

Monica Castiglioni for Tumar

SHADES OF FELT

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curated by Benazir Iskender

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Just think about what might happen if the jewelry designer Monica Castiglioni, always busy creating new pieces in her atelier on Via Pastrengo, sees a satchel filled with felt. This was the last thing in my mind last autumn while I was on my way to her place. Just being able to show her a piece of the traditional culture of my country, Kyrgyzstan, would make me happy. I had with me a number of pieces by Tumar, a company that since many years has been successfully focusing on preserving and developing applied arts in Central Asia. Felt is an ancient textile material closely connected to the nomadic cultures and it's main objects: houses *yurts*, clothing, hats, bags and carpets.

Noticing Monica's eyes light up after she saw my objects made me get a better understanding of what art meant to her. Her work is solely based on research and experimentation with new materials, techniques and shapes. Our project came along easily and was the natural outcome from our meeting with no dealings or contracts in between.

Both relaxed and at ease, we talked about manufacturing techniques and felt processing, its features and history. After a while, Monica got a notepad and began to jot a few notes down, we had started working together, even now it is still hard for me to believe it had actually happened. A project was being shaped, although with two question marks: working with me, a debutante designer, and collaborate with Tumar, a company unknown to the European market but yet with a mentality widely open to experiments. Monica's relaxed attitude helped me get rid of all doubts and let this adventurous collaboration begin.

Many ideas cropped up during the first day, many more in the days and months that followed since a meeting between Monica and Tumar triggered a brand new creative phase for both. For me, it was wonderful to watch Monica's ideas take shape on a piece of paper: her hand is firm, the hand of an artisan who knows how to turn what she has in mind into lines. This might be called artistic spree or a skill for crafting, and this surely proves the experience of someone who is very knowledgeable about her profession.

If this project had a motto, it would be: Never throw anything away! During all those months of work that I had the chance to visit her atelier till spring 2014 nothing has ever been thrown away, not a single drawing, prototype or test model. Monica asked Tumar to keep even those pieces that needed technical improvements, since exactly from these manufacturing mistakes one can understand the true beauty of a craftsmanship. Actually they were not considered mistakes at all rather an incarnation of the essence of craftsmanship through the interpretation of Monica's ideas given by a Master of Felt working in far Kyrgyzstan resorting to his know-how and knowledge on felt and its process.

Monica has never taken the role of Project Leader although being the very core and artistic creator of it. She truly embraced the role of the craftsman with respect for his experience and knowledge from previous generations. Since the very beginning when the first items were tested, the Masters from Kyrgyzstan showed their excitement to create new objects, experimenting and working together with an artist from a completely different background.

Monica's material is bronze, casted on the base of wax models. Tumar's main material is pure sheep wool made by hand with water and soap to create felt. At the end of this project, the hard and solid shapes of her bronze jewels mingled into the soft and light wool fibers. The most precious outcome from this project is a deep mutual understanding between two craftsmanship cultures

that are so far and at the same time so close to each other. The great distance and inability to work side by side, a language barrier that made it impossible to discuss specific technicalities, did not prevent Monica and Tumar to find a common language through art.

A free creative process that Monica purported, the unexpected final outcome of the pieces, the utmost care for the material, the spontaneity of the creation made felt become the heart of the project. Although I have been the bridge between two craftsmanship worlds, this project was guided by Monica's insights. That is why I wish to thank her most wholeheartedly for having made this greatly enriching experience possible for me and Tumar.

Benazir Iskender



Necklace



white



grey



black



mixed



Chain



white



black



grey



mixed



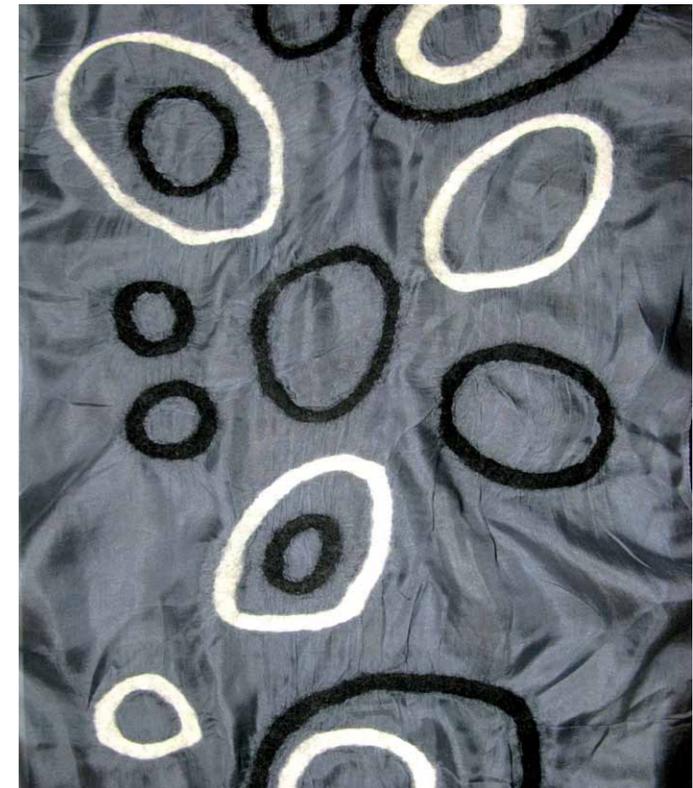
Hat Spirale





Scarf

180 x 60 cm





Scarf

80 x 46 cm





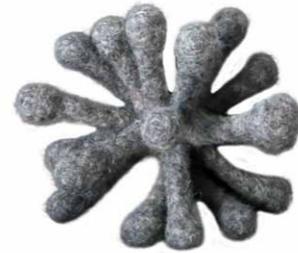
Bag Pistillo

40 x 30 x 9 cm





Sculpture **Pistillo**



10x10 cm



20x20 cm



30x30 cm

40x40 cm

50x50 cm

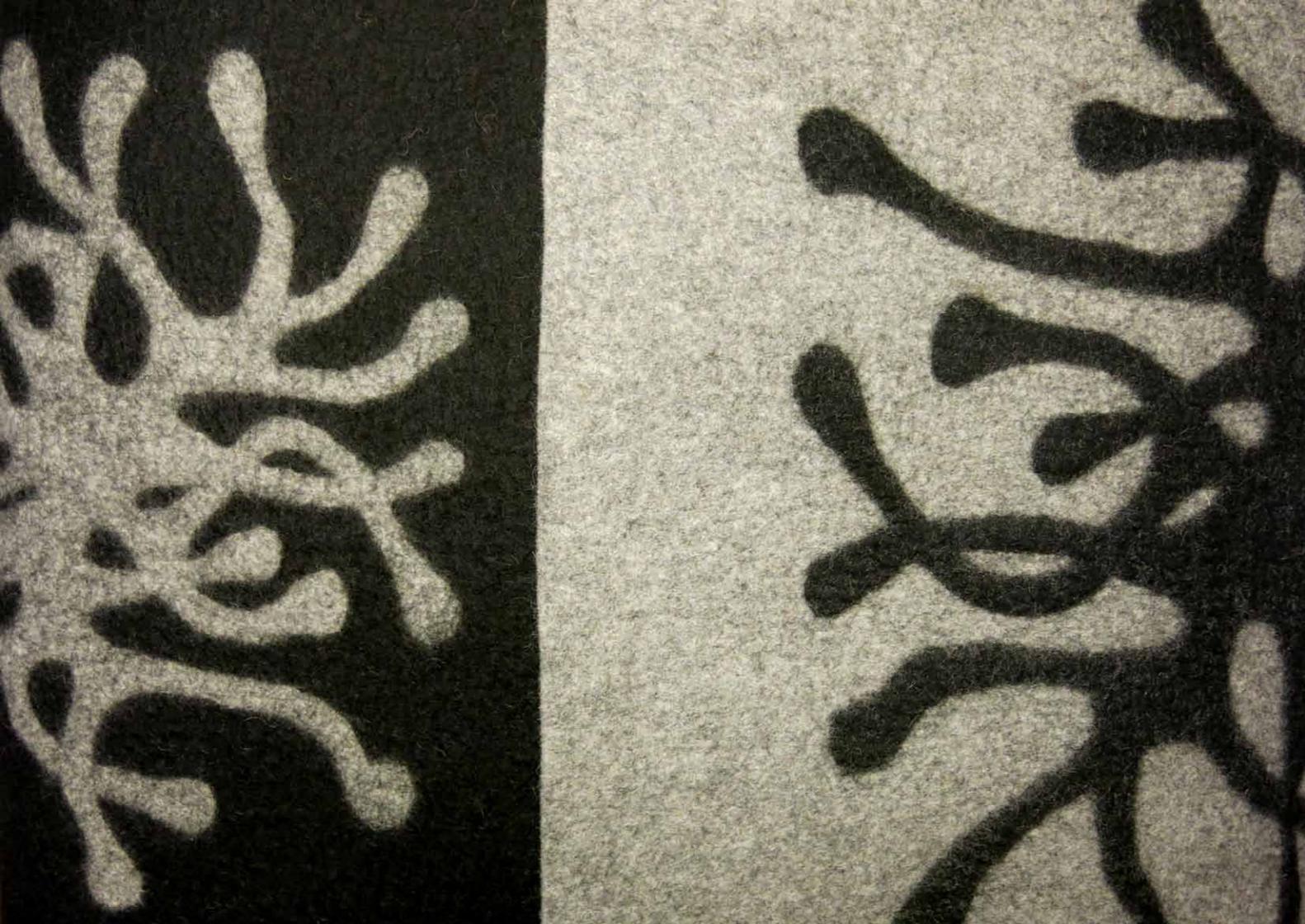
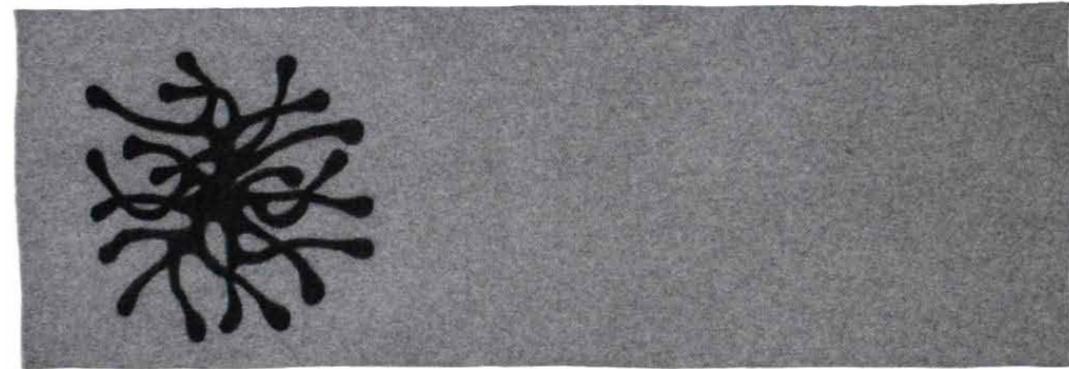
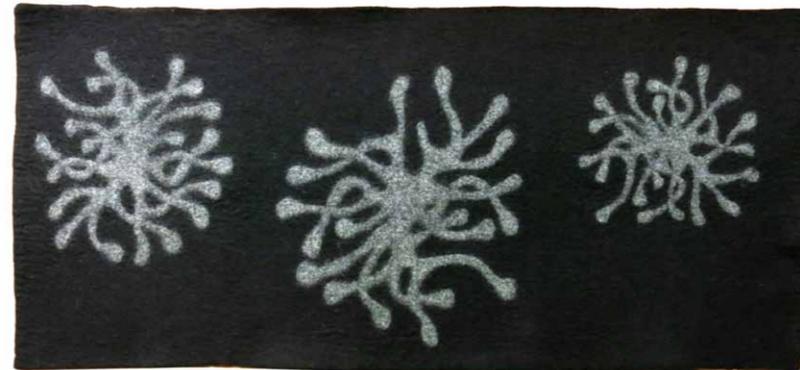


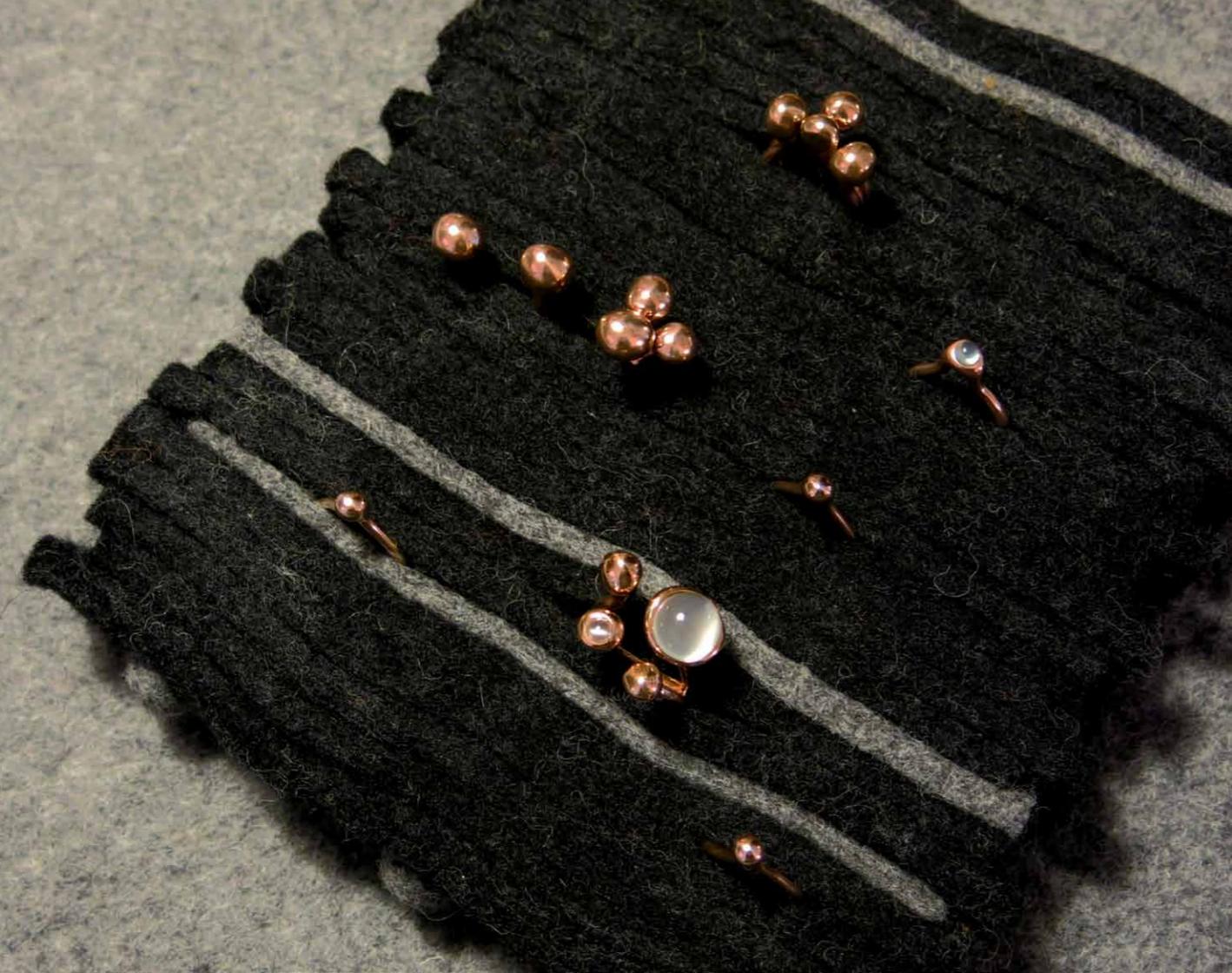
Table-runner **Pistillo**



150 x 50 cm

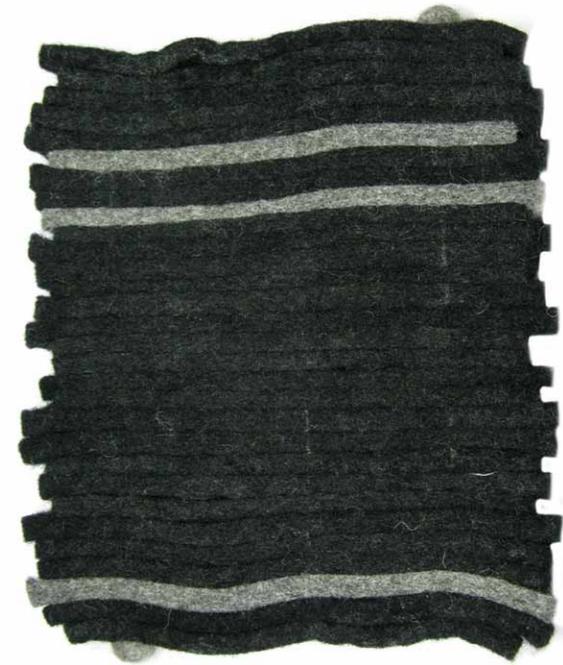


96 x 46 cm



Rings stand

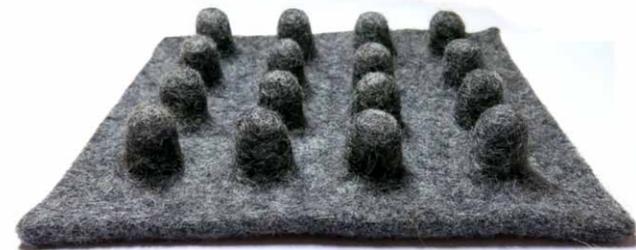
19 x 17 cm

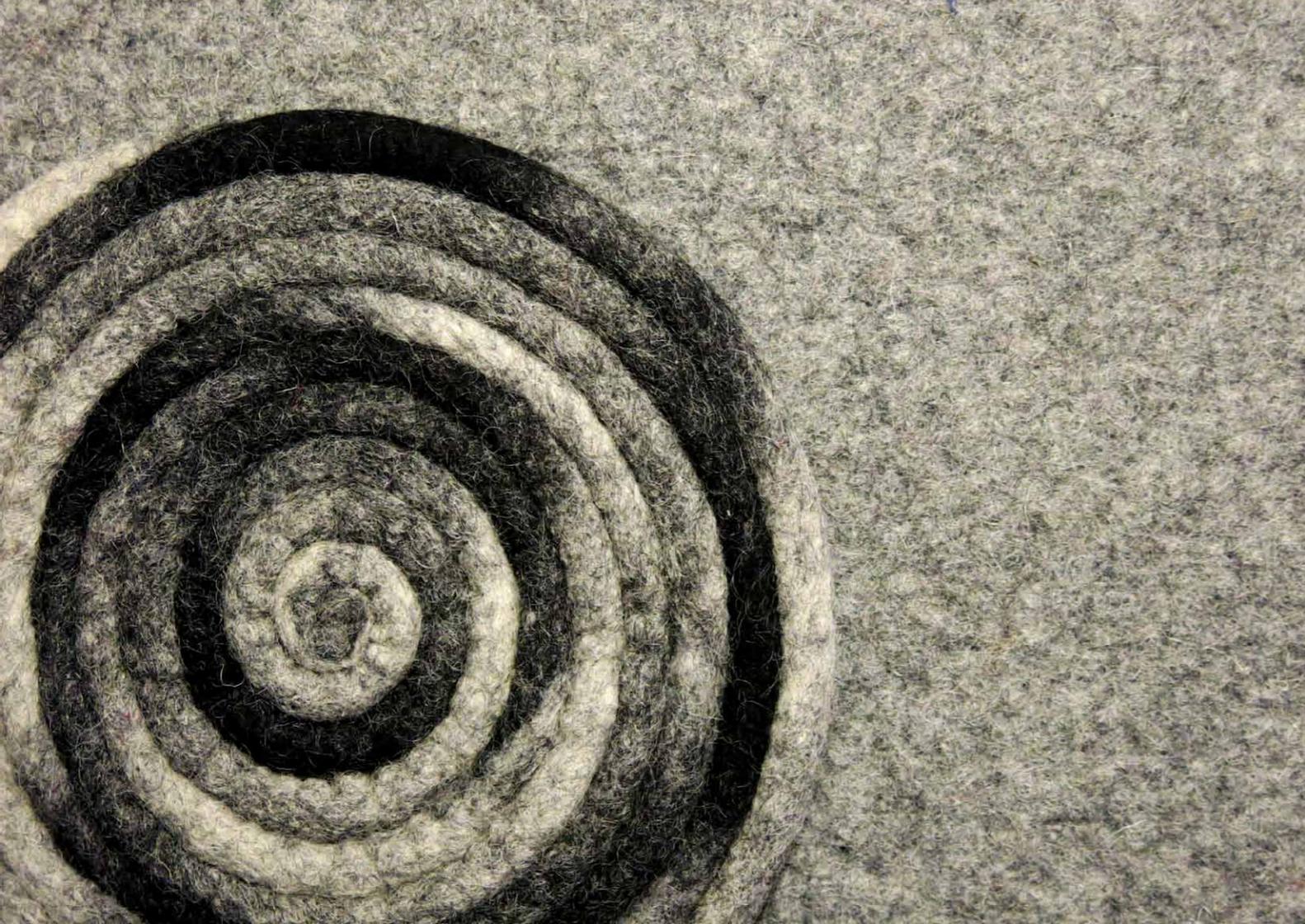




Rings stand

16 x 16 cm





Coaster **Spirale**

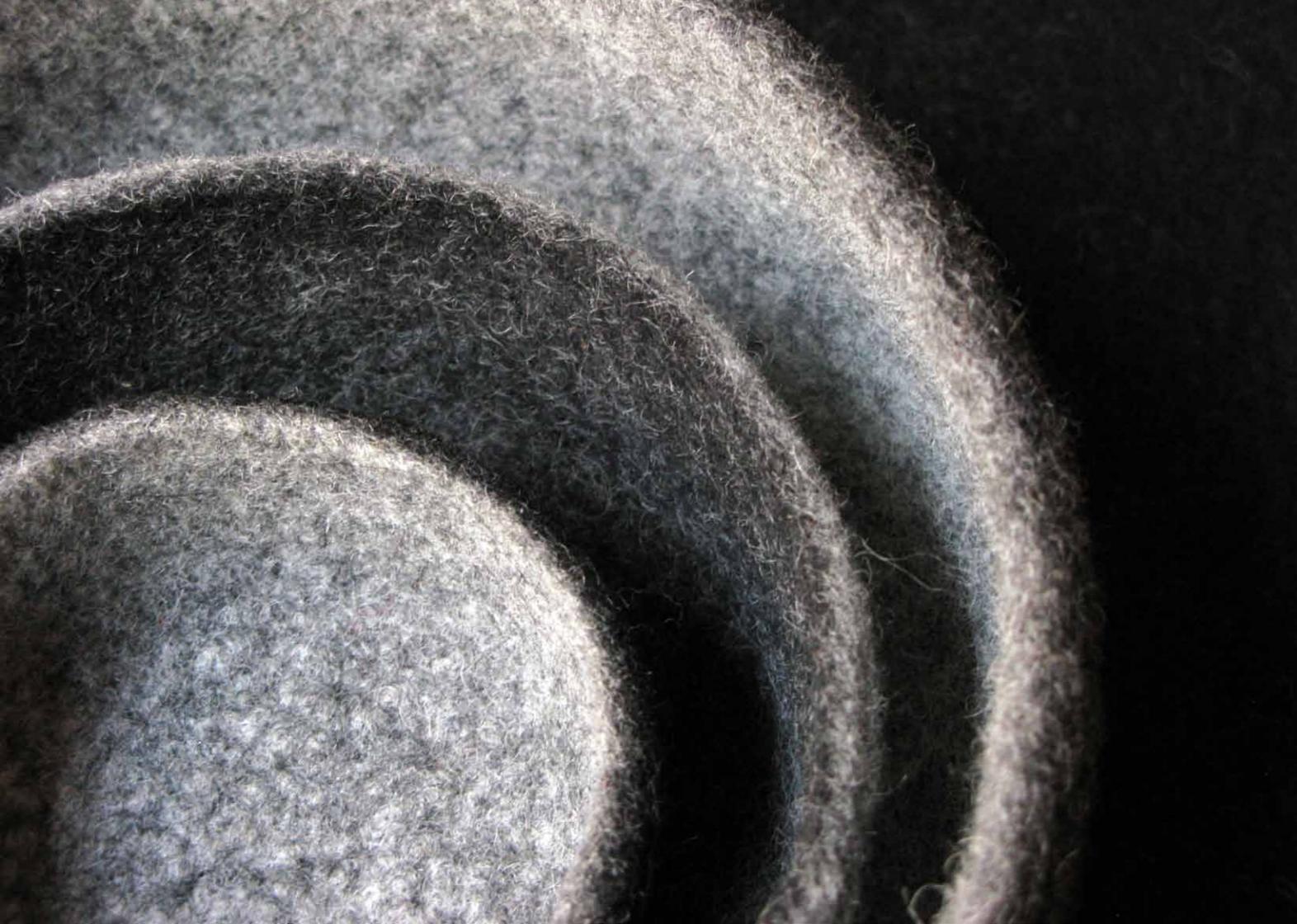


D 16 cm



D 8 cm





Bowls



round



oval



square





Monica Castiglioni has linked her name to jewelry design on the international level. Her art divides between design and photography, Milan and New York. Her atelier in Milan is located in the Isola neighborhood, the new name in the artistic culture. To New York, her second city, she has dedicated entire series of photographs. The versatility of her work is interlaced with the places from which she takes inspiration, starting from the world of plants, ending with the urban reflections passing through different cultures.

TUMAR

Tumar Art is a handicraft group from Kyrgyz Republic. Founded in 1998 with a goal to preserve and develop traditional material culture. Craftsmen of the group create unique handmade objects based on natural materials and environmentally friendly traditional production technologies.

www.monicacastiglioni.com
www.tumar.com