

# Living Felt INTERNATIONAL Felting Contest 2010

by Jana Holstein

We recently had the opportunity to work with Marie Spaulding of Living Felt and are pleased to present the winners of their first annual International Felting Contest. The contest was inspired by a desire to encourage customers and felt artists to reach new heights and to promote quality and craftsmanship in the art of felting and needle felting.

“We have found over the years that people love a challenge or theme to give them a focus and a purpose for exercising their creativity and challenging themselves,” explains Marie. “We wanted to do something big that would get artists excited to participate.”

There were two categories: a regular doll category and an *Alice in Wonderland* category. When all was said and done, there were 54 entries combined, 29 in the doll category and 25 in the Alice category. Judging was conducted by Living Felt staff, and based on five parameters: the “wow” factor, overall craftsmanship, attention to detail, presentation (including setting, lighting, and photography), and the vibe/soul/feel of the doll — did the entry have life and personality?

We, along with Living Felt, are very pleased to honor these doll artists, and hope that they are joined next year by even more artists who have been inspired by their fabulous creations.

For more information on each doll as well as more photos of all the entries, please visit [livingfelt.com](http://livingfelt.com).



DOLL CATEGORY  
First Place:

## Pinocchio

35" x 12" x 10"

Ruth Donikowski, Kansas City, Missouri

“Many people are familiar with the Disney version of Pinocchio, but not as many are aware that the original story was written in 1880 by Carlo Collodi,” explains artist Ruth Donikowski. “I set out to make my version of Pinocchio by researching the many ways Pinocchio has been illustrated by artists through the years.”

He’s the largest doll that Ruth has ever attempted — and she’s made all sorts of characters over the past six or seven years. Ruth found that each part of the doll was a challenge unto itself. The clothing required several muslin pattern drafts before she was satisfied with the way it fit. Many of the techniques were new to her and it took a lot of trial and error to get the look she wanted. The collar is done with cartridge pleating. “This was something I always wanted to try, and several old illustrations of Pinocchio had this type of collar,” she says.

Ruth says that there were so many wonderful entries and it was inspirational to see all of them. “If it were up to me, I would not be able to decide upon a winner,” she says. “I am extremely grateful to be chosen and receive the gift certificate for the felting supplies.” So what’s next for Ruth? Well, she says that she’ll put her winnings to good use: “Living Felt has such a wonderful selection for felt making. I’ve been wanting to experiment with nuno felting next, and would like to try making some scarves.”



## DOLL CATEGORY

Second Place:



## Flora Belly Dancer

9"

Bird McCargar, Emeryville, California  
[birdmccargar.com](http://birdmccargar.com)

"The feminine art of belly dance has attracted me for a long time, and I love the costuming," says artist Bird McCargar. "I wanted to make something that embodied the sensuality and the glamour of the art."

Bird only started needle felting dolls this year. She fell in love with the form as a way to make miniatures through a direct process that used the natural media of wool.

In creating Flora, she says she had quite a time-consuming and finger-cramping job of making her tiny brassiere, and in creating the folds for her skirt. She also tried using a different armature technique by building on a single leg wire as the framework. She then had to felt the other leg against the main framework. "I won't use this technique again! I thought it would save time somehow, but I was mistaken."



## DOLL CATEGORY

Third Place:



## The Invisible Man

15"

Michelle Miller, Oakdale, Pennsylvania  
[runredrun.wordpress.com](http://runredrun.wordpress.com)

Photography by Alexander Patho, Jr.

"I wanted to create something fun and spooky — I was thinking 'monster'," says artist Michelle Miller. "An illustrator friend, Vince Dorse, loves spooky, retro stuff, and when he suggested we try H.G.Wells' Invisible Man I jumped in with both feet. He designed this crazy doll with removable parts that, at first, I wasn't even sure could be done. But I couldn't wait to bring it to life and once I started needle felting it, everything fell into place."

"The bandages were a bit challenging because I wanted them to snake around his head in a specific way. Also, figuring out how to make him invisible was a fun puzzle to solve," Michelle explains. "The photos where his head and hands have 'disappeared' aren't altered — they're actually gone."

Michelle says that she's searched for a creative niche her whole life, but nothing seemed to fit. "I can't draw, I'm tone deaf, no rhythm. But I pick up a needle and some wool and I can create these dolls that, honestly, still surprise me," she says. "Placing in this contest proved to me I didn't spend all those years searching in vain. Needle felting is something that keeps me fulfilled creatively, and winning a prize for it thrills me and helps validate my efforts."

## ALICE CATEGORY

First Place:



## Psychedelic Cheshire Cat

7" x 20" including tail

Joyce Hazlerig, Smithville, Texas

[gypsyharte.blogspot.com](http://gypsyharte.blogspot.com)

"I have always loved the mischievous Cheshire Cat character in *Alice in Wonderland*; mad and unpredictable, you never knew what he was going to do next," says artist Joyce Hazlerig. "I was highly influenced by those commercials of the 3-D movie *Alice in Wonderland*, where the Cheshire Cat is coming at you with glowing eyes. Instead of doing just straight up tabby stripes, I decided to just start felting crazy swirls, spirals, and dots, and just see where they went. It was a very organic process. Using the blacklight-reactive wool roving was just a stroke of genius. First I'd only thought to do the eyes, but making the stripes all neon was so much fun."

Joyce has been needle felting since 2008, when she bought some wool and a kit. For her Cheshire Cat, she says the most challenging part was envisioning what she wanted to create. "It's also a lot bigger than the tiny 3-inch characters and critters I usually create. I had to re-do the ears to set them just right, and the whole time I was felting in the purple underfur, I really wanted to be already making stripes. When I was making the spirals and stripes, I had a particular order I wanted the colors, and I wanted them to flow naturally — it was a bit slow going at times. I almost ran out of green at the last minute! I learned the most about making wet-felted core shapes and then needle felting them together; the cat is essentially made up of one small sphere, one larger sphere (distorted into a oval), and four twinkie-like rectangles for the legs and paws."

Being chosen as a first place winner makes Joyce's spirit soar she says. "It's given me a huge boost of confidence. I don't think I've been felting that long at all, and it really, really means a lot to me. I'm very proud to have my Cheshire Cat chosen and excited that it gets to be an example of the awesome things you can create by needle felting. It inspires me to take my art to the next level and keep creating."

## ALICE CATEGORY

Second Place:

## The White Knight's Horse

20" x 20"

Yiling Tien, Towson, Maryland

"I've been specializing in felted horses for most of my felting career," says artist Yiling Tien. "The White Knight was such a droll, quaint, and captivating character, and his horse captures both gallantry and a sense of being forlorn."

Yiling began wet felting in 1990 with purses, slippers, and hats. She then progressed to horses, but says they were very difficult to make with wet felting. Finally, a friend presented her with a set of felting needles about six years ago and she was off and running.

To make The White Knight's Horse, Yiling used one of her old horses to model the head, neck, and chest, and then made sketches of the illustrations from *Through the Looking Glass* to model the legs and body. "As always, there is some challenge to get the placement of the legs to work out," she explains, "and I am almost never satisfied with the back legs completely, however, things fell into place more easily than usual, perhaps because of the stylized shape: a fat body, and pony-ish, bony legs."



## ALICE CATEGORY

Third Place:

### *Go Ask Alice*

24"

Christine Benjamin, San Jose, California  
[cbillustration.squarespace.com](http://cbillustration.squarespace.com)

*Alice In Wonderland* has always been one of Christine Benjamin's favorite stories, but she wanted to put her own spin on Alice and make her more adult. She's been creating dolls out of Sculpey for children's books for 15 years and needle felting for 3 years.

"The most challenging part of creating Alice was the fact that she was the biggest doll that I've created," explains Christine. "She's 2 feet tall. She took quite a while because of the size, but I wanted to make a doll that someone would want to sit on their bed or a shelf."

