
Intro to Needle Felting with Rad Megan

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- Needle felting is one of my favorite crafts and at its core, it's basically just altering wool roving with a barbed needle until you have a solid fiber that's like regular old felt. But the cool thing is that you're sculpting it. So you can make whatever kind of sculptures you want using some really basic materials.

Chapter 2 - How to Needlefelt

Tools & Materials

- Before we get started actually needle felting, I'm just gonna show you what the three basic things you need to get started are. First of all, this is wool roving, and roving is, it's the wool off a sheep, and it's dyed, it's processed, and we have three different thicknesses here. So this is kind of like fresh off a sheep and dyed. There's still little bits of like sheep food in it, and it's kind of chunky, the fibers are really short. What's nice about it is that it's really quick to work with. There's also this medium grade, and you can see the fibers are a little bit longer. The color is still kind of dull, and with this first sample I showed you, you can see like chunks of other colors are still in it. There are projects where you want that. This kind of medium thickness is sort of a mat color, and that's great too. But my favorite to work with are these long-fiber balls of roving. They end up making projects that just are like more smooth-looking. You can kind of have a more polished finish. So that's wool roving. Another thing that you can use is wool felt or wool yarn. Anything that's 100% wool, you can felt it. What you're gonna want to use is a barbed needle. That's how these fibers are getting matted. This sharp needle, so super sharp, do be careful, has little tiny notches taken out of it, and as you take this fiber and place it on your third-most-important item, your felting pad, you're just gonna poke it and poke it and poke it, and as the fibers catch in the little barbs, it begins to mat it. And that's basically felting at its core. There is some other things that we can use to kind of accentuate our felted sculptures once we're done. We've got some embroidery floss, you can sew it, I mean, literally, it turns into a fiber. So you can stitch it, you can add things to it. We can use cookie cutters to kind of protect our fingers and sort of work within these shapes. We've got several different kinds of needles. If you want to work with a large surface, we have these multi-prong needles. These are great if you want to felt a large swath, if you're making kind of a fabric that you would want to use for a purse, or a hat, or something like that. It's also just a great way to kind of cover a lot of ground quickly. So, finally, your best friend is gonna be your trusty pair of scissors. As you needle felt things, it's gonna start to look really cute, but your projects won't typically shine until you give them a little trim at the end. So, these are the basics of needle felting. And in our next workshop, I'll show you how to use the needle without bleeding all over your project, and just using some different tips for really refining your process.

Create basic shape and add color

- So now we're ready to start using our needle. But before we really get started with the project, there are a couple tips I really want you to understand. This needle is crazy sharp, and you're most likely gonna poke yourself while you're needle felting. Honestly, it startles you more than it hurts, but it will happen. The way to prevent frequent finger poking is by using your fingernail as a guide.

Always, always keep your needle felting pad down on a flat surface, and use your nail to guide the needle down. So I'm gonna make a quick little cocktail olive. I'm gonna take my little segment of my green roving here, and I'm just gonna start rolling it up. Give myself a fighting chance at making an olive shape, and once I get it to a circle, I'm just gonna place it down on my pad, get my needle ready, and just start poking it from all angles. And this is just matting the fibers. Turn your pad around, and just really, you can turn your piece over, just keep an eye on your fingers, and be sure you know where the tip of your needle is going. This is also something that you want to think about to prevent your needle from breaking. You want to keep your needle going straight up and down or straight in at an angle, but if you push it in and then tilt it, it could break. So you just want to keep it going straight up and down, just work it from every angle. I've got my nails against my piece so that if I accidentally poke myself, I'm gonna poke my nail and not my fleshy finger. And I never, I know this is going to sound like totally common sense, but I never wanna lift up what I'm needle felting and poke it in my hand. Why? This needle is gonna go all the way through your roving, just like it's gonna go all the way through your fleshy fingers. Seriously, keep it on the mat. Okay, so I'm just gonna keep going, and I can already feel the resistance in the roving. The fibers are starting to change. It's almost getting kind of like a dreadlocky quality where it's just filling out. It's not so soft and fluffy anymore. And the more I poke, the more matted these fibers are gonna get. So, once I get to a point where I'm happy with it, I can start to trim away the excess and make it really look like the shape I want. And you might be seeing, since this is the medium-gauge roving, you can kind of see where my needle pokes are going. And that's actually a really great technique if you want to add lines or textures. If I wasn't making an olive for instance, if this was, if this was orange, and I wanted to turn this little guy into a pumpkin, I could just poke in a straight line and I'm gonna start developing this little groove. Do another straight line of pokes, and you can see it's already developing. So there's a lot of cool things that you can do just by manipulating your needle in different ways. Okay, but this is not a green pumpkin, so. Oopsie, so you can get kind of rough with it. If it starts matting in a way that you don't like, you can always pull your fibers out. Sometimes I'll roll them around to kind of get the shape that I really want. And then you can feel it too. It's a little looser up here than it is down at the base, so I'm just gonna poke a few more times. And I'm rolling my material, I'm turning my roving as I poke, because I really do want to have an even consistency throughout the entire piece. That's gonna be important. If you just concentrate all your pokes in one area, you're gonna end up with those little valleys that we just saw in our fake pumpkin. Okay, so this feels pretty good now. So I'm gonna just show you how I would trim this down. And usually, I like to just kind of grab whatever extra fibers are on top, but I really want a smaller olive. I want this to look more like an olive. So I'm just gonna go ahead and cut it as if I was cutting pieces of felt. I'm still turning it in my hand. I want to have a really even surface. And I'm really trimming away quite a good amount of it. It's not compromising the design at all. It's not compromising the stability of the piece. It still feels really nice and solid. So now it's a lot smaller. I can give it another roll. I can poke it some more. In fact, I think I will poke it some more because it still feels a little bit floppy on one side. So I'm just gonna poke it a few more times, and then I'm gonna add a little bit of color. And that's another technique that I really enjoy using because it just brings your pieces, it gives them so much dimension, it gives them so much more life. So shaping your wool roving is one thing, but once you kind of master all your shapes, there's so much more that you can do with it, adding color, using embroidery floss and just kind of sewing straight into your pieces. You know, if I wanted, I could even, I could take this piece of regular felt and just sort of like begin stabbing right into it, and then these fibers would pull up into my olive. I don't necessarily want to do that. It wouldn't really make

sense with what I'm working on right now. So what I want to do is add a little bit of color, and I love using this long fiber roving for that. (grunting) Because, what you can do with it, this isn't going to be for everybody, but it works really well. Just take a little bit of saliva and, if you twist your fibers up, that's a good way to kind of kick-start the fiber process where everything kind of blends together. And I don't know if you saw that, but I like to twist this up in my hands, and then I get a nice, tight twist. And if I'm putting something that's really small, like just an eye on something or some tiny accent, I'll just twist it together and then push the fibers together, and then I get that itty, bitty little spiral right there. And that is what I'm gonna use. So I'm just gonna take that spiral and put it straight down on my olive And using my fingernail as a guide. So I'm just gonna go ahead here, and I'm poking that red right in. And, you know, it's not for everybody, but I'm gonna take a little bit more saliva, it really kind of helps get those fibers just, they all blend together. I know it sounds gross, but it works for me. You don't have to do it, but it does work for me, to just kind of keep a really nice, straight line when I'm adding a color to my piece. So I want to have kind of a perfect circle of red on this olive, so I've twisted my roving underneath my finger. I've got this comet tail back here that I'm gonna cut off, and I've got this nice, hard line here. And I'm just gonna poke as much as possible. Make sure it's a nice, solid line of red. I don't wanna get a lot of this. I can see that there's some of these fibers that are kind of bleeding into my green and that's really not what I want. I just want this to be as convincing as possible. So keeping my project down on the pad, using my fingernail as a guide, just gonna poke away, and then really just cut the excess right off. So now I'm just gonna do a little bit of finishing. Okay, so are olives fuzzy? Typically, no, but does it look like a little martini olive? Heck yeah, if we had three of these things in a martini glass, I guarantee you'd be fooled, maybe. But these are the basics for adding some color, creating some texture, and just generally using your needle felting needle without making a giant, bloody mess all over your project; nobody wants that. So hopefully with these things you'll stay safe, enjoy needle felting, and I look forward to seeing you in future workshops.