



Felt rugs in many sizes, shapes and colours support the decoration at the ISS headquarters in Copenhagen. Designed by Signal Architects.

## Giving the office soul and character with felt

The line between work and play is more blurred than ever. But that is not just a way of saying that people take more work home with them – it is also a trend towards making the office more homely. Fraster is all about doing just that. The key ingredient? Wool felt.

By Sanne Wass | Photos: Fraster

Every time Fraster's head of design Trine Neve meets an architect, she has a little ten-by-ten-centimetre wool felt sample with her. And every time, she gets the same reaction. "As soon as you give that other person the felt sample, they become a bit absent, completely drawn into the felt, touching it, getting really inspired, and they immediately have lots of ideas as to how to use it in their own projects. That way, the felt gives you a very tactile experience – it's such a comfortable material, and it really makes you want to work with it," she says.

With wool felt as its core product, Fraster is a Danish company that provides creative and functional interior decoration solutions for floors and other surfaces. In fact, the people at Fraster prefer to call themselves a 'tailor's shop', because they keep no finished products in stock, but custom-make everything to order. They work closely with architects to help utilise the felt's many creative possibilities.

Turning 25 this March, Fraster has transformed a material that has been manufactured for thousands of years

into a modern design tool. The company has helped some of Denmark's biggest businesses and institutions by uniquely decorating their offices, including Danish Industry, DR-Byen and TDC. Today, Fraster also works in Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium and the US, and is constantly expanding to new markets.

Wherever in the world Fraster goes, people are fascinated by the same opportunities that felt brings. One thing that is driving more interest in the material is the fact that what used to be a sharp division between work and home has become more and more blurred. Companies are increasingly thinking of ways to create office spaces with soul and character – simply giving people the feeling of being at home.

"We see a growing fusion between work and home," Neve explains. "The comfort, cosiness and 'hygge' – things that you don't usually associate with work – are being drawn more into the workplace, and we increasingly see that in the interior design. Felt is one such way of bringing this well-being into the office."

### Functional and creative

The felt also has a very practical purpose. Modern architecture is often about minimalism, big rooms and surfaces, large hardwood floors and lots of glass. But it often comes with poor acoustics and, as a result, an unhealthy indoor environment. "Today's architects love to design buildings with huge hard floors, hard walls and lots of glass, but when people then move in, it doesn't always work. You need something to absorb some of

the noise. Felt is the perfect material for that, thereby making the office a nicer place to work," says Neve.

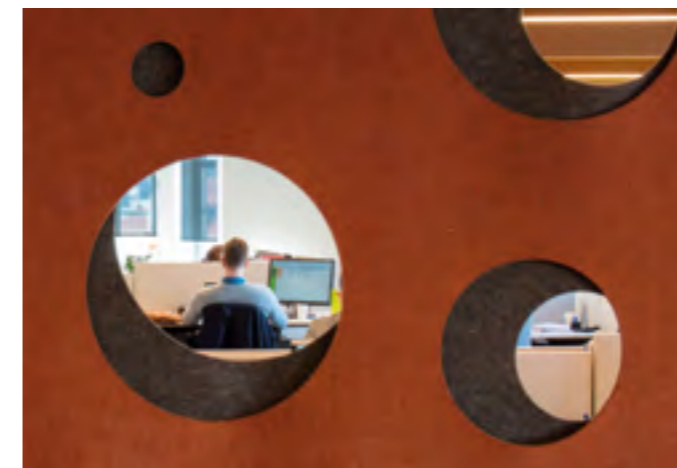
That is where Fraster's Twister and Covers series come into the picture – felt designed for the walls and which can serve as unique decoration, partitions, screening, as well as a means of sound absorption. But, Neve emphasises, the felt is not about hiding the architecture – it is about embracing it. As such, the material is an important design element – it is a way for the architect to let their creativity loose and play with the many shapes, patterns and colours that felt offers.

One example highlighted by Neve is that of the ISS headquarters in Copenhagen. "The architect has used the felt to create

patterns of a stylish tree on the top roof of a meeting room. So the felt has become a decoration instead of a floor cover – nobody ever goes there," she says.

Another place where felt has really become a defining part of the design is in Bisnode's call centre in Oslo. Here, the architect has used a special development of Fraster's Covers series to create the feeling of being in nature. "The architect has really played with the various possibilities that felt brings. The green felt came from the architect wanting to create the feeling of being in a forest. She used it to form a room where people can walk and talk, while shielding it from the people sitting at their desks," Neve concludes.

Web: [www.fraster.dk](http://www.fraster.dk)



Top left: Fraster will soon expand its own rug collection with new colours and patterns. Top right: Trine Neve, head of design at Fraster. Bottom: At Bisnode's call centre in Oslo, designed by Snøhetta Architects, a forest made of green covers from Fraster's Covers series creates a relaxed atmosphere while absorbing noise and dividing the office space into smaller areas.