



We care about the environment. There. We said it.



Relief Chair by Ben Mickus: Part of Felt Exhibition at Cooper Hewitt

by Lloyd Alter, Toronto on 03. 4.09

DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE (chairs)



Most chairs are upholstered in foam, which can be treated with fire retardants and difficult to recycle. Ben Mickus designed the Relief Chair as part of a collection that uses "digital fabrication and solid, rapidly renewable materials. Upholstery, foam products and finishes are all supplanted with thick sheets of natural wool felt, adhered with non-toxic, water-based adhesives. The precision-cut contours of each piece of felt are aggregated into sinuous yet comfortable forms."



The designer continues:

The chair is a sculpted assembly of rapidly-renewable felt sheets, supplanting foams, upholstery and anything applied. The cascading edges of the felt sheets create an integral pattern with both a visual and tactile effect.

More about [Mickus Projects](#)

The words "rapidly renewable felt sheets" raised the question: what exactly is felt and why is it rapidly renewable?

It appears to depend on what it is made of; it is more a process than a material. According to [Wikipedia](#), it is "a non-woven cloth that is produced by matting, condensing and pressing fibers."- you just press them together and natural fibers like wool bond together into felt. Even artificial felt has a proportion of natural fibre, necessary to hold it together.

Because it is just fibre pressed together, it is easily made from recycled materials, which is why the designer can call it "rapidly renewable", although usually the term is applied to commodities that are grown and harvested sustainably.



Fashioning Felt

On view March 6–September 7, 2009

The chair will be part of the exhibition [Fashioning Felt](#), at the Cooper Hewitt.

This exhibition will explore the varied new uses of felt—an ancient material, believed to be one of the earliest techniques for making textiles. Made by matting together wool fibers with humidity and friction, felting requires little technological expertise and is an extremely versatile material.

More at the [Cooper Hewitt](#)

More Felt in TreeHugger:

[Natural Wool Felt Bags and Home Accessories, by Planar](#)

[New Models of Cargabags: Recycled Wool Felt Totes and Messenger Bags](#)

[Eggflat: Josh Jakus's Felt Forms](#)