

Last month's hobby portion of this blog featured Ken Vanhoy and his sustainably grown goodness business, well this month it is his partner Laura Frazier's turn. When I drove out to talk to Ken, Laura told me he wasn't home and then we started talking. Well come to find out she has her own business that I decided would be a perfect topic for this blog.

Do you know what needle felting is? Or have you ever seen it done? Well Laura, a clay sculptor originally, learned about this craft when she went looking for uses for the wool from the sheep that Ken's family was raising. She came across a technique where you take the wool and poke it until it becomes a more condensed material. Of course I am sure there are more technical terms for this, but for me this is the basic concept. What Laura can do with some reference pictures and some wool is truly an art form. Laura started sculpting years ago and has transferred that talent into the business of sculpting animals and pet recreations that she sells today.

Each small animal can take up to 30 hours of work manipulating the fiber, much like you would with clay, and creating a form that looks more real than not. The wool Laura uses goes through quite a process before it is ready for her creative mind. Before the wool is sent to Michigan for washing and straightening, Laura raises the sheep, shears them, sells them and once she gets the cleaned wool back, she then spins it and sells it. As she puts it, "I'm one of the lucky folks who get to make a living at something they LOVE doing and would do anyway". I was witness to a horse she was working on and looking at the raw material turning into a sculpted horse leg was amazing. The needle used for this is barbed and as you poke at it, the wool becomes smaller and tighter. Laura can take different colors of wool and blend them in to which ever animal she is making. There are pictures of her work and a video on how it all happens on her website www.farmgirlarts.com. One of the fascinating things I discovered about this technique is that the entire body is made of wool; there is no internal structure to which you adhere the wool.

Laura's talent for this has certainly shown to be remarkable and brings a whole new outlook for a material that is usually used for commercial items. If you would like to see more of her work, visit her website as listed above or her facebook page FarmGirl Arts.

Thank you Laura for bringing this art to my attention.



Happy Felting