

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #69

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Dear Readers,

a difficult year lies behind the felt artists: Many courses and exhibits were cancelled due to the pandemic or were postponed to 2021. Some events took place under strict hygiene measures, e.g. the Filzkolleg of the Felt Network in Soltau (page 16 ff.), the exhibitions »Wir WOLLEN METALL (approx. We want wool and metal)« in Vienna (Page 8ff.), »Filz im Raum in Form (Felt in Space and Form)« by Margot Krug in Gunzenhausen (pages 12/13) and the anniversary exhibit in the Swiss studio Meldani (Pages 14/15). Let's all hope for more communal activities next year!

The artists and craftspeople whom we introduce in this issue come from all over the globe: Catherine O'Leary from Australien has written a book about working with needle fleece (Page 24ff.). In Kiev live Hanna Tsukanova, who makes true-to-life needle felt portraits of cats and dogs (Page 34ff.), and Valentyna Kostetska, who makes the enchanting Lapatatuttsy (Page 40/41). Petra Nasdal

from the Niederlausitz using the silk yield of her own silk worm breed in her felted objects (Page 30ff.), the heart of Valentina Kehl who was born in Kazakhstan belongs to horses (Page 37), and the shoemaker Ina Büchs from Berlin makes felted shoes fit to wear outside (Page 38/39).

Should you still look for a Christmas present for a dear person, a hand-felted note-book cover could just be the right thing. Ilona Riehle shares with us, as of page 50, a step-by-step instruction how to make it yourself. Further detailed instructions for felted presents or things to keep you can find in our just-appeared filzfun special No. 6 that can be ordered under www.filzfun.de.

May 2021 find you in good health and confident spirits!

*With best regards,
your filzfun-Team*

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.

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de
The winter issue will be published on
February 26th 2021.
Editorial deadline: December 16th 2020.

Day of the Wool / Mountain Sheep

At the action day »Wolle« (Wool) in the scope of the special exhibit »Gut betucht – Textilerzeugung bei den Alamannen« (Well Cloth(ed) – Textile Production of the Alamanni) the visitors could marvel – apart from the textile art objects – at the living Krainer Mountain Sheep in the yard of the Alamannenmuseum Ellwangen. By means of samples of the Coburg Fuchsschaf wool, Esther Schneller from Rosengarten showed the way from sheep to sweater or jacket. The visitors could »begreifen«, i.e. understand the objects by touching. This applied as well to fiber examples of different sheep breeds, silk, other animal hair or plant fibers and also modern viscose made from bamboo. The two Krainer mountain sheep that Josef Thomer brought from the Nutztierarche (Domestic Animals' Ark) Thomers Höfle in Dettenroden were the uncontested celebs that day.

www.alamannenmuseum-ellwangen.de

Felt Encounter at the Teutoburg Forest

Under the motto »Filzen ist (k)eine Hexerei« (Felting is (no) Wizardry) the Felt Encounter from February 11th to the 14th 2021 will take place in the Youth Hostel Tecklenburg, high up in the Teutoburg Forest. In the arts center of this climatic spa there will be a lot of creative felting during the days of the encounter. In the youth hostel video-based courses by Ina Jeromin as well as the groups »Filzen mit Kindern« (Feltmaking with Children) with Susanne Breuling and »Qualität im Filzkurs« (The Quality Aspect in Feltmaking) with Susanne Schächter-Heil are on offer – due to the Corona restrictions that are to be expected only a limited number of participants will be allowed. Please find all relevant information for the Filzbegegnung on the website of the Filz-Netzwerk:

www.filznetzwerk.de

New Digital Market Place

For artisans, craftspeople and material sellers from Germany, Austria and Switzerland there is a new digital marketplace. Kasuwa.de bridges the gap that the end of Dawanda left two years ago. Since its start in May 2020 already 2500 sellers with more than 300 000 products have registered on the platform. It was established by Sven and Uwe Günzel, two IT specialists. Especially in times when markets and fairs are cancelled in series due to the pandemic many salespeople use the possibilities to sell their products online.

www.kasuwa.de

Public Prize for a Bridal Dress

The felt artist Petra C. Sommer from Ostrhauderfehn was happy due to her great success at the 17th international competition of the Weaving and Fiber Art Assoc. in Rocco di Sala Baganza in Parma, Italy: Her extravagant nuno- felt bridal dress was awarded the public prize there.

www.feltworld.net

Travelling Show Streams of Life

The preservation of nature and environmental protection are in the 2021 focus of the travelling show »Lebensströme« (Streams of Life). Works from the areas textile art, painting and Soft Sculptures will be shown by the artist Silke Bosbach in several galleries and places. She co-operates with the photographer Michael Lange und Anja Bosbach, who contribute nature photography in the shape of (miniature) landscapes and natural details from extraordinary perspectives. Its first station will be Nordrhein-Westfalen with the Rhein-Sieg District in the spring; then the exhibit will move to Bavaria. Further stations across Germany will follow until the end of this year.

www.faser-um-faser.de

www.silke-bosbach.de

Quilt Exhibit Prolonged

The much-sought after show »Amish Quilts meet Modern Art« in the Staatlichen Textil- und Industriemuseum (State Textile and Industrial Museum) in Augsburg will be prolonged. It was supposed to end in the fall – now you can still see it until January 24th, 2021. On an exhibition space of more than a thousand square meters you will experience an exciting dialogue of original Amish-Quilts from between 1890 and 1950 with high-class work of contemporary art.

www.timbayern.de

Felt Creatures in Winterwonderland

A fantastic light world with all kinds of felted creatures from fairy tales and legends presents Margit Röhm from November 26th throughout the whole advent time in the Wollwerk BT in Münsingen. In the troll's dark cave, the public will meet unicorns and wood gnomes, will o' the wisps, strange batlike creatures and a flock of sheep. The Triluna Winterwonderland is watched over by the great silver dragon and shone upon by the man in the moon. The project was made possible through many supporters of a crowdfunding campaign. The show comes with a catalogue.

www.triluna.de | www.wollwerk-imbt.de

Felt is Her Element

Margot Krug shows a cross-section of her artistic work in Gunzenhausen

Margot Krug has depicted the four elements fire, water, air and earth on four narrow wooden boards with fine-spun wool in bright red hues, delicate blue, stark white and brown. This showpiece and all the others that are exhibited in the vhs adult education center in Gunzenhausen make one thing clear: Margot Krug's very own element is felt. ♣ Most intricate fin structures in feather shapes, powerfully quaint motifs in shingle technique and neutral grey, colors sometimes subtle and in other objects

bright – the show titled »Filz im Raum in Form« (Felt in Space and Shape) offer a wide range of artistic expressions. Some of her images are additionally embroidered, e.g. a big wall hanging, into which she has integrated an eye motif from the embroidery project »Keep Your Eye on the Planet« of the German-Afghan Initiative Guldusi.

Back to the Roots

With her exhibit Margot Krug goes back to her roots. 20 years ago, she started her felting career in an adult education course – at the beginning, it was not what you call love at first sight. »I didn't notice right away how much fun felting could be«, she admits. But she didn't give up, taught herself and experimented for many years. Over time her experience and skill grew and finally brought along the inherent joy in processing wool with water and soap. In many courses and workshops with internationally renowned lecturers like Judit Pócs, Charity van der Meer, Annette Quentin-Stoll, Rotraud Reinhard, Annemie Koenen and Annelie Petitqueux she continued to discover new designs and possibilities. Five years ago she underwent the »Fit in Filz – Fit in Felt« training in Oberrot. »Hats were the subject of my final assignment«, she says. ~ Since 2010 Margot Krug has been teaching at the education center herself, but she also has her own studio. »Many students don't come only one, but they book a yearly meeting. Some even meet several times a year and have become friends«, she is pleased to report.

Images in a Material Mix

In the past years she has been asked over and over again for images. »So I began to combine wool, silk and other fibers and materials in felted images, thus giving them a face and speech.« Next to wall decorations she presents unusual vessels in the Gunzenhausen show. These can be used as »vases, containers for smaller or bigger treasures or as decoration objects.« For these she mainly uses coarse wool, wool mixes or raw wool. »So they attain shape, sturdiness and expression.« ~ In the course of the years she has deepened and perfected her feltmaking due to the many course experiences and lively exchanges with other felters. Margot Krug asks and answers: »But what, after all, does the word 'perfect' mean? It lies in the eye of the beholder. Most important for me is a good felt quality.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 14-15

A Decade in Felt

Anniversary Exhibit of the Studio Meldani in Switzerland

»From Head to Toe«, »Fairytale Playfulness«, »Surfaces and hollow forms/Space and Bodies«: these are some examples of the manifold course topics offered by Daniela Melberg in her studio Meldani in Ebikon, Switzerland. Just as varied and exciting was the two-day anniversary show by her students. They presented clothes, accessories and vessels as well as experimental studies, artistic works and playthings. 18 women who had taken part in Daniela Melberg's intensive courses gave an overview of their objects. ~ Daniela Melberg made her first felting experiences twenty years ago. From 2007 to 2008 she trained in the felting education in Ballenberg and afterwards she continued to broaden her skills there and abroad. Since 2008 she has been working as a professional textile designer in the feltmaking area. Since then she has been passing on her knowledge in various courses and her objects have been on show in many exhibitions.

~ Ten years ago she offered her first crash course in her own studio called Meldani. The subject was »Experimental Feltmaking«, and seven students were taught the felting basics during ten days per year. In the following year Daniela Melberg extended the course range in the shape of new techniques and mottoes. A clothes-making course which took place twice a month ended with a crash course for coat design. Since last years, experienced feltmakers design and carry out their own projects on the basis of poems, artistic postcards, colors and other terms and definitions.

~ Many exhibitors whose works were on show in the jubilee exhibit have been felting in Ebikon in alternating groups for years already. In the meantime, they are looking back to a treasure of knowledge and experience. The show mirrors this decade-long development.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 16-19

Filzkolleg in Corona Times

A varied course program under unfavorable terms in Soltau

For many months the organizing team of the Filz-Netzwerk had planned the summer course of lectures in the felto Filzwelt Soltau. They agreed on the subjects, invited lecturers and collected the applications. For a long time, it was in the stars whether the lecture course could happen at all due to the pandemic. At the end, though, they were lucky: Under strict rules and an intricate hygienic concept the participants were finally allowed to felt!

Experiments with Raw Wool

»Tradition and Modern Times« was this year's motto, the thematic range reaching from raw wool experiments to seamlessly felted clothing. Apart from the fixed courses open workshops around the fields of raw wool and working with stencils were offered and interested parties could choose the duration of the courses individually. These experimental workshops were taught under the supervision of Susanne Breuling, Ulrike Wieland and Susanne Schächter-Heil. At the end, the participants enthusiastically presented their works, among other objects cuddly sitting furs and felted baskets with a raw wool decor.

~ Vests according to the personal taste of the wearer were made in Susanne Breuling's course. Each participant chose whether her model should be short or long, bodyhugging or casual, colored or monochromatic. By means of test samples the felts' shrinking factor was calculated and then the stencil was made. Afterwards the design ideas materialized in fleece wool or roving, with silk fabrics or etamine in nuno felt technique.

Fox with a Mask

Gabriele Mazaracis has made a name for herself over the years with massively felted, compact, ready-to-play with animals in her characteristic style. Clients who wanted to enter her course had react quickly, the places were so much in demand that a waiting list had to be established. Foxes, cats, mice, Alpaka, duck, penguin and some other two-or four-footed creatures were the final result of a two-day workshop – one fox, in remembrance of the lecture course under

unfavorable circumstances, was even decked with a mask.

~ Henny van Tussenbroek's students played with »Bewegung im Filz – Movement in Felt« and tried out how fine effects and other interesting structures were made in Merino wool with the help of stencils.

Loops and Holes

Ulrike Hartrump offered two one day-workshops: »Mit Löchern spielen – Playing with Holes«. She incorporated holes, usually undesired, into the project – with astounding effects. On the following day she showed how to create a shawl or loop from silk and fine merino or in a mix of silk and viscose.

~ The traditional Kyrgyz Shyrdak design was introduced by Meike Raßbach. With the help of a 25 x 25 cm test piece the students learned within three days how the motifs are drawn, cut out from two layers of felt, re-arranged and combined.

Anniversary Cancelled

The Soltau Filzwelt organizers had chosen the perfect location for the lecture course in the historic premises of a former felt store house. The information and event center would have celebrated its five-year anniversary. But, as so many others, the celebration had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. This made it all the more beautiful that felt enthusiasts from all over Germany were able to practice their art for several days – distancing socially, of course, and wearing masks – but at least together.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 20–21

Learning Feltmaking in a Modular Principle

The Filzszene Schweiz (Swiss Felting Scene) offers adult education in modular courses.

We feel that for some years now the great interest in the felting craft which bloomed after the turn of the century has been waning. This was clearly felt in the diminishing application numbers for felt education projects. Still, there is a lot of demand for a basic feltmaking training which opens the way to a craft that is still developing. But more and more interested

parties found it difficult to make room for a full year, others weren't able to bear the cost and resources for a time-consuming and expensive training. So in the last two years no one-year training could be started, at the same time we had to disappoint the still interested parties.

~ For that reason, we have asked ourselves: How can we meet the changed needs of our target group and offer a solid, contemporaneous basic feltmaking training? Our answer was this: Only if we change the lectures and training sessions in terms of organization, and that instead of a linear training we offer modules of respective content.

Flexible Training

The training envisaged becomes a kind of felt model kit, it turns modular. The single modules must no longer be followed in a prescribed series within a year. Instead they can be made loosely in row or intensified during a short period of time. As it fits their personal living circumstances the participants are free to work on their own chosen time, deepening the craft's contents. All modules finish with a final assignment. After this has been handed in the successful participation is documented. And as before we can guarantee learning in very small groups.

Basics and Structures

To make a continual depth in feltmaking skills possible we have divided the already existing ten modules anew, i.e. in basic and structured modules. The four basic modules deal with basic questions of the felting technique, material, surface design and three-dimensional approaches. These basic modules can be studied without any prior feltmaking experience.

~ The structured modules require the previous visit of at least two basic modules – subject to change regarding the given theme's complexity. These modules introduce the more complex 3-D work, e.g. in making hats, bags, jewels, playthings and clothes. One module offers an additional art aspect. For interested parties who already have felting experience, the structured modules are open after an informal verification of their felting skills by showing their work.

~ The most difficult task was to plan the single course days – a module takes two days – in such a way that a slow as well as a fast way was possible, considering the great variety of different felting matters. The basic modules are offered twice each year, the structured ones once.

The current schedule organized by the Filzszene Schweiz can be found on their homepage under »Angebot« and in the event supplement of the filzfun.

~ A two-day course including professional support costs 380 Swiss Francs (material excluded), for members 30 Swiss Francs less.

ESTHER GRISCHOTT, STEFANIE HOFMANN AND CLAZIEN HOF

PAGES 24–29

Felt Forward

The Australian artist Catherine O'Leary experiments with needled batts (needle fleece) in her new book – to astoundingly sophisticated effects.

Jewelry, clothing, hats, shoes, blossoms and sculptures: All felted objects made by Catherine O'Leary are sculptural and very impressive. Bright and bold colors, surprising shapes and strong structures characterize her work which she presents in her new book »Felt Forward« on extravagant photographs.

~ Next to feltmaking, the Australian textile artist specialises in Bojagi, a Korean sewing technique for piecing together fabric fragments. She predominantly uses silk organza as her material of choice. »Both techniques involve a layering of fabrics and they both create a unified design from unprocessed materials,« she explains.

Studio in a Mudbrick Building

Catherine O'Leary, who has been working as an artist »for ever« lives in Castlemaine in the rural Victoria in the south east of Australia. She loves the clean mountain air and the ubiquitous birdsong surrounding her. »My studio is a mudbrick building which sits next to my home,« she says »but frankly, every room in my house is also my studio!«

~ She discovered feltmaking three decades ago, when there were hardly any English books on the subject. Feltmaking communities had yet to form in Australia. »When I first started felting the outcome was very thick and clumpy«, the artist remembers. »At the time I was looking for a soft, malleable fabric in which to embroider, but over time the process of making felt became a real passion.«

Versatile Prefelt

In recent years she has been making felt using commercial needled sheets of fleece. »I was initially intrigued with the graphic qualities of surface design when using these prefelt batts«, she explains.«The detail has the potential to be intricate and the colors tend to blend less. When using needled batts in nuno felting, the shapes on the fabric have a sharp definition to their edges, whereas rovings often have more of a painterly, soft and blended outcome.«

»Catherine O'Leary wanted to investigate the creative possibilities inherent in the commercial needle fleece.« »I wanted to see how far I could push this medium, so I experimented with nuno felting and three dimensional felt sculptures using the needled batts.« Amongst other applications she printed on the prefelts and casted objects in felt. »The years have passed, and I am still enthralled with this medium. I always wet felt the batts in the same manner of traditional feltmaking and the versatility is quite incredible.«

»For most of her art objects she uses Australian merino. She usually approaches designing in an intuitive way.« »I love the daydreaming part of starting a new project. Some of my ideas are quite subconscious and evolve in the making of the work.« She realized that often her eldest daughter is her subject matter »and when my girls were expecting their babies my work reflected this theme.«

Finish with Intense Stitches

Lately she has been working the surface of prefelts and finished felt pieces with intense stitching. As she puts it: »I find the slow process of embroidery a calming meditation, especially with some classical music and a gin and tonic.«

»In 2011 she published her first book «From Felt to Fabric» in the Lark Books Publishing House. It soon became invaluable to students as a resource in her felt classes. Now the artist has decided to put all her experience and knowledge of working creatively with needlefelt batts into a new book She chose the self-publishing route this time, because she wanted to have creative control over both content and look of the book. Great support came from the photographer Jacqui Henshaw and the book designer Stacey Zass. »It is a very personal book«, she says, pleased.«All of the models photographed are family members: my siblings, my two daughters, my pretty nephew and beautiful niece,

both my beloved grandchildren and even my 90-year old Mum.« Great photographs make it a feast for the eyes.

Clothing and Sculptures

In the ten chapters of »Felt Forward« the author covers themes like clothing, pattern making, sculpture, jewellery, hats, bags and art objects. She explains her way of working in detail, gives exact material specifications and wants to encourage people to experiment themselves. (An instruction from the book for encasing foam shapes with felt follows) »This is an instructional and inspirational book which will hopefully motivate people to think of felt in a new way«, says Catherine O'Leary and adds: »I am not sure what the future holds, but I know I will always be creative.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGE 29

Felting Around a Foam Core

Sometimes a piece of jewelry or another three-dimensional felted object should be big, yet light. This can be achieved by encasing a foam core with felt.

»Cut the foam into a form which is about 50 % bigger than the desired end size. Cut it with scissors but make sure not to use your best pair, since the blades might become dull. Continue to cut small snippets from the foam and bring it into the desired form. Keep in mind that the foam is pressed down when the felt encasing shrinks and some details could be lost in the process. For that reason I recommend to plan with a more generous (and general) form. Details can be added later on.«

1 Wrap two needle fleece strips around the foam. You should cover the basic form with at least two layers of needle felt strips.

2 Once the strips have been wrapped around the form can be decorated. As long as the object has not been felted you can add other felted pieces.

»Then wet the part with warm soapy water and gently rub all connecting parts and cutting edges with a thin piece of plastic foil.«

»Wrap the project into thin plastic foil and continue to rub the prefelt until it has shrunk to two thirds of its original size. Should you want to enhance the shrinking in different parts treat these areas more intensively.«

3 When the feltmaking is finished rinse the work and roll it up into a towel. Press as much moisture out as possible, then let the object dry in the air. Such striking Statement bracelets are all but weightless if you felt them over a foam core.

CATHERINE O'LEARY

PAGES 30-33

In the Realm of Wool and Silk

Petra Nasdal's felted art objects process silk from her own domestic silkmoth rearing.

In the late afternoon sun, Petra Nasdal is sitting contentedly in front of her »Filzhaus« (felt house), while her day's work, a felted ball, is drying beside her in the sun. The so-called felt house, a spacious room in an adjoining building of her house in the Niederlausitz is her retreat, lecture room, meeting place for family and friends and last but not least a »place to work creatively«, as she says. The room was christened by her four-year old grandchild, who, upon discovering shelves full of wool, cried out merrily: »Granny has a felt house!«

»But the 55-year old nursery-school teacher has been felting for much longer. »About 20 years ago I saw a small felted wall hanging that I immediately caught my attention. The same day I went and bought a book about feltmaking and ordered some wool«, she remembers. In the beginning she tentatively taught herself the technique and began to experiment in a more courageous manner as time went by. Later she improved her knowledge and skill in many courses, e.g. held by Lyda Rump, Bruno Bujack, Adrian Salome, Ricarda Aßmann and Maria Friese. In 2017 she passed the examination for voluntary quality assurance of the German Felt Network to which she has belonged since 2016.

Decorative Balls

Petra Nasdal's work focuses on interior decoration, her specialty being felted balls as vessels or lighting objects. »For a ball with a diameter of 28 cm at least 400 g of wool are required«, she explains. Mostly she processes fine Merino wool, but lately she has discovered advantageous aspects offered by mountain sheep wool. »I love to felt in white, pastel and grey shades, but sometimes I use vibrant colors. And I like surfaces from different materials or silk.

Dyeing ›Like a Witch‹

Already in 2013 she was introduced to the secrets of surface design by Lyda Rump and learned treating silk hankies. She was fascinated but soon deliberated how she could dye them. »Then Lyda said smiling: ›Do it like a witch would, Petra, a little crumb here, a tiny morsel there.‹ This sentence has been accompanying me ever since, when I dye silk or wool.« Petra Nasdal uses different color granules but also plant material like walnut or common tansy. Sometimes she treats fabrics with plants from the garden in Ecoprint technique.

A Long Mulberry Hedge

Silk plays an important part in Nasdal's art. In 2015 she participated in a course called »Seidenspezialitäten« (Silk specialties) held by Renate Maile-Moskowitz. »People who had access to mulberry tree leaves were allowed to take a couple of silkworms home«, she reports. »I had tons of them – a hedge approx. 70 m long.« Her grandfather had planted the hedge in the 1950ies in order to breed silk worms. »An accident didn't allow him to follow his dream. Now I tried my hand in it.« For five years she has been breeding *Bombyx mori*, mulberry spinners whose larvae spin the precious cocoons from which 500 to 1000 m silk thread can be rewound. »Each year the challenge rises due to the increase in numbers of our caterpillars«, Petra Nasdal sighs. But she is pleased and willing to continue the life work of her grandfather. »So the circle of life is completed.«
~ Still felting is only a professional sideline due to her job in the kindergarten. Petra Nasdal sells her work on markets and fairs, in a boutique in Cottbus and to visitors of her Filzhaus. She especially values the contacts derived from feltmaking: »Through felt art I was able to meet wonderful people and dear friends.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 34–36

Like Cats and Dogs

The Ukrainian journalist Hanna Tsukanova portrays animals with her felting needle realistic and lifelike.

I grew up in the suburbs of a big city, the capital of Ukraine, Kiev. My childhood was spent in a private house with a large yard. We always had animals: not only cats, dogs and hamsters, but also geese, hens, pigs, rabbits. I have loved them since childhood. And I also loved to sculpt from clay. Until 6 years, I did not go to kindergarten. My grandmother kept an eye on me at home. And I spent all day doing what I loved to do – sculpt animal figures from plasticine. When the time to go to school came for me, adults asked me who I want to become when I grow up, I proudly replied – I want to become a sculptor.

~ But years have passed. I acquired various knowledge and skills, developed my talents but gradually forgot about my main dream. After school, I graduated from the university and received a master's degree in journalism. I defended my scientific dissertation and worked in the field of political PR. I was very busy. And not very happy. Because I was not doing my job.

~ One day I accidentally went to a store where they sold hobby materials. Many large and fluffy skeins of multi-colored sheep wool lay on the shelves. I could not take my eyes off them. I wanted to touch this. And a miracle happened. I felt that I really want to try to create something from this material. I bought quite a bit of wool. And a felting needle. And that very evening a small and funny bunny appeared. Eight years have passed, and this bunny is still with me at all competitions and exhibitions. He travels with me around the world (I have his photos from different countries). He is my friend and mascot.

~ I did not have a teacher. The first lessons on felting was a video on YouTube. And after that I studied on my own. My skills were getting better, my jobs looked tidier. These were funny animal characters, as from cartoons. But over time, I wanted to try to create more realistic animals. I chose dogs as models. With some breeds it was easy, because real dogs, such as the Yorkshire Terrier or Spitz are very similar to toy puppies. But with other breeds everything was more complicated. In this work, I noticed that

for me the most interesting process is the creation of the dog's face. I liked catching emotions and character. But to create 4 almost identical paws – it was boring and not interesting. And then I got an insight! Portraits! I have to create portraits. But not just paint with wool, but sculpt from it like a sculptor! Creating a bas-relief. Creating a 3D portrait for me is like meditation. I can work up to 10 hours a day without noticing how time flies. I get tired physically and my eyes begin to see poorly, but I am addicted to the process and cannot bring myself to stop. But thank God I have a husband who always knows when to say stop. He reminds me to take a break, have tea, or have lunch. To create one portrait, I may need from 2-3 days to a week. It all depends not only on the size of the portrait but also on the complexity of the color of the coat of the pet. First, from a fairly tough carded wool, I create the basic volume and shape of the future portrait. I determine where the nose and eyes will be. For the dog's eyes, I use plastic bead halves and paint it myself with acrylic paints. If I create the eyes of a cat, I draw them on cardboard and then paste a glass cabochon on top. I sculpt the nose, lips, teeth and tongue out of plastic, which hardens with strong heating. With the wool of the base colors, I create all the necessary relief. And after that I cover this volume with a woolen roving of the necessary shades and lengths. It can be sheep or alpaca.

It is in the bas-relief technique that I have been working for the last 3 years and have created most of my works. It was these portraits that I presented at several international exhibitions. I create many portraits to order. My clients live in different parts of the world now it is 21 countries and I dream that there will be more of them, and also that I can visit them all!

Each new portrait is not just a new order for me, it is a new story. I do not remember all the names of my clients, but I remember the names of their pets, the portraits of which I created. I remember their stories. Many have already gone to the rainbow – as their owners say. They do not like to use the word »dead«, they grieve for a long time about their loss. When a pet becomes not just an animal in the house, but a member of the family, losing it is very difficult. I know this, because my dog, who lived in my house for 14 years, fell asleep forever in my arms. Therefore, I understand the feelings of my clients and share this.

With many customers I maintain friendly relations. They continue to share with me news about their cats and dogs, about new puppies, about personal ones, for example, send photos from a wedding.

☞ Despite my lack of art education, I consider myself a professional feller. A few years ago, I quit my career in political PR and journalism. I still teach public relations at Kiev National University, but most of my time I devote a needle to felting from wool. For the past few years I have been a member of professional organizations. I represent my works at international exhibitions and competitions and have awards. I held dozens of workshops in Ukraine for children and adults, including for people with disabilities. My youngest student was only 6 years old, and the oldest was 78. But despite this, one of my dreams is to learn the art of sculpture. I am now setting aside for this part of the money from the sale of felt portraits.

HANNA TSUKANOVA

PAGE 37

Equestrian Memories

Valentina Kehl wet-felts her animal sculptures in the resist technique.

Ever since her childhood in Kazakhstan Valentina Kehl has loved horses. »I often watched them galloping through the steppe – free, independent, fast and graceful«, she remembers. »For me, they were mystical creatures, yet untouchable because I both feared and respected them.«

☞ 1996 the studied teacher and her family moved to Germany. She found work as a Waldorf pedagogue in a kindergarten, where she first came into contact with feltmaking. The felting technique captivated her immediately. She took courses and made small dolls, animals, images, bags and jewelry. For twenty years she has been organizing a felt art project with pre-school kids of the state kindergarten in Mölln. »I also like to accompany their parents in case they are interested in feltmaking as well.«

Images and Sketches

☞ When she started the »Fit in Filz« education in Oberrot, her daughter started horseback riding. The original fascination was rekindled, and Valentina

Kehl decided to make horses her final assignment. »Everything was taken into consideration: Form, size, color, the different kinds of wool, shrinking factor, but also details like the mane, ears, eyes, lashes and nostrils«, she says. »I studied countless images, made innumerable sketches, and sometimes I really pushed the envelope.«

Wet-felted Sculptures

For matters of sturdiness, she wanted to wet-felt her sculptures instead of using the needle, so she decided on the hollow body technique above a stencil. It takes Valentina Kehl almost a week to felt one horse. As material for the three of them – a Shetland pony, an Arabian horse and an Iceland horse – she chose Austral-Merino in white, chocolate brown and mocha, white and brown mountain sheep wool, self-dyed Chubut wool in brown shades as well as Heidschnucke wool for the manes. Eyelids, lashes, ears and nostrils were felted beforehand. For each horse's head she laid out approx. 420 g of wool in four layers onto the stencil, felted them and then put the prepared details, like eyelids or manes on.

☞ The finished felted horse bust, which is about 54 cm high, is filled with darning cotton. Then the face is formed and the mane combed and trimmed. The separately felted eyeballs are sewn into the eye sockets.

☞ Despite all this work Valentina Kehl's adoration for horses has never waned. »I have never learned how to ride«, she admits. »Instead these creatures carry me into the beautiful land of dreams.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 38–39

From Felt Boots to Outdoor Shoes

The fashion designer and shoemaker Ina Büchs from Berlin soles felt boots professionally and gives them their finishing touch.

In the beginning, there was felted footwear. Each feltmaker puts all her skill and experiences, her ideas and her dreams into this project and looks forward to the day when she will take a walk in her new shoes. In each felted

shoe there is a lot of power and effort.

☞ I had made my own felt boots in a course by Sabine Reichert-Kassube in Berlin. I tried them on proudly and waited anxiously for the announced shoemaker who was to make my boots fit to wear on the street. Beaming with friendliness, Ina Büchs entered the studio. She had brought along many material test samples and asked each course participant in detail what she imagined: How should the shoes or boots look? What sole, what latches and what heel should they have? Then she explained patiently and expertly how the individual idea could be realized. She gave suggestions, hinted at technical details and their possibilities to be carried out. She meticulously noted measurements and design ideas, gave a resumé, watched her respective client closely. She could detect the most minute doubt and asked again. We all felt entirely understood and well taken care of.

☞ Ina Büchs finished her apprenticeship as a shoemaker in Leipzig in 2014. Since then she has her own workshop, Shoemaker Byks Berlin. There she makes tailor-made shoes for both sexes, whether classical, high heels, sandals or sneakers. »One can really riot here, also with alternative textiles or hand-painted leather,« she remembers from her own experience.

Many Fastening Variants

One of her specialties is turning a felt boot into streetwear, using different elements such as heels, soles, loops and strings in a wide color range. Leather latches or made from felt are just as welcome as later-added shoecaps or leather applications – you can't possibly name all of them. Next to professional soling and the finishing of felt boots the artisan's repertory includes also the fastening of handles to (felt) bags or all kinds of applications.

Practice in France

But Ina Büchs' talents don't stop here: Since 2008 she is a state-registered fashion designer, having graduated from the Lette Association in Berlin. In 2009 she worked for four months as a feltmaker and textile designer at the Feutrière Françoise Hoffmann, a felt designer specializing in garments from nuno felt, as well as three months with the Shibori artist Sophie Gyuot, who excels in Japanese plait- and dyeing techniques in Lyon, France. She says about herself: »But shoemaking was at long last the

profession that unified all my interests and skills.«

Felted Bridal Gown

So it was no wonder that in 2019 she made the acquaintance of Sabine Reichert-Kassube who re-introduced her to feltmaking. »Due to the participants' order to make their felted boots fit to wear outside I have found a wonderful way to combine this fine, natural material with the art of shoemaking«, Ina Büchs explains. »Felt is indeed a lot similar to leather, when it comes to beauty. I have even felted my beloved wedding-gown, since it is considered bad luck to sew it yourself.«

Trying on at the Workshop

I noticed her enthusiasm when I tried on my street boots in Ina's workshop six weeks after the felt course with Sabine Reichert-Kassube. My grandfather had been a shoemaker as well, so I was really keen on having a look at her workshop. And now my soled boots carry me throughout the world, miraculously light and a lot more stylish than I could have ever imagined.«

☞ Finishing our shoes has whetted the feltmaking appetite anew in Ina Büchs: After having handled so many works by other feltmaker she plans to come back to the felting table more often.
Meike Raßbach

PAGES 40-41

Friends from an Alien Star

Valentyna Kostetska is the creator of the Lapatatuttsy from the Lapatamelli planetary system.

Sometimes green with purple dots, brown with yellow flecks or grey with orange stripes, with stocking caps, curly fringes or a bushy mane, huge ears and a big snout, blue, green or rust-colored eyes – no Lapatatuttsy is like the other, but one can easily see they were all made by the same artist. Valentyna Kostetska from the Ukraine has invented the congenial felt companions and their adventurous story. ☞ Already as a child she dreamt of travelling and invented »fantasy worlds with creatures that only existed in my imagination«. Twelve years ago, she fell

in love with wool, she says and since then she has been designing clothing and accessories for clients all over the globe. »My coats, jackets, skirts, scarves and caps are worn from New Zealand to Canada«, she is pleased to tell us.

Loneliness as Inspiration

Some time ago, an illness caused her to feel quite low. It propelled her »in the direction of those former dreams of imagined creatures and worlds«, as she puts it. »I was inspired by the most hurtful experience a person can have: loneliness. I had nobody to embrace.« This was the hour of birth of the Lapatatuttsy. She went into her studio and made a hand doll that she could embrace. »She is like a companion, she comes everywhere with me, poses for photos, I can love and – very important – hug her.«

☞ The idea awakened her spirits again and she set out to make more of such hug dolls from highest-quality materials, a.o. wool from New Zealand, England and Italy and Uzbek silk.

☞ In her imagination the Lapatatuttsy come from the planetary system Lapatamelli. We can only go there while dreaming. It boasts a row of highly strange planets, e.g. the crystal planet which shimmers in different colors or the magnet planet which de-magnetizes all of a sudden or changes his orbit.

Friendly Aliens

The Lapatatuttsy, as Valentyna Kostetska tells us, are friendly creatures. »They are always in a good mood and they have a mischievous air. Only by force of will and their dreams they travel through their planetary system. When they see other planets they just go there.« So they came to Earth and found a cap. »From then on, you only saw them with this accessory.« What these colorful aliens like best are warm, heartfelt embraces. That is why they were invented: »They are travel companions, they embrace you when you are sad and join in laughter and dance, if you are in a great mood.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 42-43

Virtual Virus Carpet

Occupational therapy students design a patchwork object online.

Our idea of the world has turned topsyturvy. The last felting event in the aid for the disabled was not far away when the Corona pandemic suddenly changed the life at the Occupational Therapy School in Dornstadt. For 20 years I have been working there as a teacher and course instructor with a focus on felt as therapeutic medium.

☞ A group of the first training year had just finished their education successfully – with two excursions to a geriatric ward and to the aid for disabled persons – when after the very first day the training for the second group was stopped due to infection protection measures. Luckily I had started a teaching platform in the months before so we were able to continue working more or seamlessly and »unplugged«. The students organized themselves and their educational process to remote lectures.

Felting on the Balcony

To continue passing on practical and creative content I started the first online felting tutorial soon after the closure. The students had taken home their felting equipment and a packet of wool. So treasure balls, ball-shaped animals, clover leaves and blossoms were made in living rooms and on balconies, which functioned well indeed. Family members and the neighbours' kids were recruited as trial patients and some mothers might have learned a new pastime from their felting daughters in the Corona time.

☞ With regard to the subject »Working with Prefelt« I thought of the following working challenge: The students were asked to felt small squares connected in any way with the pandemic. They were to be made into a large carpet and sewn together.

☞ With such a task, representing a present concern to be turned into communal work, I had several aims in mind: getting to know the rolling technique and the felting of flat surfaces plus the development of creativity and skill in felting techniques.

Instruction Film

A short instruction film familiarized the students with felting a surface on prefelt. They each cut out a 30 x 30 cm prefelt

square and laid out the desired motif with only 15 g of wool. They were encouraged to use other textile materials such as silk, wool etamin, knitting yarn from pure wool and other cut-out prefelt shapes for their individual Corona squares.

☞ »I am quite satisfied – these turned out to be rather sweet Corona viruses«, one occupational therapy student wrote about her work. She suggested to make a cushion in that technique, e.g. with patients in psychotherapy, something to remind them of positive, joyful things.

Posters and Postcards

☞ All in all, the results were astounding and at times really funny. Since the crisis endures, one student, who is also a photographer, agreed to digitally arrange the small surfaces into a virus-carpet. The result is quite remarkable. In the meantime, we had postcards and posters printed.

☞ It is probable that, after the digital result, we will not make the analogous carpet. The digital version is already a work of art and it can speak for itself. Still, we all look forward to felt together in a group, since this activity, communicative in nature, is most fun when made in a congenial circle.

PETRA KUNZ

PAGES 44–46

In the Felted Blossom Community is Flourishing

Social-artistic initiative in Aachen for differently-abled people

Felted blossoms, cute animals and dwarves, lamps that give off atmospherical light and unusual sitting cushions: In the Filzblüte-Manufaktur (Felted Blossom Manufacture) differently-abled people make these unique products which are then sold in the social-artistic initiative zwischen uns e.V. (between us). Next to the felting manufacture and the shop an artistic area with a gallery called »Der blaue Ezel« (The Blue Donkey) and a garden are part of this project as well which was founded twelve years ago at the Parzival school, a Waldorf school with a curative pedagogy section.

☞ Then the graduate students had been looking for a working place which should meet their special requirements. They started with the felting manufacture and a small shop.

Handicraft without Time Pressure

Sheep wool is a grounding material with a highly therapeutic effect on people, moreover it is sustainable. Feltmaking is soothing and meditative, enhances the concentration and the development of fine motor skills. The latter is especially important for our co-workers.

☞ In our manufacture all products are handmade without any time-related pressure. The unique objects are made in an atmosphere of joy and sold in our own shop. Furthermore, we sell feltmaking wool and accessories so our clients can work creatively as well. To avoid stress with regard to production speed we buy different products suitable for our range of goods, always taking into consideration fair conditions for both humans and animals.

A Door to the World

The shop for us is like a door to the outside world, through which visitors come and are treated with great hospitality to a cup of coffee or the like. Through the colorful materials, but also through the felted objects themselves we have established a welcoming atmosphere visitors gladly partake in. Through contact with the clients our co-workers experience how enthusiastic other people are about their products. This makes for very special encounters.

Art and Gallery

Painting freely in the art area of the project is a particular trip allowing our co-workers entirely free, different and unforeseeable ways to express themselves. Energy, expression, freedom – all this heals the soul. The finished paintings are put on show in our art gallery »The Blue Ezel«, where our wards find opportunity for personal exchange with visitors and clients alike.

Eating Together

In the home economics department, we prepare our lunches with care, always in accordance with the seasons. This means lively communal work for the team and a conscientious handling of foodstuff. We highly value the enjoyable moments when we can eat together at a big table. We buy our food in a small health-food shop nearby where mostly regional

products are sold. Our co-workers can go shopping there on their own and are much like as a clientele.

Fruit, vegetables and herbs grow in our garden and every crop goes straight to the kitchen. The bio-waste is distributed in the garden again which guarantees a healthy cycle.

Loving Care

We lovingly accompany our co-workers, who are often in need of soulfelt assistance, in all work done and we aim to develop the special talents of each person. An important inspiration is the realization that the inner core of each human being is intact despite of possible illnesses or disabilities. More than anything we are striving to strengthen each person's individual resources and to find things to do for each that give them pleasure.

ANNETTE KOFFER

PAGE 47

A Cord for a Lifetime

Parents felt colored ropes for kindergarten kids.

There's no end in what you can do with a solid cord! You can knot it, climb or rope-skip with it, lay out patterns, fasten something, tie things and keep them together, too. Such a multi-functional cord the parents of the Waldkindergarten »Waldwichtel« (Little Wood Dwarfs) made as a birthday present for their kids – each cord felted from pure wool in individual colors – in short, unmistakably suitable for each and every child.

☞ 15 mothers and fathers met with the nursery schoolteachers got together to felt the cords from merino wool strands under supervision. On several so-called beer tables put up in front of the »Waldstübchen«, a pertaining location, parents in three teams prepared first a piece of cord approx. 150 cm long and felted it until the ends.

Real Teamwork

Three parts each were then cautiously connected at the dry fiber ends. Then came the final felting process, with a lot of power and in a communal rhythm. The result were sturdy cords or ropes – a true teamwork and a lot of fun. For

most parents felting was quite a new experience.

~ This way they made thirty fantastic cords, each in three colors in most diverse combinations. The children loved their parents' work: Each little wood dwarf is looking forward all year long to be given his own cord as a birthday present.

MARGRIT FEIL-MÜLLER

PAGES 48-49

Frisbee in Felt

Childcare workers to-be training includes felting playthings for their future working places.

A ball-shaped Memory game, a rope play for groups, a ball game, frisbee discs and balls – two chests full of games for kindergartens and Youth Institutions were made in the felt course by Heike Roth at the F+U Fachschule für Sozialwesen in Heidelberg. In June 2020 it was first offered for the students with a focus on Youth- and Children's Residential Education. The future childcare teachers are supposed to pass on their felting skills to children and youngsters one day.
~ Many of them had no feltmaking experience at all. All knew the basic connection between sheep and wool, but how these objects that were on show were made they didn't grasp at first.

Many Young Men

Half of the participants were young men – quite an unusual experience for the lecturer Heike Roth, who was looking forward to the challenge with a bit of tension. How would the young men take to working with wool, something which was generally considered women's work? But surprisingly the men were just as alert and keen and seemed to share the same fascination as their female colleagues.
~ In the beginning Heike Roth introduced different felting techniques: A few basics (Why does wool felt at all?), general feltmaking theory, explanations how to tell strand wool, pre-felt and fleece wool apart, and then felting started. Each participant was allowed to try him- or herself out with the materials, to experiment and rehearse how flat surfaces, cords and balls are made. The main focus was on the practical experience with wool, soap and water.

Despite so many question marks colorful test samples were soon made and a bit later their first small yet successful first pieces.

Felt Projects for Practice

Regardless of the Corona social distancing and strict hygiene measures the lecturer managed to make a communal work with her students: From flat surfaces, felted cords and balls they made a chest for playthings that they can take to their clientele in homes and other institutions. The students undergo a two-year long vocational school educational program with a high degree of practical work. Their internship takes place in two different institutions of their choice. So, they can take the playthings chest to different social institutions (from cribs to homes for children and youths) and they can also guide a felt project with their charges. This lends itself especially to the one-year professional practice which follows after their time at the vocational school.

~ The students were enthusiastic about their feltmaking education. One of them wrote the following feedback: »The frisbee is ready and flies really well – so well indeed that it flew from the kitchen through the first door into the living room and then out of the balcony door. It now lies on the roof of an adjoining house. It will soon be retrieved – it's trajectory was 30 m!«

HEIKE ROTH AND DR. ANKE WOLL

PAGES 50-55

Tutorial: Notebook Cover

A hand-felted cover turns every quaint booklet into a noble notebook for sudden revelations and other notes. Ilona Riehle describes in a step-for-step instruction how such a personal book cover is made.

Material

- Merino wool roving (in this project 19 mic) in green and light blue, 35 g each
- For decorating: various natural fibers (here mulberry silk caps, viscose)
- Felting material: Soap (e.g. olive soap), water, smooth gloves, ball sprinkler,

nylon gauze, fulling pin (tube insulation or pool noodle), bubble wrap, towels

- For the resist and the foil motif: sound insulation foil (to put underneath laminate floors, available in hardware stores), 1 DIN A4 piece of paper, one punched pocket (stationery store), ruler, waterproof pen, scissors
- Din A5 notebook

Note

The resist is 44 cm x 29 cm, the finished felted cover is 32,5 cm x 22 cm. If you want to use a different kind of wool, e.g. fleece wool you have to calculate the shrinking factor anew by means of a felt trial pattern. My personal advice: Use smooth, soapy gloves in the first felting stages so that the hands can glide smoothly across the laid-out wool.

Instructions

- 1 Sketch the desired motif on a piece of paper (DIN A4). The lines should have a width of approx. 1 cm. Shade the pattern which will be cut out later.
- 2 Copy the motif with a waterproof pen on a punched pocket and cut it out.
- 3 Cut a stencil from the sound insulation measuring 44 cm x 29 cm.
- 4 Lay out the light blue wool thinly and evenly, first horizontally and then vertically onto the resist and let it protrude at the side around the stencil approx. 3 cm for the foldover.
- 5 Wet the laid-out wool with water from the ball sprinkler.
- 6 Cover the wool with nylon gauze and press the wool down cautiously. Lightly glide across the gauze with a piece of soap. Remove the gauze and turn the resist with the laid-out wool around – maybe with the help of a plastic foil on top.
- 7 Wrap the protruding fibers close to the resist around the edges.
- 8 At the corners you may cut or pick some wool away to avoid bulges. Spread the fibers evenly.
- 9 Lay out the light-blue wool thinly horizontally and vertically also on this side of the resist. This time the wool

should not protrude from the resist's edge, but instead taper off on the wrapped-around fibers.

10 Wet the laid-out wool, cover it with gauze, press it, rub soap onto it and turn it to the other (first) side.

11 Place the foil motif on the right half of the rectangle.

12 Cover the motif's lines with thin strands of light-blue wool. This is important for the stability of the cutting edges, and that they turn out dichromatic: light blue from the inside and grey from the outside.

13 Repeat steps 4-10 with the grey wool.

14 Should you notice that the workpiece gets too wet, cover it with gauze and take the surplus moisture away with a towel. Don't place the towel directly onto the wool, otherwise fibers will cling to it, thus damaging your work.

15 Now it is very important to mark where the felted cover's top and bottom is, as well as what is inside and what outside. It is easy to lose the sense of this, so later you might mix up where the short resp. the long cord goes or a where decoration object should be placed. For any such marking I use a thin, P-shaped wool strand: It signifies the cover's inside and the circle points upward.

16 Before you decorate the cover, you have to felt cords. I think it is most beautiful when a cord is wound completely around the notebook. This means that the cords should be of different lengths. Put two colored, overlapping wool strands on a rubber mat or a piece of bubble wrap: 65 cm and 45 cm.

17 Roll the cords around as long as they are still dry so that the fibers can connect.

18 Then wet the cords cautiously with soapy water from the sprinkler (they should not be pressed down flat) and roll them around more strongly. See to it that the end, which will later be felted to the cover, remains dry.

19 Fasten both cords with the dry, fanned out fibers in the middle of

the narrow sides of the felted rectangle: the longer at the would-be upper side (the side with the shingle motif), the shorter one at the opposite edge, i.e. the future underside of the cover. Lay out the dry fibers closely to the edge of the cover, put it in place with soapy hands and felt them on lightly.

20 Now you can decorate the felted cover with different fibers, as desired. Take for example viscose, silk or mulberry caps. For this project I used the caps and some viscose. Put the decoration elements onto the outside of the cover.

My advice: If you don't want to decorate the cover further please proceed to step 23.

21 Wet the workpiece, cover it with gauze and felt the surface lightly with soap.

22 Turn the cover around and decorate the inside, should you want that.

My advice: Please remember that the middle part of the inside will be cut out, so decorations are useless.

23 Now the cover is ready for felting: Wet it with soapy water, cover it with gauze and work both sides with gloved hands and a piece of soap. Make sure that there is enough soap and the soapy water stays warm, so the felting process runs smoothly.

24 As soon as the fibers stop moving under your hands remove the gauze and felt the work again on both sides intensely. Also work the cords well.

25 When the decoration has combined with the wool, wind the felt piece around a pool noodle or a piece of tube insulation in bubble wrap and roll it back and forth from each side about 100 times.

26 Flatten the felted cover, put it down and work both sides and also the edges with your hands. The gloves should always be soapy so the hands can glide effortlessly.

27 Now the felt should be so sturdy that the resist can be removed. At the place you marked in step 15 cut the cover open at a length of approx. 9 cm with a sharp, pointed pair of scissors (see photo). Remove the stencil.

28 Put your hand inside the cover and work it well.

29 Let the cover drop onto the table several times (a), rub it smooth (b) and wind it up without a rolling pin and roll it (c). Repeat these three steps alternately.

30 Should you notice that the cover has become too tight for the pattern foil you have to remove the latter. Feel around where the foil is to set the first cut. I recommend a sharp, pointed pair of scissors with long blades. Put the scissors midway onto the place where the foil lies. Now cut the upper layer, not the foil itself! This is why the long blades are necessary – they help to follow the way of the pattern, thus avoiding a cut in the wrong direction.

31 After the foil has been removed you have two possibilities: If you desire a sculptural effect leave the project as it is and proceed directly to felting. (Step 33) You can also cut the edges of the grey layer back a little so the light-blue material becomes more visible.

32 In my project, I shaped the contours of my workpiece with the scissors.

33 Work the cutting edges with soapy gloves strongly in order to seal them off.

34 Felt the cover intensely, rub it against the bubble foil, let it drop, knead it and roll it up.

35 Check the length of the side edges regularly and fold the cover so the edges don't go out of shape. Correct eventual irregularities by working the respective places with your hands or by rolling.
My advice: Felt shrinks in the direction it is rolled.

36 Work the cover's folded edges from the inside with your fingers.

37 Only when the cover is almost finished the inside can be cut out – don't do that any earlier, since the open edges tend to stretch during felting. A book cover should have exact, sharp, even and smooth edges. The side sleeves should

have a width of 8-11 cm. When they are too narrow the notebook will slip out of the cover when it is opened. My cover has a sleeve width of 11 cm.

My advice: The cut-out rest can be made into small strips for bookmarks or used with other felting projects.

38 Put plastic foil (punched pocket) under the sleeves and seal the cutting edges briefly with soap and soapy gloves.

39 The felted cover is finished: The felt is sturdy and a little grainy. Another sign that the felt is ready is that water drops just roll off its surface.

40 Rinse the felt cover and stretch it into shape, especially the corners and edges. Let it dry on a towel.

41 I recommend to iron the felt cover while it is still a little moist with a steaming iron on the »wool« setting. This is not really needed, but it gives a professional finish to the felt surface. Here you see the finished felt cover from the outside and from the inside – ready to house your notebook!

ILONA RIEHLE

PAGES 56–57

Shropshire Sheep

When you think of Christmas you might picture the sheep at the manger and how orderly and short the grass around it looks. It is highly likely that those sheep were from the Shropshire breed, since this is the preferred field of action of these animals which will be introduced in this month's instalment.

History

The Shropshire sheep comes, as can be guessed from its name, from the English county Shropshire. There it was bred from various local sheep in the first half of the 19th century and has been an acknowledged breed since 1859. Shropshire were hugely popular from the beginning on, at the end of the 19th century they were the main sheep meat providers in England. In the US, Shropshire sheep were much valued because of their adaptability.

~ The breeding focus for wool yield led to some disadvantages which brought hard times for the Shrophire in the middle of the 29th century. Only by returning to the original characteristics which predestine those animals for double use let the numbers rise again, so today we find greater numbers g again in the US.

~ In England and Europe their number remained worrisomely low until the 1990ies. Only when it was discovered that the Shropshire do not feed on conifer shoots, as other sheep breeds do, their survival was made possible. They are mostly used in the conservation of Christmas and fruit tree cultures, precisely because they neither damage conifers shoots or seedlings nor the bark of the fruit trees.

Racial Characteristics

The Shropshire is a meat sheep of middle height with a long, deep rump and a broad back. The white fleece is quaint with middle fineness. Body parts with no hair are dark brown. The head, often wooly until the forehead and the cheeks is studded with kemp and has no horns. The sturdy legs have taut ankles and firm claws.

~ Rams reach a withers height of up to 80 centimeters and weigh approx. 120 kg in that stage. Ewes are up to 75 cm high and get as much as approx. 85 kg weight. Shropshire sheep are legendary for their good adaptability and robust physique. Even when food is scarce their basic food recovery makes for high performance.

~ The Shropshire is quite fecund for which constant high lambing quotes is proof. The ewes' marked maternal instincts and good milk output warrant fast-growing lambs. It is a serene animal which makes flock organization easier for all involved. If the heat period is long fecundity is found in ewes that are eight to ten months.

~ Shropshire lambs are fast-growing, as the photo (right, left, below) shows: A four months- old lamb is suckling here that has almost reached the height of the mother animal. For that aspect alone the breed is considered a good meat-provider. Apart from that they yield each 2.5 to 3.5 kg of wool. It's even structure and quality makes it useful in many different ways.

Wool

At first sight, the fleece is unremarkable. The wool in all parts of the fleece is almost of equal length and also the quality hardly ever differs. As with all quaint-woolen fleeces the tips are soiled,

but the dirt doesn't permeate far into the wool. Only the areas behind-legs-stomach are usually dirtier, this wool should be rejected immediately.

The uniform wool hairs stand very densely together and show a fine crimp.

Felting Tests

Because I love the Shropshire wool because of its wonderful fluffiness the rather limited felting capacity did not surprise me. Shropshire wool refuses to felt – and with that I mean really not at all or almost not at all.

~ This makes further consideration of felting and shrinking factors obsolete, but one should look twice. As with any other wool that doesn't felt well it is just this feature that accounts for some aspects you can put to your advantage.

~ First of all, non-felting wool is easy to wash. The biggest problem when washing wool is usually that the garment or other textile should not be moved around too much. Shropshire wool can be washed with simple soap (but this doesn't take away the oil), only because it can be even kneaded to remove specks and dirt crusts. This never results in any kind of felting, which makes Shropshire wool ideal for darning, since it hardly ever gets clumpy, even it is used at a later date.

~ Secondly you can still felt a nice fur from Shropshire wool. The wool is well fixed by mountain sheep wool. Together they make for a beautiful, robust fur which doesn't fall in even after longer use. Unfortunately there is little demand for such »quaint« wool breeds because they look rather boring. For sitting furs, the optical aspects are in the foreground and not whether they are useful and practical. Yet for everyday use their felted furs are clearly superior to those made from long-haired or curly wool.

~ Thirdly, you can make the so-called »covered fur«. (I call it that, whether I first invented this technique is unclear. With this, the fur is not kept open, so you can see it in the finished object, but it is covered by another layer of wool, similar to making a felted hollow body. Then the whole cushion is felted. In its inner core a felted fur materializes which is covered by a felted layer. In contrast to stuffed cushions this filling does not clump together and cannot be shifted when washed. The cushion remains evenly thick.

Conclusion

Shropshire wool is the fluffiest wool I know. It actively and reliably resists any attempt to felting and so for feltmakers

it has little meaning. On the other hand, like no other wool it is suitable for darning and filling. For other kinds of processing, Shropshire wool is really good, because it doesn't felt without any chemical treatment and, compared with other wool kinds that resist felting, it is rather delicate.

MARGIT RÖHM

PAGES 58-59

The Village of the Feltmaking Women

In the Turkish village Hüseyinbeobasi Mari Nagy and István Vidák witnessed the making of felt blankets for goatherders' families.

Surely many of you know Turkey and her beautiful capital Istanbul which used to be known under the name Constantinople. For 30 years now we have been visiting the city's European side and the Asian areas at the Bosphorus. ☞ In this instalment of our serial »Felting Tradition« we would like to report on the textiles and the lives of the Jörük and the Turkmen goat herder families. North of Anatolia, in the famous seaside resort Afyonkarahischar at the foot of the mountains we have visited those herdsmen regularly between 1995 and 1999. Our experiences were later confirmed and added on by researchers that we have met in person.

Exchanging Wool for Blankets

In those days every nomad herder family possessed felted blankets. The shorn wool of their own animals was exchanged for felted blankets and herders' coats in all sizes for adults and children. One place to do that was Master Erkus' workshop in the feltmakers' street in the city of Afyonkarahischar.

☞ The Jörük- and Turkmen tribe in Turkey belong to the Oguz Turks, from their origin as well as their languages. About 700 years ago, in the 12th and 13th century they came to their Anatolian relatives. Their spiritual and material culture is close to Central-Asian traditions and more so of the Turkmen. Some of these groups have been wandering from their summer to their winter lodgings regularly each year until 1990.

☞ Their way of life was mostly researched by two German anthropologists, Albert Kunze and Harald Böhmer. Apart from them the American Josephine Powell and Ulla Johnson from Sweden were much engaged in introducing these tribes to the public.

☞ In Anatolia, feltmaking is mens' work. »I found one single village where also women were able to make felted carpets, a mountain village called Hüseyinbeobasi. The name means ,a village that was owned by Mr. Hüseyin«, explained Júlia Bartha, an Hungarian ethnographer during one of our visits.

Simple Motifs

We also were interested in the special way of life of these people and decided to go to Hüseyinbeobasi ourselves. It is a mountain village near Balikesir, three km from the small town Ivrendi. The Jörük-settlement had about 500 inhabitants then. The men were away with the animals way up there in the mountains. The felted blankets in the house wherein we were invited had been made by the women. Their motif world is far more ancient and simpler as that of the city master – at least we thought so.

☞ We met a herder's family and took photographs of their felted blankets. The pattern was quaint: a single rotating sun in the blanket's middle and a frame pattern with four floral motifs. The blanket pattern shown (right/left) is similar.

How the Jörük Work

The researcher Harald Böhmer made a film about the special feltmaking of the Jörük which we would like to comment as follows:

☞ The floor blanket is made from a mixture of sheep wool and goats' hair. This material is first whipped by the women with a stick and then made finer by the means of a manual roving tool, the Tarak. At last the fibers are further relaxed with a small bow and so loosened.

☞ The hairy material thus treated is then lightly pressed in a round sieve. The resulting round hair pieces are connected with great care in several layers and then arranged on a big goats' hair blanket. First they lay out the pattern, then the background.

☞ After all has been thoroughly wet with hot water from a jug, a wooden stick is placed onto the edge of the blanket around which the whole matter is wound. The women kneel next to each other and

roll the blanket with their elbows to and fro in all directions until a sturdy felt is achieved.

☞ The making of the patterned family blankets vanished for good between 1970 and 1990. The herders's families, who sit and sleep on felted blankets buy them, as mentioned above, at the feltmakers' workshops in nearby towns.

MARI NAGY UND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

PAGES 60-62

The Miracle Blue

How Indigo came to Liberia – a West African Legend

A long, long time ago the High God left Earth to live in the sky. The sky used to be much closer than today, it lay across the hills and mountains and hung inside the valleys. When grinding spices, the women were afraid to use too much force, lest the fabric of the sky which hung low over their heads should be pierced by their pestles. This was considered all the more dangerous because the soul of a dead Ancient could be hurt. What a catastrophe this would be!

☞ After some industrious women had hit the High God several times it was surely better for him to leave the souls of the Ancients, to move higher up, thus putting a greater distance between him and mankind. But at least the sky still hung low to shelter the people and to shield them from the glaring sun.

☞ But the sky then was not only there to protect the people or to house the spirits. No, part of the sky could be actually eaten – but not at all like ordinary food. Rice and palm oil fill the stomach, but the sky fills the heart. Fed on small clouds, a man could dream, levitate and recover all the peaceful and happy feelings he had possessed before the High God left the Earth.

☞ But this eating of clouds was a dangerous matter! You had to be pure at heart and body to do it. On the other hand, it was quite possible to become pleasurablely ,drunk by clouds' without ever really noticing it. Exactly this happened to Asi, the seer of Foya Kamara.

On her Way to the River God

On a sunny morning, Asi came to the banks of the brook that flowed by her settlement. She wore a dress – called a

Lappa – from white fabric and she had her little girl tied to her back. On her head she carried a bast bag filled with rice. At the holy place, where the altar of the river god leaned against a big silk wool tree, she was supposed to cook and eat the rice as a sacrifice.

~ She collected firewood and lit the fire between the three pieces of rock which surrounded the holy earthen pot that was always left in those woods. Then she undressed, plucked leaves and covered this soft bedding with her Lappa. Then she placed her child onto it. Naked, she went to the bank, washed the pot and fetched fresh water.

A Hunger for Blue

On sunny days, cloud strips came down to lie in the water. One could see deep down the wonderful blue of the sky swimming in the water. Asi's eyes and heart hungered for color, and the blue mirrored in the shallow water seemed to her the most beautiful color in the world.

~ »If I eat enough sky«, Asi thought, »its blueness will enter me from inside. And if I'm lucky my hair will become as blue as thunder.« This thought made her shiver, because it suddenly entered her mind that a seer at the holy waters must never ask anything for herself, only for the whole village population. She blamed herself for her selfish wishes, in a moment where she should be just pure at heart. Fear shook her body when she carried the rice back to the cooking fire.

~ After Asi had put the pot onto the fire she sat down, leaning against the cotton silk tree, while she waited for the water to simmer. »Now I will bite something off the sky and eat it so that my heart gets still«, Asi said to herself. She reached up and broke off a piece of sky as big as a plaitain leaf and began to nourish her lonely heart with it.

The Dance of the Jeda Bird

As soon as she had taken her first bite magical, wonderful thoughts filled her. She felt as if she were in the tree roots far below, in the earth moistened by the

river. The roots attempted to suckle the earth like a baby trying to find milk at it's mother's breast. When the roots had quenched their thirst Asi's spirit moved up and into the body of the Jeda bird that danced before her in the air.

~ The Jeda bird is of a supernaturally bright blue. He dances in the air in this spot when he wants to mate. His dancing movements make his body turn sky-blue, so that he becomes a creature of a vibrant blue. Asi was jealous. She shook herself to get rid of this desire for color. What would happen if she asked for this kind of blue for all mankind, not for herself only?

~ Asi rose and added the rice to the boiling water. The moment she decided to ask for the precious blue color for all people of Foya Kamara she felt more serene and less fear-ridden. She saw that the child had fallen asleep on her white dress. So, she felt she would have enough time to bite off another piece of the sky while the rice was cooking. Then she would stop her praying for blue, leave some rice at the altar and head back home before the forest turned dark.

Drunk from the Sky

But after a while, Asi fell asleep herself. When she awoke, she had a bad headache: that is what's in store for you if you get drunk from the sky. The stench of burnt rice suddenly hit her nostrils. She had spoiled the sacrifice she had come for! The sun stood deep in the horizon, and fear gripped her as she turned her hurting head around to look for the child.

~ The little girl had rolled off the Lappa and lay on the ground, her face downward. But something strange stopped Asi in her stride: In the middle, where the baby had wet the dress, a blue stain appeared – a stain of shining blue in the midst of a dull white surface. Asi didn't look closer nor did she attempt to feel the Lappa. She rose and ran as fast as she could to her child. But when she turned it around, there was no breath coming from its mouth.

~ Asi's child was dead. She thought it was a punishment for her selfish thoughts

at this sacred place. In her despair she ran to the fire and loosened her hair to cover it with ashes, as all women do in mourning. Tears streamed from her eyes and smudged the ashes that she had put on her head. She hugged her child and tied the lifeless body into her Lappa. Her own body rocked to and fro as she cried and sang her dirges.

The Secret of the Leaves

At last, Asi fainted at the foot of the cotton silk tree. While she lay there unconscious, the water spirit spoke to her and told her about the blue stain on her white Lappa. This is Indigo, he said, and it comes from the leaves that you have plucked as a cushion for your baby. To fix the blue color, one had to add urine, salt and ashes. It had been necessary for her child's spirit to leave its body, otherwise Asi would not have added the salt of her tears and the ashes of her despair to the urine stain. The blue Asi so much desired could not have remained on Earth otherwise.

Before Asi awoke from her dream, the spirit admonished her that it was her sacred duty now to protect the Indigo. Only women too old to bear children should handle the Indigo pots.

~ Asi was further told to bring her new knowledge to Foya Kamara and to teach the old women so this blue color would feel at home in the fabrics. Only when this would be achieved, she could conceive a child again.

~ When the people of Foya Kamara awoke the following morning, they saw that the sky no longer lay low on the hills or covered their roofs. After the High God had told the women the secret of the color blue, he pulled the sky higher up so nobody could reach it anymore to break off a piece to eat it. The people now look admiringly at their marvelously dyed fabrics, so that the blue of a nearby sky is not so important anymore. But in their innermost core they will always long for God.

FROM ISTVÁN VIDÁK'S
FAIRY TALE COLLECTION

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Tel. (0041) 619131333
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Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de;
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