

Creating Texture and Light with Man Made Meltables

Working with meltables and incorporating them into your projects can add different textures, capture light and create surfaces that can not be achieved in other ways. There are a couple of things to note about everything discussed here. They are all washable and colourfast. Finally, they can all be used together and can be heated with an iron or more commonly a craft heat gun. You can also use a soldering iron to create lace or fine etching.

Angelina Fibre: This is a soft lustrous iridescent fibre that will bond to itself at relatively low temperatures to produce a non-woven type of fabric. Angelina fibre comes in different types, but the most common is the Hot Fix or bondable fibre. Bonding occurs when the 'hot-fix' Angelina Fibres soften and fuse together.

The instructions for heat bonding are as follows. Simply place a small amount of fibre between a folded appliqué mat or two sheets of baking paper. Heat iron to silk temperature setting. Gently, with little pressure, move the iron back and forth, checking frequently on the bonding progress. Be careful not to "fry" the Angelina Fibre with too much heat or pressure and a too long ironing time. The more heat you apply, the darker, matter and denser the colour becomes. This can be good by itself.

The result will be a sheet of web-like non-woven sparkling fabric that can be peeled off the appliqué mat or baking paper. Generally, Angelina heat bondable fibre will only adhere to itself and not to other fibres, tissue paper or fabrics. You can however add small amounts of non-bondable fibres and the hot-fix fibres will trap the other fibres (see below). Bonded Angelina Fibres can also be attached to double sided web. When heat bonded the sheet can then be cut to any shape.

Try blending the fibres for shimmering multi-coloured effects. To make more solid, dense sheets of fabric simply use a larger amount of fibre without spreading or thinning. In this case, it may be necessary to increase the temperature slightly while applying the heat for longer, and to turn the Angelina Fibres over and iron on the reverse side. You can also iron Angelina to other items in this pack. Angelina can also be used as a 'glue' between layers of the other meltables. To do that, put the Angelina between the other two materials and iron it together in one go. Once ironed, the Angelina loses its stick.

Tyvek: Tyvek is a synthetic sheet, water resistant, it can also be recycled. Tyvek comes in three weights: 54gsm, 75gsm and 105gsm. Tyvek bubbles and warps with heat. It also bonds to itself and other materials when heated. Yet it remains soft and pliable and can be hand or machine stitched or embellished.

To use, place the Tyvek between two sheets of baking paper or an appliqué mat. Using an iron on the cotton setting gently iron until the Tyvek starts to change shape. You can keep going until it bubbles and separates, or use it with limited warping. Painting the Tyvek on one or both sides not only creates interest, but helps slow down the warping process as it acts as a resist. I would always paint it first. You can use any paints. They will behave slightly differently, but it is fun to experiment. Both sides of the Tyvek will look different after being heated. You may like to heat some of the sheet on one side and flip it over to heat other areas. That will create an interesting combination of hills and valleys. I have also had a lot of success using a heat gun on Tyvek.

You can either cut out shapes of Tyvek and then heat them or you can heat the Tyvek and then cut out shapes. You will get different effects either way. If you want a set shape, heat first and then cut. Tyvek is very organic and is great for replicating nature.

Lutratur: this product is also sold as Sunspun in Australia. It is a fine fabric, made of spun polyester material. It is light and wispy and looks a bit like fairy floss being made. Lutratur comes in three weights – light, medium and heavy. As Lutratur is not woven, it will not fray and you can cut it up and use it in conjunction with pretty much any materials using any techniques.

Kunin Felt: This felt is an acrylic felt made from recycled plastic bottles. As such, it is the most 'meltable' of all the acrylic felts. It is soft, but when heated becomes a bit stiffer. The felt can be used as is for soft items, as a base for needle felting or as an appliqué.

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