from

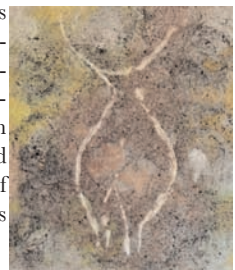
a steely blue that gives the breed its name, through dark browns to silvery greys’ she says.

‘Some of the lighter greys dye beautifully creating deep and dramatic hues’.

She has found these colours lend themselves to her interpretation of cave paintings based on line drawings of her own sheep.

‘Controlled distortions within the felting process can transform fairly recognisable images of pedigree stock into ancient beasts of indiscernible species’ she says.

The few Zwartbles she has at Millside provide her with a completely different character of very dark brown wool that she has found suitable for a range of accessories and items for interiors.



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