

*June 21, 2015*

### **An artist with ‘heart’**

For years, Sandy Compton had a pop-up book of the human body in her home. She’s not a physician, nurse or scientist by training, so some might have thought it an unusual book to have in her personal collection.

“I didn’t know why I had it, but I needed to have it,” she says.

Now, as she begins to earn success and attention for her art – anatomically correct, three-dimensional felt pieces – it all makes sense.

“Now I have seven or eight anatomy books as well.”

Compton can recall being interested in textiles at a very early age.

“I loved to sew, it’s as plain as that,” she says. “Over the years, I sewed everything I wore. I had this drive, this impetus; there was something nudging me in that direction.”

She started using cloth and fiber as art: making boxes out of fabric and then taking a turn at quilting.

“Those were good, but they weren’t quite there – but the universe was telling me to carry on.” One day, she saw a photo of a woman with a white wool tam with a flower needle felted onto it and thought “I could do that”

Today, she has a piece on display for Dimensions, the Saskatchewan Craft Council’s biennial, open, juried, touring exhibition. The Dimensions show, currently on exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, encourages and rewards excellence in hand-crafted work. About 180 works were submitted by 106 artists and the two jurors selected 36 pieces for the exhibition, including Compton’s – an anatomically correct, three-dimensional heart. The show will tour in places like Yorkton, North Battleford, and Saskatoon once the exhibit closes in Regina.



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“It’s a big milestone, reaching that level and having it in there with the works of artists I greatly admire,” says Compton.

Each piece she works on, depending on its size and detail, can take anywhere from 10 to 14 days to complete. She’s been known to pull all-nighters when she’s engrossed in a project. The process of felting involves taking dry wool and laying down thin layers on top of one another, wetting the layers with water and soap, and then manipulating the wet mass into the desired shape.

“You have to control the material. There’s this point when it all comes together and it’s no longer a soggy mess, it starts shaping up. It’s a challenge.”

If she were a painter, Compton says she’d be a realist painter – she likes to create things that reflect reality. “Right now, I’m working on a piece that is a replication of an x-ray – a knee and the bones above and below it.” She’s also working on another heart that will show the valves and internal chambers of the heart.

Compton has a few pieces available for purchase at Traditions Hand Craft Gallery located at 2718 13th Ave, Regina.

“It’s my ultimate goal to have a body of work (no pun intended) in the fine galleries and be known as a fine-art felter.”

Compton has worked at 3sHealth for about two years, supporting Susie Hilton in Clinical Services, the Hospira Smart Pump project, and the lab and medical imaging business cases.

“I enjoy working here,” she says. “There’s a clear line of sight to the end goal, which is improving the health system for all of us.”