

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #66

SPECTRUM

2 6 Out of the Felt and Textile Scene

EVENTS

2 8 Flexible Structures

3 10 A Missed Chance

4 12 Delicate Fairies and Fat Ladies

4 14 Felt Builds Bridges

5 15 Metamorphosis in the Magic Room

EXHIBITIONS

5 18 A Hands-On Sculptural Experience

6 22 Still Waters

7 24 Premiere in the Café

8 26 A Wealth of Felt

ARTISTS' PORTRAITS

8 30 Gotow: Specters from a Mysterious World

9 34 Yvonne le Mare: Seductive Felt Art

9 38 A Year with the Teeswater Sheep

10 40 Jenny Hill: Haute Couture in Nuno Felt

10 42 Jenny Hill: Marbled Scarf with Fringe (Tutorial)

PROJECTS

12 50 Rapunzel in the Lantern Tower

13 52 May I Introduce a Leader: Bernadette

SHEEP & WOOL

13 54 Pomeranian Coarsewool

TUTORIAL

14 56 Tutorial: Sculptural Bowl

FELTING JOURNEY

15 60 Following the Nomad's Trails in Kyrgyzstan

FELTING HISTORY

16 62 India: Tschakla and Namda Spectrum

Dear Readers,

Do you feel that way, too? Even after many years of felting it still remains a most magical moment when fluffy fibers turn into a solid piece of felt solely through warm water, soap and movement. But felting does not only connect loose fibers but also people. When the filzfun spring issue will be published feltmakers from all over Germany, but also from other countries will meet in the Roggenburg monastery near Ulm in order to new learn techniques, exchange creative ideas and to work together. In the summer issue of the filzfun we will duly report on this 25th German-speaking feltmakers' meeting. Also the filzfun magazine itself helps to establish contacts between felt and wool enthusiasts: by reporting on interesting exhibitions and events all over the world, portraits of internationally renowned textile artists, exciting travel accounts and descriptions of unusual art projects – and last but not least our calendar where more than 200 events and congenial offers for workshops, lectures etc. are listed.

You are cordially invited to become part of this living community: Show us and the other readers of the filzfun the objects you made in the Readers' Gallery, tell us about courses or exhibitions you liked very much, or write us about your personal felting experiences. We keep hearing the wish for a correspondence column: You can always write us – preferably by mail – what you like about the filzfun or what you would like to have added t. Maybe you fashioned one of the models of our step-by-step instructions? Then feel free to send us a technically good, expressive photo of your work so the author and

we can share your pleasure and satisfaction.

Via our website and the social media networks you can also keep in touch with the filzfun team: On www.filzfun.de you will find our up-to-date readers' gallery and the latest information from the felting and textile art scene. On Facebook and Instagram, you will be kept current regarding the editorial work and you get a glimpse how the filzfun is made and by whom.

Our spring issue shows that the felting passion literally does connect people from all over the world: We take you along to the Textile Biennial in Madrid (p.8), to the Filzfestwoche in Vienna (p.10) and to the InTouch show California (p.18). We portray the Japanese artists Kenji and Kanae Goto (p.30), Yvonne le Mare from Great Britain (p.34) and Jenny Hill who has American-Canadian roots and a great love for Paris (p.40). Our travel reports take you far away to Kyrgyzstan with Sabine Reichert-Kassube (p.60) and to India. We wish you nice a pleasant and inspiring reading!

Best regards

Your filzfun-Team

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The summer issue will be published on

May 29th 2020.

Editorial deadline: March 16th 2020.

Experiments During a Felt Happening

The participants can find out new things, reflect, try out, exchange their experiences with others, deepen the already familiar and draw on unlimited resources during the Filzhappening (Felt Happening) in the Kurszentrum Ballenberg in Switzerland on Oct. 17-18th. A couple of days before the courses begin the participants will receive a theme that will inspire them »to delve into free feltmaking and to lend an outward shape to their inner images«, the organizer of the happening, Johanna Rösti-Bühler, explains.

Information and Application:
www.ballenbergkurse.ch

Wool Meets Metal

After two successful international exhibits around the themes »Wolle und Holz« (Wool and Wood) in 2018 as well as »Wolle und Papier« (Wool and Paper) in 2019 the Austrian artists' collective wollmodus now calls for the artistic combining of wool and metal this year. Objects for the CraftArtFusion-Project »Wir WOLLEn METALL« can be sent in until June 10th 2020. The objects chosen by a jury will be on show during two exhibits in the fall. All pertaining information are available as downloads on the wollmodus website.

<http://wollmodus.at/wollkunst>

International Lecturer Team at the felt::feutre canada

Famous felt artists from five countries will teach during the felt::feutre canada in Red Deer, Alberta/Canada from August 23rd to 28th 2020: Judit Pócs from Hungary, the Canadian Marjolein Dallinga and Renate Maile-Moskowitz from the US, just to name a few. Next to the high-quality workshops the Filzwoche offers discussions with the artists, an exhibit and a fair.

www.felt-feutre-canada-com

Rust, Stones and Felted Animals

You can choose from six courses during the 5th feltmakers' meeting in the border country (Dreiländereck) which takes place in the Jugend- und Bildungshaus St. Arbogast in Götzis, Vorarlberg/Austria from April 30th to May 3rd 2020 under the title »Fascination of Stones« (see photo), »Experimental Surface Structures« und »Basic Thread Buttons« with Beate Bossert, »Rusting – Colors from the Past« and »Seamless Garments« with Constanze Krög as well as »Critters« with Susanne Wetzel.

Information and Application:
www.wizardwool.at

Jubilee Guests from Italy

A students' group from Salò on Lake Garda was greatly surprised when they visited the State Textile and Industry Museum in Augsburg (tim) during a language course: they were greeted as jubilee guests by the representative of Bavaria's Ministry of Culture and Art, Bernd Sibler and the tim director Dr. Karl Borromäus Murr. With the three dozen Italian youths the museum cracked the record of a million visitors since its opening in 2010. Especially for this occasion the experts wove a »memory cloth« on one of the old looms.

www.timbayern.de

Wool, Wine and Workshops

A wool and arts&crafts market with everything on offer that warms the heart of feltmakers, knitters and spinners and 16 workshops make the wine town Guntersblum in Rheinhessen on June 6-7th 2020 the meeting point of felt enthusiasts from near and afar. On schedule are spinning and knitting, the making of buttons and Japanese thimble rings, the so-called Yubinuki. The wool and arts&crafts market which will take place for the eleventh time in 2020 had its origin in Schwabsburg, then moved to Oppenheim and has now found a new home in Guntersblum.

www.wollfest-guntersblum.de

Felt Education in the Wienerwald

Ecoprint, plant dyeing, felted jewels, bags in special forms and sizes and elastic felt projects as well as the subject »Felting with children – but how and what?« are the subjects of the 4th international felt education. The Austrian group wollmodus invites to the Laab cloister in the Wienerwald from July 10th to 12th 2020. Renowned lecturers are: Franziska Ebner, Annette Quentin-Stoll, Judit Pócs and Dina Elmani-Zanka. The courses are directed towards newcomers as well as experienced feltmakers.

Information and Application: <http://wollmodus.at/wollraum-filzfortbildung/>

Flexible Structures

Success for five German artists at the Textile Biennale in Madrid

A wall made of felted rectangles, a concrete cube out which fluffy felted structures burst, or this intricately folded felt object that seems to hover in the air: These are only three of the many objects that German felt artists presented at the Textile Art Biennial in Madrid. The 8th Biennial of Contemporary Textile Art that took place in Europe for the first time had the motto »Sustainable City«. The juried objects were put on show in the Real Jardín Botánico, at the Centro Arte Complutense as well as in the Museo del Traje. Further exhibits, lectures, excursions and workshops complemented the biennial program.

Folded Object with a Light Effect

A total of five German artists were able to convince the curators with their textile art objects. For their joint project »Un Gran Pliegue – more than an architectural object« Beatriz Schaaf-Gießer and Andrea Noeske-Porade were nominated for big size format in the Museo del Traje. Behind this work is the idea of folding as a symbol of sustainability in the sense of a solid structure and as an indicator for the adaptability regarding outward changes. A fleece surface area of about seven square meters was turned into a three-dimensional architectural object

through a way of folding that the object stays solid despite of its lightness and delicacy. The folds' edges were sewed additionally and fixated with a non-toxic, phosphorescent illuminating agent. The contours thus shone as a kind of architectural sketch into the night sky.

A Wall of Felted Building Blocks

Katrin Knappe presented her object called »Stones«, an irregular wall made of felted rectangles or building blocks. She explains: »The sustainable city will not be built anew; it will manifest itself where we live, love and work today. We have to succeed in tearing down walls, in changing our perspectives and ways of thinking in order to be able to balance with nature our life styles and our communal efforts in restricted spaces. My wall erected from single hollow bodies and felted boards symbolizes such a breaking open. The change, re-and upcycling measures of already existing matter into new spheres is depicted across various surfaces and enclosures made of cotton, paper, bamboo and other plant parts.«

☞ Regarding the smaller formats, three German artists won as well. Andrea Noeske-Porada showed her work called »Estructura piramidal«. »Like a membrane, a thin felted expanse divides the inside and outside and generates spaces of pyramidal architecture«, the artist expounds. »This architecture which is stable in itself and does not require additional support is made possible by means of a special fiber structure. The object is changeable without interfering with the substance. It can be turned around, taken inside out or wound up. It hooks onto its own structure, whereby creating new spatial areas.«

☞ Christine Rummel's object »Estabilidad« ponders the following question: Is stability a feature to desired when it comes to sustainability? Too much of it means rigidity, immovability and stagnancy, and under certain circumstances it hinders or blocks further development.

Third Price for »Occupy«

In the category 'small format' Gabriele Wehrmeyer was awarded third price for her show piece »Occupy«. It points to the disrespectful treatment of natural resources which casts aside their sustainable use.

☞ In her concrete cube, out of which fluffy, bubble-like felted structures thrust their way out she shows nature's vital

force in gaining back space – first tender as a leaf, then in steady growth without human beings noticing.

GABRIELE WEHRMEYER

PAGES 10-11

A Missed Chance

The revival of the Tapisserie Triennale (Tapestry Triennial) in Lodz could have given a stronger boost to the textile arts, thinks Beatrijs Sterk.

The triennial in Lodz is the oldest textile art event in Europe and presumably worldwide. It started 1972 as an Eastern-European window for textile arts for all those who could not visit the biennial in Lausanne. In the first year it was an event for people from Poland only, but soon international artists and audiences came. Until recently, however, there was no call for public tenders.

☞ Now a revival was initiated in honor of the renewed interest in textile art by free artists. Finally, there was a public call for tenders and a curator of the younger generation, Marta Kowalewska, was hired. She emphasizes iconography and new media. Above all, young textile artists and artists from other fields who deal with contemporary problems via textile media are addressed.

Subject »Breaching Borders«

As an important theme the term »Breaching Borders« was chosen. Such structuring made the exhibit well-arranged and set the focus on the value of each single object. The use of new technologies as well as a revival of handicrafts were desired. Still, many important techniques in this area, for example 3-D-print which had shown artistic tendencies with regard to design, were missing. In order to strengthen the integration of free arts, a jury was chosen whose influential members all come from free art forms, like e.g. Anne Coxon, curator at the Tate Modern, Michal Jachula of the Zacheta National Gallery of Art and Mizuki Takahashi of the Centre for Heritage, Arts and Textile/Hongkong.

☞ The result, its high quality notwithstanding, did not exactly meet the expectations of the audience. The older visitors were heard saying: »to have seen

all this before«. Others deplored a certain emptiness of the show, which was not due to a more generous hanging. All in all, the result did seem less rich compared with the triennial 2017. What was the root cause?

☞ First of all, the time span available had been very short. Only a years ago the new conditions had been made public and the ambitious theme »Breaching Borders« did obviously require a certain amount of space for its deeper artistic examination.

☞ A further reason for feeling slightly disappointed was and remains the fact that most famous artists like to be invited rather than to hand in objects themselves. Some artists had sent work that had already been presented in other important shows (amongst others, Kristina Daukintyte Aas and Sarah Perret), something that should have been avoided.

Focus on Young Artists

Yet another reason, it seems to me, was the focus on youth. Budding artists may have fresh ideas, but they don't necessarily make masterpieces. Also, the geographic participation was one-sided. Obviously, the new concept of the Triennial was made public in all relevant Polish institutions, but not in many other countries. Of a total of 57 participants 22 came from Poland, and these were rather young. From other countries came but a few each. It is not possible that only Poland has good, young artists!

☞ These differing results may also have been due to a jury that specializes in »Free Art«. Of course, these people are very well informed about what happens in art. But regarding textile art their knowledge often seems to be limited.

Reassessment of Handicrafts

In one point my opinion differs from that of the curator when it comes to the necessary renewal of textile art. We agree on the use of new technologies and the reassessment of handicrafts. Only in the changed iconography to more important themes I don't see a solution.

☞ What is special in textile art compared with the so-called »Free Art«? I looked at the single objects in the catalogue again and found about 10 objects that belong to the free realm. This applies also to the 3rd price: the work »3eme Age (le retour d'Ulysse)« by Aurélie Jaubert, a Patchwork from fleamarket embroideries, or »Totem« by Judy Hooyemeyer, showing a stack of old woolen blankets. Only when reading the accompanying text, you learn

that the works are about Inuit children who had been taken out of their families, the so-called lost generation. In both cases these are objects which have only fleetingly, arbitrarily to do with textile and do not present an enrichment for textile art.

My conclusion: The distinctiveness of textile art should be honored more! I see the renewed interest in textiles on the part of free arts as a return to touchable, haptic qualities. Art needs textile as an impulse! One of the two first prizes – »A Letter to Helena« by Dobrosława Kowalewska, presumably the oldest contributor of the Triennial – clearly shows that textile art can convince through beauty and intensity and not only through themes relevant to contemporary society.
Beatrijs Sterk

BEATRIJS STERK

published the magazine Textilforum until the end of 2013 and worked as ETN secretary (European Textile Network) until May 2015.

PAGES 12-13

Delicate Fairies and Fat Ladies

The 4th Viennese Filzfestwoche (Felt Festival Week) in the Alte Schieberkammer offered plenty of opportunity for personal exchanges and to try out new felting techniques.

In its fourth year the Viennese Filzfestwoche in October is well-established in the Austrian feltmakers' scene and abroad. For the third time, the Alte Schieberkammer in the 15th Viennese District was the preferred destination of many felt artists and fiber enthusiasts which took up this opportunity to shop, to talk shop enthusiastically and to visit the courses held by renowned teachers. »Through the familiar atmosphere the Filzfestwoche is special indeed. People instantaneously feel at home and lose their shyness«, says Ursula Weber-Hejtmank, the organizer, happily.

Needle-Felted Little Mice

Already the opening with a musically accompanied fashion show and a

greeting by the former state parliament president Marianne Klicka was well-visited. In the course of the following days the many guests could admire or buy textile art objects by international exhibitors, take courses at moderate fees or learn new techniques. Blossoms and fairies could be made with Ursula Weber-Hejtmank, with Beate Bossert small precious things made from pre-felt, wind chimes and twine buttons, with Tanja Kahl her famous Dicken Damen (Fat Ladies) and felted roses with Martina Wahl. Steffi Holzgräwe made small pods and capsules with her participants, and Helga Steegborn, master of depicting true-to-life animals, demonstrated how to needle-felt tiny sleeping mice. The chair of the German Filz-Netzwerks, Susanne Schächter-Heil invited the audience to experiment.

Touching desired!

Apart from all that, interested parties could buy all kinds of accessories and felting literature. Expert advice came with the purchase of wool and plant fibers of the highest quality and dyed silk fabrics. Also, there was Susanne Weber's »Lockenprojekt« (Curl Project) which has grown to over 70 wool samples of different kinds of sheep in the meantime. At the booth of the German Filz-Netzwerk the touching of the felt samples was explicitly encouraged, so the guests could feel different fibers, felt qualities and sturdiness.

SUSANNE WEBER

PAGE 14

Felt Builds Bridges

For three days in October, an international networking meeting took place in the small city of Mouzon in the North of France.

The meeting was generously supported by the city of Mouzon and the IFA.

☞ Board members from different national felt organizations, along with relevant feltmakers from countries without associations, totalling 28 people from 13 countries, were invited to attend this meeting.

☞ The meeting opened on Friday night with a word of welcome from our chairperson, Johanna Rösti, followed by a short introduction by all those attending.

On Saturday, we were officially welcomed to the Felt Museum by Mr Alain Renard, representative of the municipality of Mouzon. After a tour of the museum, with the director Christoph Deutsch-Dumolin, we started the first discussions. A lecture with Marie-Thérèse Chaupin gave a deeper insight into local wools and wool processing in Europe. During the meeting, the following subjects were discussed:

Quality of Feltmaking

The purpose of this discussion was to define good quality felt, with the following conclusions:

- The result of feltmaking should be fit for purpose, which says it all.
- To make feltmakers aware of the choices that need to be made when felting, a basic knowledge of felting is essential. The choice of material, the making of samples and of calculations before you start were topics often mentioned. In Germany, the German Association offers a quality assessment of felt.

The discussion made it quite clear that when you talk about the quality of the felt, you are also talking about education. Education in Feltmaking

☞ In this discussion we wanted to learn about education systems in the different countries. In Germany you can do a 3-year apprenticeship in textile design, specializing in felting.

☞ It was generally agreed that learning the basics of feltmaking is essential. What are the pros and cons of online workshops versus hands-on workshops? Actually, seeing and touching the felt is important, but for people not able to travel, an online course (such as the CiFT offered by the IFA,) is a good alternative.

Exhibitions

An enthusiastic discussion took place on this subject. Many of the represented felting organizations organise exhibitions, in their own country and/or internationally and have extensive experience in this area.

☞ One possibility discussed was of an international exhibition in 2022, with »Building Bridges« as the theme. Like other discussions, this topic will be developed in the coming months.

Networking and synergies between organizations

☞ In this discussion, it was clear that most organizations have the same issues to deal with. Sharing information

and knowledge in person, along with organizing workshops together, would make things easier and help take feltmaking to a higher level. A network not only of feltmaking associations, but also including other textile organizations, would contribute towards keeping felting on the map.

☞ A good way to keep in contact is a Closed Group on Facebook reserved specifically for members of the network, where ideas, events etc. can be shared easily.

☞ Although for some it was quite a journey to reach Mouzon, the network meeting was really worthwhile. All participants agreed on the importance of having met each other in person, making future contact easier. It was mooted that network meetings could potentially be organized every two years. It was very positive to see decisions being made about working together.

☞ As one of the participants said, »Felters make things happen«.

HENNY VAN TUSSENBROEK
Edited Heather Potten

PAGE 15

Metamorphosis in the Magic Room

Eleven women spent a day in the sign of feltmaking and dance in Annaberg-Buchholz.

Exactly 30 days after the Berlin wall fell, eleven women step through a golden veil into the »Magic Room«, a parish hall of the catholic community Heilig Kreuz in Annaberg-Buchholz. They want to prepare themselves by felting and dancing for the theme »metamorphosis«. The event was planned by the feltmaker Doreen Lüpfer and the dance teacher Barbara Moch. I am all excited, since it will be my first time to felt.

☞ When we dance to the music piece »Schweige und höre« (Be silent and listen) by Helge Burggrabe the transformation begins. Music and dance carry us into different, happy worlds.

First Felting Experience

Our felting project was to be an individual, tiny »transformation« jar each. At first Doreen Lüpfer explained how

pre-felt is made. Led only by our intuition, we arranged felt waste, pieces of fabric, wool and silk fibers and covered it with several layers of plucked wool. Then we moistened the whole piece thoroughly with soapy water and started to felt – with no pressure at all, almost strikingly. When everything has connected, we have to roll, roll, roll, then we press the water out and cuddle the piece until the felt is firm. Then the pre-felt is allowed to dry.

☞ After lunch we weigh the wool for our jars, prepare the stencils and put the wool onto them, first radially, then in a circle (of course in dance direction!), at last radially again. I am a beginner; therefore the pace is rather slow and not always easy, but Doreen Lüpfer gives a lot of encouragement.

☞ Patterns for »Transformation Jars«

☞ Then a brief shock: We are supposed to cut our beautifully prepared pre-felts in order cover the jars with them. As soon as we recover, we delve into the creative work, i.e. the making of beautiful patterns. A hole is cut out and the jars take shape.

☞ My physical force is not enough to make a lid, but the jar is beautiful anyway. But my co-felmakers work miracles with their felt jars. With a communal dance this interesting day ends, always in thankful remembrance of the peaceful turning of the tide three decades ago.

MARGITTA HENNIG

PAGES 18-21

A Hands-On Sculptural Experience

The tactile appeal of certain objects and materials can be difficult to resist; we humans come equipped with highly sensitive fingertips that can help us sense and interpret the world around us. When it comes to artworks, audiences generally must rely on their sight alone, as touching art is strictly forbidden. Imagine, then, entering an art museum and being encouraged to touch, hug, rearrange, and even wear alluring, soft, mysterious, lightweight sculptural objects. Would curiosity and novelty drive you to join in? How might you behave if you were alone in the gallery, or if friends or strangers were encountering the sculptures

alongside you? How would you engage with the art, and with other participants?

Holdables made of industrial felt

In my exhibition 'Stephanie Metz: InTouch,' visitors are welcomed into two galleries full of objects designed for hands-on experiences. The first gallery offers the active, playful forms of 'Holdables,' surrealist shapes made of stitched, stuffed industrial felt. The geometric yet organically-inspired grey and tan sculptures appear stone-like and heavy, yet they can be manipulated, stacked, rearranged, and worn on the body. Participants are invited to engage at whatever level they wish, from simply observing to handling and rearranging the sculptures and playing with interpretations of the open-ended shapes.

Human-sized Hanging Pods

In contrast to the active, playful tone of the 'Holdables,' the second gallery offers a more subdued and contemplative interaction. A dozen different human-sized white chrysalis-like 'Hanging Pods' sway gently as audiences move among them. Based loosely on organic specimens like seed pods and cocoons, the surfaces vary from squishy, pillowy forms to firm, linear edges and furrows. Viewers seem compelled to hug certain sculptures and then touch each one to compare and test their qualities. The museum hums with the sounds of guests exclaiming and sharing with each other the immersive experience of touching the art.

☞ I have been creating tantalizing sculptural forms out of needle-felted wool for 17 years, but the InTouch project is the first time I've invited viewers to indulge in touch. The idea for a public presentation of touchable wool and felt sculpture grew out of a desire to create tangible connections in my community. I was feeling a lot of distress over the divisiveness I see in the political and personal spheres here in the U.S. and abroad. I have never been a political artist; my artwork tends towards the personal and the subtle. But dueling worldviews within my extended family were unsettling: they moved increasingly towards 'us versus them' thinking from both sides. I wanted some way to address that issue, but instead of dwelling on the negative I wanted to focus on the things that bring people together because I know that people tend to find more evidence of that which they seek. I asked myself what I could do in my role as an artist and realized

that my particular and unique medium held the key.

Art as a Catalyst

Over the years at exhibition receptions I sometimes invite the viewers hovering over my work to try touching it under my supervision. The ensuing reaction is most often an exclamation of delight and automatic turning to their neighbor to share the experience – whether that neighbor is a friend or a total stranger. The novel experience of getting to touch the art, particularly art made of soft but firm textiles, creates connections with and between people. Handling my sculptures causes people to stop a moment to be present and engaged with the world and people around them. I realized that my artwork is already a catalyst for the kind of interactions and experiences I'd like to emphasize in my life – I just needed to reach more people in a more dramatic fashion.

☞ 'Stephanie Metz: InTouch' is the result: human-sized touchable sculptures made of highly tactile, robust wool and felt that invite audiences to interact. At this writing the exhibition is about to open at the de Saisset Museum on the campus of Santa Clara University in the California Bay Area. Responses to the artwork throughout its development have been enthusiastic, and I'm excited to witness the completion of the artwork – the interaction of visitors. This first showing of InTouch will be up for six months, after which I aim for the exhibition to travel to different venues.

Changes to my Artmaking Practice

The project of creating the works for the exhibition – over 70 new pieces – required significant changes to my artmaking practice.

☞ From the beginning I knew I wanted the sculptures to be larger than any of my previous work, on a scale that would encourage visitors to relate to the art with their entire bodies. In the past my needle-felted sculpture averaged about 12 cubic inches (30 cm), which is fairly large considering that they were made by repetitively stabbing at loose wool with notched felting needles to compress it into felt, a very time- and labor-intensive process. Yet some of the needle-felted sculptures I proposed would measure six times that size. In order to scale up the artwork but preserve the unique sculptural surface qualities only achievable through needle felting I had to develop an alternate approach. My

solution was to create armatures or base forms underneath the finished sculptures by carving spongy foam rubber or using thick sheets of industrial felt ($\frac{3}{8}$ inch or 9.5 mm) to stitch three-dimensional forms.

Patterning to create forms 'in the round' out of flat sheets of industrial felt was another innovation for me. In the past I had always worked with wool as if it were clay, building up masses of fiber and then compressing and shaping it with felting needles. It was a real change to approach the 'skins' of forms rather than the solid mass. I taught myself to create flat patterns to make the three-dimensional shapes I wanted by carving polystyrene models and laying thin felt over it, then cutting to create pieces that would lie flat over curved surfaces. It was suggested to me several times that there are computer programs that can be used to the same effect, but I wanted to learn so that I would truly understand with my head, hands, and eyes. I hand-stitched the pieces together using strong waxed linen thread, then stuffed the stitched shapes with lightweight materials (foam rubber, fiberfill, polystyrene). For the 'Hanging Pod' pieces, I needle felted white wool over and into the industrial felt to create the final surfaces. For the 'Holdables' sculptures I used two different neutral colors of industrial felt, unadorned besides the stitching visible along seams.

Two Years of Work

The scale, scope, and quantity of pieces involved in the InTouch project was going to be a huge leap in production from anything I had done before, and I would have a little over two years to complete the works. I quickly realized I was going to need help, so the final big change in my sculptural practice was to bring in volunteers and studio assistants to aid in physically making the artwork. I particularly anticipated needing help with the 12 'Hanging Pod' sculptures, each showcasing different visible and tactile surfaces. After designing, patterning, and stitching or carving the underlying forms I invited volunteers to participate in 'felting parties' where they would come to my studio for some training in needle felting, then spend a few hours with like-minded people having entertaining conversations while we poked at wool. Over two years I had sixty volunteers helping in my studio; some who came for a few hours and others who became regulars at the felting

parties and recruited friends to help. I also employed a few young artists with particular skills as studio assistants to help with patterning and stitching. I truly valued the insights and suggestions of other artists as we creatively problem-solved to figure out tricky construction of invented shapes. The necessity of helpers inadvertently introduced community and new interpersonal connections into the making stage of the project. On a personal level I benefitted by forming new friendships and learning that social creating is something I value and want to continue.

☞ Now that the sculptures are finished and ready for the public it's time for me to observe and learn. This idea of touchable felt sculpture has been a big experiment: I want to see how people will react and interact with the work and each other. I consider the human element, the tactile exchange, to be what animates and completes the installations. I also want to see how the artwork holds up to six months of touching. Wool and felt are quite physically robust materials; they repel liquids and resist bacteria thanks to the coating of lanolin on each fiber. A disinfectant hand-wash station at the entrance to each gallery is a practical consideration but also suggests a ritual that sets an action or experience apart from the everyday. Inviting the public to touch is after all a radical act that goes against everything we've been taught about museum experiences. I want the InTouch exhibition experience to be the start of an ongoing dialogue about being more present and in touch with the people, activities, and world around us.

STEPHANIE METZ

PAGES 22–23

Still Waters

In their joint installation Sabine Reichert-Kassube and Yvonne Zoberbier highlight a phase in life of great sensibility and passion.

The way to the Textile Art on the Phorms Campus in Berlin Mitte is noisy, I am caught in the hectic crowds of people. Upon entering the fair a firework of colors almost overwhelms me.

☞ But then I step into a quaint, all-white room and I feel as if I were in a quiet

oasis, a protective cocoon which invites me to stay longer: the installation »Stille Wasser« (Still Waters) by the textile artists Sabine Reichert-Kassube und Yvonne Zoberbier.

☞ I see small female bodies and busts with names like »Artemis« or »Perlentaucher« (Pearl Diver) which seem to be made of finest marble. Miniature corsages with interesting surface structures float in the air freely. These small sculptures suggest a certain want for protection and vulnerability, despite their perfection. Each of these objects shows that many hours or weeks have been spent to reach the impressive results.

Needle-Felted Sculptures

A human foot, lifesize, a hand, a head, half woman, half man: Also, here I see that the fascination with human forms is a forceful drive. Yvonne Zoberbier sculpts exclusively with white Merino wool using the needle-felt technique. In felt she found the material which enables her to express intricate emotions in an intuitive way, showing innermost feelings.

☞ A few steps ahead, a female body rests in a hint of a shoe. The piece called »Versunken« (Immersed) is a joint project of the two artists. With the body sheaths and installations on show Sabine Reichert-Kassube moves away from the Applied Arts. The show pieces invite the viewer to immerse herself in the clarity depicted or to reflect on herself.

Shoes for Sculptures

This becomes even more clear when I see the shoes on show, not the ones Sabine Reichert-Kassube usually makes for wear. These shoe sculptures mirror emotions or moods.

»Wachsende« (Growing) is a kid's shoe. Out of the heel come tender leaves, remindful of the first snowbells at the end of winter. »Horned« is a symbiosis from horn and shoe and gets its natural structures through a clear white. Some of the objects make me chuckle, so e.g. »Abgefedert« (Spring-Loaded) or »Notbremse« (Emergency Brake), where a brake pedal serves as a heel and reminds me of situations in my life when such a shoe might have come in really handy. For Sabine Reichert-Kassube it was a challenge and a pleasure at the same time to limit herself to the color white and to put all the more attention to forms and structures. Some of the objects are so transparent, permeable, almost fragile, yet others are very powerful. In

the interplay with light you can see the different facets.

Singeing Traces at the »Puttenaschel«
☞ My view wanders to a dress, white, of course. But no, it is not a wedding dress, but one for a simple woman, despite its beauty. Upon a closer look I see traces of burning, delicate bobbin lace meets woven structures and burnt shades in the fabric: it is the »Puttenaschel«. (A fairy tale word play in the sense of »Ella Cinder«, yet with our German name for Cinderella, Aschenputtel.)

☞ The two artists met at the Wollefest in Leipzig in 2018. During a weekend they spent together in Saxonia, far from the city hub they developed their joint project. This intensive co-operation was carried by a lot of fun and mutual inspiration. The title »Stille Wasser«, which was meant ironically at first, has found its full meaning in this exhibition.

ANEMONE PYTLIK

PAGES 24-25

Premiere in the Café

Meike Raßbach convinces with her first show in Berlin.

The show titled »Gefilztes« (Felted Objects) in the eastern part of Berlin was a twin premiere: Meike Raßbach went public with her art for the first time and the Café Mahlsdorf had never before shown felt art. Already during her training »Fit in Felt« which ended 2019 Meike Raßbach answered the question of her further plans regarding feltmaking with a determined: »I will exhibit!« But until then it was a long way to finally convince herself. In her favorite café many photo or painting exhibitions had already taken place. Once, after long doubtful moments whether her work was ripe for the public eye, she dared to ask whether a feltmaking exhibit was of possible interest. The owner Fanny Leichmann had no idea what to make of felt art. After having seen a couple of pieces she quickly developed an interest and reserved a few weeks in the coming year.

Bridge to Beuys

The opening night was eagerly awaited: How would people like her art? How would the guests react? The first surprise was that all invited people showed up,

so the small café quickly became packed. A good friend introduced the feltmaker, even building mental bridges to Joseph Beuys. The guests watched, asked questions, marveled. Lively discussions began.

☞ With her first exhibition, Meike Raßbach allowed for a deep glance into her manifold work, ranging from objects for everyday use to felt art, from a colorful, painting-like wall hanging with a Berlin motif, nature impressions, e.g. »Birke im Schafspelz (Birch in a Sheep's Fur)«, other small wall objects or tiny jars to small sitting furs, jewelry and bags – the whole café served as an exhibition space. Above all Raßbach's graduation piece from the felting school, »Lebensstrom (Stream of Life)« caught a lot of attention. All objects carry her label »Huhn Grünes«.

Improved Room Climate

»Felt really improves the room climate«, registered the host Fanny Leichmann. »Its sound-insulating effect works well for the café.« Meike Raßbach was pleased when her exhibition was prolonged for several weeks.

☞ This opening was a great success for both the artist and the exhibition space. A first small workshop kindled the demand for courses, and some guests ordered a custom-made felted item. Many guests developed a keen interest in felting and kept asking for information about sheep wool, sheep breeds and wool processing, so a new small feltmakers' community came into existence.

☞ The most important conclusion for Meike Raßbach goes as follows: »It was worthwhile to venture the step into the public.« Preparing her exhibition and to accompany it while it lasted was a big workload, but the result were renewed experience, recognition and constructive criticism that the artist will consider for her future work.

☞ She was highly enthusiastic about the many interpretations the guests ventured: »Everyone sees his or her own world in my works. It is all a question of one's own perspective and personal experience.« A second exhibit followed the one in the Mahlsdorf Café, this time in the Gemeindehus in Berlin Buch directly afterwards: The guests of the café had recommended Meike Raßbach and her felted works. The felted path continues!

GERHILD SCHMIDT

A Wealth of Felt

Barbara Eichhorn, Maria Weber und Barbara Westerath show a cross-section of their work at the Kunstverein Weiden.

Delicate bowls and life-like blossoms, extravagant, warming clothes and breathtaking art objects: In the exhibit of the Kunstverein Weiden the artists Barbara Eichhorn, Maria Weber and Barbara Westerath demonstrated impressively what astonishing potential lies in wool and the archaic handicraft of feltmaking. The title »In Hülle und Fülle« (approx. Great Wealth) was also programmatic. »We wanted to present exactly that – a great wealth of the most diverse show objects and different sheaths like objects and garments«, Barbara Eichhorn explains: »Each of us three thinks in different categories and focuses on something other. The exhibit range clearly shows this to best advantage.«

~ During the opening, musically enhanced by the guitar player Dirk Westerath, laudator Wolfgang Herzer emphasized the meaning of felt and feltmaking in the history of mankind. »We still seem to hear the the stone age mens'praise echoing from their caves: Finally, wearable all-weather garments, a cave to be carried about, so to speak, protection from head to foot. Then we go from caps, hats to the Loden coat, from then on to shoes, bags and pouches to tents, from the early Stone Age reaching to Pompeij.«

Sculptural Character

He introduced the artists and mused: »They introduce us in an astounding way with the design potential of the fiber and surface material felt, which has its origin in the wool of wild sheep. The artists make the sculptural character of this materials useable by a great, sensitive physical effort.«

Bowls like Fine Porcelain

Among Barbara Eichhorn's exhibits he called to special attention the filigree felted bowls. »They look like porcelain, and their delicacy of design show once more the chameleon-like characteristic of the material. Also, the hats and garments, the organic forms of which are remindful of nature's mimicry and of Arik Brauer's phantastic realism, show the adaptation faculties and the nobility of an otherwise

considered dull insulation material.« Barbara Westerath, who won a reputation for her more than true-to-life blossoms, says: »Flowers open my heart. The colors, the geometry of the blossoms and their dynamics fascinate me and propel me to imitate nature.« Next to her voluptuous arrangements in strong colors she also showed a framed »wedding crown« in off-white with tendril-like, hanging-down leaf clusters.

Colliers from Apples and Pears

»Crazy Hats«, unusual headgear, intricate sculptural objects and off-white »Sputniks« which circle below the ceiling are Maria Weber's specialty. Concerning her white female torso with a collier made of apples and pears Herzer says: »Maria Weber's fruit necklace asks: Can bodies become more body-like through a special coloring, as in her case? It is somewhat beautiful, and since this is executed to great effect in a real sculptural shape, a round, crisp natural product, one is inclined to congratulate her in the the style of classic artistic competition saying that, in certain aspects, she was able to surpass nature, to make a better effort even.«

~ The three artists, who have known each other for a long time, not only showed their own work, but invited the spectators to various felting events and workshops during the four weeks' duration of the exhibition. One enthusiastic spectator put it like that: »Clothed in colors, full of details, surprisingly versatile!«

HELENE WEINOLD

Specters from a Mysterious World

With a tremendous amount of imagination Koji and Kanae Goto from Japan make whimsical felted figures that find thousands of enthusiastic followers on Instagram. One day the couple would like to show their objects internationally.

A green creature with roots for legs and leaf-like ears which reminds of Bowtruckles from »Harry Potter« plays an odd instrument, another, blossoms coming out of its shoulders drags a cinc

basin, and two snow wolves with a white, cloudy fur look serenely and irritatingly at you from greenish eyes: The world of Kanae and Koji Goto seems mysterious and strange but nevertheless fascinating.

The Russian Fairy Kikimora

Unter their label Gotow the couple has been designing their grotesque felt figurines to the applause of people from all over the world: Their Instagram account has more than 8600 followers. They profusely and vivaciously comment on the photos of sorceresses like the Russian fairy Kikimora, pale creatures with fuzzy hair like Heita with her ballooning trousers and her huge suitcase, boot-wearing dogs or hybrid creatures from the animal and plant world.

Fascinated by Wool

35-year old Kanae Goto and her 40-year old husband Koji have been infected by the felting virus about 13 years ago when they made one such creature for a niece. »Wool that takes on different forms under our hands is a fascinating thing«, the couple says. But they are not only skilled feltmakers but they also spin, knit, sew and make exclusive crocheting needles. They market their work via Japanese online shops. In their studio in the Kataji valley near the city of Mino in the prefecture Gifu in the middle of nature the two host and teach courses in feltmaking, knitting and spinning.

An Axolotl for a Pet

There, they live and work and feel one with their natural surroundings. Their penchant for the exceptional shows also in the choice of their pets: the bearded dragon Chuck, the toad Daruma and the Axolotl Bunbun.

Not Conventionally Beautiful

Regarding their wet- and needle-felted figurines, for which they use Merino, Suffolk, Gotland and Corriedale wool as well as silk and cotton fibers, the Japanese artists put more emphasis on mysterious effects than on conventional beauty. The inspiration for such works, »brims over from the depth of the heart«, as Koji Goto explains. Delusion is his and his wife's hobby. The world of ghosts for them is »invisible, yet present. We pass between the two worlds.« Some of their art was inspired by the Japanese poet and childrens' book author Kenji Miyazawa. ~ For many years the Gotos have shown their mysterious creatures in galleries all

over Japan. Especially their success in the Social Media encourages them to think in international categories. They plan to publish a book about their objects and to present them in other countries as well.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 34–37

Seductive Felt Art

Yvonne Le Mare loves to process wool and curls of old English sheep breeds in her breathtaking art.

When Yvonne le Mare came to North Yorkshire in 1990, she lived on a farm, where she sometimes herded a flock of Masham sheep. »That was a lot of fun«, she recalls. She feels sorry still, though, that at the time she had not yet discovered feltmaking. »So, I never had the chance to use my own wool.«

» The light-bulb moment had to wait yet another one and a half decade. Only in 2007 she accidentally signed up for a felting workshop. »It turned out to be a revelation.« Until then, the graduated fashion and textile designer had already launched a successful industrial career. She was successfully self-employed and held lectures at various English universities as a guest professor. Over the years she had tried out several textile techniques and got very skilled in them, but nothing ever entranced her more than felting. »As I said, it was a revelation! I finally had found the art form I had always been searching for.«

»Feltmaking is like Magic«

Yvonne Le Mare is still filled with enthusiasm and wonder. »It seems miraculous: You start with a fluffy bunch of fibers, and with the help of moisture, rubbing and heat it turns into a dress or a landscape image. You can paint with fibers or work sculpturally. I really love this versatility!«

» She set out to learn about all possible aspects of the craft and profited from her former professional knowledge. Additional skills and experience came with a one-year educational training and during workshops of the International Feltmakers Association. She stated: »The only problem is that the more you know about fiber art the more there is to discover.«

Now she is a pensioner and has all the time in the world for it. She works at home. »The whole house is full of fabrics, yarn and wool curls and of course my finished objects.«

Direct Shopping at the Breeder's

Since the time with her own Masham flock Yvonne Le Mare has maintained contact with an experienced, successful breeder of Teeswater and Wensleydale sheep, who in turn networks with other colleagues. »I hand him my shopping list with the desired fleeces and he in turn informs me what's currently on the market. I only buy first-class fleeces, because the sheep in question represent show class without exception, some are even champions. Their wool, therefore, is of the highest quality.«

» In many projects, like for example extravagant stoles or a wedding dress for the Teeswater show which opens these days, the felt artist uses the fantastically long curls of Wensleydale and Teeswater sheep. »They have become a crucial element in many of my designs, since they give nuno felt projects a lot of additional structure and movement. Loosely felted in, they luxuriously enhance delicate stoles, cuddly felted furs for newborns to lie on during a photo shooting, carpets or sofa covers.«

Mixed Hues Through Carding

For some of her objects, Yvonne Le Mare uses the fleeces in their natural colors, for others she dyes the wool and other fibers in different colors. »With feltmaking I particularly like that the colors can be either bright or discreet according to the individual project demands«, she explains. »And through carding or fiber layers in different colors you get mixed hues. The lower layers shine through, so you get a rich color depth instead of flat optics.«

» The artist, who lives in Nidderdale, attaches a lot of importance to sustainability and regional purchase. »A sheep gets a new fleece every year. I process local fleeces in order to keep the interest in rare breeds alive, or at least this is my hopeful contribution.«

» When it comes to clothing wool is her first choice anyway, »because wool is so comfortable. It breathes. I can wash all my garments cautiously by hand.«

A Lightweight Stole of 16 g

The wide range of felted fashion from her label is ample proof for the versatility of the technique: From thick jackets and coats with strong structure

to light, flowing models like e.g. her delicate »spiderweb« stole made of 16 g Bluefaced-Leicester wool and Tussah silk. »I like to challenge myself«, says Yvonne Le Mare, »simply to see how finely I can work without the object falling apart.« Next to her wearable art she makes accessories like handbags, interior decoration like carpets, cushions, even vases and other containers, but also decorative wall art.

» There is no shortage in inspirational sources. Her creativity regarding projects and patterns is kindled by traditional ethnic art, historical costumes, by her surroundings, »and especially from natural colors and structures.«

» She offers her work on two Etsy shops online and on textile art fairs. Often interested parties contact her via Facebook and place individual orders. In this way, feltmaking has taken over Yvonne Le Mare's life hook, line and sinker. She reveals: »Feltmaking is way more than a hobby for me – it is a lifestyle!«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 38–39

A Year with the Teeswater Sheep

With an exhibition of photographs and felt art the photographer Melissa Peakman and the textile artist Yvonne Le Mare paid their tribute to this old English sheep breed.

For more than a year, the photographer Melissa Peakman visited meadows, stables, barns and country fairs in the whole of North Yorkshire with her camera in order to take pictures of Teeswater sheep and their breeders. During this time, she made the acquaintance of textile artist Yvonne le Mare who works the characteristic curls of this ancient English sheep race into her fashion and art objects.

Bridal Dress with Noble Curls

Together, the two women planned the show called »Teeswater Year – Farm – Fleece – Fashion« with photos that tell their own unique story of this breed, next to showing ravishing felt fashion. »As an eye-catcher, Yvonne made a seamless nuno-felted bridal dress into which went one and a half kilo of Teeswater curls«,

Melissa Peakman is pleased to tell. ☞ To finance the exhibit, which will take place in the Dales Countryside museum in North Yorkshire in the spring, and the high-quality printing process of her images, the photographer started a crowdfunding action. »During my work I received support from the Teeswater Sheep Breeders' Association as well as from farmers and sheep breeders. Many of them contributed to the printing cost for the exhibit via crowd funding, with the aim to make the Teeswater sheep better known in public«, she says.

Advertising Feltmaking

Yvonne Le Mare counts on the hope that also the old craft feltmaking will become more popular due to the show. Focussing on the wonderful potential of wool the traditional limits between art, design and craft should be broken up. ☞ Melissa Peakman's often coarse-grained images contrast attractively with the masterly hand-made, colorful felt objects made by Yvonne Le Mare that turn quaint fleeces and sheep locks into intricate and stylish fashion.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 40–41

Haute Couture in Nuno Felt

Jenny Hill creates exceptional felt fashion and put her fashion line in the limelight during a shooting in Paris.

A close-fitting blazer in simple off-white color with spectacular hole pattern bordures at the shawl collar, pouches and arms, a short, wide-swinging skirt in wine red with a broad sash together with a mauve, sleeveless checkered top in intricate optics, a black stole with dashing color strokes and a square bolero jacket with inserted lace: These are only a few of the unusual nuno felt models that Jenny Hill made for her collection named »My Weekend in Paris«

A Life in Europe

The American-Canadian artist discovered her passion for feltmaking during a sabbatical from her public relations and marketing job and she has kept at it ever since. (Gabriele Betz introduced the artist

in the filzfun summer issue no. 47 in 2015) In the meantime, Jenny Hill lives with her husband, her twin daughters and her son in the Southwest of Germany and has made a reputation for her spectacular fashion internationally. »To live in Europe had been on my wish list for a long time already«, she says. »It positively influences my work – from all the stimulating factors everywhere around me to the new materials that I can get here. To travel and to get to know new surroundings and new people has always been an important source of inspiration for my art, my fashion line and clothes. I love feltmaking with all my heart and it is a great joy for me to share my art with others.«

☞ In her book »Artisan Felting – Wearable Art« (see page 49) she generously shares the experiences she collected over the years with her readers and even allows for a glimpse over her shoulder during the planning of a new line. For one year she prepared the planning phase of her Paris collection before she actually got started.

Travel Inspiration

»Before I set my mind on a fashion line I think about the inspirations collected during all my travels«, she reveals. »My line 'My Weekend in Paris' is the result of the many weekend trips in one of my favorite cities.« Because she lives only three hours by train away from the French capital, she often jumps at the occasion to enjoy the atmosphere of the different seasons and to marvel at the Parisian fashion trends. »I sketch my ideas in cafés, I collect photographs taken in museums, I perceive the perfume and the rich colors of rose petals – simply every detail – in order to get impressions for the project at hand.«

☞ When Jenny Hill gets a good idea for a certain theme, she starts an inspiration board with model sketches, fabric patterns and a color palette. »The mood of his fashion line was strongly influenced by Audrey Hepburn in Paris during the 1950ies«, Jenny Hill explains. »We even took photographs at the Place du Trocadero where also great fashion photographs with Audrey Hepburn modelling were taken.«

☞ By means of the inspiration board she develops felted test sample for patterns, techniques and material combinations that she wants to use. »Sometimes I think that a certain felting technique would look ravishing in combination with a certain model. Then I felt a test sample and realize that it's never going to work and that I have to change either the design or the material involved.«

A History in Images

The fashion shooting in Paris with the photographer Florian Gurtner crowned her project. »To take photographs at the very place that served as a source of inspiration is almost magical«, Jenny Hill rhapsodizes. A team of eight experts, a stylist, make-up artist and hairdresser worked together to tell the story of the collection and the thoughts behind it in impressive images.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 42–49

Tutorial: Marbled Scarf with Fringe

A beautiful lightweight and structured nuno felt scarf with fringe tassels, made using various neutral shades of wool.

What you will learn:

With this project you will blend fibers and create a marbled texture with defining lines.

- Basic wool layout, layering, and nuno felt techniques
- How to create a marbled design with wool and other blending techniques
- How to calculate shrinkage of layout and fulling
- How to create tassels at the ends of the scarf

Materials

- ☞ 4-8 oz of 19 micron merino wool in various neutral or monotone colors: grey, black, charcoal, and white
- ☞ 92 x 13in 4.5mm silk gauze, undyed or dyed your color of choice
- ☞ Basic felt tools
- ☞ Two x 15 x 12in sheets of plastic for resist layers (about the weight of a garbage bag)
- ☞ Optional: uncarded raw fibers such as mohair and/or silk roving for extra shine and texture

Calculation of the Shrink Factor

Final width and length (without tassels): 10in wide x 70in long
(The final width before trimming the scarf edges was 10in, so I will use the width measurement before trimming in the formula).

Final tassel length (from scarf edge): 9in per side

Shrink Factor:

Horizontal SF (width): 1.3 SF

Vertical SF (length): 1.3 SF

Horizontal Shrink Factor:

$10\text{in} \times (\text{SF}) = 13\text{in}$ $13\text{in}/10\text{in} = 1.3 \text{ SF}$

Vertical Shrink Factor:

$70\text{in} \times (\text{SF}) = 92\text{in}$ $92\text{in}/70\text{in} = 1.3 \text{ SF}$

Step-by-step Tutorial

1 Lay the silk piece flat onto the bubble mat. If there are wrinkles in the silk, sprinkle water over the top and smooth out the piece. Start out laying light blocks of colored wool that slightly overlap over the silk piece.

2 To test the thickness of your roving layer: hold it up to your eye, it should mostly obscure your vision, but you should also be able to see through it.

3 Each piece laid should overlap half of the next piece. To keep the layout smooth, if you are right-handed, lay left to right; conversely, if you are left-handed, lay right to left. If you see any holes or light spots that show the silk piece through your layout, lay dust layers of roving over the top. A dust layer is half to a quarter as thick as the base roving layer. It is important to keep the layout thickness consistent, so dust layers should even out the layers, and not make some patches thicker.

4 In each of your chosen shades, lay blocks of color out in wavy lines, slightly overlapping each color to ensure there are no gaps in the layout. Allow your wool layout to hang off the silk piece edge by about a 1/4in.

5 After the solid blocks of color completely cover the silk, blend the blocks of color together with light, wispy layers of roving. This is the decorative layer, so keep the roving very light. With each color, take a 24in long piece of roving. From top to bottom, split each strand into four or six thinner strands, varying in width. Hold the end tip of a strand and lightly pull the strand along, guiding the wool into a thin wispy layer between each block of color. This will blend the contour lines and soften the edges along the blocks of wool.

6 Pull off wispy layers of wool and create dust layers on top of contrasting colors. For example, spread

wispy white wool over the top of charcoal wool to create a pop effect.

7 Evaluate your design by standing back—even getting on a chair for a bird’s-eye view of your project—to see where colors need to be balanced or added. When you are happy with the blocks of color and blended tones, start to dry-felt wool and silk together. Lightly place your hands for a few seconds over each section of wool, softly yet firmly vibrating your hands in small up and down motions. Each up and down motion should not exceed more than 1/2in of space.

8 The dry-felting will lightly bond the wool and silk together and prepare you for the next fulling stages.

9 Add some defining lines to your scarf design. Peel off thin strands of roving about 1-3ft in length and 1/8in wide. Sprinkle some water on the bubble mat and lightly roll the strands in the water to fully saturate the fibers so they stick together.

10 Start placing the wet wool strands on top of your felt design. Go inbetween blocks of color and create interesting patterns over the top. These wool lines will stay defined while the bottom wool layers will blend together.

11 Put contrasting colored lines over solid blocks of color. At this stage take another elevated view of your project to see where you need more lines, or where you need to adjust them.

Tassels

12 Create tassels for the end of the scarf by peeling off fifty strands of roving, approximately 11in long (twenty-five strands for each side). The width of each strand should be about 1/2in. There can be some variation in length and width. Use the same colors of roving as used in the scarf and use the same amount of each tassel color.

13 Sprinkle water on the mat and rub soap on top of the water. Roll each tassel strand in the soapy water until it firms up a little. Leave 1 1/2in of the tassel dry and unfelted. The dry portion will be used to attach to the scarf. The width and length after you rub the tassel should be the way you want them on the finished scarf. You can vary your tassel thickness if you are not happy with the width and length.

14 After you full each tassel, prepare both ends of the scarf for the tassel attachment. Dry-felt each end of the scarf and tuck the overhanging fiber strands under the silk base. You want a smooth edge on the scarf before you attach the tassels.

15 Place twenty-five tassels on each side of the scarf in alternating colors.

16 Attach only the dry portion to the edge of the scarf. Take each dry end of the strand, and lightly pull the wool to thin out the strand and blend the wool into the scarf. Place a dust layer of wool over top of the tassel strands in the same direction as they were laid out.

Preparation for Felting

17 Lightly disperse water over the top of the project. As there are many layers of wool that you do not want disturbed, it is best to start out watering with a garden pump sprayer on a low pressure setting and gradually build up to more water pressure. Hold the water nozzle at a 90° angle to the layout to prevent moving the wool around. I always wet the surface before I cover it with netting. I find this prevents some of the wool from sticking to the netting and allows the wool fibers to come together faster.

18 Tuck the edges of wool hanging off the sides under the base layer of silk. Seal and smooth out the edges with your fingers. You may want to put soap on your fingers to create a lubricant while smoothing the fibers down.

19 Make sure the fibers are folded right under at the silk edge and that the entire scarf edge is straight and smooth. Sealing the fiber edges is very important for the end product to look clean and refined.

Felting

20 Cover the layout with the open-weave plastic netting.

21 Rub or dispense soap on top of the netting, allowing the soap to seep through to the layout underneath.

22 Start agitating the surface with a hand-felting tool such as a Palm Washboard. Begin by rubbing the edges and the connecting points of the tassels in the direction of the layout.

Work your way into the center of the design, and then switch to circular and perpendicular rubbing motions. After about five or ten minutes of rubbing, lightly remove the netting. Hold the felt project with one hand while you lightly jiggle the netting off with the other hand to prevent uprooting any part of the design that is stuck to the netting. Check the project for any under-agitated areas to focus on in the final rub-down. Place the netting on one more time and rub the surface for a final five minutes, or however long you need to seal down the fibers and connect them to the silk base.

23 Remove the netting. Place a resist layer of plastic at the edge of the scarf where the tassels begin. Flip each tassel over the edge of the plastic, avoiding any overlap with other tassels. The plastic resist layer will prevent the tassels from felting onto the project. (Note: If your bubble mat is long enough, you will not need to do this folding-over step, otherwise fold as necessary.)

24 Take a plastic rolling rod or pin and roll the bubble mat and project around the rod in the direction the project was laid out. Keep the mat tight when rolling it up. Secure the roll with bubble mat ties. Tie in a bow so it can easily be untied at the end of the rolling. Drain out any excess water by tipping the roll over the top of a bucket. Roll the mat up in a dry towel to absorb moisture. Roll the project five hundred times: each roll count is from your palms to your elbows and back to your palms. This takes approximately seven to ten minutes, depending on how long it takes you to roll. You may want to set a timer when you begin, so you don't lose track.

Fulling

25 Unroll the mat. Begin the fulling process by rubbing the silk side of your design against the bubble mat in the direction of the layout, and then perpendicular to the direction of the layout.

26 When you see the silk starting to crinkle up, flip the project and rub the wool side in the same directions on the bubble mat.

27 Ball the scarf up and knead it like bread, one hundred times.

28 Stretch the scarf in vertical and horizontal directions to smooth out the felt texture.

29 Continue rubbing the scarf both vertically and horizontally on the bubble mat until you feel it firm up. Feel and look at the surface for any loose fibers.

30 Rub the tassels against the bubble mat until they are very firm. The project should feel firm and not squishy before you are ready to wash out the soap.

Rinsing

31 Using room temperature water, rinse out all of the soap from the scarf. When you squeeze the project, you should not see any soap suds. Then place the scarf in a spin dryer to extract the water.

The Final Touch

32 Final shaping: stretch the areas needed, including the tassels. I can get several more inches on each side of a project by doing this final stretch.

33 If you want a straighter edge, trim off any curves. After you cut the edge, be sure to seal the fibers up by rubbing the edge in a perpendicular direction against a wet and soapy area on your bubble mat. Be sure to rinse that section out again with water.

34 Iron the project to give a crisp look to the surface and flatten out any waves in the scarf.

35 Place over a mannequin or rod to dry. If you want to shape the scarf so that it curves around the shoulders and neck, you can use the curves of the mannequin.

36 Do your final measurements while the scarf is on the mannequin and any last stretching or shaping.

JENNY HILL

(Excerpt from Jenny Hill's new book »Artisan Felting – Wearable Art«, by courtesy of Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.)

PAGES 50–51

Rapunzel in the Lantern Tower

Béatrice Gründler designed a fairy tale book with felted figurines made by Christine Burr and Kathi Dällenbach.

At court, of course you dine off golden plates in the light of stylish candelabras in front of artfully draped silk curtains. Wine is served in precious decanters while a bard entertains the guests with a lute. This genteel and stately meal was lovingly set in scene by Béatrice Gründler with felted figurines, Reinhold Müller took the photographs. You have to take a real close look to see that the plates are made from pressed coffee pads, the decanter from a lipstick casing, the candelabra from candle holders and the silk drapes from an old neckerchief. On the menu are rose hips, currants and onions; the lute usually serves as a Christmas tree decoration.

Wallpaper from the Sample Book

The noble party is a picture out of the book »Rapunzel« that has just been published in the Baeschlin Publishing house. Many of the depicted objects Béatrice Gründler made from items of everyday use. A lantern combined with a plant stand became Rapunzel's tower, for instance. Thimbles, miniatures from Murano glass, Christmas tree decorations, a flowerpot and jewelry were used for the fairy-tale images. The luxurious wallpaper adorning the castle walls comes out of an exclusive pattern book. In this manner the kindergarten teacher, author and songwriter from Switzerland created a highly atmospheric framework for Rapunzel, the sorceress, the prince on his beautiful white horse and all the other characters of the tale. They were all felted by Christine Burr and Kathi Dällenbach of the felt studio Allerleihrauh with a lot of love for details.

Fotoshooting in the Garden

Reinhold Müller photographed the carefully arranged scenes in the Gründlers' garden and in the nearby Klingen Valley. At the outdoor shootings, flowers, ferns, shrubs and roots served as a natural setting. The initial idea was a query of the Märlistadt Stein on the Rhine for twenty images to the Rapunzel tale for the shop windows in the old town. It inspired Béatrice Gründler to deal at

length with this fairy tale and to find an appropriate yet new image language for it. A CD with the fairy tale and eight songs to the book will be published this spring.

☞ »The Rapunzel tale is pure soulfood that strengthens the resilience«, Béatrice Gründler explains. »It thematizes the female side and shows that there is always a way out, even if the situations are either completely unjust or even hopeless. Rapunzel releases the prince from his blindness and moves into the castle with him, which can be seen as a symbol for a successful ending of an emotional process.«

☞ With her picture book, Béatrice Gründler wants to foster imagination and creativity in children, to guide their aesthetic perception and to encourage them to be self-reliant and to act socially-minded. Fictitious role changes encourage kids in situations where they feel helpless. Kids can identify with heroes and heroines who are capable to act properly, and they can subconsciously adapt to individual concepts of dealing with difficulties in their real lives.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 52–53

May I Introduce a Leader: Bernadette

On the life of a leading animal and the flock of a pastime shepherdess.

Bernadette, a Skudde and Quessant sheep mix has been living in Wuppertal at the edge of the Bergische Land. She is the leader of a small flock and therefore has a lot of responsibility.

☞ Although Bernadette does not lamb anymore, such a flock remains an extended family, where especially the aged animals have important duties. Bernadette still looks after her own offspring and their »children« as well. When in summer the first birth is about to happen, it is her, the granny, who is attentive, offering support to her own »daughters«, the ewes. Comes the time for the lamb kindergarten she takes over watching out for them. She has no patience with the young »helicopter« ewes that lamb for the first time. Indeed, these exist also among sheep, these over-cautious young mothers who won't let

their lambs out of sight and try to prevent them from too much wild frolicking. How good it is that an experienced animal shows the way!

☞ Members of Claudia Hoffmann's flock are Caroline, a big, dark Skudde, who yearns to take over the lead from Bernadette. Shaunie, who lost her lamb during birth last year, Shirley, Bernadette's daughter, the castrated, snow-white rams from last, Gustav, Anton und Bob and the still-shy Tiffy.

Everything Started with the Bitch Ivy

For Hoffmann all started with her Border Collie bitch Ivy. This faithful animal kindled a passion which now determines her master's day-to-day life. Claudia Hoffmann moved out of the apartment she owned to a small farm, and soon the first sheep – Heidschnucke and Coburg Röhnsheep mix – were peacefully grazing on the meadows. With Bernadette, the first small flock was complete, and of the meanwhile three Border Collies two work with the sheep regularly. They train in The Netherlands as often as possible and when they don't herd, they are used for mantrailing.

☞ Only eight animals out of the usual number of ten to twenty animal were still in Claudia Hoffmann's small flock by the summer of 2019. The dry years took their toll and the number of sheep had to be reduced. But none of them was ever brought to the slaughterhouse. Even the little rams found a new home, even when they had to be given away for free, the shepherdess emphasizes.

☞ She has many concerns and worries: the lack of veterinarian care, the high cost, especially when food gets scarce in hot summers and, at long last, the returned fear of the wolf. She is no enemy of the wolf, she points out »but I cannot afford the necessary precautionary measures.«

Haycops and Bananas

She does not want to part from her animals, because they have grown dear to her heart. »Each sheep has its own character traits and Bernadette, alas, has even a couple more«, she tells us. In the meantime, the old, almost toothless sheep granny is fed soaked hay cops and beet pulp twice a day and she calls out loudly for her daily banana.

☞ The photographer Melanie Böltge shares her friend Claudia's enthusiasm for her animals. She often comes to the farm with her camera. The dogs used to be her

favorite models, but with time she could no longer resist the small flock's special charm.

Felted Veggie Furs

Claudia Hoffmann has learnt how to felt in the meantime. During the shearing she takes care to avoid too much stress for the animals and the skilled shearer manages to leave the fleeces in one piece. These will be made into veggie furs later on.

☞ Sheep and dogs offer the best balance for her professional life as a social education teacher working with the mentally disabled, says the pastime shepherdess. »And sometimes both fields can be combined well. The sheep clearly have a therapeutic, quieting effect on my patients.« (ELE)

PAGES 54–55

Pomeranian Coarsewool Sheep

History

A 1000-year-old glove that sank together with a boat construction site in front of the Baltic Sea Island of Rügen served as proof. The fleeces of the mountain sheep, today called Pomeranian Coarsewool (Rauwolliges Pommersches Landschaf) are similar to those of prehistoric times. The contemporary race belongs to the old domesticated animal breeds and originates from the Zaupel Sheep that used to be of Middle European stock. But today also this breed is threatened by extinction.

Description

The Pomeranian Sheep is a beautiful and frugal animal that is very valuable for the preservation of the countryside. They are of middle frame, have exceptional breeding characteristics and give a good amount of milk. In the old days they were used for milk production.

The lambs are born black. Head and legs remain black; the wool turns grey and the tongue should be blue and the gums dark. With adult sheep the color of the fleeces ranges from silvery grey to almost black: Grey, grey-blue, blue-grey and blue are the official denominations; the transitions are smooth. Animals with black or white fleeces are not desired and excluded from breeding, what is wanted is a uniform

grey. An eel back is seen occasionally, and the rams can have a black mane.

~ The grey of the Pomeranian is a combination of white and black fibers. How light or how dark it actually turns out is a question of mixture. Why the Pomeranian were excluded from breeding animals with white wool I find interesting. Their wool was used traditionally by the country people for work clothes. The soft grey wool was much praised.

Wool

The fleece of the Pomeranian Sheep should contain 12 to 25 % hair. The researcher Dr. Gunhild Kurt reported on the combination of the fibers in 1999. She found four different, often to be found types of hair and wool fibers on these sheep (and others as well): Only very few Pomeranian have kemp. A long hair type, similar to Kemp, which also has a lot of marrow and is therefore stiff and scratchy is rather rare, but there are individual animals that carry them and then in great number. One finds more long hairs that hardly have any marrow and are hollow inside, which makes them softer and more flexible. On the whole, these serve as the Pomeranian »raincoat«. The long covering hair grows mostly in the summer months. It is remarkably

Initial Weight	Starting Size	End Size	Shrinking factor
10 g	20 cm × 20 cm	10,5 cm × 11 cm	1,73
3 g	20 cm × 20 cm	7,5 cm × 7,5 cm	2,66

longer than the wool fibers and protects the animals from rain in the fall.

~ In addition, there are woolly long hair and wool fibers. These grow best in winter, and when the shearing takes place in April or May these are almost as long as the long hairs. They make for the main part of the fleece which renders warming, soft wool.

~ In order to make the chaos perfect each fiber has its different structure – not only with marrow, hollow, solid (wool fibers) but they are all differently bent. The many diameters and the different kind of crooked hair (even fur is not wished for!) are responsible for the chaos that produces the air chambers in the wool and of which not only the sheep profit but also the wearer of his or her comfy sweater: It warms so very well! Yarn from Pommern sheep wool is rather bulky yet light.

~ In the breeding process, an average fineness of the wool in the categories C and CD is wished for. This corresponds to

a middle fineness of 32,1 to 40 μ . Often the wool yields are even finer. BC- and B-wool is not rare, a stately ram can have a D-type wool. In the fleece you get fibers from 4 to 60 μ , sometimes to 80 μ . A great part of fine wool (A-category) is found in the fleece.

KARIN HÖLLER
www.rauhwoller-in-rinteln.de

Felting Tests

As already so well described, the wool of the Pomeranian Coarsewool Sheep is a mix. At first glance, such a fleece seems to have an even fiber length, but this impression fools you concerning the variety of the different fibers. At a closer look one can clearly see the different types, and they can even be separated from another when you work carefully with your fingers.

~ For testing I used raw wool in a middle grey and a fiber length of approx. 12 cm. The fleece feels very oily, but it is not sticky. The stacks can be easily separated and therefore laying them out is easy. As usual I make two different felt test patterns. A thin one with 3 g of wool on a surface of 20x20 cm, another with 10 g of wool on 20x20 cm.

~ What is striking here is the enormous shrinking factor. It almost seems as if the wool would never stop shrinking. Nevertheless, the felt remains astonishingly flexible afterwards. Another remarkable thing is that the kemp does not protrude from the felt even during the strong fulling process. A few short hairs remain on the work mat, but these are rather broken or cut short fibers than kemp.

~ Everything turns different when you felt a fur. The technique is easily applied here. The Pomeranian wool stands up readily and acts in co-operation with the felting process. It can be felted quickly on the base material and allows for the time to loosen the single tips of hair. But when the fur is plucked apart kemp and other coarse hairs are clearly visible. The do not felt at all into the fur. Hairs keep getting lose and they stick to the fingers in an unpleasant way. Still the Pomeranian wool turns out unbelievably beautiful furs. They are very dense and solid. Despite its dark basic color, the Pomeranian wool dyes well.

There are always enough light fibers so that you get expressive colors.

Fazit Conclusion

The Pomeranian Coarsewool Sheep have a wonderfully variable wool that can be used for objects of everyday use. It is not at all as coarse as you might deduce from its name. But above all, these sheep are very beautiful in my opinion and I would like to contribute my share to keep this breed in existence.

MARGIT RÖHM

PAGES 56-59

Tutorial: Sculptural Bowl

By means of motifs made from pre-felt, an alembic, wax and shellac Mascha Schreiber succeeds in making intricate effects on her felted bowls. Here she describes step by step how this is done.

Material

For a bowl with an approximate diameter of 20 cm:

- ~ Stencil in circle form, Ø approx. 35 cm (e.g. from sound insulation material)
- ~ 50 g mountain sheep wool in fleece, brown
- ~ 50 g Austral merino wool in fleece, white
- ~ 5 g Karakul wool
- ~ 5 g Small wool balls
- ~ Mohair wool flakes
- ~ 1 g silk fibers
- ~ 50 g knitting yarn for decoration
- ~ Pre-Felt
- ~ Small wool rolls
- ~ Felting equipment (Soap, water, towel, ball sprinkler, slide-resistant mat, gauze, fulling pin / a so-called »felting mouse«)
- ~ Scissors
- ~ Alembic
- ~ Wax
- ~ Small batik jar (Tjanting) or something similar
- ~ Candle
- ~ Brush
- ~ Wax pastes (e.g. from Viva Decor)
- ~ Shellac

Tutorial

Preparation

Draw a sketch of your project and note all materials required, like for example silk, wool or yarn.

Basics

1 As base material put out a layer of light wool from the stencil's center radially in an outward direction, so that the whole surface is covered.

2 Then put a second layer of dark wool around it in a circle but leave an edge of 5 to 7 cm free. This is necessary to be able to form the depth of the bowl later. At last put a layer of dark wool radially from the middle over the whole surface.

Decoration

3 ...Now you can design the surface of your project by putting yarn fibers onto it, for example....

4 ...distribute pre-felt pieces and small woolen balls over it....

5 ...place motifs cut-out from pre-felt, like a bird or flowers...

6 ...and put on wool curls or other fibers onto the surface.

Felting

7 Wet the work piece with a ball sprinkler filled with warm water, the temperature of which should not exceed 40 °C.

8 Cover the decorated and moistened wool layers with gauze and rub over everything with soap.

9 Press the air out of the wool carefully with your hands and start to felt the wool by rubbing it softly. As soon as the decoration pieces are connected firmly to the base remove the gauze, wrap the felt bowl into a towel and roll it in all directions until the felt is firm.

10 The felting of the bowl is finished once you can see tiny balls appearing on the surface.

Cleansing and Cutting

11 Rinse the bowl under clear water until it remains clear as well. Then tumble-dry the bowl and pull it into the desired shape. Cut the edges even with the scissors.

12 A valuable advice: Don't throw away the cut-away edges, you might want to use them for further projects. Shape the desired bowl form with the »felting mouse« or a fulling pin.

Further Design

13 Draw details like flower stalks, feathers or a bird's beak with an alembic. The singeing can create a relief surface.

14 Fill the burnt-in lines with melted wax. I use a small batik jar, i.e. a funnel-shaped tool on a wooden shaft for that step.

15 Color the burnt-in and waxed details with a brush and wax paste in the desired color (e.g. gold, silver, green, blue etc.)

16 For finishing cover the details with shellac.

17 The result is an expressive bowl with sculptural ornaments.

INSTRUCTIONS AND PHOTOS:
MASCHA SCHREIBER

PAGES 60-61

Following the Nomads' Trails in Kyrgyzstan

Part 1: From Bischkek to the Eastern bank of the Issyk Kul

On a journey through Tschingis Aitmatow's home country a group of travellers under the direction of Sabine Reichert-Kassube learned about the feltmaking tradition of the Kyrgyz people.

∞ Between China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan is a country that has been fascinating me for many years: Kyrgyzstan – the source of felt art and the home of Tschingis Aitmatov, whose novel »Djamila« had touched my heart when I was very young. Enthusiastically, I followed the travel reports of feltmaker friends who had travelled to Kyrgyzstan with István Vidák. My special interest lies in the simple, close-to-nature life of these people many of whom still live as nomads.

∞ In 2013 I took the trip to the country of my dreams under the guidance of Annemie Koenen. In 2017 I was there alone in order to teach Kyrgyz women to make felt- or silk clothing from Uzbek silk and Kyrgyz wool. With the help of Annemie Koenen, István Vidák and Asel Sapakova, a Kyrgyz woman

who speaks German and Russian very well and has a lot of contacts in the country's feltmaker scene I organized another trip with a small number of women to Kyrgyzstan in 2019.

∞ Our aim is to go around the Issy Kul, the Earth's second-biggest mountain lake, once.

∞ Asel Sapakova lives with her husband Bolotbek in the capital Bischkek, where one can still see many characteristics and remnants of the former Soviet Union to which the country belonged. Monuments, wide streets, big public places and geometrically arranged flower beds shape the cityscape.

Artful Embroideries

In the art museum our small group gets their first impression what we will see and learn in the forthcoming two weeks. Next to paintings which show the Nomadic life there are impressive art objects in all possible textile techniques to be admired: From the Alakiiz over Tschij Weaving to Shyrdaks. I stay in from of a colorful wall hanging with typical CentralAsia embroideries which was made by Asel's mother Kalipa Asanakunova. Then we stop by the elegant felt shop Tumar and Asel's studio where she makes the small, hand-crafted figurines that are widely sold on European fairs. She learned the craft from her mother and developed it further.

∞ Together with Asel we leave Bischkek on the Silk Road which leads us to the Kazach border to the east. Kerim, our friendly driver, shows us the Burana tower which used to be part of the oldest mosque in Kyrgyztan. Here we look with awe at petroglyphs, animal motifs carved in stone, which are also often copied to ornate various felted carpets.

A Visit in the Shyrdak Workshop

We travel along the northern coast to Tamchy to the most renowned Shyrdak master of Kyrgyzstan, Kendjekan Toktosunova, called Kenge. (István Vidák presented her in detail in the filzfun no. 60.) There a lot has changed during my last visit. Now she has a really modern bathroom, a Shyrdak workshop and another big one for slippers, complete with several machines such as carding equipment. We watch the women felt the slippers until the final fulling, which is done by the local men. Kenge explains the meaning of the symbols on the Shyrdak carpets, draws the motifs' outlines onto the prefelt with a piece of chalk and cuts them out with a sharp knife. She does not only make so-called

»twins« but also »triplets«, which means three-colored work pieces with gradients in the pre-felt. Asel translates Kenge's Kyrgyz language for us. The whole day and quite often during our trip we see women embroider Shyrdaks which are of a cushion-like format.

∞ Tamchy being a place to swim, we duly swim in the lake and enjoy the view of the summits of the Tian-Shan mountains on the South shore. Then we visit Baktagül where we admire a collection of marvelous carpets.

∞ Then we continue to Karakol, a small village on the eastern bank of the Issyk Kul. The landscape is of a breathtaking beauty: high summits, deep gorges, clear lakes and brooks, unspoiled nature as far as the eye can see.

A Kyrgyz Kneipp Cure

In the evening, we get to eat Plov, a rice dish with meat and carrots that Asel cooks over an open fire. Since for two days we only shared a single tiny wash-basin, Kerim drives us to a thermal bath in the mountains. We tremendously enjoy the extremely hot water and cool off in the tingling water of the brook: A Kneipp cure in Kyrgyzstan – just marvelous.

SABINE REICHERT-KASSUBE

PAGES 62–63

Tschakla and Namda

Sitting Mats and Cushions from the Indian peninsula Katsch

The international symposium »Plant Dyeing« in Hyderabad man years ago had kindled the curiosity for India, and so we – Mari Nagy, István Vidák aTrudi Janker, embarked on a trip to the Katsch peninsula in the federal state Gujarat (near the Pakistani border) to discover still-alive remnants of the old felting tradition. Our first destination was the

village Todia, where felting master Gül Mohammad Mansuri invited us into his home.

Sweat Blankets for Horses

»The first felt master came from the Pakistani province Sind from the town of Badin a hundred years ago«, he told us: »In those days there was no border between Pakistan and India. He taught my great-grandfather to make sweat blankets for horses from wool. My great-grandfather, Harun Lada Mansuri, taught the other village men and of course also his son Harun Ibrahim Mansuri, my grandfather. My father Sumar Ibrahim Mansuri learned from him as a child and I in turn from my father. The most important felted item was always such a blanket that Katsch people call Partschi.

∞ Next to the horse blankets sitting mats used to be an important product of the feltmakers, said Gül Mohammad Mansuri: »We had an assortment people could choose from, but we also worked to order. The clients used the mats to sit on during prayer at home, but they also took them to church (Mandir) for the service (Pudja).«

Patterns on the Front

»The cushions come in two different shapes«, Gül Mohammad explained further. »The round one is called Tschakla here, the rectangular one Namda. The word Namda also means felted carpet. The client decides on size and color, but the pattern is ordained by the master. The size is measured in feet. The smallest size with one and a half foot costs approx. 1500 rupees (about 20 Euros) today, the biggest measuring three feet 2500 rupees. Each item is finely patterned on the front, the back part is always monochrome and made of off-white sheep wool. If the felted cushion is treated with care and is aired one a month in the sun, they can last 10 to 15 years.«

A Crafts Park in Budjodi

In the village of Budjodi, eight kilometers from Bhuj, the administration site of the Kachchh district we visited the Hilaksni

Craft Park. Ten small houses stand next to each other there, and in each a crafts master has his workshop: Carpet weaver, batic master, bellmaker, fabric weaver, wood turners, potters, fabric printers and feltmaker.

There we got to know Niamad Ben Pinjara and her husband who showed us how to make sitting cushions or mats. »I learned felting as a child in Todia«, says Niamad Ben Pinjara: »My childless uncle, Fakir Mohammad Adam Mansuri, adopted me and showed me everything. The yarn I dyed myself and then I was allowed to lay out the pattern and the other wool as a cushion base. The physically straining fulling was done by my uncle. My adopted parents gave me the name wool beater, (Pinjara). Families by that name are very poor and usually dependent on state support. So we received – in contrast to the Mansuri families – rice, oil, salt, sugar and peas free of charge.

A Nine-Year-Old Feltmaker

Our guide Sadik brought us a couple of days later to where the felt family Pinjara lived, to Nakatrana. In the yard we saw the dyed wool fluttering merrily on the clothesline, kids ran all around, and beautiful felt objects dried in the wholesome air. The nine-year-old daughter let us watch while she made a felted cushion. We were greatly in awe that such a young girl already was a skilled feltmaker.

∞ When I was still living in the Todia village, the Mansuri families made also other felt objects, for example prayer rugs (Muslo) for the Muslims, natural-white caps (Tupi or Topo) and raincoats for the monsoon season (Gugi)«, Niamad Ben Pinjara reported: »Some of the monasteries ordered felted carpets called Tschapaj. But what people needed most were the sweat blankets for their horses, and every now and then a similar but bigger one which had a hole in the middle: for a camel's hump.«

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK
in co-operation with Trudi Janker, Munich

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