

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #67

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Dear Readers,

when the last *filzfun* issue appeared at the end of February, nobody had the slightest inkling how the whole world would change in the course of the following weeks! In those days that already seem remote to us, about 100 feltmakers from all over Germany were still able to get together at the Roggenburg Monastery in Swabia (see pages 8–15) before all other meetings, courses, markets, fairs and shows were cancelled for months to come because of the Corona pandemic.

Maybe – in times when the cultural and society life has been curtailed to such an extent – you will find a little more time and leisure to read or to felt, or to start feltmaking. In this issue we would like to present three interesting textile artists who work decidedly different: Beate Bossert (page 24ff.) is a veritable sourdough of the German felting scene and the true mother of the *filzfun*.

NOTE

For reasons of environment protection, we decided to no longer add the English translation of most articles as a printed supplement to the filzfun issues going abroad but to offer it as a PDF on our website. The new approach will enable you to find and read selected articles and print them out only when you want to keep them.

She first published the magazine then called *verFiltzt Und Zugenäht*. Diana Nagorna (page 30ff.) makes breathtaking felt fashion and Yaroslava Troynich (page 36ff.) ravishing animal hand and finger puppets.

As an encouragement to become active, Delia Grimms' enchanted castle is available in a step-by-step instruction (page 42ff.) Her daisy palace and meadow castle could inspire you to felt your own dream dwelling. We already look forward to receiving your photographs for our gallery.

We hope that feltmaking will help a little to get through these difficult times. Stay safe and sound and – creative!

*With best regards,
your filzfun-Team*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:

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The autumn issue will be published on

August 28th 2020.

Editorial deadline: June 15th 2020.

Shyrdak, Shawls and a Love for Snails – the Filz-Kolleg in Soltau

The German Filz-Netzwerk has prepared a diversified course program themed »Tradition und Moderne« (Tradition and Modern Times) for its 5th Filz-Kolleg (Course of Lectures on Felt) from July 13th to 19th 2020 in the felto Filzwelt Soltau. You are cordially invited to an open experimental workshop with raw wool by Barbara Steffen-Munsberg, Susanne Breuling and Ulrike Hartrumpf. With Susanne Schächter-Heil and Barbara Steffen-Munsberg the show goes on at a second experimental workshop called »drunter-, dran- und draufgefilit« (approx. To be felted underneath, next and onto something). »Bewegung im Filz« (Movement in felt) is Henny van Tussenbroek's theme. Delia Grimm leads the courses »Schneckenliebe« (Snail Love; hand puppets) and »zuHAUS« (At home; felted bags). Garments can be made with Susanne Breuling (a vest) and Ulrike Hartrumpf (shawl or loop). Hartrumpf also hosts the workshop »Mit Löchern spielen« (Play with gaps, cuts and holes). Compact, playable animal figurines spring to life in Gabriele Mazaracis' course, and Meike Raßbach teaches the traditional Shyrdak carpet technique. *Information and application:* www.filznetzwerk.de

Hand in Hand with Afghan Embroiderers

»Hands give, take and reach out; all this can be rendered artistically. They also create art,« writes Pascale Goldenberg with reference to the call for her current Guldusi-Projekt »Hand in Hand«. Hand motifs embroidered by Afghan women should find their way into your own textile art objects. The motto does not lend itself to a literal interpretation alone, but should be seen metaphorically, too; as »approaching each other, designing for the wellbeing and camaraderie of others and for oneself«. The closing date for applications is May 31st, 2021. The works will be presented

to the public for the first time during the 27th European Patchwork Meeting in September 2021.

Terms and conditions: www.guldusi.com

A Virtual Stroll Through an Exhibition

»See and notice« is the title of Andrea Noeske-Porada's felt art exhibit which will be on show until July in the Dutch Galerie High Five Art in Baarle-Nassau. Because of the Corona pandemic only two persons at a time can see it after advance notification. Make your reservations per email under highfiveart@icloud.com or by phone +31 (0) 6-51 15 94 14. You may as well also take a small virtual stroll through the show on the gallery's website:

<https://highfiveart.nl/virtuele-expositie/>

Summer Felting in the Steiermark

Michaela Kunzfeld, Barbara Steffen-Munsberg and Susanne Schächter-Heil are the lecturers during the »Sommerfilztage« (Summer Felting Days) in the educational center Retzhof Castle in Steiermark from 8th to August 16th. Building on two basic workshops around the subject »Filzen mit Schablonen« (Felting with Resists) und »Spielen mit dem Schrumpf« (Shrinkage Experiments), the event offers plenty of room and space for individual work, with each instructor constantly offering assistance, advice, support and guidance. *Information and application under:* www.wollwerkerin.de

10th Felting Symposium in Werenzhain

For the 10th time in a row Maria Sagurna will invite you to four summer weeks of the Felt Symposium taking place at the Atelierhof Werenzhain. The feltmaking days start Juli 31st and last to August 2nd. They begin with a bookbinding course and the felting of book covers with Maria Sagurna and Dagmar von Reis, ending with a reading by Traude Bührmann. Then follow the courses »Praktisch und

nachhaltig – Kleidung, nahtlos gefilit« (Practical and Sustainable – Seamless Felted Clothes) with Sabine Reichert Kassube (August 7th–9th), »Kugeln groß und klein – als Deko-Objekte und zum Beleuchten« (Globes big and small as decorative or illuminating objects) with Petra Nasdal (August 22nd) and »Zeigt her eure Füße – kesse Sohlen und freche Pantoffeln« (Show your feet – perky soles and cool pantolets) with Maria Sagurna (August 28th–30th) an. Accommodation is offered either in the guest house, on further living space on the premises, in the summer house, a shepherd's cart or a place to set up your own tent. *Information and application via email to atelierhof.filzsymposium@mariasagurna.de or by phone under the number +49 (0) 177 4 64 82 33.*

Feltmaking Feast in the Sign of the Mask

For four days the Roggenburg Premonstratensian monastery in Swabia was the meeting point of feltmakers from all over Germany – shortly before the Corona pandemic made such encounters impossible.

☞ It seems as if Margit Röhm and her organization team had possessed visionary faculties one and a half year ago when they fixed the motto for the Felt Encounter 2020: »Masquerade«. When approx. 100 feltmakers from all over Germany met in the Bildungszentrum Kloster Roggenburg near Ulm in order to felt together for four days, to share their experiences and to plan the workload of the Filz-Netzwerk for the coming months nobody had the slightest notion that three weeks later the Corona pandemic would bring the cultural and social life in the whole of Europe to a sudden and bitter halt. Some weeks later, wearing masks was made mandatory.

Courses and Theater

Margit Röhm, Ilka Lehmann, Christine Rusch, Petra Kunz, Kerstin Waizenegger and Angelika Geißler had prepared a varied course and entertainment program: Imaginative fascinators, Venetian masks, classic felted hoods and embroideries on felt were made in workshops (see page

10/11), members of the Alemannic Fasnet (type of archaic German exorcism of evil winter spirits) presented the traditional masks of the fools' guild (the also invited representatives of the famous Venetian Carnival were not allowed to travel because of Covid-19 at that point in time already) and the theatre ensemble »Die wollen doch nur spielen (They just want to play« from Ulm delighted the audience with improvised scenes. The event's end was crowned by a live presentation, where the participants were the first ones to see the exhibits of the international felt art show »Ver-Kleidung« (approx. DIS-guise) (see pages 12-15). At some traders' booths in the foyer of the educational center the feltmakers were offered endless choices of materials for their own projects. A guided tour through the Premonstratensian monastery and the church enhanced the historic and sacral background of the meeting premises.

A Jubilee Joint Venture

The 25th Filzbegegnung and the 15-year jubilee of the Filz-Netzwerk were perpetuated by a joint venture. Each participant processed exactly 15 g of wool in just one color into an arbitrary object. This task inspired the feltmakers in many different ways: some made a hat, others a dress or the grid from the Filz-Netzwerk logo or more abstract objects. ♪ At the annual general meeting the members of the Filz-Netzwerk decided to bring the public closer to the association itself and its offers, like the children's felt chest for schools and other institutions or the voluntary quality control of felted products for fairs and handicraft markets. On the European Day of the Felting Craft in April 2021 the network will take part with a day of open feltmaking workshops. Apart from that it supports the initiative to have felting be acknowledged as world cultural heritage.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 12-15

Transformative Felt

From headpiece to hood: The workshops in the scope of the Filzbegegnung were fully booked.

♪ Some feltmakers transformed themselves, others only their felted objects during the workshops in Roggenburg. On the last evening, coy fascinators with feathers, tulle or glittering details adorned the heads of some women from Susanne Breuling's courses, while others had made classic yet ageless felted hoods with Monika Derrix. Totally changed seemed the wearers of the Venetian masks out of Beate Bossert's workshops. Two dozen women learned from Annemie Koenen how felted objects can be further enhanced or upgraded by artful embroidery. All workshops were fully booked – some lucky feltmakers were able to get into the desired course via the waiting list.

Fascinating Fascinators

Under the competent supervision by Susanne Breuling truly alluring fascinators, a type of small festive headgear, were made. The choice of materials offered for this extravagant headgear was almost inexhaustible. ♪ One could not only indulge in the usual wool madness, but every desired bit of material could be incorporated. There were no limits for creative ideas and the combination of felt and other materials was really exciting. From hatters' ware like Sinamay, various fabrics, buttons, beads, tinsel, lace, but also wooden parts and pompons and feathers of all kinds and colors – everything and then some were put to good use. Some were spoilt for choice and some students turned to the course instructor for inspiration and assistance.

♪ The participants felted, stiffened, stuck, wound and finally sewed their creations onto Alice bands. The end results were highly individual headpieces, some plain and simple, others noble, sober or shrill. Needless to say, all were much admired.

BARBARA EICHHORN

Venetian Masked Ball

»In almost every culture, hiding behind masks is traditional, for many different reasons. There is a joy in it, and it is

inspiring. The mask offers a space to try out many new ideas, using a variety of materials for textile creations. Especially the fantastic masks of the Venetian Carnival with their fine patterns are endowed with special charm by enhancing them with nuno techniques, surface structures and embroidery. Simple masks only whet the appetite for more complex ones.« With these words and showing beautiful, delicate specimen, Beate Bossert opened her mask workshop.

♪ Stencil, instruction materials, working tables – everything was prepared perfectly, so we were able to start immediately. In these short courses I like best that experienced feltmakers, highly skilled over the years, share their knowledge and individual ways of working so willingly. Here a valuable hint how to pick at the net material to loosen it, there the idea to heat up the feltpiece with the steam iron – it all amounts to invaluable advice that can be used in intricate feltmaking or with many other techniques or different kinds of objects.

♪ Due to the fact that theoretically everybody is able to felt the courses are truly relaxing. You can indulge yourself in giving shape to your ideas and in the admiration for the skills of others. Beate Bossert's treasure chest filled with glittering fabrics and tinsel, spectacular yarns and wool curls invited all kinds of experiments. For the presentation we had a great number of attractive masks: Tree- and water creatures, masks with eyebrows, curly beards or dreadlocks, but also delicately glimmering masks which were remindful of a perfect make-up.

♪ Ina Jeromin

Imaginative Embroidery

»Needle, thread and work should all be in balance.« Annemie Koenen laid down the basic facts in her course »Fantastische Stickereien« (Fanciful Embroideries): the thickness of the yarn, the needle and the material to be embroidered have to match in order to get a satisfying result.

♪ Koenen showed everything to the beginners – choosing a matching yarn, the correct thread length, threading and the sewing up. The latter is really simple with feltmaking, since the thread can be well hidden the different layers. Then our instructor, going ahead reasonably with regard to the beginners, showed us several decorative stitches.

♪ With great patience Annemie Koenen explained the stitches again and again, found fault and solved arising problems. How attractive hand felted objects

become by embroidering them with the above-mentioned stitches could be seen in the show objects. Felted bracelets, small bags with a hoop and compactly felted lucky charms in the shape of female torsos (a characteristic hallmark of Annemie Koenen) had all been intricately embroidered to great effect with hand-dyed silk yarns.

BETTINA CASPARI

Hoods – From Hobo to Handservant

I had been very curious about the workshop »Felted Hoods Classic/Romantic«, since for a long time I had coveted such loose and comfy headgear for my own. The instructor Monika Derrix, friendly and best prepared showed us several models and explained their differences and the necessary calculations. All these hoods have in common that they are very flexible, both in the individual width and the shape given.

~ We had only three hours, so we were allowed to copy Monika Derrix' stencils. Then we turned to the wool strands, laid them out and felted. Derrix was open to any question throughout the whole enterprise. She had her eyes everywhere, watched closely and stepped in with helpful hints and advice. More than once I heard her say: »Don't stroke it so much, Meike, it is enough!«

~ At the end of the course my work piece wasn't ready. So, I used the lunch break to finish my penum just in time before the next course began.

~ 19 women made hoods over those two days, to be categorized somewhere between the »hobo« and the »handservant«-model. We admired each other's work, talked extensively shop shortly before the evening program began and wondered aloud about the great variety of headgear stemming from a single stencil.

MEIKE RASSBACH

PAGES 16-17

Inspiration and Interpretation

The international felt exhibit »Verkleidung« (Disguise) had to be put on the back burner after the first presentation in Roggenburg.

~ A live show on the darkened threshing-floor, part of a once self-sufficient monastery, hosted the dramatic premiere of the international felt art exhibit themed »Disguise« by the German Filz-Netzwerk. Students of the Occupational Therapy Dornstadt in black whole-body suits moved among the crowd and presented show pieces of thirty artists, trailed by hand searchlights and accompanied by music.

~ Margit Röhm had prepared the exceptional show together with Petra Kunz and the jurors Kerstin Waizenegger and Angelika Geißler. The opening night was to be the first leg of a travelling show, first to go to the Textilmuseum Mindelheim, then to the Pfalzmuseum Forchheim and the Museum der Schwalm. Due to the Corona pandemic this exhibition schedule had to be put on the back burner for the time being.

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

The live presentation already showed how astounding the individual interpretations of the motto turned out: The inspirations reached from a harlequin coat with a red wig and plush tie (Susanne Breuling) to a wall covering (Bettina Caspari), from felt-covered cables (Sabine Köhlert) to a costume with fancy giraffe fur markings (Anne Jansen). There was a wolf in sheep's clothing and its counterpart, a sheep in a wolf's hide, made by Claudia Hecke. Monika Derrix anticipated humorously a quite delicate matter that would make worldwide news some weeks later: She fashioned a stylish bag, wherein a roll of toilet paper can be transported, and the sheets rolled out through a slit with a zipper.

~ We show here a small choice of the exhibits. In the summer issue of the Filzfun we will present more and – if at all possible – we will publish the new dates for public occasions to see them.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 18-21

Wool and Water

An impressive exhibition by Annette Quentin-Stoll, Carine Mertes and Robert Quentin in the Duchfabrik in Luxembourg.

~ Whoever plans a hiking tour in the northern part of Luxembourg might find her- or himself in the small village Esch-Sauer in the nature reserve »Naturpark Obersauer«. A true eye-catcher are the impressive ruins of a high castle from the 10th century. Not quite as old is the »Duchfabrik« at the river Sauer, where mostly wool cloth and fabrics for workwear and uniforms were manufactured. The plant was restored at the end of the 1990ies and has functioned since then as a 'living' museum where woolen blankets and accessories are manufactured on site.

Basis for All Life

Twice a year textile exhibitions are held there. The most recent winter show was called »Waasser« (Luxembourgish for water). As the crucial element of all life on this planet it not only shapes the whole region, but the dammed waters of the Obersauer river are also the biggest sweet water reservoir in the country.

~ Water mirrors the blue of the sky and the green leaves; we enjoy the brook's murmur and the rolling sea. When it vaporizes, myriads of drops form huge cloud formations. When it freezes we discover frosted flowers and ice crystals. Water is inspiring in itself as an element, as a living space and also as an essential medium in the works of the invited artists, Carine Mertes, Annette Quentin-Stoll and her husband Robert Quentin.

Fish and Shells

Annette Quentin-Stoll's fish could be found all over the entire exhibit, either as detailed, colorful sculptures or felted into wall hangings or images. Small, meticulously and elaborately made shells and intricately wound snails showed the playful side of this versatile artist. Ever since her stay as »artist in residence« in Petäjävesi, Finland in 2005, Annette Quentin-Stoll has been truly fascinated by snow, as seen the felted image »Sternenbaum im Schnee (Star tree in the snow)«. Her »Froschkönig« (Frog king) became the bright and merry face of the show. With more reduced objects like »Wollke« (Word play involving the German words for wool and cloud) from

Merino and Wensleydale curls or the »Schneedecke« (Snow blanket) from Merino and Seide, she draws somehow artistically nearer to the works of Carine Mertes.

☞ The Luxembourgeois Mertens prefers wool as design material because of its variability. Felted wool can become stiff and sturdy, but also incredibly soft, light and delicate. Carine Mertes loves to use different wool qualities. Next to soft Merino she works with Austrian Mountain Sheep, Wallis Blacknose and Wensleydale wool and loves to experiment with Alpaka wool from Luxembourg.

☞ Her archaic-looking objects are characterized by a reduced language of form and boldly chosen materials. They represent the Zeitgeist, yet they are as natural and primary as they are modern. Proof of the latter is the artist's repeated participation at the renowned biennial »De Mains De Maîtres«.

☞ For the show, Carine Mertes used water drops as inspirational source, hence her designing a whole row of »drop-shaped vases« in different shapes and sizes. A felted water jug pours invisible water into a coarse bowl called »Muselwaken«: It reminds the artist of the stony river bed of the Mosel. Winkingly, function follows form. Very useful for wear indeed were the great, flowing shawls in silk and wool which the artist hand-dyed in a blue and green color range.

Surprising Harmony

The light images of Robert Quentin were responsible for the remarkable wow! effect in combination with Carine Mertes' vases. The photographer had mounted enlarged images of bubbling water, meandering brooks or the sea, e.g. at the Hiddensee island in the Baltic, in illuminated frames. Both artists made all objects especially for this exhibit and neither had been familiar with the work of the other party. It was all the more astounding how well they harmonized and complemented each other's artistic style.

☞ It was an exciting, varied felt art show with photographic highlights, accompanied by the spherical music of Robert Quentin's short films.

☞ Towards the end of the exhibit, interested spectators could deal with the subject water themselves in a felt course called »Flying Fish« with Annette Quentin-Stoll. The results were a wealth of diversity in fish tank populations!

VERONIQUE MATHAY

PAGES 22-23

Tribute to the Teeswater Sheep

»Teeswater Year: Farm. Fleece. Fashion.« was a collaboration featuring the work of Photographer Melissa Peakman and Feltmaker Yvonne Le Mare, culminating in an exhibition at the Dales Countryside Museum at Hawes, North Yorkshire.

☞ Melissa is a documentary photographer who has followed and photographed the rare breed Teeswater sheep for the last couple of years, working with sheep breeders and visiting their farms in North Yorkshire, capturing the complete cycle from preparing the rams, through to lambing, showing, shearing and finally to selling at the auction marts, thereby providing a fascinating insight into the life of sheep farmers.

☞ Some of the images are beautifully atmospheric, others show the bond between farmer, working collies and the livestock. The project focused on the farmers, the breeders and the sheep themselves.

☞ Along the way Melissa met Yvonne, who uses the distinctive curly Teeswater locks in her felt work and was fascinated by the almost magical way wool can be transformed using only moisture, friction and soap. She also found the sheer versatility of felt very interesting – from light and floaty to solid and structured. Both women concluded that their respective skills would complement each other for the exhibition and show case the breed more fully.

☞ As a centrepiece for the exhibition, Yvonne crafted a seamless nuno-felted Wedding Dress, from a prize winning fleece which was exceptionally fine with long, well-formed ringlets and ideal for such a clothing project.

☞ Before starting on the felt making Yvonne needed to prepare the fleece by picking out any vegetable matter and carefully hand washing it. She wanted to showcase the locks without making the dress cumbersome and heavy, deciding that the way forward was to have some sort of overall pattern to give texture and interest, with a froth of lustrous locks at the hem.

☞ The Wedding Dress was made entirely by hand, using fine Merino wool, Teeswater locks plus about nine metres of silk chiffon!

☞ It was nuno felted on a resist so that was completely seamless, and the skirt

section has six godets, to give fullness. The hem circumference measures 7.5 metres and has approximately 350 grams of locks wet felted onto it. About a further 175 grams were manipulated to form the all-over spiral pattern. To complete the outfit, Yvonne also felted a matching floral headband and wrist corsage.

☞ Museum Manager Fiona Rosher said: »A Teeswater Year gave people an insight into the life and traditions that the Teeswater supports, in fields, lambing sheds and show rings. Melissa Peakman's sometimes gritty photos contrasted with Yvonne Le Mare's beautifully crafted, colourful feltwork. It was a must-see for anyone interested in farming or textiles.«

☞ Olivia Conner, Breed Secretary of The Teeswater Sheep Breeders Association commented, »the 'Teeswater Year: Farm. Fleece. Fashion.' Exhibition in Hawes had been something the Teeswater Breeders had been looking forward to for quite some time. I am so proud of the amazing job both Melissa and Yvonne have done – not only have they devoted time and effort into the creation of the exhibition, and showcased just what they are both capable of as artists, but they have done an excellent job of promoting the Teeswater Breed. Teeswater sheep are native to the UK and are on the Rare Breeds watchlist, which makes them that little bit more important. Their lustrous locks and striking confirmation make the Teeswater Breed noteworthy.

☞ Melissa took thousands of images at showgrounds, during lambing, scanning and other important events in the Farmer's diary – capturing stunning images of situations as they really happen. Some may have been shocked by the 'gritty' images in the exhibition, but I believe they were an important way to show people what really happens behind the scenes.

☞ Yvonne created the most beautiful wedding dress using Teeswater locks as well as other stunning garments in beautiful bright colours. It was well worth the journey to attend the Opening Evening of the Exhibition, to talk to both Yvonne and Melissa, as well as other Teeswater Breeders.

☞ It was a great social evening and a first look at the completed exhibition – there was a real buzz in the room and a sense of pride from all involved. Amongst the refreshments was Teeswater lamb provided by the Tunstall Flock: a mouthwatering example of a native meat with minimal miles from food to fork.«

YVONNE LE MARE

Thirty Years on the Felting Path

Beate Bossert has been a feltmaker half of her life and she has been actively engaged in the feltmakers' scene almost as long. She is the co-founder of the filzfun magazine and shares with us her experience over three decades in the sign of wool.

Since I was a child, I had a great passion for textiles and art. As the granddaughter of a sheep holder I was allowed to be present during the shearings from early on. Literally mountains of wool, higher than myself! It was then that I began dreaming to create something out of wool. Of course, felting by hand was almost unknown in those days so I settled on spinning, weaving and knitting, but my love was kindled for good! The same goes for visual arts, a lifetime companion. Art class helped to improve my grade point average for the university entrance, and I chose art as a teaching subject during my studies in special needs education.

Apprenticeship as a Florist

I switched to an apprenticeship as a florist, making my poor boss suffer with my extravagant creations. He still had a lot of patience with me. »Well, let's see whether it will sell...«, he used to say. And indeed, there were clients who liked modern floral arrangements.

☞ During my free time I had always remained true to visual arts and textile art. When I discovered feltmaking in 1990 – after many excursions in various textile techniques such as knitting, crocheting, sewing, patchwork, macramé – I had the feeling that I had finally arrived.

☞ But it was no mere arrival, except for having finally found the material that I like best. Quite on the contrary: it was the beginning of a new path. My first felted object was a mask, a merman.

☞ In 1998, together with Jeanette Rucktäschel we curated a mask exhibit with performances that led us to a feltmakers' meeting in Göttingen. I also made masks for the Sampler competition of the Textile Art in Berlin. It came full circle with this year's theme of the felting encounter »(Ver-)Kleidung« (approx. (Dis)guise), where again I taught how to make masks. (See also page 8-15.)

Let it be a challenge!

Like so many other people, I always put some work in my holiday suitcase. For a trip to Tuscany I took along little dwarfs to finish them. A friendly Australian who lived next door bought the first one. The next day he came by again, informing me: »I need a woman to go with it.« He countered my objection that I had never made a female dwarf before with a simple: »Let it be a challenge to you.« This encouraging demand has become my life's motto. Of course, his little creature got his woman. I enjoy the challenges felt continues to provide, and also dwarfs, trolls, elementary spirits and fairy tale characters have stayed true to me until now!

☞ During all the creative work I've made meeting other enthusiasts and the resulting exchanges remained crucial. As of the third feltmakers' meeting I have been participating in work groups or organizing teams.

The Birth of the filzfun

In the mid-nineties I took over an address list of feltmakers. Soon the question arose whether I should gather other pertaining information that would in turn be made available to others. The idea for an information brochure was born. And then, why not start a real magazine? In 1999, together with Jeanette Rucktäschel I produced and published the first issue of the FUZ – verFilzt Und Zugenäht, later re-christened FUN – verFilzt Und zugeNäht and going by the name filzfun as of 2014. ☞ From 2001 to 2006 I continued the magazine on my own. I had little idea about computers and layouts, feltmaking opened up a whole new world for me. My family can sing quite a tune about my sheer desperation when layout was due – nothing was functioning the way I imagined it! Images vanished overnight, files could not be found, the light personnel called in sick, the prints wrong...But nevertheless: A surge of informational exchange had started to roll! In 2006 I put the magazine in other hands in order dedicate myself to felting and teaching again. When the Filz-Netzwerk Association was founded in 2005 I was one of the decision-makers.

Lecturing Here and Abroad

Passing on my year-long experience became the next great passion. Wouldn't it be a shame if I kept all accumulated knowledge to myself? As a lecturer I have been travelling widely, also abroad and I continue to enjoy immensely

making people familiar with this fantastic material. It is also great to meet others who are just as enthusiastic about feltmaking. To get across how the material metamorphoses under my hands, from fluffy wool to sturdy, robust felt!

☞ Turning wool into felt each time represents a new commitment to meet the object, the people involved, the fibers. The more I deepen my knowledge of the different ways to process wool the greater artistic freedom I find in expressing myself, just as in the saying: »When I know what I'm doing I can do what I want.«

Felt Variety

My work is committed to the versatility of the fabric, which continues to pleasantly surprise me to this very day: Wet felting, needle felting, fusions with fabric, fine wool, coarse wool...Felt isn't absolute but allows for the most diverse ways to process it. It doesn't mind perfectionism and lends itself to many experiments, its charm develops in a wealth of colors as well as in the reduction thereof.

☞ Trying out new techniques and surface structures makes me feel like a curious, active child. The mixing of techniques I particularly like. With the felting needle I conquer space, with water and soap I change surfaces, with thread and needle I make new structures and I play around with yarns and beads. Felt is a wonderful supplement to almost any other textile handicraft. So a vest gets knitted arms, self-made twine buttons, I apply pouches and sometimes a piece is topped with delicate small embroidery.

☞ The contrast between hard and soft or deceiving illusions are very attractive to me. Regarding the latter, I felted many pebbles for a beach which was shown already at my first exhibition in 1999. In contrast, I made an airy, light »Indian Summer« shawl or leaf-like scarves. Some objects were meant in good humour, using German vernacular sayings like »a loose screw – i.e. somebody is not quite right in the head« and other to illustrate their double meaning. Many pieces of jewels were given poetic names, such as »Morning Dew in the Mountains«. The importance of meeting like-minded people resulted in artistic work as well, such as »Begegnung (Encounter)« or the »People« sequence. I can rely on a keen eye to make true-to-life pumpkins, fruit, vegetables, petit fours, licorice and even Sushi.

☞ It has been 30 years now since I stroke my »felting path« and I'm still on the

road, so to speak. I am very grateful to have met so many wonderful people who taught me and encouraged a lively and fruitful exchange. I never want to reach the end of it. Like in a maze, there is always something new to discover around every corner; sometimes I stumble or glide into new and exciting possibilities. Doors continue to open and close again – I relish being on my way.

BEATE BOSSERT

PAGES 32–37

Felt Fashion in Perfection

The Ukrainian designer Diana Nagorna fashions breathtaking nuno felt robes and plays them to the gallery in perfect photographs. She teaches her technique internationally in workshops and instruction videos.

The combination of transparent silk and opaque felt, intricate structures of wool on gossamer fabric, a headgear abundant with felted blossoms or strings that can be knotted into long hair to resemble Rasta dreads – Diana Nagorna's creations are everything but simple or inconspicuous. Quite on the contrary: they immediately hit the eye with their extravagance. Art to be worn!

☞ The 41-year old designer from Charkiw in the Ukraine with a faible for portrait art has been interested in feltmaking for more than twelve years. It all started when small, delicate felt sculptures by a Japanese artist caught her attention. »They obviously were made of a soft, malleable material, but I hadn't the faintest idea about how they were actually made«, she tells us. »When saw these objects, a sudden thought came to my mind: What if I could make my portrait art of the same material?«

Beginnings in Needle-Felting

So, she began to teach herself needle-felting in order to make three-dimensional figurines become alive in her hands. »A load of experiments was awaiting me, new discoveries and a lot of joy over initial successes despite difficulties and physical exhaustion«, Diana Nagorna remembers. »This is how my love for felt in all its forms began.« For quite a

while she dedicated her energy to wool sculpting in needle-felt technique, »then I got interested in wet-felting.«

The Studio in Charkiw

In the meantime, she has almost exclusively been working in nuno felt technique and has become a professional feltmaker. »With nuno felting I can put all my ideas into effect«, raves the artist, who had a studio in the old part of Charkiw for a long time. »I had a lot of fun working there and have my morning coffee in the café next door.« A year ago, though, she moved her studio to a room in her house. She wanted everything to be close at hand, to be able to start felting at any given moment in time. In this room she felts accessories, shoes and interior decorations.

Stylish Felt Shoes

In the course of only a few years she designed and made five complete collections that she presented on fashion events in the Ukraine. Then she turned her attention to manufacturing shoes. Not without pride she states: »I succeeded in changing the image of felt footwear and to show that they not always have to be just coarse boots, but stylish, comfortable shoes of the highest quality instead that simply belong to a modern woman's attire.«

☞ Diana Nagorna dedicated herself to the production of her shoe line, co-working with other designers as well as with a manufacturer of luxury soles. »All this was great fun«, she says, »but I find shoe production most complicated. Every milimeter counts. This is undeniably art. As a perfectionist, I would have to give all I had to the shoe production, thereby declining the lure of all other projects.« She finally went back to experimenting with fashion and textile design.

Sander and Wash Board

In her fashion line she uses Merino of different fineness degrees, silk and other fibers, sometimes also fleece wool and wool curls. In order to achieve special colors and gradations she sometimes dyes silk with acid colors. The studio is equipped quite rudimentarily: Apart from a table, a sander and a washboard she doesn't need much else to make her extravagant models that she likes to finish with beads of different sizes, metallic yarns and gimp. Not everything works out straightaway, »but often exactly the experiments that didn't really work led to new decorative techniques.«

☞ She is inspired by people who »are fully absorbed in what they are doing, artists, musicians, my French teacher...«, but also by nature. »When I travel I can watch the sea for hours on end, admiring its tremendous force that simultaneously attracts and frightens me.«

A Key Note for Each Project

The artist always sets out on a new project with a leitmotif: »This can be a certain color combination, different textures or fabrics. It is like a color palette out of which I fashion a garment or a complete fashion line.« The next step is to give shape to her ideas. Sometimes she sits for hours in the same position, imagining the details of future elements, which she sketches. Nagorna describes her way of working: »I make very schematic drawings and take down notes, which I can only fully comprehend later. Only then I start using fabric.«

☞ Her inborn feeling for proportions has developed much through her artistic training, Diana Nagorna says, and this special faculty has been of great service in feltmaking.

Symposium in Canada

Next to her own artistic work she teaches workshops in the Ukraine, in Russia, The Netherlands, Argentine and Chile. At present she is preparing a course programme for a symposium in Canada. ☞ In addition, the Ukrainian artist produces teaching videos. »So for many of my students in the US, Europe, Latin America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan it is now possible to study my felting techniques online.«

☞ Photography is another passion of this felt artists who finds the magic of light and shade fascinating. For a couple of years now she has been an avid jogger and prepares herself for her first half-marathon.

☞ It would be nice write a book about her feltmaking experiences one day, she muses. »And my absolute dream is my own show in a museum of modern art.«

HELENE WEINOLD

A Handful of Animals

*From travel journalist to felt artist:
Yaroslava Troynich loves nature.*

A blue-green frog who looks curiously out into the world with orange eyes, a cunning fox with a pointed muzzle and like ears, a horse with a flowing mane and sturdy horseshoes and a bear that had just caught a salmon: All these ravishing animals are felted hand puppets from Yaroslava Troynich's workshop, as well as sheep, koalas, pandas, mooses – and especially felicitous – a duckbill. ♪ The hand puppets and their smaller relatives, the finger puppets are modelled after animals existing in nature, yet strongly stylized and therefore all the more expressive. In the spirit of minimalism, Scandinavian design and folk art Troynich tries to make her puppets seem alive without too many details. Only now and then she allows for additional accessories, the salmon, the horseshoes, a bamboo stick for the panda or a pair of Russian felt boots for the bear.

Fascinating Fauna

Yaroslava Troynich, born 42 years ago in the USSR has been living in Helsinki together with her Finnish husband and a Scottish cat since 2007. She has always felt a special connection to nature. As a journalist from the university of St. Petersburg she travelled the world for many years for magazines like *Cosmopolitan* or *National Geographic*. Already then, the wealth of the animal world left a strong impression. »Travelling gives me my best ideas – in the mountains, the forests, or at the sea«, she tells us. »I strongly appreciate the Amazonas rainforest and the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, but when I started living in Finland I fell in love with the North.« ♪ »My art is my small personal contribution to ecological awareness«, she says. »Almost all my ideas stem from nature: ugly and beautiful animals, endangered ones. When visiting nature reserves, I never miss a chance to get to know wildlife. Even if my work does not aspire to a true-to-life depiction I study animals closely, I look at photographs or watch documentations about nature, and I read a lot about animal life and habitats.«

Initiating Talk

Her dolls are not only lovely playthings, they bring people together as well. »The puppets help to strengthen the bond between parents and children, to invent stories and to learn new things. They support ecological awareness and training and foster the love for animals«, Yaroslava Troynich is pleased to note. »I am really proud that ecologists in nature reserves and museums, but also teachers and psychologists use them in their work.« ♪ She discovered felting as a means to reduce stress already in 2009 when she was still working as a travel journalist. »I started with needle-felting and was so impressed how the wool took on the most different shapes. Wet-felting I liked immediately. I love everything in connection with it: the messy table, the often unforeseen result, the wet wool surface, the sweat. I feel really creative in the here and now.«

Russian Hand Puppets Bibabo

Soon her interest in three-dimensional felted objects awoke. »As a child I loved Bibabo, traditional Russian hand puppets whose origins go back to Italy and France in the 17th century«, she says. The remembrance gave her ideas for making her own dolls. »When my first hand puppet fox was born he seemed like a present from the universe. Surprisingly, a really modern, unique art object came off the combination of traditional feltmaking and traditional toys. Suddenly everything fell together: my love for hand puppets, animals and wool.« The travel journalist turned into a textile art specialising in felted animal puppets: »Within a couple of years I changed my job and became a professional felter.« ♪ Her 14 m² studio is part of a co-working space of a former pharmaceutical plant. She practically never meets her neighbours, authors, musicians and painters because: »In Finland, people value their privacy a lot.« The studio looks more like a warehouse for her course materials, but it is still an inviting space with a cozy sofa, a handmade carpet and a teapot. »I love being there and do whatever I want«, she says. »Sometimes I work from home, but where my loved ones and the refrigerator are it is hard to concentrate. So I take flight by bike or foot and rush to my studio.«

Sturdy Yet Flexible

Still Yaroslava Troynich wet-felts almost always. Some parts of her objects are

made in needle-felt technique, also using other handicraft techniques to achieve the desired results: Shibori, nuno felt, dyeing, embroidery, modeling, painting... ♪ For her hand- and finger puppets she mainly uses superfine Merino roving with 18 to 21 Mikron. »These fibers allow for the best combination of flexibility and sturdiness and they retain their form for a long time. This is a crucial issue for dolls that are played often, exposed to a lot of wear and tear.« Her aim is to make long-lasting objects, because: »My art is not meant for the shelf but for little hands and crowded playgrounds.« The firmness is achieved by laying out very fine Merino wool in thin layers, taking into account a shrinking factor around at least 2. »In this way my playthings always retain their form but remain easy to handle.« ♪ Bigger body parts like tails or horns are felted from coarser fleece wool, like for instance from mountain sheep. »This helps to build up such elements more easier and to keep them light, since this kind of wool shrinks much less than the Merino parts.«

Mohair Fur

Surfaces are decorated with all kinds of fibers such as fleece wool, silk, rayon or mohair. The latter ends up as the hairy fur of an Orang-Utan. Yaroslava Troynich sometimes uses acid dyes for mohair and silk fibers. Reptiles and amphibians get their characteristic structure through nuno-felting: »The bubbly silk surface is great for making the skin of toads and crocodiles. Textile markers help to dissolve the dilemma between wet-felted parts and concise lines and distinct colored areas. ♪ Admittedly bad at drawing, her rough sketches look more like ugly construction plans, she says self-critically. »Much more often I just get an idea and test it directly on the wool. I break the complicated forms up in much simpler ones and trifle with them. Some parts, like hoofs, I make separately as test samples when I am not convinced of the result.« ♪ After fulling the animals are not ready yet. They wait for their last finishing: »The seal needs a smooth surface, so I shave the protruding fibers away; the Orang-Utan should end up fluffy, so I brush its fur thoroughly; the rabbit gets an embroidered smile and the horse a professional hairdo with the help of my own hair care products. I won't stop until the animals are entirely fit to be played with.« ♪ Yaroslava Troynich has exhibited her animals already in Russia and in Japan in

2017. They were also a contribution to a gallery book by Russian feltmakers.«

Courses and Online Workshops

Troynich passes on the skills and experiences she has accumulated over the years in courses and video instructions. For 2021 she plans workshops in Germany, Ireland and The Netherlands. A video in English language about the making of hand puppets is already available in her Etsy shop, one about finger puppets is in the making.

- ☞ Apart from that, the artist has many other plans. At present she makes herself familiar with animated film technique in order to make her animals more lively. She thinks about an online school tutorial to felt hand- and finger puppets which »could be the forum to share creative ideas, feltmaking and love for the animal world«. She dreams of a blog about feltmaking, nature and creativity: »There I could gather up and combine all my skills and passions.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 44-49

Daisy Castle and Meadow Palace

Delia Grimm's small felted houses call for play time inside and out in the open. You can also decorate a so-called »all-season table« or a puppeteer stage with them. The tiny houses can be made in different sizes and colors and can be further trimmed according to your personal taste.

Learning Matters

- ☞ Making of a hollow body across a double stencil
- ☞ Connection of cord and surface without gaps
- ☞ Manipulation of the processed felt
- ☞ Kindling of one's own imagination for individually designed houses, varying according to a certain theme or other key activities.
- ☞ Further possibilities: (e.g. embroidering, cutting out windows, put in floor plates etc.)
- ☞ This project is ideal for teamwork!

Material

For 2 small houses

- ☞ Mountain Sheep or similar wool, approx. 50 g in green shades
- ☞ Fibers to decorate the surface in different green hues (here wool strands in different shades of green, wool and mohair yarn, Sari silk)

For the flower

Fine fleece wool, e.g. Kap Merino or other fleece wool (the finer, the simpler processing will be), waste material in green, white, pink and yellow, total approx. 8 g.

For the leaves of grass

Mountain Sheep fleece wool or other fleece waste materials in shades of green

Felting Equipment

- ☞ Bubble foil for the stencil
- ☞ 2 mats
- ☞ Bowl, soap, scrim or gauze, towel
- ☞ Auxiliary tools for the final shaping (maybe a rolling pin, glockenspiel stick, a big wooden knitting needle, a wooden spoon)
- ☞ Felting needle
- ☞ Scissors

Instruction

Preparation of the Houses

1. Cut the stencil out of bubble foil, according to the pattern it should be 42 cm long and 15 cm wide. This stencil is designed for two houses.

2. Divide the amount of wool for the two houses evenly into two portions 25 g each – one portion each for the front and the back of the stencil. Put a 20 cm wide layer of wool across the middle of the stencil with an overlap of about 1.5 cm.

3. Then the entire stencil is covered with three layers of wool. Begin and end with a lengthwise layer. You can work in just one color or several. A combination of different shades of green – waste material – is recommended. The different fibers should be of similar quality, though, and each layer should cover completely. Put the scrim or gauze onto it, wet the workpiece and then turn it around. A second underlay can be helpful to turn around the whole »sandwich« without problems.

4. Now the overlap is pulled exactly over the stencil's edge – eventual

creases should be carefully stretched and pulled until the stencil is entirely wrapped up and the edges are free of crinkles.

5. With the second portion of wool the other side is layered exactly like the front, first horizontally with a 20 cm strip in the middle...

6. ...and then in three complete layers, also of mixed green shades, if desired, especially in the top layer. Attention: As with every stencil felt the wool should not be laid out over the edge, but should end approx. 1 cm in front of the stencil's edge.

7. Now a bit of decorating fun: Silk, wool, yarns – everything you like can be put on, preferably horizontally following the length of the stencil. This step can be omitted if no suitable material is at hand.

8. Now cover the whole workpiece with gauze, wet it carefully, press the air out of the wool with soapy hands and lay out the pattern carefully. Then turn the thing over with the help of the second pad. Smooth out remaining overlaps close to the stencil. Put a layer of »decoration« also on this side and press it again under the gauze. Put on a very small amount of water since the piece is already wet and soapy. Put it aside for the time being.

Grass stalks

9. Prepare a one layer of fleece wool of approx. 12 cm length and 6 cm width and cover it with a second layer.

10. Trim the wool with fiber waste in green if desired.

11. Turn the decorated side down. Cover the workpiece on two thirds of its length with gauze and wet it. The remaining third (left in the picture) has to remain dry.

12. Fold the moistened two thirds of the wool piece lengthwise and roll it up tightly.

13. Felt the wet part at first with caution, then firmly. The lower part (left in the picture) must remain dry and unfelted.

14. Prepare three leaves of grass this way.

Daisies

15. For the stem, prepare a 10 cm long and approx. 6 cm wide piece of fleece wool in one layer and cover it with a second. For this I recommend fine fleece wool since it tends to shift less and closes faster.

16. Proceed similarly to the felting of the leaves of grass, but as for the daisy's stem, not one but both ends should remain dry. After moisturing and rolling felt only a width of three fingers, since otherwise the stem gets too long.

17. Prepare a circle of a 4 cm diameter from the white wool and put two layers on it. Put on fine, rosy wool flakes at the edge. Turn the piece around, moisten it under gauze and press it. Fold the edge over for the later stabilization of the incisions.

18. Put on the already prepared stem and felt it all around.

19. Make the surface firmer on the palm of your hand.

20. Form the calyx and finish felting it in your hand. The end of the stem should not be felted.

21. All parts for the two houses are now ready.

Connecting the Parts

22. Divide the dry ends of the leaves of grass and the blossom carefully and put them at the opposite ends of the stencil.

23. Pay attention that the wool is pulled out completely up to the sturdily felted end of the stem and is put directly to the wool-covered stencil – otherwise the flower drops its head later. The point where it is attached can be covered with gossamery wool flakes.

24. Do the same with the grass at the other end of the stencil. Cover the connection points with gauze, press it and felt carefully on both sides of the workpiece, until the flower and the grass are safely and soundly connected to the big felt piece.

25. The work the whole piece by rubbing or rolling it until it gets too small for the stencil and changes form.

Finishing

26. Cut the hollow felt in half with a good pair of scissors: For this, fold the lengthy felt piece in half and mark the bend, remove the stencil and cut the felt sheath in two parts. Now roll the two parts from all sides one time each and let it shrink further by rolling it twelve times. Pay close attention that the cutting edges and the lower part of each house become firm, this can be achieved by fulling, rolling into a towel or by manual rubbing. Do not treat the upper third!

27. Now taper the form on one third of its length (seen from above) by rolling and kneading it by hand, here comes the intersection to the roof.

28. Form the roof manually by pulling strongly and by folding it over and in.

29. Form the rooftop with a suitable round tool (e.g. glockenspiel stick with padded end, a kitchen spoon).

30. Now pull alternately on the roof overhang (when your fingers start to hurt, use a small pair of pliers), taper the intersection to the house (rub between your palms or use a suitable fulling pin) and stretch the rooftop from the inside to bring all of it in a roof shape.

31. The longer and more careful you proceed the more defined and sturdy the final form will turn out!

32. Cut the daisy's petals and felt the cutting edges. Rinse the small houses carefully and roll them into a towel in order to get rid of surplus moisture. Then bring the houses again in the desired form.

33. At the end cut a door opening. It should not be too wide (here 2 cm), and the »hinge« side should be only so long to allow the door to open completely. How high the door should be is up to you. Eventually re-felt the door opening. Form the opening bend for a couple of minutes so that the door remains wide open: this offers an additional support for the house. Those of you who have little patience can fix the door with clips while drying.

This project shows how flexible and malleable a carefully laid out and sturdy felt is and how out of a simple form something entirely new can be made. Just think further: a meadow palace, a rainbow never-never land or a tree house. With the help of these instruction and your own imagination so many other colorful and pretty houses await their making!

DELIA GRIMM

PAGES 50–51

Feltmaking 4.0

That an ancient handicraft and ultramodern technique can harmonize well shows Irene Reinhardt with her laser cutter project.

For some time now, the Coburg University has been offering the so-called CREAPOLIS Makerspace as a forum where interdisciplinary knowledge is shared. Whoever wants to realize a certain project can make use of various workshops and machines. Modern scientific and technical options are also combined with traditional handicraft techniques.

Inspiring Co-operation

The core of the Makerspace is a laser cutter. I was quite taken with the inspiring co-operation and the atmosphere at CREAPOLIS and saw myself confronted with the challenge of using a laser cutter in felt art. After a first technical introduction to the machine I tested the innovative applications of this modern cutting and engraving technique on hand-made felt in many different facets.

☞ First trial runs turned out successful. Soon there were many suitable felt art projects for this combination of modern 4.0 technique and traditional feltmaking. ☞ »Sometimes the path shows only when you start walking«. This quotation by Paulo Coelho hangs in my studio. It continues to motivate me to try out new ideas and different aspects in my felt art.

Laser Engraving

After I have found an idea for a text or a word, I design matching cycles of felted surfaces or hollow forms. Once the basic object is ready, I engrave the text onto

the surface with the laser cutter. I write the text with the help of a graphical software and convert it to the cutter. So prepared, letters and lines can be placed and made visible with utmost precision, taking up the image either accurately and sharp, or in a contained and unobtrusive manner.

☞ The felt should not be too thin, since the cutter's laser beam burns into the material. The depth of each engraving can be controlled via the performance parameters (amongst others, speed). The size of the felt processed is restricted to the table size of the laser cutter. Extra big pieces can be processed in several steps. ☞ In the meantime, I have made many felt art objects with the help of this digital technique. When presented to the public during exhibitions this always becomes a topic. Very often it was emphasized that laser engraving is not only suitable for industrial use but can be used in felt art to enhance the written word or in surface designs.

IRENE REINHARDT

PAGES 52-54

See with Your Hands

Blind and visually impaired people make new experiences in Ina Jeromin's feltmaking workshop

I have known Kerstin for many years. Unerringly she walks through town with her white cane, she does her shopping and official interactions alone. She works in a brush manufacturing workshop in Dresden and she goes there every day by train. She loves to go bowling in her free time and now she has discovered felting. ☞ My first felting course with her is exciting. First, I show her around my studio, and I describe the work surroundings, the working table: One time around, pay attention – here the crank of the carding machine is in the way, then how to get to the wash basin and the bathroom – all clear. Kerstin remembers most details surprisingly well. I am very impressed.

☞ I give her things to hold that we could manage to felt together. Her favorite are flowers. »Real flowers in vases are not for me«, Kerstin says. »When you touch them, they lose petals, they wilt and crumble, and when you accidentally knock over the

vase...But I love flowers anyway, and I want to have a nicely decorated home.«

A Poppy Made from Wool

Felted roses, poppies, daisies, daffodils and spring snowflakes are in stock. Kerstin decides to try her hand at making poppies. I give her red fleece wool and lay out a circle on a sponge as a pattern for her. The second circle she makes herself, a little irregular around the edges, which fits poppies. (My circle is overly correct, of a geometrical perfection not found in nature, secretly I correct it.) ☞ In order to stabilize the blossom I explain the functioning of the felting needle. »No problem, I can do that«, she says. In the beginning I hardly dare watch. Kerstin puts her left hand completely onto the red wool and stitches directly alongside her fingers. »There is no other way, I need orientation as to where I am on the workpiece.«

☞ It goes well. The needle never misses the wool, and later, when cutting, I have grown accustomed to the fact that Kerstin's fingers are always dangerously close to the tools. »To see with one's hands« – this is often heard in connection with blind or visually impaired people, and it applies to needle-felting, too. ☞ With a wide, circular stencil and the felting needle we put together the two red circles. Onto one side we put black wool in the middle, some green one on the other. Then we move over to water and soap and some net lace as a protection from Kerstin's energetic hands. Felting and fulling works great, and shortly afterwards Kerstin proudly holds her first felted poppy in her hand. Immediately she sets out to make another one.

☞ She is really happy. Shortly afterwards, she comes to my studio, this time with a big empty vase. She liked the roses so much, she says, and she would like to make a whole bunch of them.

Apples for Roses

This is a much greater challenge, since roses are made of single layers which are put together at the end of a wire stem. The task being difficult, she thinks about buying some, but five or six of them are too expensive. I propose something different: Kerstin felts apples for me, and in the meantime I make roses for her.

☞ No sooner said than done: Kerstin winds up a firm, red ball for each apple and fixes the wool with the felting needle. Then she needles an apple cheek in red and yellow onto the ball and then

wet-felts the apple. She continues to ask explicitly about colors. She was able to see colors until her youth and holds the memory awake by constantly reminding herself of crucial matters: the blue of the sky, the red of roses, meadow green. ☞ How enriching feltmaking can be for the visually impaired I also experience during two meetings of the Freiberg Blinden- und Sehschwachen-Verband (Freiberg Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired). First, I have the participants touch and handle some objects from different kinds of wool. They can tell very well the difference between Merino and Mountain Sheep wool or between needle- or wet-felted surfaces. ☞ For the actual work each participant gets a try with a wet-felting pad, a small water bowl and a piece of soap. From roving we felt thin strings for key rings. Again, the colors are of great importance. Each has a clear idea what color they prefer or what suits them. The felting and fulling of the strings present no problem at all, and all find the finished key rings useful.

Felted Animals for the Touch

For the second course some months later, I bring felted animals made by Helga Steegborn. Talking with Kerstin made me realize that wild animals can almost never be felt and touched, so lizards or fire salamanders were unfamiliar to her. In the course the felted fox, ermine and hamster meet with great enthusiasm. I give them some information as to how those animals live and afterwards, we start to felt colorful mice.

☞ Bodies and ears I had already prepared (tightly wound and needled on a bit) so we can focus on the wet-felting. The participants can clearly feel and relate to the change the material undergoes. The mountain sheep wool is easily fullled to form. For the tail we pull a wool thread through the felt and twist it into a cord; the nose and ears are needled on in the end. The participants help each other out, and in the end, all are proud of their work.

Light Mice with Dark Eyes

As a note for improvement I plan on preparing only very light mice. Those who can still see a little can make out the dark eyes in a yellow or orange mouse.

☞ Thanks to the Saving Bank in Freiberg and the Lichtpunkt (Point of Light) Association that sponsored my project I can envisage further projects:

Acquainting the visually impaired with famous paintings as felted reliefs would be a fascinating challenge. One of the colorful animal portraits by Franz Marc will most likely be the first!

INA JEROMIN

PAGE 55

Rams' Market without the Public

Shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic halted public life completely Kerstin Waizenegger and Cornelia Schurer visited the traditional show in the Swiss canton Wallis.

To meet shepherds, to see Switzerland's most beautiful rams and to talk about sheep, wool, purchase and the consortium of the Wallis Black Nose Sheep in Germany on site: this is what we (a feltmaker and a breeder of Black Nose sheep) planned to do together with other Bavarian breeder once we arrived in the town of Visp in the Swiss canton Wallis in March. Shortly before outdoor restraints were imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic the traditional rams' market of the Wallis Black Nose Sheep was held on a very small scale. Usually it attracts many people from all around the canton. The town's market and the cafeteria had been closed because of the virus a week ago.

Sheepwashing in the Yard

Normally, the white-curved rams with their impressive horns, black mouths and legs are washed and groomed in public the day before the fair. In front of the jury they should be presented to best advantage. Needless to say, this is like a small festival for shepherds and spectators alike. Overnight the resolution to cancel the sheep washing as a protective measure against contagion was made public. We were invited by a shepherd who carried out the sheep washing in the scope of a small family reunion. The family sat in the sun, drinking coffee and eating apple strudel while three stately rams were drying their skin in the mild breeze. The pastoral image was completed by the sheepdog, other members of the flock and children running around.

Juried on an Empty Market Place

The following day, no spectators were permitted to attend the rams' fair. On the big market place usually there are not just an assembly of several hundred sheep, jurors, shepherds and breeders, but also an enthusiastic audience after the winners are declared. This year, only the jurors were allowed to be there. As onlookers, we were able to admire the beautiful animals and to take photographs from a safe distance. The experts were pleased that selection and classification could take place as planned, but nobody could hide a certain sadness when looking around this forlorn space. Especially the breeders were hit hard. But also the shepherds, waiting in front or inside empty cafés until their animals could be retrieved, had to go without the proud presentation of prizeworthy rams to the public. The results of the assessment could be read online on the web pages of the breeders' association.

☞ These days it is still written in the stars when we can purchase sheep and wool again. Yet we keep in touch with the Swiss breeders and hope to see each other again, hopefully safe and sound, at the next rams' fair in 2021.

KERSTIN WAIZENEGGER (FELTMAKER) AND CORNELIA SCHURER (BREEDER OF WALLIS BLACK NOSE SHEEP)

PAGES 56-57

Sheep & Wool: Bentheim Landschaf

History

The Bentheim Landschaf (Country Sheep) belongs to Germany's more recent country sheep breeds. 1868 the literature shows a first mentioning of a sheep with traits much similar to the Bentheim Landschaf. In 1867, several thousand animals were exported to France where they were highly popular due to their easy way of keeping and their high slaughter weight. As late as 1918 the breed Bentheimer Schaf was officially registered. The denomination, as with other kinds of sheep, goes back to the region where the breeds originally comes from: The county Bentheim in the Weser-Emsland.

☞ In Germany, the Bentheim Landschaf was acknowledged as an independent breed as late as 1934. Since then they are bred as sturdy, broad-in-the-beam heath and bog sheep.

☞ It can endure long marches, their claws are firm, and they are robust and undemanding. The fecund ewes are especially caring towards their lambs. Their meat is said to be of very good quality.

☞ When reading about the Bentheim Landschaf there is often mention of the Dutch breed Schoonebeeker. These two breeds are often classified as so-called sister breeds because they are genetically very similar. This is due to the fact that the Bentheimer Landschaf has developed from cross-breedings where the Dutch Drenthe Heath Sheep has played an important role.

☞ The big difference, however, is that the body wool of the Bentheim Country Sheep is pure white, while the Schoonebeekers show a great variety of colors.

☞ Unfortunately, also this breed lost its importance over the decades and the number of registered breeding animals shrank to 50 in the 1970ies. Due to the small population it was not possible to keep the breed alive any longer without in-breeding, so they were crossed with rams of the French breed Causses du Lot in the 1990ies. This led to an improvement of muscle and fleece. Apart from the French, also Rhön and Drenthe Heath rams were used for crossbreeding. ☞ Since then the number of the breeding animals has risen to about 2500 ewes and 120 rams today. Additionally, there are several thousand which are not registered for breeding purposes. The current population goes back to nine breeding lines only three of which come from Germany. A great issue regarding the Bentheim is a resistance to scrapie which only occurs with about 10 % of all tested animals. It is estimated that other valuable breeding characteristics will get lost in the course of breeders' focussing on the scrapie-resistant animals.

Description

The Bentheimer Landschaf is the biggest German Heath Sheep and it is also very long-legged. The rams have a withers height of 70 to 80 cm and they weigh 80 to 90 kg, the ewes are mostly 10 cm smaller and relatively lighter, 60 to 70 kg. Both sexes are hornless and have a long, wooly tail.

☞ The head is longish and narrow, without any wool and curved to the outside. Around the eyes there are characteristic black spots, and the long, protruding ears have black tips. Dark spots on the legs are also common. The body wool is pure white. As with all country sheep the wool is somewhat coarse with a fineness of 27 micron. The rams yield approx. 4 bis 5 kg wool per year, the ewes 2,5 to 3,5 kg.

YASMIN GROSS

Wool

Regarding the wool you may feel tempted to designate the Bentheim Country Sheep's hair as quaint and homely. On first glance there are no different fiber types, but a closer look reveals single white kemp. The longer wiry hair and the wool hair are hard to tell apart, since also the long wiry hair have a slight crimp when cut which makes them difficult to

distinguish from the shorter wool hair. Nevertheless, the wool of this breed is a mix.

Felting Tests

As always, 3 g wool each and 10 g wool each were layed out on a 20 cm x 20 cm surface and felted.

☞ As the photos show the wool felts easily. The comparatively homogenous fibers yield a beautiful felted image with an even, curly structure. With thin felt (3g) this shows remarkably well. The result is a very firm, elastic felt. 1st surface is slightly hairy and single curls protrude. Nevertheless it is really scratchy.

Conclusion

The wool of the Bentheim Landschaf is beautiful, if rather coarse, and thus more suitable for robust felting projects.

MARGIT RÖHM

Initial weight	Size in the beginning	End Size	Shrinking factor
3 g	20 cm x 20 cm	10 cm x 10 cm	2
10 g	20 cm x 20 cm	12 cm x 12 cm	1,6

PAGES 58-61

Felt Fashion from Mongolia

Three times Sigrid Bannier has travelled to Mongolia, teaching groups of women felting, sewing and marketing their products. This resulted in a small fashion line of high-quality jackets made from yak or camel hair. For the filzfun readers Sigrid Bannier shares her experiences with the project and her passionate attachment to the country.

☞ In 2016, after having been allowed to travel twice for the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ Society of International Co-Operation) to Kyrgyzstan in felting matters. To be precise, it was about implementing an apprenticeship as Textilgestalter im Handwerk, Fachrichtung Filzen (Textile Designer in the Handicrafts, main branch felting) in the daily work operations of manual felting enterprises. In March 2018 I got the next chance to work with

feltmakers in Mongolia within the scope of the project PRO VALUE (see info box), which is being sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-Operation and Development. All three projects took place in the city Tsetserleg, approx. 500 km west of Ulaan Baatar, der Mongolian capital.

Interior Decoration Upon Request

During my first assignment we got to know each other and to establish what skills were already known. During my second stay in May 2019 we dealt with interior decoration such as cushions, lamps, wall hangings or sheaths for chairs. We not only focussed on manufacturing but also on talking to potential customers, the drawn or sketched placing of such items in a floor plan and presenting saleable items in front of a chosen clientele. The aim was not necessarily to produce large quantities thereof, but the answering of specialized customers' requests and the notion: What kind of clients do I wish for? Or, for that matter: Who are they in the first place?

☞ Here I was accompanied unofficially by my former apprentice who has turned into a friend and business partner, Susanne Breuling. We used to have a lot of fun together, especially during our many excursions and trips. During a picknick at the Chulut canyon we met two bikers who travelled the world: a German who had been on the road across Russia for nine months and a South Korean biker.

☞ We visited a yak breeder's family in their yurt way away from anything that can be called a road. They were perfect hosts and cooked specialities from yak milk for us. There it became quite obvious that the old zoological taxom of yaks is correct indeed; Bos grunniens, the grunting cattle. Since the yaks were kept not only for calving in a perch, but also afterwards, we sort of got almost palpaby near to those gentle giants. Merely by looking at them one could hardly believe that their hair is really soft.

☞ Everywhere we met animals roaming freely: yaks, cows, crossbreeding of the two, sheep, cashmere goats, horses and Bactrian camels along a travelling dune that had moved up from the Gobi desert, we even saw pigs. When they cross the streets, everyone waits patiently until they have vanished.

A Visit in the Wool Cleaning Plant

My third assignment in the fall of 2019 began with visiting a wool cleaning plant in Hotont, about an hour north of Tsetserleg. I saw such a procedure for the first time: At the beginning, a handful of women sorted out huge amounts of soiled wool fleeces, which will be cleaned on a wool wash plant before a dryer blows them out again as white wool fleeces. There two sinewy, slim men (they looked like descendants of the ancient 'Golden Horde') took over the wool and put it through a suction pipe that led to the wool press.

☞ The result of the process were blocks of wool weighing approx. 85 kg with an edge length of 1 m that were delivered to spinning plants.

☞ A fraction of this wool, also in its pressed form, is used for felting and was the basic material for our work. This time it was about the making of fine fabrics from yak and camel hair and the sewing of jackets from those fabrics in classic patterns. Before I had already bought sketch pads, piping or braiding material and other things in Ulaan Baatar and had taken it along by bus to Tsetserleg. My interpreter Odnoo - a miracle worker when it came to the question: Where to

buy what? was a great support and always helpful in all three trips. She was even familiar with the technical terms, having studied textile design in Dresden in the former German Democratic Republic.

Felt from Yak and Camel Hair

Unfortunately, the art of making a thin, delicate, smooth yet sturdy felt is not widespread in Mongolia, and as rarely as here test samples are made to be able to calculate and weigh the amount of wool required. The rough rule of thumb is still very popular but doesn't bring the desired results, especially if serial production is intended. We tried this out for eight days, until each participant had felted six pieces: two front and two back pieces and two sleeves, either of two different shades of yak or of a mixture of yak and camel hair.

☞ From these single parts six different jackets were made, using patterns that I had brought with me. The jackets were trimmed with leather imitate buttons I had bought in the capital. We made the buttons ourselves or family members carved them from horn – very classy. Additionally, we made matching caps from waste materials or blank cones that had been felted before.

☞ These really eye-catching tops serve as the basis for a fashion line. The project and their makers are invited to an exhibition at the Innatex, an international fair for sustainable textile in Wiesbaden soon.

Photo Shooting in Front of Rocks

At long last we wanted to put the clothes well on scene. On a cloudless day we all went to a local holy mountain, the women dressed in black (upon my request), taking the jackets and caps to a nearby rock formation at a local holy mountain. This setting would make any photographer green with envy.

☞ Since my interpreter Odnoo was busy sewing a scarf from waste felt, I was alone with the local feltmakers. Since no verbal communication was possible, I had to develop pantomimic faculties to get across how the women should pose for the photos. For instance, I took to imitate a bird, a plane, a reader engrossed in his book, a botanist scrutinizing a plant sample and Rodin's thinker. Any uninitiated spectator would have split his sides laughing!

☞ At the end of my last stay we handled design and made flyers to advertise for further participants, a field far from being exhausted businesswise. There is

still a lot of work to do. But although the women of the feltmaking project are still beginners, they are on their way to learn so much more.

☞ My heart is full of that country, its vast emptiness and its natural beauty. This includes the unique natural fibers I found there. There are many requests by textile artists for a trip like that, so I plan to take small groups to this country. When it comes to that I will report in the filzfun.

☞ So good-bye for now, and maybe we meet again on a journey to Mongolia.

SIGRID BANNIER

PAGES 62-63

Following the Nomads' Routes in Kyrgyzstan

Part 2: From the south bank of the Issyk Kul back to Bischkek

On the second part of her trip through the home country of the writer Tschingis Aitmatow a group of women were learning old handicraft techniques under the direction of Sabine Reichert-Kassube.

From Saru we continue along the south bank of the Issyk Kul westwards to the village Kyzyl-Tuu. There the yurt builder Sapar lives with his wife Gulbara and a big family. We all sit together in the yurt, eating freshly baked bread, Pelmeni and tea. Sapar and his sons demonstrate the construction of a children's yurt.

☞ The elder daughter-in-law, Mayram, speaks English well. Together with her we visit some masters of different handicraft techniques in the village. A Tschij weaver, for example, weaves length of sheets from reeds wrapped in wool and spun yarn. These sheets are several meters long and are designed to form an image. (It took me an entire day to weave an image 30 cm x 20 cm). These lengths of material serve either as coverings for the yurt's interior or as doors. The latter are especially artful in the making and decorating.

☞ Also surfaces knotted decoratively from red wool adorn the yurt. The so-called Örmöck knot is remindful of our macramé technique. Thanks to our youthful experiences, when macramé was en vogue, we can score here and be of help.

Mud from the Salty Lake

Later we lie in water of a saltwater lake and rub ourselves with the black mud that is said to heal all illnesses. The Issyk Kul is not far away, so we walk there and wash off the mud. At long last we can go to sleep in the yurt.

☞ On the next day we travel further to a yurt camp at the Issyk Kul. It offers a certain luxury: we are accommodated in two-bed-yurts, there are showers, a sauna, the lake and the food prepared in the kitchen yurt is very good. The women embroider their Shyrdaks, and in the evening at the campfire we celebrate »Bergfest«, i.e. the middle of our trip.

☞ Although a thunderstorm is likely we make a trip to the fairy tale valley, which is an apt name. We are overwhelmed by its natural beauty.

Strings and Cords from Yak Hair

Meeting Tscholpan, a Kyrgyz woman, who reminds me of my grandmother, is almost magical for me. I ask her to tie my headscarf the way Kyrgyz women do. Tscholpan is a master of making cords or strings. She shows us how the long, bristly hair of the yaks are turned and twisted into durable strings to tie the yurt framework together. This not easy at all, we only succeed rudimentally.

☞ The next leg of the trip KaraSu is southeast of the lake near the small town of Kochkor, which is famous for its many textile artists. Felting master Ainagul has given birth to eleven children and for her 71 years she is remarkably agile. During an Alakis workshop she explains how the Kyrgyz women lay out the unwashed country sheep wool. The rolling only takes part using hot water, without soap.

A Visit to the Textile Museum

In Kochkor we visit several feltmakers' shops, we buy Shyrdaks, caps and bags and eat in the Textile Museum, also in a yurt, together with the museum director Nurbübü. Ainagul sells the most beautiful Shyrdaks. Her specialty is working in small felted pieces, so that the Shyrdak contains also patchwork elements.

☞ On the Jeep drive to Song-Kul we are accompanied by a clear brook, meandering through verdant meadows. We cross the snow pass, drive through a river and finally we have arrived at the Dschailoo, an alpine high plain (3016m). At the horizon one can see the snowy mountain tops at an altitude of more than 4000 m. The yurt camp is loosely grouped around a mountain lake that invites swimming. Here people live from

June to September, the winter with its polar climate is far too cold. Aitmatov describes the summer life of the nomads as paradisiac, almost like a fairy tale. On the high plateau alpine flowers and grasses grow, cows, sheep, horses, even pheasants roam around freely.

☞ The extreme height is a challenge for the body, some of our group get very tired and groggy. Luckier ones explore the landscape on horseback. In the evenings it gets really cold, then the yurts are heated with cow dung.

☞ On the way down to the valley – still at an altitude of 1500 m – we finally see a yak herd. Some 30 animals roam the mountains: with their long black hair they are an impressive sight indeed.

Lace from the Madina Market

At last we return to Bischkek, where we visit the oriental Osch bazaar and the Madina market. It is just paradise for us textile enthusiasts. We buy lace, trimmings, buttons, yarns and so much more. The last day of our trip is dedicated to Tschingis Aitmatow, we visit his grave.

☞ For the last time we drink kvas and eat the yummy Moscow icecream. The most lasting impression, as before, is to realize how people live with so little material things without truly missing anything.

SABINE REICHERT-KASSUBE

PAGES 64-65

Vintage Felt Carpets from Kopriwtschiza

A unique collection of vintage carpets lured Mari Nagy and István Vidák in the Bulgarian city Kopriwtschiza – and the two textile art researchers were not disappointed.

From Sofia we took the train to the Sredna-Gora-mountains and stopped in the picturesque small town Kopriwtschiza. Most of its beautiful old buildings house museums now, for example the ethnographic museum is in the so-called Lyutov building. Donka Kriviralcheva, the expert in Lyutov building, tells us that Kopriwtschiza with in its heyday in the 19th century belonged to the biggest cities in Bulgaria. It used to have 12 000 inhabitants: »In those days, the wealthy Bulgarian trader families had their homes

built and furnished in the Turk fashion. Today, there are hardly 3000 people living here.«

☞ The collection of 40 vintage felt carpets in the Lyutov building is unique in Europe. Without the efforts and research work of ethnographer and historian Rajkó Sefterski, however, we would hardly know anything about it. Between 1954 and 1957 he travelled the entire country and turned into a great lover and connoisseur of felt art and feltmaking.

Sun Discs and Flowers

In one of his studies he writes: »The work to make patterns in felt is similar to painting, with colorful wool instead of a brush. The colorful sun discs and flowers shine on the marble-white felt.«

☞ Sefterski praises the imaginative faculties of the old felt masters who were largely inspired by nature. »In motifs around the edges you can see hearts, flying cranes, sometimes the heads of horses. Some of them are met again on the wooden gates of Kopriwtschiza, on fountains fronts or on the livingrooms' ceiling.«

☞ The local felt carpets are much more colorful, richer in detail and more fine-spun than in other regions of the country. While walking through the old part of the city we met the artist Nikolov Kostov who knows a lot about blankets and carpets.

From Bridal Bed to the Bier

»The felted blanket was an important part of the bridal chest in Kopriwtschiza. A girl had to own at least two to three felted blankets in order to be allowed to marry. In the middle of the blanket the felt master put a sun made of colored wool that was supposed to shine on the couple's married life. The newlyweds slept on this blanket from the wedding night until nine months later. Then the cradle was placed upon the sun. Years afterwards, when the cradle was no longer in use, the low family table stood here and when the head of the family died, the corpse was wrapped in the felt blanket and was buried therein.«

☞ Feltmakers should not miss the opportunity to see this impressive collection that would grace any picture or coffee table book. As far as we know, nowhere in Europe felted blankets or carpets that are older than 100 years can still be found, let alone seen restored and guarded in museal surroundings. A part of the collection can be seen permanently in the Lyutov building, the rest are stored in the depot.

☞ Donka Kriviralcheva, the expert in the Lyutov building, tells us about the old days: »Exactly when the felting craft came here is not known. The oldest blanket here was made at the end of the 18th century. The house of the last felt master Stojan Dründarin (means wool beater) is not far from here, but his workshop has already been put down. By his daughter I was given a tool bow and a welded pair of scissors for our museum.«

☞ In the course of the years we have met some families in the town at the Topolniza river where great-grandchildren still keep the blankets of their ancestors. The museum could only afford to buy one or two of those a year from the local family because of its tight budget.

☞ One of the biggest carpets adorns the living room in the Lyutov Building. It measures 260 x 390 cm and weighs 17 kg.

☞ Even after 150 years the colored patterns on their light-yellow ground have not faded. The carpet was protected from the sun and always stayed indoors. The plant dyes proved a lot more durable than the chemical colors used today.

A Felted Garden Eden

The astonishingly beautiful motifs have mystified us thoroughly. The manufacture of the carpets halted around 1880. There is no explanation as to the meaning of the patterns. How old they are, whether they are of ancient Turk or Bulgarian origin we were unable to judge.

☞ Since we have studied it repeatedly during our many trips to Bulgaria we have the following interpretation: When you look at the carpet you see a garden Eden. The fence around this fairy tale world is the edge strip pattern of the blanket. In it flower roses and jasmine, their scent is in the air. Cyprus trees point to the sky. Everything strives to the light, to the middle of the world, the sun. The center could be the fountain, which gives eternal life, or Salomon's hexagonal, starry magic ring. Sometimes there are tents in the garden – from fairies? So beautiful and peaceful it is and brings to mind a country graveyard in the mild light of autumn.

☞ These were our impressions. Whether we are right or not cannot be made out anymore. The Turkish or Bulgarian masters who created those carpets a century and a half ago have long passed away. Their art is obscured by clouds.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

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