

# Starry Starry Night Holiday Mail Pouch



The Starry Starry Night Holiday Mail Pouch was inspired by the famous painting by Vincent Van Gogh. The pouch was created in two pieces, which allows you to use the top half (the night sky with the angel and moon) as a pillow front, if you wish, rather than making a mail pouch.

Each square has a finished measurement of roughly 15½" square. The finished measurements of the complete piece are roughly 22½" long by 15½" wide.

If you are not familiar with Artfelt®, additional instructions and photos on "how to" can be found at the Artfelt® website: [www.itsartfelt.com](http://www.itsartfelt.com).

## Materials:

- ½ yard Artfelt® Paper
- 1 skein each of Schoppel Multi-colored Pencil Roving in colors 1968 (dark blues) and 1993 (shades of brown and cream). Each skein of pencil roving is 50g and has roughly 44 yards.
- 1 hank each of Schoppel standard roving in colors 1213 (brown) and 1239 (blue). Each hank is 50g.
- Small scraps of roving in:
  - o Yellow or gold for moon and star
  - o White for angel wings
  - o Raspberry or other color for angel gown
  - o Loopy Mohair roving for hair
  - o Loopy Mohair roving and silk ribbon to match gown
  - o Green for tannenbaums
  - o Curly roving for hair
  - o Skin-toned roving for angel face and hands

**Also needed:** barbed needle(s), 1" or thicker foam pad or Artfelt® tacking board, plastic kitchen bag, rubber bands, a few bath towels, kitchen towel, boiling water, clothes dryer, 12 inches of 1" wide Velcro, hot glue gun, and a large branch.

## Tips:

**Drawing with your pencil roving:** When creating your piece with the multi-colored pencil roving, you will get the best flow of color variances by using the roving in a continuous strand as it comes from the skein. Think of drawing a picture with a pencil but never lifting the pencil from the paper. This is the way you should create your sky and hillside scenes. Be creative and allow the colors to flow.

## Step 1

**Cut your Artfelt® Paper.** You will need two pieces of Artfelt® paper that each measure 18" square. This allows for approximately 20% to 30% shrinkage. Your final squares will each be approximately 15½" square.

## Step 2



### Create a solid felt base for your sky.

Split your hank of blue roving in half, then draft small amounts of the roving and lay them vertically onto your paper (Photo). The layer can be quite thin, so you can still see the paper beneath it. You should use the entire first half of your roving. Next, take the other half

you can still see the paper beneath it. You should use the entire first half of your roving. Next, take the other half and draft a second layer on top of the first, but this time lay the roving horizontally. Once you have the two layers stacked, use your barbed needle and tack the roving into the paper (Photo). There only needs to be approximately one tack per inch. You are not needle felting; you are simply tacking the roving onto the paper so that if you flip the paper over, the roving does not fall off. You should be able to see small tufts of roving on the back side of the paper where you have tacked it in.

## Step 3



**Create your Van Gogh inspired sky.** Begin by creating a moon with your yellow or gold roving. Simply lay a semi-circle (or a circle, if you would like a full moon), and tack it right on top of the base. You will need to tack this in more than you did your base, as you will want it to have defined edges.

Use the lightest blue from your blue-toned pencil roving around the moon. This will create the impression that the moon is glowing. To find the lightest blue, you will have to take your blue multi-colored pencil roving and unwind it, so you can see what colors you have available to you. Each skein is different, so no two skies will ever look alike. When you find the lightest part of the skein, begin to tack the pencil roving directly around the moon (Photo). Simply lay the pencil roving side by side—there is no need to overlap, as you now have a base layer. As a matter of fact, you do not want to overlap at all, or you may be short of this color in the end.



Next, using any other part of the same skein, continue to create the sky by laying down the pencil roving and tacking it in as you go along. You will want the sky to have movement, so try to lay your first pieces in a wavy pattern, or start with a circle (Photo). Continue to lay down the pencil roving until the entire square is covered (Photo). You should have exactly enough to cover your entire square.

## Step 4



**Create your angel.** Begin with the skin-colored roving. Tack it onto your sky to form a circle (Photo). This should be tacked in quite a bit so that the circle keeps its shape, but you do not need to tack it until it felts! Next, add a flowing gown to your angel (Photo). Then add a star to your sky (Photo). Draw your wings with your white, and then fill in the wings. Add your angel's outstretched arms and connect them to the star by placing a small skin-colored circle to represent your angel's hands. Complete your angel's dress using some Loopy Mohair roving in the same tone of the dress. In the sample, a little bit of silk ribbon is used to add movement and depth to the gown. The final step is to tack in the angel's hair—also made of Loopy Mohair roving.

To finish the sky piece, clean your edges by tacking them into a smooth line. If you want a more rustic looking piece, do not smooth your edges. Just leave them be.

## Step 5



Create a solid base for your pouch. Your pouch will be folded in half after felting, so the upper half of your square is going to be the bottom of your piece. Create your base just as you created your base for the sky, only use the brown roving (Photo).

## Step 6



**Create your hillside and log cabins.** Using the multi-colored brown roving, lay down the first row for your hillside (Photo). Add a few more rows of the hillside, and then create your log cabins. Take advantage of the color variations by following the tip at the beginning of the instructions ("drawing with your pencil roving"). If you look at the photo closely, you can see the movement of the pencil roving in the creation of the cabins.

After finishing the cabins, complete your hillside by using the green roving to add a few tannenbaums. All of the designs that you are creating with the roving should be tacked into the paper as you go along.

To complete the bottom half, use scissors to cut around your cabins and trees. This will give you a three dimensional look when your piece is complete (Photo).

Fold the bottom half in half and lay it next to the sky, so you can get the general idea of what your piece will look like (Photo). Your sky and hills will vary a great deal from the sample, depending on the color sequence of your roving. There are no two skeins of Schoppel pencil roving that are exactly alike, thus you will never get the same result twice. This guarantees you an original work of art!



## Step 7



**Felt your piece.** Now that your pieces have been designed and the roving is tacked into the Artfelt® paper, it is time to felt your pieces.

To prepare for the process, toss a few towels into your dryer and preheat it by turning it on high. Next, you will need two pieces of plastic, each measuring roughly 20" to 22" wide and 28" to 30" long. You can also cut a kitchen garbage bag, which seems to work well. Clear bags are the preferable, but white or black bags work just as well.

Saturate your sky with water. I find the easiest way to do this is in your bathtub or on the floor of your shower. Simply lay down a towel and totally saturate it with water. Next, lay your sky piece on top of the towel, paper side down, roving side up. Gently pour some water onto your piece. If you hold your hand over your piece, fingers stretched apart, and pour the water over your hand, it will create a nice, gentle flow of water. Do not overdo it! Use small amounts of water until your piece is saturated.

At this point, place the plastic on top of the piece and use your hands to press down on it. This will force the water poured from the top to be absorbed by the roving and allows the water from the towel to absorb through the paper and into the roving (Photo). If you prefer, you can also use a spray bottle to saturate your piece with water. What you do not want to do is immerse the piece in a pan of water or press down on the roving with your bare hands while you are wetting it. Immersion in water may release the roving from your paper, and touching the semi-wet roving with your bare hands may cause the roving to stick to them and pull away from your project.

Once the piece is sufficiently wet, you will want to roll it into a tootsie roll shape. At this point, make sure that the plastic is completely covering your piece. The width of the plastic should be centered. For the length, one end should have about a 4" overhang, while the other end should have the remainder (roughly 6" to 8"). To avoid kinking the piece, begin rolling it around something, such as a rolled up kitchen towel. Just place the rolled towel at the end with the short over-

hang of plastic then gently pull up the paper with the roving. The water does not dissolve the Artfelt® Paper, but it does make it weaker, which is why we say to pull “gently” (Photo). The paper becomes transparent when wet, so if the paper is not transparent, the piece is not wet enough.

Once the piece is completely rolled, use rubber bands to keep it in a roll shape (Photo). If the piece is so wet that water drips out, this is okay. Simply squeeze (do not wring) the piece so some of the excess water is removed before placing it in the dryer.

Repeat the water saturation process with the bottom half of the project as well.

Toss both pieces into the dryer along with the towel you used to saturate the pieces (wring it out first) and the additional towels you have put in the dryer. Leave the pieces in the dryer for fifteen minutes. Take them out and unroll the pieces. If the roving looks properly felted, the felting process is complete. If your fingernail can still separate the pencil roving pieces, you will want to reroll the piece (with the plastic again) and toss it back in the dryer.

Note: The piece will remain wet. It does not get dry in the dryer. If you are uncertain of how felted your piece should be, measure it. If it measures between 15 and 16 inches, it should be done. At this time, the paper will have adhered itself to the roving. It will look wrinkled, because the roving will shrink, but the paper will not.

**Dissolving the Artfelt® Paper.** To dissolve your paper, lay your pieces (one at a time) in your kitchen sink, paper side up, felt side down. Do NOT plug up your sink. You want the water to be able to drain right out. Boil a kettle of water (electric kettles work great). It must boil – hot tap water is not going to work. Pour the water over the piece, and you should see the paper dissolve in front of your eyes. It will take roughly one full electric kettle of water to dissolve all the paper. When no paper remains in site, you will want to rinse your piece out. The best way to do this is using the sprayer from your sink, if you have one. Just keep spraying the water over the piece until the water runs clear. Then squeeze out the excess water.

Repeat the dissolving and rinsing step with the bottom half as well.

Roll your pieces in a dry towel to remove excess water. Lay your pieces flat to dry overnight. You may also hang them to dry, if you have clothes pins or hangers with clips.

## Step 8



### Putting it all together.

When both pieces are completely dry, lay your bottom half on a flat surface, the wrong side facing upwards. Take the sky piece and lay it down, slightly overlapping the bottom piece (Photo).

Fold the bottom up to form the pouch so you can see what the finished piece looks like. If it is in the correct position, you are ready to assemble the pieces. Using a hot glue gun, first glue the two pieces together as they lay flat. Next, fold up the bottom half and close the edges by gluing them. If the edges do not match up, simply trim them with scissors.

To hang your piece, use 4 pieces of Velcro, each 3" long. Use the hot glue gun to attach them to the top half of your piece, evenly spaced across the top back about ½" to 1" from the top edge. Find a nice branch outside, and position your piece where you would like it to hang from the branch. Glue the opposite side of your Velcro to the branch piece. Your branch does not need to be perfectly straight across, as you can adjust the Velcro to hold the branch in any position within the 3" pieces of Velcro.

If you wish, you can also keep the pouch closed by gluing a small piece of Velcro between the sky piece and the cabin piece.



Karin Skacel is the leading authority on Artfelt® in North America. She was the first to experiment with the paper and through trial and error has discovered many amazing possibilities using it as a base for felting. She is currently working on a book on the subject and has been teaching classes and doing demonstrations throughout the United States. Prior to working with Artfelt®, Karin taught classes in glass fusing and lampwork, clothing design, sewing, knitting, crochet, and pottery painting. She has been involved in the artistic crafts industry her entire life and is currently president of Skacel Collection, Inc. For more information on Artfelt® or to contact Karin please visit [ItsArtfelt.com](http://ItsArtfelt.com).