

A full scholarship and degree from the Fashion Institute of Technology in textile and apparel design led PJ in what seemed like a straight path in the fashion world. She spent three years working in lower Manhattan, helping designers screen-print color and pattern onto raw fabric. "It was a fantastic first job. I would stroll the maze of fabric and trim dens in the Garment District — a never-ending riot of colors and patterns to feed my imagination," she remembers.

But PJ missed Colorado, where she'd spent summers with extended family. With characteristic determination, she talked her father out of a car, packed up her cat and sewing machine, and headed back to what would become her new home state. PJ landed an apartment in Denver's Capitol Hill and a job at the Denver Dry Goods Company. "I saw this as an interim step, because I'd always wanted to have my own business."

Not long after, PJ met her soon-to-be husband, Merrell. A few years later, a 1904 "baby Victorian" home caught her eye. Moving into the little plaster and lath house, she remembers freezing their first winter. "I recalled seeing European wall upholstery in showrooms while going to school in New York. I decided to try this in our own home to warm it up." Thanks to years of collecting in both New York City and Denver, PJ — a self-proclaimed "fabric-holic" — had boxes full of the goods needed to pull this off.

Impressed by the results, a neighbor asked PJ to do the same in her house. Upholstering



walls with fabric had been high fashion at the turn of the century in Colorado mansions and in Europe's castles before that. PJ brought the art back to Denver and invented her own techniques. "I was tailoring these rooms with fine fabric and making them quite exquisite. Eventually I thought I could start a business doing this." After giving notice at the "Denver Dry," an enterprise was born. For 23 years, PJ perfected her techniques, forming every seam and trim detail with her own hands.

Eventually PJ sold the business and she and Merrell moved to Salida where arts fever was well underway. She wanted to continue working with her hands, this time creating something multi-dimensional that would grab attention in a room. The first artwork from her Salida Creative District studio involved hand felting with wool, which eventually led to fashioning large-scale wall-mounted