

filzfun – The English Supplement

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Dear Readers,

there's no question about it: We all are fed up with the pandemic, and not so few of us get somewhat depressed. Roz Dace and Judy Balchin, two sisters from Great Britain who co-operate under the name »Woolly Felters« are aware of that, too. With their bewitching needle-felted figurines they keep lifting the spirits of their fan crowd all over the world on Instagram or Facebook. Humor plays a decisive role in both their works – sometimes they even needle proper caricatures of politicians like Boris Johnson, the English Prime Minister (as of page 38).

Because Roz Dace and Judy Balchin like to make others happy, they explain step-by-step how a cuddly teddy bear in the Woolly-Felters' style is made. For all who like to felt a small souvenir or a surprise for the paper cornet of first graders, Dina Elmani-Zanker has designed her funny crayon monsters that are suitable to process leftover wool and curls (as of page 50).

As of page 54, Anke Jacobi-Culemann takes up a highly exciting matter: She dyes felt, wool and silk with plant dyes

and the power of sunlight – with solar dyeing. Maybe you feel like trying out some of the felting or dyeing ideas? If so, e-mail us a well-turned-out photograph of your work to leserbrieve@filzfun.de. The filzfun-team and the artists who share their experiences with the filzfun-community greatly welcome the feedback! Many feltmakers have tried out new things during the past months: Sabine Reichert-Kassube moved from Berlin to Brandenburg's countryside and set up her studio in the former cow barn of the Werenzia farm (Page 22/23), Dagmar Binder (page 16 ff.) and Susanne Schächter-Heil (as of page 19) are teaching online now, and Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser focuses on an interesting art project around the role and design of handkerchiefs (Pages 24/25). In other words: Quite a lot to read and think of. We wish you a lot of fun with our summer issue.

*Best wishes,
your filzfun-Team*

NOTE

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

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de
The autumn issue will be published on August 30th 2021.
Editorial deadline: June 15th 2021.

Change at Hohebuch

The adult educational center Hohebuch in Waldenburg has a new education speaker: Almost for 19 years Beate Hufeisen (left) organized the courses, among them three felting encounters in Hohebuch. Now she has retired and handed over her post to Rahel Vakalopoulos. But Beate Hufeisen will stay true to the Heimvolkshochschule as a felt course instructor.
www.hohebuch.de

Postponed Exhibit

Originally, the exhibit »Licht- und Schattenspiel« (Play of Light and Shade) by Annette Quentin-Stoll and Robert Quentin was scheduled to take place these days in the felto Filzwelt Soltau. Due to the Corona pandemic it has to be postponed for the time being, just as the planned felting workshop with Annette Quentin-Stoll.
www.filzwelt-soltau.de

Sheep Wool and Plastic Materials

After wood, metal and paper, now plastic materials are to be the combination partner for the next CraftArtFusion-project of the Austrian artists' collective wollmodus. Art objects around the theme »Wir WOLLEn KUNSTSTOFF« can be handed in until May 1st 2022. The results will be presented in the Viennese Galerie am Park from October 10th to 21st 2022. The details for tender can be found on the wollmodus website.
www.wollmodus.at/wollkunst

Plant Dyes

The plant dye set assembled by the dye specialists Kremer Pigmente in Aichstetten consists of logwood, madder roots, walnut shells and four more dyeing plant parts as well as soda and potash alum as mordants and citrus acid for a cleaning agent. A brochure that comes with it explains in detail how fibers or fabrics can be dyed in sunny yellow or aubergine. The beginners' set costs approx. 38 €. www.kremer-pigmente.com

Digital Meeting Place for Textile Art

This year, the Textile Art Berlin will become a digital meeting place for all friends of textile art due to the Corona pandemic. From Saturday, June 19th to Monday June 21st interested parts can immerse themselves in the variety of textile art, without mask or entrance fee. 27 exhibits, 17 workshops, several events where one can take part and videos of fashion shows are on schedule. Amongst others, Yvonne Zoberbier (see photo: Upward Climbers) and Sawatou Mouratidou will show a choice of their works online.
www.textile-art-berlin.de

Felting between Craftsmanship and Art

At its fifth felting educational training called »wollraum« (Wool Space), held in the parish Laab im Walde from 8th to July 11th 2021, the Austrian artists' collective wollmodus offer the following classes: Franziska Ebner teaches dyeing with plant dyes and in both Shibori and Ecoprint techniques. Charlotte Sehmisch holds a three-day course called »Metamorphosen«, Vanda Robert shows how effectually felt can be rendered sculptural by sewing. Dina Elmani-Zanka explains the basics of wet-felting during a beginners' course.
www.wollmodus.at/wollraum-filzfortbildung

Participation Around Local Sheep Wool

»An applause for local wool!« is the motto around the wool circus in the lower-Saxonian city of Bassum on Sept. 18th and 19th 2021. The organizer Susanne Schmid plans a variety of events where the working steps from fleece to yarn are shown and the audience will be made wise to the manifold uses of wool. Children and adults alike can experiment with this natural material in workshops. Exhibitors with interesting themes around sheep and wool can still apply at the organizing culture association.
www.veranstaltungen-bassum.de
sus.e.schmid@web.de

Encounter at a Distance

An interesting felting challenge unites the scene in these difficult times.

We live in a time where everything is different than it used to be. Visits or simply seeing some friends have been out of the question for many months now. The Filz-Network cancelled this year's Felting Encounter with a heavy heart. We tried to think of alternatives: What really makes the Encounter so important, and what could we offer as a substitute? Meetings in person were not allowed, we are connected online on different platforms, so what we missed the most was the common felting.

Tasks as a Central Theme

Felting meetings always have an inspiring leitmotif or recurrent theme which we tackle for three or four days. Sometimes, however, we are presented with a real task. In Hohebuch there were the embroidered Afghan images we had to integrate, in Bad Schandau felting at the borders was our subject matter and in Regensburg all participants made a common art object.

☞ These themes are never obligatory, each felting encounter leaves a lot of room for free developments, and nobody must follow them in the first place. But whoever takes up the challenge is forced to leave his or her comfort zone, to step out of one's own felting routine and will find something entirely new in the end. ☞ A couple of years ago for example I attended a felting encounter that brought me to raw wool felting – only because there was no place left for me in the other rooms. I took up the theme rather grudgingly. But this experience had a lasting effect on me and greatly advanced my felting skills.

Inspiration found at one's surroundings

In the pandemic year we had to find a substitute for our encounter, i.e., a task that would enable our members to develop further artistically. After thinking hard, we organizers agreed on the following challenge:

We felt cut-outs from certain surface structures, if possibly identical ones or with the same measurements as the original. And since we cannot get out much, we take a surface or texture

from our daily surroundings such as a bathroom tile, a mosaic floor, a pattern in drapes or a pot mat. If you cannot find a suitable object in your home you may take inspiration from paintings or any other art.

The results – a photo each of the original and the respective implementation – were immediately published on the Filz-Netzwerk's homepage and on Facebook. ☞ The reactions were quite encouraging. Already after a few days the first photographs came in, and in the meantime the collection has turned into a complete online gallery showing numerous arresting contributions.

Napkin and Billboard

Tanja Kahl and Petra Herrmann saw their mosaic-tiled floors with new eyes and transformed them into felt. A paper napkin inspired Elisabeth Grates to make her robin, while Christine Rusch and Margrit Feil-Müller used images by Andreas Felger as a starting point for their felted objects. Irina Kalaschnikow imitated the tessellations by M.C. Escher in an unbelievably refined way. Bärbel Helfrich meticulously felted a Coca-Cola billboard and Ina Jeromin clothed tiny sheep in extravagant semi-precious stone furs made from tiger's eye, malachite und agate.

☞ Helga Steegborn has freed her small mugs in the complementary colors blue and orange from the the surface challenge, lifting it into the third dimension. Also Karin Twelkemeier worked in felt sculpture, rendering the characters in a book much loved by her grandchildren – »Die Schnetts und die Schmoos« by Axel Scheffler . ☞ Irene Reinhardt made a shimmering iris out of wool and expressed her longing for summer, sun and travel to faraway countries with a bewitching blossom and a life-like cholla cactus.

A Stone Wall

Stone walls inspired Kerstin Waizenegger to imitate castle walls for which she made pre-felts out of several kinds of wool with different materials such as woolen curls, cheesecloth, cords, velvet fabrics and coconut fibers.

☞ It was very interesting to see how this challenge as well became independent eventually and developed a life of its own. Within soon, the participants acted freely, surfaces turned into objects and images into sculpture. But they never lost the original sense, and many exciting

surfaces were remade. The felting skills involved were at par with individual creativity.

MARGIT RÖHM

PAGE 11

Felt is Learning How to Walk

Amongst other projects, the Filz Kolleg in Soltau plans an animated film workshop.

Raw wool landscapes, life-like blossoms, sitting furs, stone animals, experiments in sculpting wool, tricks for felting Alpaka wool and designing felted surfaces: All these themes are on schedule this year at the Felt Netzwerk lecture course in Soltau from July 12th to 15th followed by two days of felting encounter on July 16th and 17th. Apart from the felting classes the workshops »Animated films with felted figurines« and »Video editing for instructional videos and animations« where Ina Jeromin shows how felted animals and dolls are brought to life.

☞ The felting encounter in Tecklenburg which was planned for February had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but the organizer Ina Jeromin is hopeful that the lecture course and the felt encounter in the felto Filzwelt Soltau will take place in July.

Seven Lecturers

The courses will be held by Margit Röhm, Heinke Schütt, Doreen Lüpfer, Karin Twelkemeier, Barbara Steffen-Munsberg, Susanne Schächter-Heil and Ina Jeromin. At the Friday and Saturday encounter the participants will have the possibility for free work in the raw wool tent and on the Filzwelt's upper floor. For Friday evening an outdoors party is planned. »Should the event be cancelled for Corona reasons, the fee will be fully reimbursed«, Ina Jeromin assures.

☞ The complete program for the Filz-Kolleg and the encounter can be found on the Filz-Netzwerk's website. There you can download the application form and a list of possible places to stay: <https://filznetzwerk.de>

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 12-13

Lost in Thought, Glancing at the Sky

AtmosFahren (a word play mixing atmosphere and ferries) by Llaura I. Sünner

Originally, Llaura I. Sünner's objects with the title »AtmosFahren« were scheduled to be shown as the first contribution within the frame of a yearlong programme called »Seelenklima (Soul Climate)« at the Hamburger Einstellungsraum e.V. on the Wandsbek Chaussee in February. Due to the Corona regulations the show turned into a shopwindow installation instead, accompanied by poetic thoughts of the artist in weekly e-mails.

A Ferry to Outer Space

»Glancing at the sky, our sheath above, can guide us out of the local atmosphere and place us in a ferry that takes us everywhere in outer space«, Llaura I. Sünner writes on the association's website. »What you can see in cloud formations mirrors your actual inner state or influences it, your own mental state becomes visible.« Earth Cut in Half

☞ The art and literature scholar Dr. Belinda Grace Gardner prizes Llaura I. Sünner's installation as follows: »The »atmos ferries«, through which Llaura I. Sünner navigates move between inner and outer shifting climate zones, between artistic and life-like design, between individual mental states and earth-covering sphere, between vast cloud formations that make the weather and the expansive spaces of thoughts and dreams. In Sünner's half-Earth the floating sky is turned inward, lost in retrospective: Cloud-like schemes become apparent in the blue of the concave semicircle. The second, convex half is lost to the view as an impenetrable outer sheath.

☞ Sünner's double sculpture »Innenwelt« (Inner World) from 2020 is formed from neutral, earth-colored felt. The open world bowl reveals a sky of mounted gauze panels: an off-the-rack cloudy sky. In the realm of the inner world, it is abstracted as a painterly notion, not unlike a mentally internalized copy. A space for the soul appears.

Sea Anemone of the Air

In Innenwelt II (2020) the inverted sky folds itself out like a blossom, distributed

along imaginary longitudes. The globe, lined in pastel blue-white gauze metamorphoses into an air anemone, a fata morgana like the transitory faces, birds and other creatures that we seem to behold for some moments in moving clouds.

~ In a group of images called Wolkenschiff I-IV (Cloud Vessel) from 2019/20 the sky cracks into prismatic fragments. The latter are remindful of cut precious stones and call to mind parts of mosaics or stained glass window. Sünner has incorporated and united sections of her private photographs in triangular shapes of different sizes.

Hidden Connections

Crossed by fine beams, the images of birds, back views or those of fabric hint at the hard-to-grasp matter of thought reality, of soul and mood images that constantly form there. They are just as fluid as the ever-changing shapes of clouds. These ›atmos ferries‹, in which the the artist viewer takes us along keep forever moving. They only stop briefly, so we may become aware – between high-altitude euphoria and fathoming the world, global roundness and spherical curve – of the analogies and hidden lines that inextricably connect sky and earth, nature and art.«

BELINDA GRACE GARDNER AND
HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 14-16

Felting Together Across Continents

An online course on scarves and collars by Dagmar Binder brought together participants from six nations.

Lamella or feathery scarves and 3-D collars were supposed to be made during an online course over three weekends – so the project was announced by Dagmar Binder from Berlin in a mail. I was more than a little skeptical: Would it be at all feasible to learn new felting techniques via Zoom? But because I have been admiring Dagmar Binder's felt objects for a long time I did not hesitate to apply. I found myself in an international course, consisting of a German-speaking group from Germany and Switzerland and an

English-speaking group with participants from Chile, the US, Canada and Australia – connected online over country borders and continents.

Work Sheets with Sketches

It got started with an informal internet meeting via Zoom, where we could test our technical skills or improve them, if necessary. The technical requirements for the course were a tablet, a laptop or a computer with a camera, good internet and the app Zoom which is free of charge. In an info letter we received a list of the felting material we needed. A couple of days before the start we received the first work sheets to get into the matter – they were clear, entertainingly written and illustrated with pleasant small sketches.

Looking Back Over Her Shoulder

On Saturday morning we all met online at Dagmar Binder's studio and were thus able to literally look over her shoulder when she felted. The first weekend was dedicated to the disk or lamella technique for scarves. Next to the written information, our lecturer provided small step-by-step video instructions.

~ During the actual felting the participants were a lot more attentive than in courses with presence – there was no distraction by talking amongst ourselves. Dagmar Binder answered all questions patiently. When language difficulties arose, she showed us what she meant precisely with paper models in front of a camera.

~ The next round came on Sunday with the prepared felt parts from the day before. There was brainstorming and the video sequences for the next steps were discussed. Then we started to felt. A bit exhausted I rejoiced looking at my finished scarf and took part in an online meeting of both groups where we presented our works. We were again encouraged to pose questions. Promptly two days later I received a mail from Dagmar Binder with answers to the questions that had come up in both groups for our mutual benefit.

Time-Consuming Feathers

Two weeks later, at the second weekend, feather scarves were the subject matter. I had already learned how to make a basic felt, so this time the project was far easier to handle. However, the making of the single feathers – leaves in my case – took a long time. When problems occurred,

as it was the case with a group member whose feathers were designed too big and had therefore found their way into the waste-paper basket, Dagmar Binder showed us by means of a paper stencil how one could make two smaller feathers from one too big – sensible and always keen on solving problems.

~ I really liked this second technique, so I felted another feather- or leaves scarf. On the third weekend the 3-D collar was added.

~ My conclusion: Dagmar Binder has prepared this felting course wonderfully structured, she held it and the finishing treatment after with great poise. Of course I regretted not being able to see or touch her scarves ›in real life‹ and mostly not being able to exchange my views with the other feltmakers. These factors notwithstanding, the possibility to further one's felting skills in times like these and to have such a committed felt artists as an instructor and listening to her sharing her skills made up for any shortcomings. My advice: In the fall when Dagmar Binder (www.textillabor.de) will repeat this three-part course – apply!

GABRIELE WALL

PAGES 17-18

Virtual Instead of Vis-A-Vis

Susanne Schächter-Heil has developed online Filzinars© in Corona times.

~ Fulfilled and inspired I drove back home from the Felt Encounter of the Filz-Netzwerk in Swabian Roggenburg on March 1st 2020. As so often before, the intense contact with colleagues and friends had turned out to be both a source of power and a healing balm.

~ Then happened what I found hard to imagine: Suddenly the personal and direct contacts were made difficult and sometimes prohibited. It took me some time to come to terms with the imposed standstill.

~ During almost 40 years as a committed adult education worker, I succeeded to build a bridge between my two realms of life: the counselling of people in their professional lives and my feltmaking passion. I incorporated felting in work-life balance tutorials, or

I emphasized stress reduction within a felting course theme.

Basic Felting Video Courses

But what to do when no face-to-face courses can be held? As first step – with a lot of technical help from my family – I recorded a video course series about felting basics: a wonderful experience of co-operation, structure and positive results. But I soon realized that the direct contacts, the talking, inspiring each other were greatly missing.

~ To work together, to see what the other is doing, to hear new stories and to cast off worries almost on the side, to have questions answered and problems solved immediately – all this is crucial to the process. But how was I to achieve this?

Online Chair Meeting

Three impulses further an idea manifested itself. For one, a lecture course organizer with whom I have been working for many years asked me to establish »something« about team sessions under remote working conditions, which meant that I had to put the technical side into consideration. Secondly, my Filz-Netzwerk colleagues and I decided that chair meetings online were better than none. So, I ventured to use a provider of meetings online. The beginning was rather clumsy but soon the meetings were more effectively structured and started to be fun.

~ The last impulse was given by a live online experience with a breath therapist. After half an hour of stimulating relaxation, learning and fun my courage grew to open such a path for my ideas also. To work online plus being in a live contact – this was too tempting to not at least try my hand in it.

~ Months later and richer in experience concerning technical and conceptual aspects all I can say is that it was worthwhile. To felt together, to profit from other skills, to relax or to briefly get rid of daily routines and chores, to learn new techniques – all this turned out to be possible during my Filzinars®.

Creative Impulses

I chose the name Filzinar for my courses online to distinguish them from webinars or video courses. I also wanted to get back to my roots – regarding my creative work with wool and concerning themes that have to do with a good work-life balance. Many of us have partially lost frame and rhythm to the pandemic and its accompanying ›music‹. Due to

the regular meetings, the possibility of retreating, creative impulses, encouraging results and an adequate working speed the Filzinar hours became a familiar experience, lingering in the mind long after they had ended.

The Gift of Digitalization

I for one feel that it is a great gift of digitalization to maintain contact with my participants without having to travel. To use it takes time, also to get acquainted with it and you need a manageable budget. Also, these live online courses as well as the presence course in a studio both take preparation and a post-processing phase. Even if I look forward to closer contacts again, I know already today that working with and in Filzinars will continue to be a focus of my work. ~ I am quite convinced that the digital world and felting have a lot to give to each other.

SUSANNE SCHÄCHTER-HEIL

PAGE 19

Digital Bunny School

From Egg to Sculpture on Three Filzinar® Evenings

~ What was there first, the hen or the egg? I can settle this famous question: First there was the egg – and then came not the hen, but a rabbit, at least in the Filzinar® »Osterhasenschule« (Easter Bunny School, the title derives from a famous German children's book) organized by Susanne Schächter-Heil. It was part of a series of online courses during which figurines for a seasons' table decoration were made step-by-step. ~ On three Wednesday evenings half a dozen women from all over Germany and Austria met in front of the computer screen to felt the Easter table personnel from fine Merino fleece.

Ears from Wool Loops

The egg shape represented the basic form; two of them turned into the first bunny. Over the second evening another was made, with front legs. It was always exciting to put a wool loop for ears into place. It looked like a huge wig at first, then it was cut open, parted cleanly and felted into rabbit's ears. The master class followed: on the third evening we made a bunny complete with paws and hind legs that we built up over a wired form. In the end they all got felted dungarees to wear.

Tricks and Knack

During the course we all laughed a lot, showing each other what we had made. We offered encouragement when a rabbit looked rather like a hippo. With the help of sketches, Susanne Schächter-Heil explained the work process and demonstrated the technique on her own figuring. She was never at a loss for knack and tricks, e.g. when we were about to wet-felt the dungarees.

~ The finished bunnies plus the felted, colorful Easter eggs soon decorated our Easter tables and were made into many virtual, enthusiastically received greeting cards for friends and family. It really looks like my bunnies must propagate like bunnies are known to do – but this will be a real walk in the park considering the detailed script we received after the class.

HELENE WEINOLD

Finally Arrived at Werenziahof

Sabine Reichert-Kassube lives, works and teaches in Southern Brandenburg now.

A magic dwells in each beginning, as they say ... as a dedicated felting nomad I had been moving my felting studio five times already, four times within Berlin. This fifth move should be my last, for I have finally arrived: at my Werenziahof. My studio and shop in Berlin-Friedrichshagen and the whole city became too cramped and too loud for me. My desire to work quietly in the countryside and to live in harmony with nature had steadily grown. For three beautiful years I travelled through Brandenburg, looking for a place to stay, falling in and out of love again with many houses.

The Desire for Quietness and Nature

Only when I had visualized my ideas thoroughly my search took shape. A place to work, live, design and receive guests and provided with a good transport connection – to the front a social life with neighbors, streets, a church and in the backyard peace, nature and free room for the eye on fields and meadows.

☞ A visit at the studio/farm Werenzhain near the Spree Forest made me look for a place between Berlin and my Saxonian home. The artists living here helped me search and in July I found myself falling for this enchanted rectangular farm.

☞ Here time had come to a standstill because the farm had been abandoned almost twenty years ago. Clinker facades, all a bit run down, no electricity, no water, elder bushes at each corner, the cowshed and stables covered with vine, a ditch at the field's edge: Even after my first visit I knew that it would become an artists' place. My neighbor encouraged me to reconstruct the dilapidated main building.

A Felting Studio in the Cow Barn

In spring construction went under way. At all corners the most important features were repaired, piping and wiring were installed. Due to the diligent and skillful workers the cow shed was turned into a felting studio with a kitchen and a sleeping floor. The dilapidated main house served as a background for the garden. At the occasion of the felting

symposium in August 2020 my studio was celebrated with a Kyrgyz evening. I had come to love working at my felting table looking out at the fields. Sometimes I can watch cranes bowing to each other there in a mating dance.

☞ In the meantime, the roof has been newly tiled, and the former haystack has been restored. In a pen where the sheep were once kept, I had an unusual bath- and shower room installed. Inspired by the masters Gaudi and Hundertwasser the farm's four cardinal points were depicted in new mosaics: an iceberg in the North, the setting sun in the West. Gluing on minute shards of mosaic stones reminded me of making my lace felts, which I start as a basic structure and fill out the free spaces with fabrics or fibers.

Communal Courses

I am happy to report that once and again visitors find their way to my farm. Also during the pandemic, I held small workshops when regulations allowed it, with negatively-tested, small groups. I am not into offering courses online, for the people coming to my farm do not only want to learn felting techniques but they want to experience companionship, they want to have contact, eat, walk and sit around the fireplace together.

☞ There is still a lot of work left on the Werenzia farm, but some lovely places have been made in the garden and in other parts of the premises. I cannot see the church steeple from my new home, but I only have to visit the other artists at the studio farm which is right next to the church. The artists' association in Werenzhain provides a network for local artists and those from Berlin. Maria Sigurna has been organizing feltmaking symposiums each summer for more than eleven years.

☞ I don't miss the big city at all. All who value a quiet, simple life and felting holidays in the country are very much welcome on the Werenziahof.

SABINE REICHERT-KASSUBE
www.spitzenfilz.de

Studio on Hold

Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser cannot yet hold courses in her new studio, but she is making the most of this time of pandemic-

induced peace and quiet.

The planning had been so promising: room for art, student groups, dialogues, exchange and smaller shows were to be offered in the new studio in Winnenden. Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser rented it two years ago and it is fully equipped. But first came a water damage and then Corona. ☞ »The first year literally was rained off«, the artist tells us. »But luckily the water pipe damage had not ruined my works. But still I was left without a working space and everything had to be put in an interim storage. Towards the end of 2019 I finally moved in. I had a lot of room as well for my erasing press, and zillions of plans.

Virtual Exchange

In the beginning of 2020, she taught for a while in South America. Shortly after she had returned the Covid 19 pandemic put everything on halt. Again, holding courses in the new premises was out of the question. She used this forced break in a creative way: »For the whole last year my studio became a perfect retreat. I was able to work undisturbed, without any interruptions, to concentrate fully on what I was doing and I tried out many new things. But I came to realize that the exchange this year would only happen on a virtual basis and not in my new studio.« ☞ Because in this uncertain times she greatly missed exchange and encounter she invited to take part in the international action event »Lasst unsere Hände sprechen« (Let our hands do the talking) where artistic handkerchiefs were made. A choice of items will be shown at an exhibition called »Taschentücher – Trost & Tränen im Quadrat« (Hankies – Comfort and Tears on a Square) in the Herxheim Museum.

Video Award

With her video »Gira y Gira« (Turn and Turn) about working on an art project from sculpturally wound yarns Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser took part in the virtual competition »Pre Biennial WTA Online«, together with the film team Konrad Kobiela and Florian Imberger. They were promptly awarded first prize. For the web page of the Verband bildender Künstler Baden-Württemberg (VBKW) (Artists' Association Baden-Württemberg) she made a portrait video about herself.

☞ A weekend of open studio and three further exhibits in the fall of 2020 turned into »ghost events«, as the artist says regretfully, »because only few, if any,

visitors came to see it and the press had other fish to fry.« To bring her art to the public she conceptualized and curated together with the organizer Ulrike Hartrumpf a video about the exhibit »FilzAspekte (Felt Aspects)« at the premises of the Volkshochschule Neckarsulm.

☞ Together with another South American artist she worked on an online platform for classes and contact. But to Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser, real meetings are what she most looks forward to again: »My new studio has never seen a student so far, but I sincerely hope to be able to entertain in this place someday soon.«

The Lungs- More Up to Date than Ever

The lungs are not only a crucial matter in the pandemic but also play a role in Beatriz Schaaf-Giesser's artwork. Since 2016 she has been working on this subject. In 2017 she made an installation featuring walk-in lungs and submitted it to the International WTA-Biennial in Montevideo, Uruguay. Since then, she had been designing lungs in different formats and of different materials. »Last year then this subject overtook me from the left«, she says. »This actuality and my premonitions left me speechless.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 26-31

Possibilities Galore

Flóra Carlile-Kovács loves the versatility of expressive means in feltmaking and is convinced: Feltmaking keeps us fit!

The relationship of Flóra Carlile-Kovács and felt almost ended before it had really begun, even though she had been involved with many fiber arts from an early age. »That we can transform certain material with only our hands has always kept me fascinated and entertained,« she says. So she taught herself knitting, sewing and weaving, to make bobbin lace and sequin embroidery. She first experienced felting as a teenager in a folk camp. But as there was no time to attend a class she came to rely on self-teaching and decided to try out felting of a pair of slippers once she got home.

A Huge Disappointment

»I made a pattern for slippers, enlarged it, covered the stencil with wool. So far, so good. But then I used way too much soap and water and made all possible mistakes«, she remembers. »It was an epic failure and I did not want to touch wool for over a decade again.«

☞ But around twenty years ago – then working as a teacher and social anthropologist – she was teaching all kinds of crafts for kids and one day she was asked to teach feltmaking. »I sat down with a friend of mine and we learned the basics of the craft figuring it out together«, she tells us. »But the fibers we had access to were rather coarse and came only in a limited array of colors. My passion was not yet kindled.«

Soft Wool and Fine Silk

It only came to life when Flóra Carlile-Kovács discovered soft Merino wool, fine silk fabrics in deep, hand-dyed shades – and the textile artist gave free rein to the felting craft. »I gave up pursuing other crafts because I love the fact that I can use and combine all my previous craft and fiber expertise in felting.«

☞ The endless opportunities have been keeping her fascinated ever since. »We can work on a small or large scale, felt can be two-dimensional or three-dimensional.« By layers of different-colored wool she creates an optical illusion of colors blending into each other. In her objects, she uses a wealth of material such as fabric, yarn or sequins. She especially values the sheer variety of textures that felt may render in an artistic process.

Only Wet-Felting Techniques

Her passion, however, only includes wet-felting in all its variations. Felting with a needle brought her nightmares: »I have tried it, yes. But I felt like I was killing my felt with the needles instead of being its creator.«

☞ In 2005 Flóra Carlile-Kovács became a professional feltmaker. She realized that felting can be a medium that would connect her with nice people and decided to pursue an art career. »The flexibility of an artist's life was also a good fit for being a young mother of two.«

☞ In Seattle, Washington she shares a studio with two other textile artists. There she has two big tables on sawhorses to adjust the height in an L-shaped space.

»Usually I spread out my materials on one large table and work on the other one«, she says. »And I particularly like that my space has a concrete floor and an

industrial sink. I only wish I had a couch there so I could take breaks from being on my feet all day.«

Hats and Scarves

For the first seven years or so the artist, who turned 45 this year, created wearable art from head to toe: Hats, scarves and accessories for everyday use. Later she explored her skills in structural felting by creating complex book resist on hats. She reports further: »In the past few years I also experimented with large wall hangings and very rich and intricate textures. Once I learned how to felt perfect and even edges I started to concentrate on more organic shapes.«

An Eye for Detail

One leads to the other: Since she has been working as an artist, she began to discover more details, patterns and structures in nature. »I noticed that my eyes grew more susceptible to colors and surfaces. Subconsciously I tend to analyse everything I see.« Next to nature, the colors and textures of abandoned industrial environment, Art Nouveau and folk art are her main sources of inspiration.

☞ For many years, the artist used exclusively very fine Merino roving, silk fabrics – mostly Pongé – and some novelty fibers or yarn. Only over the years she came to appreciate coarser wool and started to felt large rugs. In those she loves mixing different breeds of wool, such as Mountain Sheep, Karakul, Mongolian and Gotland sheep as well as Mohair goat hair.

☞ To create marble effects on her vests and wall hangings Flóra Carlile-Kovács uses several layers of silk fabrics, silk threads and wool on top of each other, which also makes for intricate textures. ☞ She dyes the fibers herself with acid dyes. »I usually start a work day in my studio by starting a dyebath«, she says.

Hands Are the Perfect Tools

When felting she relies completely on her hands and body. »I swear that our hands are the best tools. If we keep good posture our body is a most efficient tool. I loved seeing a video on Youtube of a 5th generation Iranian feltmaker, whose rugmaking was a whole-body workout in various positions.« Felting keeps us fit, of that Flóra Carlile-Kovács is sure.

☞ She usually keeps sharing her skills, expertise and experience in classes of all levels, hoping that this can happen again soon. »I like to analyze the process and to

explain in full detail what happens and why«, she describes her way of teaching. She doesn't like to make felt patterns with her students the whole day long: »I prefer to teach project base classes where there are usually several techniques introduced and there will be a functional object ready at the end of each class.«

Felt Tours to Hungary

She shows her own works at art exhibits in Seattle and offers them for sale in local galleries, craft fairs and via her website. In 2018 she had her first solo exhibit. She also considers writing a book, and when the pandemic is finally over, she wants to get back to her FeltTours, as she calls her trips to Hungarian felt artists. (see filzfun no. 68, page 61)

» There is no lack of ideas for further feltmaking projects. She would love to make more wall art on larger scales. »I have a whole notebook filled with sketches that are waiting to be born«, she muses. »I think the quality of life lies in the details, just like the quality of felt shows itself in detail. It is our responsibility to slow down and notice them.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 32-35

Technique and Design

Nothing is left to chance in Ina Birke's felting projects

»I love to go into my studio in the morning«, says Ina Birke, »to design new projects, to lay out fine natural fibers, to combine them with noble silk and to connect it all with water and a little soap – for me, this is magical.« Said studio, »a meeting place, a place for happiness and felt«, is in Lößnitz, one of the oldest cities of the Ore Mountains, directly at the St. Jakob pilgrims' path that connects Germany to Santiago de Compostela.

Relaxed Silence

With the light-strewn working room in her own house the feltmaker made a dream come true in 2014. »To live and to work at one place, with natural materials in an ancient craft.« For her it is a great gift to be able to work with her hands. »It gives me a satisfied, relaxed peace

and serenity, I find peace away from my everyday chores.«

» Her felting story began more than 15 years ago at a small crafts market. »I was impressed by how single fibers turn into a solid piece of fabric«, Ina Birke reminisces. »My curiosity was kindled and my journey into the realm of wool fibers began. Soon I rented a small studio space, became a free-lancer and I started to experiment with wool, water and soap.«

Her First Course with Inge Bauer

But already from the start she wanted to dig deep into the matter. She never forgot her first workshop with Inge Bauer on the Swabian Alb in November 2005: »Inge's big studio, looking out on the snow-covered hills of the Alb, her hospitality and the many offhandedly shared knack and tricks plus the possibility to work together with the others until way into the night – all this was just fascinating,« she remembers fondly.

» She booked further courses, e.g. with Annette Quentin-Stoll, Sabine Reichert-Kassube and Andrea Noeske-Porada, and in 2013 Ina Birke decided to undergo the adult education program »Fit in Filz« at the Oberrot felting school. »I felt like I had finally arrived. My felting skills received the ground base and structure that I needed for my work.«

Her Own Feltmaking Signature

The many things she learned at Oberrot during the three year-long training have been with her ever since. An engineer for environmental technique with diploma by profession, she has been studying test samples for every new project, which she calculates exactly and documents in detail. As she explains: »This is a crucial process for me to find the ideal combination of material, technique and design, but also to achieve high quality standards and to work comprehensively. So over the years I have collected quite a volume of project documentation. More and more I found my own personal way of expression, my own felting style.«

» Today she makes individual single objects or small serial products. Mostly textile home decoration, such as delicate drapes or table runners, but also cloth and scarves on order. »I like clear, quaint forms and a harmony in colors«, the Saxonian states. »Natural surfaces, small endearing details and structures always find me enthusiastic and can be found in many of my objects.« At times, she processes the wool of her own mountain

sheep to make bags or sitting stones.

Influence on Quality

Ina Birke sets great store to make each piece all by herself so she can always maintain her quality standards from beginning to end. She chooses her materials with great care and, if needed, she dyes the wool and fabrics herself. »Nothing is left to chance and each and every step is genuine craftsmanship.«

Workshops in the Studio

During one and a half decades the felt artist has tried out many different kinds of wool and felting techniques and she conducted many experiments with fabrics and other materials. She passes on her expertise in small, cozy workshops in her studio, where often she accompanies the participants in their own project phases. For some years now she has been coaching students of textile design at the university of applied sciences in their art practice semester.

» Ina Birke develops new ideas during her daily walks with her dog, a Hungarian Puli which fits perfectly in her studio, as she says with a wink. »He felts all by himself, I only have to assist with the finishing.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 36-41

Humor with a Pointed Needle

Under their label Woolly Felters the sisters Roz Dace and Judy Balchin, working in partnership, make people happy with their cheerful felted scenes not only in times of the Corona pandemic.

Tiny felted mice collect plastic garbage on Earth Day, they hang up fat balls for chickadees or celebrate the National Scrabble Day in England with a heated game. »They do what we do, too«, says Roz Dace, one half of the Woolly Felters. On Instagram and Facebook she cheered up hundreds of people daily during lockdown with her »Miceolation Stories« and photos of her needle-felted mice. They sewed masks, brought food to ailing neighbors and filled their time with needle-felting, art and baking.

Studio Felty Towers

Roz Dace and her sister Judy Balchin love to invent and tell stories – and quite often the felted mice play a major part in them. They reside in the Felty Towers, a phantasy castle in doll-house format the name of which derives from the the famous British comedy series »Fawly Towers«. Felty Towers is also the name of the sisters' felt studio in Judy Balchin's house in Maidstone, Kent that they have been sharing not only with those mice but until a while ago also with their studio cat Fanny. »Sadly, we lost her recently in the biblical age of 23«, regrets Roz Dace«, but we know she is still with us in our studio and she will always be very much of a part of what we do.«

Book Award

For about seven years these independent British ladies have been felting together and published two successful books around wet-felting (see page 49). »Needle Felting for Beginners« turned into a bestseller soon and it won the »Craft Book of 2021« award. In another book, they let the mice talk about their lives in words and images and how they built Felty Towers.

An Artwork as a Birthday Gift

In 2013, it was a book as well that set off their interest. Roz had commissioned it as the then- chief editor at the creative publishing house Search Press Ltd: »Art in Felt and Stitch« von Moy Mackay betreut, published in 2012. »Fascinated by Moy's techniques and inspired by one of the projects in her book, I made Judy a present for her birthday«, Roz remembers. »It was a wet-felted landscape picture, embellished with embroidery. She loved it, and that gift started an incredible journey which has filled our days with creativity and joy ever since.« Very soon after the sisters started their Woolly Felters partnership.

»We love wool!« is their motto. After their first felting experiments they quickly discovered the joy of needle-felting or dry felting, as it is also known. »For us, the fact that a bunch of fibers could be turned into something amazing with just one needle was astonishing. Imagine our delight when we also discovered that this craft was affordable, there was very little sewing and glueing, the materials were light, portable and they did not take up much space.«

Roz Dace and Judy Balchin combine wet- and needle felting at times, mostly for felted images or in elaboration of their three-dimensional works – but their heart goes out to sculptural needle-

felting.

Norwegian Wool

They mainly use coarse wool of different Norwegian sheep breeds. »These thicker fibers are great for needle-felting whereas finer wools, like Merino, are much better if they are wet-felted«, they reckon. If a bit of sparkle is needed, for example for Christmas items, they card silk or animal hair into the coarser material. For sheep or as hair for their figurines they like to use Wensleydale curls. The wool is cured and kept in shape by halters in which one or several needles can be fixed to speed up the felting process or to make flat forms.

A Felted Politician's Caricature

The finished felted figurines – apart from the mice, they are also ranging from funny characters to plastic caricatures of well-known politicians – are dressed in knitwear or tailored clothes. Wet-felted images receive their interesting texture by silk, wool, stitch or occasional appliqué. Occasionally they add text to their work, just as with their Woolly Felters logo: Here one can plainly see Judy Balchin's expertise as a graphic designer, letter artist and illustrator. Her flourishing handwriting style is usually made with a needle on a wet-felted base.

Clay Models

»We try to plan everything we do, but the wool always takes over«, Roz Dace admits. They normally do a drawing of the chosen subject. Then they make a clay model which identifies with the simple shapes that will be needle-felted as building blocks to create the final form. As they start needle-felting there is always a point at which any careful planning dissolves. A woolly character of its own emerges instead, often only with a slight resemblance to the original drawing. As the two felters put it: »We love this organic process. Going with the flow of working in this way has resulted in some of our most popular characters.« Eventual mistakes can be easily rectified, but they rarely interrupt the way the wool is taking. »There are amputations when things go seriously wrong, but only as a last resort.«

Before the restrictions caused by the pandemic the sisters ran monthly workshops or hosted talk rounds about needle-felting or how small businesses are set up. Since all this was impossible during lockdown, they are now creating downloadable patterns with full step-

by-step photographic instructions which are available via their website and their Etsy shop. They are also doing regular so-called Live Facebook Video Workshops with the Creative Craft Show team. »Some of their felt art has already been shown in public. These days, however, they can only be seen at the online gallery on their website, on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Hope and Joy

Felting, especially needle-felting, is wonderfully therapeutic and calming, the sisters claim. »Our love of the craft has helped us to remain positive during the dark days of the pandemic«, say Roz Dace and Judy Balchin. »It nurtures and inspires us and not only brings us joy and hope but it has helped us to help others who like our books, creative-sets and objects or follow us on social media platforms.« They enjoy the moment without planning all too rigidly ahead: »We have found that surprising things happen without any planning, and they take you in directions you would never have dreamed of. So we plan on short term, but always like to keep some freedom in our business – just in case the unexpected should happen!«

HELENE WEINOLD

Tutorial: Needle-felted Teddy Bear

Materials

You will need

- ✎ Coarse wool: light brown for the basic bear
- ✎ Merino wool tops: black, pale pink
- ✎ Triangular felting needle, gauge 40
- ✎ Star felting needle, gauge 38
- ✎ Foam pad
- ✎ Wooden barbecue stick
- ✎ Two 4 mm black glass eyes with single loops
- ✎ 7cm (2¾ in) needle
- ✎ Embroidery scissors
- ✎ Waxed dental tape
- ✎ Scalpel

The techniques for making needle-felted bears are simple. The aim is to create firm shapes using a felting needle and a bundle of wool fibers. To do this, you hold the needle upright and stab it repeatedly and deeply into the loose fibers so that the barbs on the blade bind them together firmly. It is important to needle all round the shape as you work to keep the surface even. As you needle, the shape will decrease in size by about a third.

Safety Note

Please note, although safety eyes are used for our little bears, the characters we make are not toys and they are unsuitable for babies and small children. Because of the sharp needle used in this craft, children under the age of ten years should be supervised by an adult when needle felting.

Making your bear the right size

The basic bear measures approximately 12cm in height and weighs approximately 20g. We say 'approximately' because the amounts of wool used for each bear body part may vary slightly. Enjoy the fact that no two bears can be the same!

✎ The wool will shrink in size as you needle felt, so to help you assess how much you will need to create each body part we have provided a simple wool measuring method and finished same-size templates. We find that this is the easiest way to work out the quantities needed.

Using the basic bear templates

- 1 Take a handful of wool for the head and form into a ball with loose ends trailing from one side.
- 2 Pull the fibers tight and hold the ball next to the head template (see page 45). It should be slightly bigger than the template. If the ball is a little small just add a layer of wool and reform it into a tight ball. If it is too big remove some wool. Continue in this way following the making instructions opposite and referring to the template whenever you are making a new body part. This will be your technique for sizing all the body parts for the basic bear.

3 Teddy Tip

After needling a shape, check it is the right size against the template. If the shape is too small, add more wool and needle until smooth. If it is too big, trim it with embroidery scissors then cover the trimmed area with fibers and needle them in to create a smooth surface.

Needle-felting the bear's parts

Needle-felting techniques are surprisingly easy. All the body parts are needled separately and then jointed so that the limbs move.

- 4 Using the triangular felting needle, hold the needle firmly and poke it into the fibers. Don't angle it – use a straight downwards motion, or you may find that it will break.
- 5 Roll the wool for the bear's head into a tight ball leaving the fibers loose on one side. Lay the ball on the foam pad and, holding the loose fibers, start to needle, turning the head round as you felt to create an even surface.
- 6 Keep needling until the ball shrinks to fit the template. Finish the ball and place the head to one side.
- 7 Take a small piece of wool for the bear's nose and needle it into a cone shape, leaving loose fibers trailing from the base of the cone. Put to one side.
- 8 Felt two small semi-circles for the ears, leaving the flat edges unfelt. Again, put to one side.

9 Teddy Tip

- When making ears, arms and legs, you may find it easier to measure out two equal amounts of wool for each pair before you start needling.
- Angling the bear's head slightly when securing it to the body can give a more appealing look.
- Ears can be shaped once they are secured. Needle into their centers to angle them inwards.
- While working, you can roll any shape in your hands to help the binding process.
- Check that both arms and both legs are the same length. If they're not, trim the longer one to the right size using embroidery scissors.

10 Roll a tight oval for the body between your fingers and needle it, turning it as you work to achieve an even finish.

11 Complete one rounded end, then work down the oval and needle all the loose fibers to create a smooth shape. Match the size of the finished body with the template.

12 Place the bear's head onto the top of the oval body, spreading the loose fibers over the shoulders. Needle them firmly to secure the head.

13 Lay the base of the nose cone onto the front of the head so that the loose fibers splay out. Needle the loose fibers into the head.

14 Attach an ear to either side of the head by needling the loose fibers into the head.

15 To create the first arm, wrap wool tightly round the end of a barbecue stick to make a sausage shape. Slip the wool off the stick and needle it in the middle to secure the sausage shape. Needle the end of the sausage shape to make it round.

16 Work down the shape, needling it to make it firm. When the arm is the same length as the template, round off the other end. Repeat for the second arm.

17 Create a slightly thicker sausage shape for the leg using the same technique. Press one end of the shape onto your foam pad so that the foot bends slightly and then needle

the inner fold firmly. Repeat for the second leg.

18 Place the arms and legs on the template to make sure they are the same size. If necessary, add wool to the shapes, or trim away excess fibers with embroidery scissors. Work over cut areas with the needle and some fibers to smooth the surfaces.

19 When you have completed the body parts use a star needle to work over each of the shapes. Needle in any stray fibers to give a smooth finish. You will not have to do this if you are going to tuft or layer your bear.

Making faces

Adding the features is like waving a magic wand to bring your little bear to life and introduce you to his or her unique character.

Attaching the eyes

When the first teddy bears were made, shoe buttons were mainly used for their eyes. Nowadays, glass eyes are specially manufactured in a huge range of sizes and colors. For our teddies, we have used either 2mm or 4mm black glass eyes with a single loop. Beads are an inexpensive alternative and are threaded in the same way as the glass eyes. Eyes with wire loops are available from specific online teddy bear product suppliers. They are attached to the bear with waxed dental tape as this is extremely strong and durable. You will need a long needle to attach the eyes.

20 Create the eye sockets by repeatedly stabbing the needle into the head to create two indented circles above the nose.

21 Use the tip of a scalpel to make a small slit in the center of each socket.

22 Thread a 20cm length of dental tape through the loop of the first eye. Put the two tape ends together and thread them onto a long needle.

23 Push the needle through the slit and out through the base of the back of the head. Pull the eye tight into the socket and leave the ends trailing.

24 Repeat steps 22 and 23 for the second eye with a separate length of dental tape. Make sure that the thread emerges from the back of the head adjacent to the first threads.

25 Tie the ends of the tape together in a secure knot.

26 Thread them one at a time through the body. Trim the ends of the tape close to the body.

Adding the nose, mouth and rosy cheeks

27 Using a thin strand of black Merino wool, needle a triangular outline onto your bear's nose.

28 Needle the center of the nose with more wool. Needle another thin length of wool to the base of the nose. Take it a little way down below the nose and then needle it into the face to secure it.

29 Divide this strand in two, pull the two strands apart and needle one to each side of the face to create the mouth. Trim the ends to neaten.

30 If you want your bear to have rosy cheeks, needle a few strands of pink Merino wool into the cheek area to create a gentle rosy glow. Trim off the excess fibers close to the bear's face. Needle any loose fibers on the head with the star needle to neaten.

Jointing the bear

Durable waxed dental tape is used for jointing the bear. You will also need a 7cm needle. It should be long enough to go through one leg, the body and the second leg, leaving enough of the needle protruding so that you can hold it. Lay the bear in front of you with the legs and body in the right positions. You can pin the limbs to the body to get the positioning right before jointing. Remove the pins when you are happy with the look of your bear, before you start the jointing process. The jointing technique is the same for the legs as it is for the arms.

31 Thread the needle with approximately 40cm of dental tape. Push it in at point A, through the body and out the other side.

32 Pass the needle through the top of the bear's right leg. Pull the thread through at point B, leaving approximately 10cm hanging from point A.

33 Pass the needle back through the leg and into the body, as close as possible to where it came out.

34 Push the needle through the body and the bear's left leg at C. Make sure the legs are symmetrical.

35 Pull the thread through, then pass the needle back through the leg adjacent to the thread at point D.

36 Pull the thread tightly so that the bear's limbs are firmly jointed. Tie the ends of tape together in a knot.

37 Thread the ends one by one back into the bear's body and trim away the excess tape.

38 Cover any stitches or holes you've made when jointing or sewing on buttons by needling over them using a tiny piece of matching wool.

JUDY BALCHIN AND ROZ DACE

Tutorial: Crayon Monsters

Crayon monsters are easy to felt and are a lot of fun – e.g. as a surprise for the first day in school, when German children come with their school cornet made of cardboard filled with sweets, crayons, a ruler and the like. Dina-Elmani-Zanka uses them as plugs for ballpoint pens to avoid stained bags.

Material

- ∞ Colored fleece wool (e.g. mountain sheep wool)
- ∞ Raw wool curls or dyed ones
- ∞ A resist from footfall sound insulation or bubble wrap, approx. 3 cm x 9 cm, at the narrow edge rounded in a half-circle
- ∞ White sequins and black Rocaille beads for the eyes
- ∞ A peg or a stick
- ∞ Felting equipment (a non-skid mat, warm soapy water, foil to turn the workpiece around, a towel)

1 Spread the foil onto your working place. Put some fleece wool in a bonnet-like shape over the round part of the resist and wet it.

2 Lay out half of the curls on the front part over the fleece »bonnet« so that they protrude slightly over the resist's edges. Wet the wool and turn the piece around.

3 Arrange the other half of the curls on the other side of the resist to get a voluminous shock of hair.

4 Wet the wool again.

5 Pile on a good amount of fleece wool over the resist and let it protrude over the edge. Even when I think it would be enough, I still put an extra wool layer on top. Don't economize, the monster should look a little plump.

6 Wet the wool again.

7 Fold the foil over the entire project and press the air out of the wool with the foil.

8 Turn the piece over with the help of the foil.

9 Revert the protruding wool fibers around the resist's edges. Put some more wool in the middle and start felting the little monster.

10 As soon as the wool has started to felt, when no more fibers can be picked out of the surface, remove the resist.

11 Pull the monster over one suitable finger and felt it by rubbing and stroking. So it will become nicely rounded and can be formed. Take the monster off your finger at intervals, knead and full it.

12 When it has shrunk so far that it doesn't fit over the finger anymore, pull it over a suitable crayon or stick and finish felting. Then rinse it in clear water and neutralize the last soapy residue in a water bath with a shot of vinegar. Tumble-dry the monster or press it out in a towel and let it dry.

13 As eyes use a white sequin each together with a Rocaille bead and sew them on.
Have a lot of fun felting the little monster, a great gift, toy or writing accessory.

DINA ELMANI-ZANKA

PAGES 52-55

Dyeing with Sun Power

Anke Jacobi-Culemann loves solar dyeing with plants.

Each year anew, solar dyeing is a wonderfully sustainable method to dye fibers in the rhythm of the seasons: with plants that grow just outside and with the help of solar energy.

∞ If you want to dye fibers for feltmaking with plants the usual dyeing methods present the danger that the fibers connect already during the dyeing process. This can be avoided by solar dyeing, a special form of contact dye.

∞ Solar dyeing is highly suitable for kids and always an impressive experience. Not only that they rejoice in collecting the plants required or putting them into

glass containers – they also learn that things take their time when they watch the colors change in the glass over days and weeks.

Material and Accessories

You don't need much to dye with the energy of the sun:

- ∞ A glass or one with a lid, e.g. big pickle jars or big preserving jars with a rubber ring. All glasses must be sealed tightly. For small amounts of fibers, you can use each glass with a screw-on top. But keep in mind that the containers have to be big enough to house fibers, liquid and dyestuff, since some dyes, like madder tend to macerate.
- ∞ Protein fibers: silk, wool, felt pieces, wool curls or silk yarn to embroider on felt, stained or un-stained
- ∞ Natural plants
- ∞ Cold stain AL or potassium alum

Solar Dyeing with Felt Fibers

In my wool studio I work only with plant-dyed fibers, on principle. If I put wool fibers to boil with plant colors, however, I run the risk that they felt before the actual felting starts, or the card sliver cannot be loosened well during felting. Solar dyeing therefore is a good way of keeping plant-dyed wool fibers intact also for a later felting process.

∞ Often, I sun-dye small quantities of felt, curls or fibers as stock items. Already with smallest amounts which I need to accentuate for felting, for example madder form y so-called WildFelt, for the back part of my mountain sheep felt vest or an ancients' urn, solar dyeing has proved itself worthwhile.

Preparation Bating

Before the dyeing I bate the wool with the cold stain AL. There is of course the possibility to put the potassium alum directly into the glassware, but I don't like that. In my dyeing studio there is always a big, lidded bucket containing cold stain. It uses itself up over time, so I don't have to dispose of it separately.

∞ I buy a ready-made cold stain AL mixture and prepare it according to the instructions that come with the product. The advantage is that I can put the material to be dyed in over night any time when I want to dye the next day.

The Colors

The array of dyeing plants and the resulting colors is sheer endless. Here a small choice for inspiration:

- ☞ **Yellow to Orange:** Reseda, Rudbeckia, Dyeing Camomile, St. John's Wort, birch leaves, tagetes blossoms, brown onion peels, Coreopsis
- ☞ **Rose Shades and Red:** wild madder root, amongst others
- ☞ **Purple Blue:** Logwood (not very light-resistant)
- ☞ **Violet Blue or Grey:** Hollyhock
- ☞ **Green:** Blood plum leaves, red onion peels, reed blossoms
- ☞ **Brown:** green walnut shells
When dyeing with green walnut shells you don't need any preparatory mordant because of the shells' high amount of tanning agent. The dye called Juglon is best achieved by the effect of oxygen, that is why I keep the lid slightly open, or I unscrew the container from time to time.

Preparing Dye Material Correctly

On principle you can release all experimental joy when solar dyeing, but some basic things should be kept in mind.

- ☞ If you dye with powder (e.g. madder root) this should have well dissolved first. If you dye with small pieces of logwood it is important that the wood pieces should be put into the solar dye container in a small, permeable dyeing pouch (gauze or mull) lest they later stick to the felt or on single fibers.
- ☞ Also take care that the mushrooms, berries and blossoms don't stay for weeks

in those containers, because they will get mushy over time and are detracted from the fibers with difficulty only. As an alternative use a small mull pouch to collect them in for easy removal.

- ☞ Leaves and blossoms that come off easily from the fabric to be dyed can be layered alternately with the material, i.e. a layer of fibers/felt and then a layer of plants and so on.

The Dyeing Process

To avoid mold the glasses must be filled with liquid exactly to the brim. An exception to this rule is dyeing with madder root pieces: Since they tend to swell if there is room towards the edge. I keep control on the glasses also when they are already exposed to the sun. I re-fill them with water when the liquid level has decreased.

- ☞ The actual dyeing, that is the connection with fibers and dye, is effectuated here by warmth. That means this process can happen also during storage in a warm boiler room in the basement or on top of underfloor heating, also here dyeing results are achieved.
- ☞ Already after a week exposed to the warmth of the sun or heating the colors become clearly visible. As a rule, the fiber material stays in the glasses for three to four weeks. Unpacking the containers is always a surprise. Did the fibers color evenly? Are there interesting patterns or other unintended yet beautiful shades?

- ☞ The finished dye material is freed from plant residue, then put on a clothesline to dry. After drying up it is easy to shake out any remaining residue. I like to let the dyed fibers sit for a while – sometimes up to a week before I rinse them. But of course, they can be rinsed and properly used earlier as well.
- ☞ If the shade is too bright or I don't agree with the hue I dye once more. The originally amount of mordant used is usually enough for several re-dyes.
- ☞ After rinsing the dyed fibers, I put a shot of vinegar in the last rinse to relax the processes involved. Still, colors that are pH-sensitive may darken.
- ☞ At the end an interesting hint for your own inspiration: Once I was in a hurry and left the bucket with dyer's chamomile and fibers outside overnight. The content froze, and even without warmth turned into a marvelous yellow shade. After all, can dyeing be made not only with the sun but also in the cold? Why not try it out for yourself!

ANKE JACOBI-CULEMANN
www.wollenaturfarben.de

Dyeing Instructions		
	Purposeful filling	Surprise dye
Fibers	Protein fibers, wool, silk	Protein fibers, wool silk
Filling up the dyeing containers	Weigh the wool and silk fibers and / or the felt pieces	Pack as many wool fiber, felt pieces or silk in a glass until it is full
Fiber preparation	Soak the dyeing material briefly in water	Soak the dyeing material briefly in water
Mordant before	In cold mordant AL or alum	In cold mordant AL or alum
Mordant in a one-time dye pot	Add 5 % alum in the amount of the dry fiber weight (dissolve the alum in hot water beforehand) or 1 teaspoon full of cold mordant	Add 5 % alum according to the dry fiber weight (dissolve the alum in hot water beforehand) or 1 teaspoon full of cold mordant
Dye quantity	Protein fibers to dye in the relation 1:1 or for brighter colors 1:2	As per your feeling, depending on the container's size or the amount of plants gathered: the more dyeing material the more intensive the color
Dye material choice	If only one color is desired, all plants that possible dye that color	An experimental mix of plants
Place	An undisturbed place where the container can remain in the sunlight for days or several weeks	An undisturbed place where the container can remain in the sunlight for days or several weeks
Documentation	The amount of fibers, dyeing material and liquid used according to your experience and/or previous documentation	Note the amount of fibers, dyeing material and liquid required afterwards

Leine Sheep

History and Origin

The history of the Leine sheep is quite eventful. They originate from the Rhineland country sheep that were cross-bred with different English breeds. The Leine sheep breed got a standard breeding certificate in 1906 and the breed started to distribute along the Lane river between Göttingen and Hannover as well as in the Eichsfeld region.

☞ After WW. II the breed started to deteriorate. Professional agriculture and the decline of wool prices put a lot of pressure on it. Various strong-performing sheep breeds were cross-bred with the Leine sheep to heighten the production of milk and meat. So, the original breed died out with the only exception of a small flock in the Erfurt Zoo in Germany. Only bringing it back from Poland, where the Leine breed had survived due to reparation payments in the shape of 1500 war-surviving Leine sheep the original breed found its way back to Germany. After the crumbling of the Eastern block the breed became totally extinguished in Poland. The last properly bred Polish flock died by fire in its pen in 2020.

☞ Since the breed had come back from Poland, German breeders achieved two different Leine sheep specimen: the Original Leineschaf and the Leine sheep. Both breeds were connected in 2016 and are now labeled as one country sheep breed.

Race Description and Characteristics

The Leine sheep looks exactly as you expect a lamb to look: it is of middle height with a long, hornless head, a head without wool and slim legs without a pelt. Also, the ears, when compared to those of other sheep breeds are only of middle length and lean to the front only slightly. It is remarkable that the rams are markedly taller than the ewes. With 100 to 115 kg they are also a lot of heavier than their female counterparts, which weigh only 55 to 70 kg.

☞ The Leine sheep is a sturdy, well-adapting country sheep breed. Due to

their good travelling traits they are well suitable for landscape conservation.

Wool

The fleece with a wool capacity of 3.5 to 4 kg is pure white and of quaint wool with a marked batching possibility. The fibers wich are up to 12 cm long are of middle fineness and slightly kinky. Typical for such quaint wool fleeces the tips are often slightly glued together and quite dirty. The dirt, however, never gets into the wool far, so that a cutting edge seems already clean.

Felting Characteristics

The two breeding lines have been turned into one, but it is apprehended that the cross-bred races may leave a mark concerning the fine structure of the Leine sheep wool. It will probably take many years before a unified opinion as to its felting quality will be agreed upon.

☞ Some years ago, I came across Leine sheep wool. It would felt only with much hesitation and the felt turned never out to be really firm. The wool I have been testing now is much more suitable to felting, the result is a beautiful, even felt with a cleanly compact structure. Since Texel sheep were among the cross-breds this should not make anyone wonder. Let's put it to test:
☞ Felted furs from that wool turned out greatly. The unsupported staples of even length can be placed nicely one next to the other, they don't felt among themselves but keep well in a finished felt fur. It turns out equally unsupported, beautiful to look at and it feels quite pleasant.

Conclusion

Leine sheep wool is a truly universal wool - no especially spectacular, but fit for every purpose.

MARGIT RÖHM

Local Wool with Personality

In her company mährle-Wolle Dagmar Fresenius processes fleeces from different German regions

When it comes to wine, it is quite clear: A Rhinegau Riesling tastes completely different than a Silvaner from Franconia. The kind of grape and the local vineyards are decisive for the taste. There are certain similarities to wool, as Dagmar Fresenius proves with her young enterprise mährle-Wolle (www.maehrl-wolle.de) that uses fleeces from flocks of the island Föhr, from the Rhön, the Swabian Alb, from the levees at the national reserve Wadden Sea or from East Brandenburg. She processes all these kinds - separately, each under the brand denominations island sheep, Rhön sheep, Alb sheep, levee sheep and capital sheep, each with a description such as »beautiful - coarse« or »beautiful - fine«.

Target: Fair Production

»Sustainable wool that can be had without long transport stretches, raw material imports and exploitation amounted only to wishful thinking for a long time«, Dagmar Fresenius says about her concept »happy wool«. It was important to her to buy wool from German sheep that are traditionally kept. The shepherds often are forced throw away the precious fleeces for lack of demand. She also sets great store by the fact that the wool is carded, dyed and spun according to fair, environmental-friendly and sustainable points of view in Germany or the neighboring countries.

Shepherds' Tales

Whoever is interested in the project can get to know the shepherds and their flocks and learn more about their lives and their surrounding on the mährle website. Shepherd John Petersen tells about the levee conservation by his grazing sheep, which are veritable »seed taxis«, because they can collect up to 25,000 seeds of all kinds in their wool and distribute them in their wanderings. Dieter Hertler, underway on the Swabian Alb with a flock of 600 sheep points out the importance of sheepkeeping for the shaping of cultivated landscapes. Knut Kucznik explains why some water buffaloes run together with his black-headed meat sheep »as an experimental

Beginning Weight	Starting Size	End Size	Shrinking Factor
3 g	20 cm × 20 cm	10 cm × 10 cm	2
10 g	20 cm × 20 cm	13 cm × 12.5 cm	1.6

and innovative factor« in Brandenburg's nature reserves.

☞ Yet there is a fly in the ointment for feltmakers: The wool is completely spun into yarn and is not on offer as fleece or roving. But many a feltmaker also knits or weaves – and finally yarn threads can be effectually felted in.

HELENE WEINOLD

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Mother and Daughter Felt

The Mongolian felting tradition is highly efficient

For a long time, we have been making felted blankets and we like very much teaching the Central-Asian way of working – a very practical and efficient system indeed. On the half-finished mother felt, separated from a thin layer of grass or the like, wool for the daughter's felt is laid. After finishing the felting process the mother felt is ready, but the now only half-finished daughter felt takes on the mother's role. Like in a family, one generation supersedes the next.

☞ As soon as the pattern has been laid out with the right amount of wool an important moment arises: the wetting of the different layers. In Mongolia, the female and male masters sprinkle them with white mare's milk with the help of a wooden shovel over the felt piece in a symbolic ritual. It is blessed with good wishes. We have learned the accompanying verses by heart and have passed them on to many others in the course of our lives.

*You who are of lambswool
laid out meticulously with ten fingers
carefully sprinkled with a
thousand drops of water
fulled by strong horses in the meadows
you dear treasure of our home-country
please don't become like a sieve
with many a hole in it
be as strong as silk,
be as white as snow.
(Mongolian folk poetry)*

Let's follow the process from the beginning based on findings by the

Hungarian orient researcher András Róna-Tas from the 1950ies. Further we have added a choice of paintings by the Mongolian artist Mardzan Sarav from the early 20th century for illustration.

☞ The feltmaking begins at the end of August with the sheep shearing. As per our personal experience, the Mongolian wool is dryer and more strongly pulled apart than European wool, especially when compared to Merino. The autumn wool is cleaner, shorter and better than the one shorn in spring. Only the lambs' wool is of often of higher quality.

☞ The dirty parts, e.g., the belly wool is taken aside from the beginning. The shorn wool is distributed on cowhide. The women get down and begin to beat the wool rhythmically with willow branches.

Beating the Wool

By beating it, the wool becomes loose and fluffier. This is no easy movement, for after every beating the stick must be pulled back to the woman using it so that the wool does not twist. A blanket requires several kilos of wool so that the beating may take hours. The wool thus treated is wound into strands and put aside.

☞ Most Turk people distribute the so-prepared wool on a mat made of grass, reed or reed maces. The Mongolians use a moistened, half-finished felt blanket to begin the work: the so-called mother felt. As far as we know this is a Mongolian specialty.

☞ The women love best to work in September because the clean, short-fibered wool from the fall shearing is more suitable to feltmaking. Yet exactly then there are a lot of storms, so the women seek shelter behind upright mats and tend to start working very early in the morning.

Diligence is a Must

As soon as the mother felt is completely covered with a wool layer it is cautiously sprinkled with cold water. A second layer follows laid out in the same method. The girls and women kneel or sit on their legs. In their left hand they hold a loosened wool strand that is pressed firmly onto the mother felt with their thumbs. With the right hand they pluck small curls out which they put next to each other very carefully and evenly. The evenness and quality of the finished felt depend on the meticulous and clean laying out. Now as much as 40 to 50 liters of water are poured onto the woolen layers.

A Sheath Made of Cowhide

The middle layer usually consists of wool of a lesser quality. The third layer again is of better quality. These three layers make for the thickness of the felt. After five to six hours of work the whole workpiece is rolled up together with the underlying mother felt. In order not to soil the bundle it is wrapped up in moist cowhide and tightly strung with a horsehair rope. The ropes are led from the middle to the edges and back before they are finally fastened.

Tied into a Roll

When this roll is put upright, once again water (like out of a mouth) will be poured onto the upper edge. Then the roll is put onto the floor and tied with a rope that is 30 to 40 meters long, so that several people together can roll it to the left and again to the right.

☞ At one variant the mother and daughter felt are wound around a rod together with the cowhide cover which remains in the roll as a core, the ends of which protrude to the right and the left. So it can be hung onto a horse which tears it along for kilometers, thus fulling the felt inside.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

PAGES 62–63

A Farewell to Bruno Bujack – Obituary

Two feltmakers recall the felting scene technician who passed away on Feb. 2nd shortly after his 84th birthday

Beate Bossert: Grief and gratitude

Bruno Bujack was there from the beginning, when a felters' scene was slowly establishing itself in Germany. Many of us knew him as the scene's »technician«. He researched the most diverse matters meticulously and was always ready to share the results. If he wasn't quite sure about something, he always used to say: »Now just you wait, at the next feltmakers' meeting I will have found out ...«

☞ Already as of the first filzfun issue (then running under the title verfilzt Und zugeNäht) he sent me articles about the different felting capacities of various sheep breeds. He wrote several books, and I found myself perusing them time and again when I was preparing a course or a project. His lectures were not only informative but truly entertaining as well. Often, I could feel the Düsseldorf carnival enthusiast he always was, and sometimes he sounded like he were on a stage thereof, lecturing in his doctor's hat with a lot of humour and zest.

A Sensitive Kind

But he not only surprised us with scientific research. Next to his technical affinity he had a very sensitive soul. At one encounter he told us fairytales. This was simply the best! His choice was a tale told at the open fires of a caravansary, so he greeted us in an oriental way, with candles and tea lights on his table, wearing a turban. We were caught hook and sinkers by his rendition. You could have heard a pin drop, so quiet it was in the room.

☞ What kept us two together was also a common interest in establishing a feltmakers' network, which came up already at our very first meeting. He was one of the founding members of the Filz-Netzwerk and he helped me to formulate the first statutory framework for our terms of reference.

Committed to a Felt Education

☞ Felt training and education was of great importance to him. Long before any felting school existed or there were apprenticeships to be had for textile designers, he referred to his courses as

basic training, which indeed they were. For many feltmakers he was the one who taught them to turn wool into felt. He was one of the first instructors for textile designers in craftsmanship with a focus on felt and, according to Lea Rombold, he was a very caring instructor. With all his considerable enthusiasm he was sharing his great knowledge once more.

☞ The sadness over his death is bridged by my deep gratitude that our paths had crossed many times over 25 years and that I could take part in his vast knowledge, experience and humor. This all makes for many truly lasting memories.

☞ Thanks for everything, dear Bruno!

BEATE BOSSERT

Lea Rombold: Counsel Walk-Opa

My trainer and »Walk-Opa« (Fulling Grandpa) has passed away – I still cannot grasp it. Only two weeks ago I asked for advice concerning mixed sheep breeds and their wool! He taught me so much and we had great times together. I am so grateful to him. I first met him at a felting encounter in Grainau in 2012, after I had called half of Germany on the telephone to find an instructor who would take me under his wings as a handicraft textile designer.

A Bridge Back to Life

After the death of his wife Gisela in the fall of 2011 Bruno experienced a difficult time and he found it hard to look into

the future with motivation. So, we helped each other, I guess: for him to get the meaning of his life back, and for me to be able to follow my plans. Within a couple of weeks, he took it into his hands to make me his apprentice, the first handicraft felt designer who still worked full time at a school in Plauen.

Drama and Worldly Wisdom

We complemented each other in many ways, and I look back fondly on our mutual projects and outings. This generous Rhinelander was indeed open-minded towards everything and everyone. With a lot of humor, a hint of drama and considerable worldly wisdom – not limited to his felting or researcher's expertise – he taught me all he knew until the end. He even went to school with me to share his know-how with my students. He was not only a proud father, grandfather, Walk-Opa or instructor – no, at the age of 84 he even became a double »Great-Fulling-Grandpa«.

☞ Our relationship resembled felt – connecting through different planes such as him being my trainer, family member and friend. I will sorely miss him, and every tiny piece of felt will remind me that he will always be in my heart.

LEA ROMBOLD

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