

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST DEANNE UNDERWOOD

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

"This is my 20th year living in Edmonton Alberta. I was a Massage Therapist for nearly twenty years, but had to retire because of an injury two years ago. Since then I have been working full time as an artist.

My art practice is a relatively new part of my life (I don't have a visual arts background beyond painting as a hobby) so people are often surprised at how prolific I have been so far. All I can say is I have been storing up images in my mind my entire life and have always been enamored with the Canadian landscape.

I began learning to wet felt about five years ago, but I never had time to devote to it until we were sheltering in place for Covid. I learned to needle felt during this time."

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY BEAUTIFUL, NATURAL PLACE THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE A HEALTHY WATER SYSTEM. I THINK LANDSCAPE ART CAN MAKE PEOPLE FEEL CLOSE TO THE PLACES THAT THEY LOVE, AND HOPEFULLY THINK MORE ABOUT DOING WHAT THEY CAN TO PRESERVE THE HEALTH AND BEAUTY OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN THE NORTH SASK RIVER WATERSHED AND WHY?

"Some of my favourite Rocky Mountain scenery can be found in the Cline Watershed.

Maligne Lake and Medicine Lake are also frequent subjects of my work. I also love the foothills country around Pincher Creek, which is located in the South Saskatchewan Watershed."

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TELL US ABOUT FELTING - HOW IS IT DONE?

" Felting is the act of tangling natural fibres until they adhere to each other. There are many ways to do this but I mainly use a technique called needle felting. Felting needles are barbed and encourage the fibres to quickly blend. The more you poke, the more densely packed the fibres become. Wool is an excellent choice because it is scaly and grabs onto other wool very easily.

I use second hand wool blankets as my base fabric for each project. The felt paintings are built layer by layer using many colours of fibre. I texturize and shape the wool in a variety of ways to create everything from cumulus clouds to the snow cover on a mountain. I am entirely self taught and it has taken a lot of trial and error to arrive at my current skill level.

I showcase most of my work in reclaimed frames. Many of these are sourced in Edmonton so they have a local history. I feel a vintage frame adds a lot of character and is also kinder to the planet than using new materials. "

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WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR FELT WORK?

"Every piece begins with the sky. I am continuously energized by the ever changing skyscape.

I am inspired by Canadian landscape from coast to coast. We live in one of the most incredible and diverse places on earth. The prairie feels most like home to me having grown up mainly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The mountain and coastal areas of our country are also full of memory for me. I was born in Labrador and have lived in Vancouver and Toronto, so all these places hold meaning for me. "

WHICH OF YOUR FELT WORK PIECES IS YOUR FAVOURITE AND WHY?

"That's a hard one. Usually whichever piece I have most recently finished. This is one I just completed - a large commission piece inspired by an Edmonton park right on the North Saskatchewan River. "



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