



Art Gallery
of Guelph

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Felt Board Storytelling

Inspired by Inuit wall hangings in the AGG's permanent collection

Felt Board Storytelling

Rooted in traditional culture and drawing inspiration from family stories and life on the land, Inuit artists create textiles that require a great deal of patience and skill. Inuit wall hangings feature intricate embroidery, silhouetted characters, and bold shapes. These textiles are made by using an appliqué technique on wool duffel or felt, with hand-embroidered edges and details. Appliqué is a technique where small pieces of fabric are sewn or adhered onto a larger piece of fabric to create an image or pattern. The glove stitch, blanket stitch, and feather stitch are well-known embroidery stitches that are often used on Inuit wall hangings to attach layers, finish borders, and add details. Inuit artists like Irene Avaalaaqiaq and Marion Tuu'luq use a variety of different techniques to make each wall hanging unique, changing the fabric, size, stitches, thread, and incorporating accessories like beads to create elaborate designs.

Make a no-sew felt board inspired by Inuit wall hangings to share stories with your family!

Materials

- Large piece of acrylic craft felt (preferably a dark colour like black, brown, or navy blue)
- Small pieces of acrylic craft felt in a variety of bright colours
- Cardboard or any portable hard surface
- Fabric glue, spray adhesive, hot glue gun, stapler, or binder clips
- Scissors
- Permanent marker
- Optional: decorative materials such as fabric paint, stickers, and beads



Instructions

To begin, cut a piece of cardboard to the size and shape of felt board you wish to make. The thicker the cardboard, the sturdier your felt board will be. If you do not have cardboard, try using a plastic or wooden cutting board, cork board, or dry erase board for the support of your storytelling felt board. Cover your support with a large piece of felt, leaving a couple inches on each side. Wrap the excess fabric around the edges of the support and adhere it to the back with spray adhesive, fabric glue, hot glue, or staples. Binder clips are a simple, removeable option. If no hard surface is available, use push pins to secure your felt to a wall. Acrylic craft felt can be purchased online from fabric and craft stores.

With your felt board support complete, it's time to create the storytelling components. Using a permanent marker, outline different shapes on coloured felt that you would like to use as storytelling pieces. You will use these pieces to depict scenes and stories on the felt board so consider the characters, settings, and other elements you would like to include. Basic shapes such as squares, circles, and triangles can be stacked to create unique structures. Silhouettes of people, animals, and plants can be decorated to resemble specific characters or species. Cut out your shapes and add details, faces, or words using permanent markers, fabric paint, foam stickers, beads, and more.

Think of a story you want to tell. Who or what is in the story? When and where does it take place? Is it based on a true story or one that you made up? Do you want to depict one scene from the story or capture all scenes of the story on one board? Use your silhouettes and shapes to create a scene on your felt board. The felt pieces will "stick" to your board without any adhesive, so place and move them around to tell multiple stories. Create new felt pieces if you think you are missing a component of the scene. Put on a play for your family by setting up the first scene of the story on your felt board, preparing all pieces needed to depict other scenes, then tell the story while switching out the felt characters and scenery on your board at the same time. Rather than a live-action story, you could also use the shapes to make patterns or create a still image like a drawing.



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Cover: Marion Tuu'luq (1910–2002), *Untitled (Yellow bird and figures)*, not dated, felt and cotton embroidery thread
Purchased with funds raised by the Art Centre Volunteers, 1989
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection at the Art Gallery of Guelph

Irene Avaalaaqiaq, *Happy Spring has Returned*, 1981, wool duffel and felt, cotton embroidery thread
Purchased with funds raised by the Art Centre Volunteers and with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program, 2001, Macdonald Stewart Art Centre Collection at the Art Gallery of Guelph