

# filzfun – The English Supplement

## Issue #73, November 2021

### SPECTRUM

- 2 6 Out of the Felt and Textile Scene

### EXHIBITIONS

- 2 8 Métamorphose  
4 12 A Feast of Fibers and Colors

### EVENTS

- 4 16 Bödön and Tumar: Online Felters Meeting  
5 18 Wool in the Ring

### WORKSHOPS

- 6 20 Stone Animals, Mandalas and Animated Movies  
6 23 A Fascinating Initiation  
7 26 Zentangles on Felt  
7 28 Feltmaking Against the Corona Blues

### ARTISTS' PORTRAITS

- 8 32 Mandy Nash: Slashing as a Trademark  
9 36 Tutorial: Scarf Corona Virus  
10 40 Margit Röhm: Felt with Eyes  
11 45 Jill Harrison: Wool Paintings

### PROJECTS

- 11 48 Elves in the Enchanted Forest  
12 51 Felted Banknotes for ARTerhalt  
12 52 A Dress is a Kingdom  
13 55 A Virus to Take off  
13 56 Wall Image as an Admonition for Watchfulness

### TECHNIQUE

- 13 58 Feltmaking without Plastic

### SHEEP & WOOL

- 15 60 Jacob's Sheep or Four-Horned Sheep

### FELTING HISTORY

- 15 62 Surmaks and Hunting Gloves

Dear Readers,

do you know the familiar feeling to have a load of ideas and too precious little time to make them happen? This seems to be a widespread notion, as two of the artists we present in this issue tell us the same. Mandy Nash from Wales, who wrote a book about the felting of bags feels sorry that she has too little time to realize all the projects that are on her mind (see page 32 ff). Also, Margit Röhm, who has been elected chair of the German Filz-Netzwerk wishes for more time to make all her plans come true, those concerning her own felt art, but also those regarding the network of professional and hobby felters (see page 40 ff). Felters don't seem to know boredom! This filzfun issue is not only inclined to offer you something interesting and entertaining to read but wants to stimulate activities of your own. So, after a long stretch of pandemic standstill, March 2022 will offer the opportunity to exchange experiences, to learn something new and – at long last – to felt together again

at the Felt Encounter in Niederaltaich! (See Spektrum, page 7) Maybe you feel like making the unusual, lovely fringed shawl that Mandy Nash describes in her detailed instructions (see page 36 ff). You could also be greatly inspired by two Northern Italian lady felters, who in a great effort populated an enchanted forest with more than 100 hand-felted figurines for children, who were then allowed to look for them and take them home (see page 48 ff).

Whatever you might think up regarding feltmaking: Tell us about it and send us photos. We will gladly report on any initiative which might serve as an ignition point for others.

We cordially wish you a great and healthy start into the creative year 2022!

*With best regards  
your filzfun-Team*

### NOTE

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

Your direct contact to the editorial department:  
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The spring issue will be published on  
February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Editorial deadline: December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Felters' Meeting at the Danube

The 27<sup>th</sup> German-speaking felters' meeting in Niederaltaich, Lower Bavaria goes by the motto »Filz im Fluss« (Feltmaking in Flow) from March 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> 2022. Besides the seven workshops, getting to know each other, professional exchange, felting together and celebrating are on schedule. From March 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> there will be four preparational courses: Clothesmaking with Kerstin Scherr, vessels with Ricarda Aßmann, wall elements with Claudia Blickling and figurine construction with Delia Grimm. Felters and interested parties can find the full program on the Filz-Netzwerk's website or order it by e-mail from Delia Grimm of the organizers' team: [info@augentrost.info](mailto:info@augentrost.info). Closing date is the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2021. [filznetzwerk.de](http://filznetzwerk.de)

## Textile Art Online

((Photo: Summertime by Susanne Weber))

The Textile Art Berlin is seeking out new ways. After the 16<sup>th</sup> return of the fair was held online with exhibits and courses because of the Covid 19 pandemic, the international event for ambitious textile art will remain digital also in the future. The former organizer Nathalie Wolters will pass on her responsibilities for the fair to Claudia Eichert-Schäfer, chief editor of the Textile Art Magazine. As done before, the Textile Art Berlin Online, so the new name, will continue to present contemporary textile artists and to provide an international forum for textile art. [textile-art-berlin.de](http://textile-art-berlin.de)

## Travelling Shepherds Need Godparents

Travelling flocks with their shepherds are of great importance to landscape preservation, but the shepherd's profession is acutely endangered. Since 2009, the Schafpatenprojekt (Godparents for Sheep-Project), care of the siblings Frederic, Henrike und Felix Zwerger

with their company for hand-knit yarns TUTTO Wolfgang Zwerger GmbH, wants to change that. Grants for winter fodder or buying a breeding ram for a flock, but also surcharges on the regular market price for shorn wool and other support for the German travelling shepherds are financed by this project, so far with approximately 160 000 €. More than 700 sheep have godparents these days who contribute to the preservation of travelling sheep rearing. The company buys a good part of the wool thus gained and have it processed in Germany into jumper and sock yarns. [sockenwolle.de](http://sockenwolle.de)

## Meeting Point for Creative People

After a Corona halt, Dortmund will be a meeting point for creative people again in March 2022: The CREATIVA, Europe's biggest fair for creatives takes place from March 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> in the Westfalen Halls. On five days in a row, visitors find all creative products and techniques under a single roof: from handicrafts, artisanry, design, painting, drawing over feltmaking, spinning, weaving, quilting and fancy cake decoration to wood- and metal work, painting on silk or glass and making jewelry. [messe-creativa.de](http://messe-creativa.de)

## From Blanket to Art Object

Fifty contemporary quilted and other textile art objects from 15 nations are on show at the 8<sup>th</sup> European Quilt-Triennial in the textile collection Max Berk in Heidelberg until January 16<sup>th</sup> 2022. The exhibits demonstrate the striking development of quilt art from a more or less functional household item, like a blanket, to an art object in its own right over the last 50 years. Public guided tours, discussions and a workshop are accompaniments. [museum.heidelberg.de](http://museum.heidelberg.de)

## Wool Angels for the Homeless

The Düsseldorf WOLLEngel association for homeless and needy people collects hand-knitted or crocheted caps, scarves, gauntlets and socks (especially as of size 42). Money donations are very welcome, too. As the chairs Tanja Elle (left) and Sabine Schmitz inform us, knitwear and yarns in darker, mute colors are needed. Please find all pertaining info on the website listed below: [duesseldorferwollengel.com](http://duesseldorferwollengel.com)

## Métamorphose

*2 000 000 meters of silk thread:  
a tribute to femininity.*

«I love extremes. Without a challenge, I'm not interested!», states German/Canadian multidisciplinary artist Mechthild Reinders, who loves to leave the comfort zone and take risks.

For her latest and most elaborate textile creation to date, »Métamorphose«, the complex hybrid of an installation and a silk moth stage costume, she raised 1000 *Bombyx mori* silkworms. She thus became the conductor of a 700-member orchestra that flat spun the gigantic wings, the showpieces of her work, in fine white mulberry silk.

«Under a certain incidence of light, the wings appear like seemingly endless ice. For me, this is like a reminiscence of the snowy, icy and epic white landscapes I've walked through during my often multi-day ski trips on the largest glaciers in North America, in Canada – often with a tent.»

300 silkworms additionally created first-class solid, intact cocoons, which were added to the installation in their original form. Mechthild Reinders showcases here an exciting new direction of her creativity, and we look forward to seeing the further development of this textile artist, filmmaker and actor.

«My latest project was an invitation to redefine my position in life, it was like an epic dive into my past and potential future at the same time. Unexpected and unforeseen, »Métamorphose« turned out to be a highly personal and autobiographical creation.»

~ »Our jury is seduced!«, was the message Mechthild Reinders received in May 2021 from the high-profile arts organization FREMAA in France. In the European cultural country, she was no longer an unknown both as a filmmaker through her film »Raising Stars«, which she produced for ARTE, and as a visual artist, having already been selected several times for exhibitions of the »Federation des Métiers d'Art d'Alsace«.

~ »I literally dropped the spade«, says Mechthild Reinders. »The news to participate in FREMAA's first class new exhibition »Trésor(s)« in France was thrilling and reached me just at the moment I was preparing my leased piece of land in Germany for my dye plants!«

~ The seeding of Färberwaid, Tagetes, Hollyhocks and Tansy, the planting of Rubia tinctorum and the creation of the large tapestries of plant-dyed silk and wool had to be postponed until the following year.

~ »Insects« and »Microcosm« were given as the theme for »Trésor(s)«. Mechthild Reinders tells us: »I had already used silk for the creations of my garments and tapestries, and if colored, then exclusively silk dyed naturally by me. I had already been inspired to flat spin silk (in which silkworms create a non-woven silk somewhat reminiscent of paper) by my older son's studies at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in Boston. The Mediated Matter group under the direction of Professor Neri Oxman had realized »Silkpavillion I« and »Silkpavillion II«, in which thousands of silkworms had created both a dome and a silk tunnel by flat-spinning (the tunnel is now on display at MOMA, the Museum of Modern Art, in New York).«

~ Flatspun silk has been used for thousands of years but more commonly known is the form of silk production in which silk cocoons are thrown into boiling water. In this process, the sericin, which is similar to glue, dissolves and only the fibroin, the silk thread, remains. 5 and up to 10 silk filaments are then joined together to form a silk thread during unwinding. The original filament is 5–7 microns, the finest in the world, but also 5 times stronger than steel.

~ *Bombyx mori* silkworms originate from China, where they have been used to produce the precious fabric since Neolithic times. In their up to 8000 years of domestication, they have lost both the ability to fly and their pigmentation, are not capable of foraging on their own and are no longer found in the wild.

Their eggs can only be purchased from breeders.

~ »It fills me with pride to raise mulberry silkworms and conduct them to flatspin; it means being part of a many- thousand year old tradition«, says Mechthild Reinders.

~ She purchased 2000 eggs from a high-end breeder. After 7 days and according to the schedule, her silkworms hatched out of their tiny eggs (comparable to the size of a Chia seed) in the incubator she built, growing from 2mm to 9cm in the following weeks, multiplying their body weight 10 000 times.

~ »*Bombyx mori* silkworms feed preferentially on leaves of the white mulberry tree and my insects ate 4,5 kilos of leaves per day in the final stage, also called »The Big Feast«, says Mechthild Reinders. »The worms went through 5 »ages« and 4 moults took place, in each of which they shed not only an old shell but also a »mask«. For me as a theater woman a highly interesting event! I am keeping the 1000 hulls of the last hauling and the »masks« like treasures for use in a later installation.«

~ Due to meticulously good care and feeding, Mechthild Reinders' silkworms were ready to spin silk after only 3,5 weeks. They moved like miniature 3-D printers, spinning up to 2000 meters of silk each for the wings, until their little bodies had »emptied out«, shrunk to 3 cm, and the worms lay motionless on their backs. Their beige, translucent bodies turned brown and hard and transformed into pupae.

~ Mechthild Reinders: »It was fascinating to watch the movement within this »shell«. The final metamorphosis, however, took place over the next two weeks as the worms in the pupae transformed into silk moths, which then emerged from these hard protective shells.

~ I have never witnessed such an extremely sexually charged atmosphere as the one that now ensued: the males seemed almost out of their minds, flapping their wings as if desperate and sex-obsessed. »What an ordeal to be a man!«, exclaimed a French friend, quite familiar with erotic escapades, upon observing the scene. Often several males fought for one and the same female. I witnessed »ménages à trois«, the females (much larger than the males) seemed to me like »territories« which the males had to conquer. These »targets of desire«, however, waited passively for the reception of the sperm, immobile, as their heavy bodies carried the weight

of 300–500 eggs. After a few days the females produced the fertilized eggs. As if in cramps, one egg followed another, at night. New pairs continued to copulate in a sea of white eggs. For me it was the ultimate manifesto of preserving and passing on life«.

~ Silk moths never see their children grow up. After producing their eggs or while they are still laying them, they die.

~ »The filmmaker in me felt called upon and it was logical to document my project cinematographically and photographically. My macro lens came into play. I worked 2 jobs at the same time, and over 2 weeks I enjoyed the »luxury« of only 3–4 hours of sleep per night«, says Mechthild Reinders. »I witnessed birth, growth, decay and death, the transient and impermanent nature of life, Darwinism and finally I witnessed the ultimate rebirth: the Metamorphosis.

~ This work, my largest and most intense, brought me psychologically back to the time when I was raising my children. The amount of wool used for the dress – a massive 4 kilos – symbolizes for me the »destiny« of a woman and the role she is pressed into: it can be slaying and overwhelming. The task of giving life, being a devoted mother and keeping the species alive can turn her into a victim.

~ It is as if the female body of my mannequin is almost born out of the »cocoon« of the opulent garment, it peels out of it as if »reborn« and my silk moth is wading in its »enchantment«: its sea of eggs containing New Life.

~ I associate it to the women in Velazquez's paintings and the dresses of the fashion designer I admire, Alexander McQueen.

~ »Métamorphose«, however, is also a celebration of femininity and its ultimate beauty, strength and fertility. This creation, the most challenging of my artistic works to date, was equivalent from an »athletic« standpoint to running continuous marathons over a 5-month period. Philosophically, the hoeing and transformation of the silkworms was metaphorical: In order to develop myself further, I have to give up old, familiar but possibly also encrusted ways of life, habits of thought and »protective shells«. To perform this act requires strength and courage. This process can be painful, even very painful. The achievement of new horizons, however, is the ultimate reward.«

~ Mechthild Reinders will produce two films: one about silkworms and another about the creation of »Métamorphose«. She will continue her work on tapestries

made of plant-dyed wool and silk, and create Haute Couture and interior design with flatpun silk.

~ For the creation of her flatpun silk, Mechthild Reinders thanks Dagmar Bressel, Gabriele and Rainer Fetting, Frank Junga, Ulrich Ramseier, Klaus Schneider and Mr. Winter, and most heartfelt thanks go to Renate Maile-Moskowitz and Martin Rudloff, who proverbially helped her »grow wings«.

LANA SENTIS

PAGES 12-15

## A Feast of Fibers and Colors

*Dutch felt artists presented their work in Den Dolder*

Felt everywhere – but in an astounding variety: Hundreds of visitors marvelled at it over the weekend exhibit »Kunst Gevilt« in the P'Arts Galerie de Gehoorzaal in Den Dolder, The Netherlands. The high level of craftswomanship and the great number of art objects by thirteen artists did not only attract people interested in art from The Netherlands, but also from abroad, e.g. from Belgium and Germany. Nobody's expectations were disappointed.

~ Annie Veltkamp showed art of natural beauty in a traditional craft clothed in modernity. Many of her big wall objects with three-dimensional effects influence the acoustics of the exhibition space: Art to fall silent by.

### Fungi and Mosses

Anneke Spijker let herself be inspired by surrounding trees, but also her fascination with fungi and mosses is clearly expressed.

~ Monika Loster's work represents a search for symbolism in her art. The creative process is just as important as the result. The intense, imaginative dyes and natural shapes make her objects a center of attention.

~ Joke van Zinderen, another talented artists with a penchant for graphic design showed intricate, Origami-like felted objects, small wall hangings and breathtaking jewelry, like necklaces. This you can either wear or just enjoy looking at them.

~ Linda de Beer's works show a lot of harmony, at least at first glance. Only at the second you are surprised by how many minutely detailed feltmaking, embroidery and other textile techniques are employed by the artist.

### Vague Memories

Miriam Verbeeks art works are remindful of old black-and-white images; transfixed in felt they seem like hazy memories on the brink of oblivion. Apart from that, she has decorated Ells Bottema's ceramic boxes with felted cords for ritual opening and closing.

~ Karen Bruinsma loves to handle a single subject in her works and to tell its story. This time she demonstrates in her felt art and embroidery how people dear to her heart see the world.

~ Anja Schrik uses only natural pigmentation for the verdant, warm colors of her feltmaking. In combination with natural materials such as leaves or twigs she undertakes metamorphoses in her wall panels, lamps and carpets.

~ Adrian Salomé's source of inspiration is nature as well: depth, light and colors. She »paints« with wool, composes fantastic landscapes or abstract images with contrasts, harmony and many hidden layers.

### Felted Feelings

Maije Kool deals with Feltfeelings, feelings turned into felt in her astounding objects wherein she often integrates materials of symbolic meaning. Her small felt diaries, presented in little notebooks, come directly from the heart.

~ Anneke Copier and Claudio Varone teamed up their creativity in designing unique felted carpets and attractive, three-dimensional wall objects. They give a room a warm, pleasant atmosphere and soothing acoustics.

~ Charlotte Molenaar contributed wearable art to this great exhibit: decorative scarves with plastic structures as well as textile jewelry in fine adjustment, harmonic colors, precise shapes, geometrical patterns or natural motifs.

~ In their communal project »Sisterhood« at long last Linda de Beer, Anneke Spijker and Karen Bruinsma are as true as their motto: They made nine specimen of fanciful headgear for nine women from countries all over the world who met to work together and share their life stories.

KOKKIE PAAUW

PAGES 16-17

## Bödön and Tumar

*At the online felters meeting 2021 organized by Corinna Nitschmann with 200 international participants decorative vessels and protective felts were made, amongst many other objects*

Bödön, what is that? Nothing but the miracle word of the CorNit-Online-Feltmakers' Meeting 2021, meaning – in Hungarian – a folkloristic vessel or container.

~ The Hungarian felt designer and lecturer Bea Németh introduced this subject to the only week-long virtual pyjama party for wet felters. She taught the participants to felt a container with an unusual lid. Her course focused also on how to plan positive-negative patterns systematically.

### A Hat with Felted Cords

The Dutch felt artist Annemie Koenen placed a merry floppy hat in nuno-felt technique on everybody's head. Right at the beginning of her lecture she shared ideas to process odd pieces of fabric or waste fabric. The hat, once finished, was decorated with a beautiful, felted cord to keep in safely on the head during, say, a boat ride.

~ The Hungarian felt designer and felt history researcher Mihály-Misi Vetró offered a rather complex subject: the making of a Tumar. The Tumar, also called Dogatscher, is used for protection, often in triangular form. If you find such a small work of art hanging in the entrance of a building you can be sure to be protected against the evil eye, awful people and other misfortunes. The participants not only learned a lot about their making and the tradition expressed therein and their symbolic meaning, but after the felting they took home with them various embroidery stitches and an intricate knotting technique for cords. The highlight was an introduction to the Kabul weaving technique, which could serve quite well in couple therapy. Two people weave the cord together which is fixed to the felt's edge during the weaving process.

### Textures in Nuno Felt

~ The Ukrainian felt magician Nadia Szabó, who lives in Hungary, was not also concerned with simple feltmaking. She shared her skills in making beautiful, various nuno felt textures and surfaces.

After test patterns bigger projects were envisaged, like an elegant scarf of sculptural design, a kidney warmer or a wall hanging. Moreover, Nadia Szabó gave valuable advice concerning different techniques of felting ornaments for clothes, lamination, felted-on roses and diverse textures with Viscose fibers.

~ The Hungarian felt artist Márta Csille entered the public sphere again after many years. She explained how she makes her felted images – from sketching and deliberating and free design ideas to the ›raw‹ felted image, which is then embroidered by hand and by the machine. The participants learned how to felt in glass nuggets or to seam the images in a self-invented technique.

~ But not only felt workshops with internationally famous lecturers were on schedule. Annemie Koenen reported on Kirgistan, where she has spent long periods of time. Impressive images and films about the people and their life there enabled the participants to approach a different culture and kindled the desire to travel there.

#### Light Symbols on Felt

Misi Vetró held a lecture on light symbols on felt: this was a fantastic ride through history exemplifying various cultures, religious beliefs, patterns and colors crowned by the symbolic structure of the Mongolian yurt. A surprising eye-opener on the relations between thousand-year old textile techniques and motifs of contemporary pottery, but also between different cultures that are so far distant in time or geographically that they probably never actually met.

~ Anita Gyertyános literally moved the participants in her yoga session especially thought out for feltmakers.

~ Two exhibits enriched this colorful, fuzzy-merry week, one at the beginning and one at the end. In the opening, the lecturers presented some of their own art and told the audience about the challenges and joy encountered in feltmaking.

#### Final Exhibit

In the finissage the results of this remarkable week were shown online. Simultaneously, the faces and names encountered in the virtual Fusselhof-Café connected to the shown objects. This encounter has put almost 200 felters close to each other beyond the borders of countries, even continents via the Internet.

~ Already now we plan a new,

intercontinental virtual feltmakers' meeting, but also an ›offline meeting‹ on site in Hungary, which was cancelled twice already in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

CORINNA NITSCHMANN

PAGES 18–19

## Wool in the Ring

*The wool circus in Bassum celebrates a unique natural resource with a fair, demonstrations and interactive events*

From sheep to spinning, weaving and feltmaking to the finished product – the program of the wool circus in the so-called linden city Bassum in Northern Lower Saxonia offers all that and more. Suse Schmid has organized a two-day culture feast around the subject wool on the park-like premises of Freuden Castle with its historic timber frame constructions.

~ During a ›literary tête-a-tête‹ the storyteller and harp player Brigitta Wortmann enchanted her audience with her renditions and romantic musical accompaniment on Saturday evening. The cabaret and word artist Christiane Palm-Hoffmeister informed on sheep and wool with a lot of humor and the band Saitenwind made for good feelings in autumnal weather.

#### Political Crocheting

In this frame of mind the crocheting artist Jutta Schröder's show opened. She has a studio ›for political crocheting‹ in the neighboring town. Many visitors were amazed how societal problems can be visualized or commented on by means of wool and a crocheting hook – from food waste over tourism into outer space.

~ Sunday was all in the sign of handicrafts. To make wool processing literally graspable especially for kids and youngsters a ›wool street‹ was built where all steps involved, from the freshly shorn wool to the making of jumpers, toys and felted house slippers could be followed.

#### Heidschnucken and Rhön Sheep

A true magnet were the living sheep: long-haired Heidschnucken, Pommersche Country Sheep with their coarse pelts and Rhön sheep that were cautiously freed from their thick summer wool by

the shearer Slavko and hiss on Alexander. In the next booth admirable finished products were on sale that had been felted from last year's wool.

~ At the cleaning station the guests could try out for themselves how the greasy and dirty wool can be rinsed in lukewarm water, thus making the natural hues visible. They were allowed to card the dry wool manually at the roller. Afterwards they brought this wonderful, soft raw material to be dyed or felted.

#### Dyeing with Solar Energy

One dyer had prepared glasses full of alum where the visitors could put the carded wool for sundyeing, in others onion peels dyed wool fibers a warm yellow. Especially the children were enthusiastic wet felters – they rolled their favorite pencil in a colorful felted cover. The next day they had dried and were ready to take them to school.

~ With the slogan ›My sheep come from the hairdresser's, not from the slaughterhouse‹ Suse Schmid promoted felted fleeces that look like actual furs. No animal must die for them.

~ In many corners one could hear the spinning wheels purr. The carded fleece turned into a thread which could be processed further at the booths around. Here a knitted scarf gained in length, there bright ribbons and butterflies were crocheted and at a further stand the visitors could try out simple knitting forks, like the Vikings already used, too.

~ A special highlight was a big weaving frame where one could work on a big image. Upon request or if the work was to be finished at home, one could choose a smaller frame and got help and instruction inside a tent.

#### Wool Fertilizer

Also the subjects ›Wool and Health‹ and ›Wool in the Garden‹ were inspected more closely: Interested parties could make a cream based on lanolin or get advice concerning the use of wool as a fertilizer.

~ ›I wanted to direct the visitors' attention to this great, regional and sustainable raw material‹, says the organizer Suse Schmid. ›Unfortunately, shorn wool is special waste as per EU regulations because it does not ignite well and decomposes only slowly. To use these characteristics in a creative way is a worthwhile goal.‹

SUSE SCHMID



## Stone Animals, Mandalas and Animated Movies

*A wide-ranging program at the Filzkolleg in the felto Filzwelt in Soltau*

After long months of Corona restrictions, where no feltmakers' meetings and only a handful of courses were possible, the Felting Course of Lectures of the German Filz-Netzwerk offered an impatiently waited-for and most welcome chance to felt together and to get new ideas. Susanne Schächter-Heil and Ina Jeromin had put together an greatly varied schedule that attracted about 50 participants to the Lüneburger Heath.

~ Inna Oleynik came from farthest away, from the Ukraine. She came together with Irina Kalaschnikow to take part in the lectures, not at all deterred by the complicated regulations to enter the country. The organizers were particularly pleased to welcome two male guests who had accompanied their spouses to Soltau. Britta and Ralf Böhlting from Tewel keep Alpakas and tried their hand at felting for the first time. The shepherd Steffen Schmidt and his wife Wiebke Schmidt-Kochan from Schneverdingen had brought along Heidschnucke sausages that they put on the table at a merry barbecue. They felted their first furs and will process the wool of their Heidschnucke Sheep together with tourists in the future.

### Brightly-Colored Mosaics

For six days in a row a lot of intense experiments and sincere working took place at the Filzwelt premises and in adjoining tents. Doreen Lüpfert whetted the feltmaking appetite with color gradients, mosaic and reserve technique. On the first of the three-day course the group worked itself into the matter by means of felting tests. On the following two days they tackled the insights learned and ideas in working with individual resists and color-gradient pre-felts to make small rugs or cushion covers.

»The results were astounding mosaic work and colorful mandalas that shone as brightly as the eyes of the participants«, says the pleased instructor.

~ Raw wool was Margit Röhm's and Heinke Schütt's preferred material. In Heinke Schütt's class, sitting furs were made and landscape images with raw or

dyed wool, whereby woolen curls served as grass or shrubby imitations.

### Felting Without Soap

With Margit Röhm's class you went back in time to the archaic. Each day interested parties took up the challenge to felt only with raw wool and water – without soap or plastic material. During the making of balls, a surface or a simple hollow vessel from fibers of different sheep breeds they learned a lot about the wool fiber as such, the structure of the wool and the feltmaking process before they made another object with cleaned wool and soap.

~ How Alpaka wool can be made into delicate, soft shawls and loops, transparent felts for windows and even sitting furs was taught by Ina Jeromin. She also hosted the course »Surface Design« with a wide range of combinations from pre-felt, needle felt, fleeces, rovings and other things and all their permutations as to structure.

### A Popular Sheep Singer Turns into a Movie Star

In Ina Jermon's animated movie workshop felted figurines, like the killer octopus by Felix Berger who does his voluntary ecological year practice in Soltau, the singer sheep Jimmy von Locki by Karen Wieprich or the »Red-nosed Rabbit« by Irina Kalaschnikow, became most alive. The youngest participant, Chiara Feldmann, sent a grey lamb together with its mother ewe »to look for color«, in the course of which it learns that all color in life must be in your own heart to begin with. In another workshop, the movies were professionally revisioned.

~ Felted animals with a pebble inside to keep them in place were felted by Karin Twelkemeier in wet- and dry technique together with her class members who had brought fitting stones from home. The donkey was especially popular, but also a chicken, sheep, horses, cat and a bear were made in Soltau. »It is great that everybody could take home at least one and sometimes several small animals«, says the instructor.

### Free Experiments With Forms

Feltmakers inclined to experiment were welcomed by Barbara Steffen-Munsberg and Susanne Schächter-Heil in their tent and assisted in the modeling of sculptures, fancy animal figures and free forms of wool.

~ Monika Wacker, who took courses at the lecturers for the second time, praised

the atmosphere as being relaxed and inspiring: »Although most of the group had known each other for a long time as even a newcomer you feel like an old member. Questions are always welcome and I gleaned much new advice for feltmaking.«

~ The co-organizer Ina Jeromin from Freiberg, Saxonia was much impressed by the Filzwelt in itself and its attentive staff: »A hit show and a wonderfully fitting space for Felting Lectures!« She already looks forward to arrange the 2020 Felting Course of Lectures with Susanne Schächter-Heil in Soltau. (See info box)

HELENE WEINOLD

## A Fascinating Initiation

*Advanced Felt Education as a Female Network of Experts, Beginners and Professional Artists*

As of July 8<sup>th</sup> I have been one of them. It was the day when my initiation into feltmaking progress began. I have to thank the wonderful felt artist and teacher Sawatou Mouratidou who helped me to receive my »acolade« from Charlotte Sehmisch. As an architect among felters Charlotte is an exceptional phenomenon in the German-speaking countries. Who else builds houses from wool that can be made into hats?

### Four Lecturers

But let's begin at the beginning. In Laab am Walde near Vienna the 5<sup>th</sup> Advanced Felting Education of the artists' collective wollmodus took place in early July. Sawatou Mouratidou and Barbara Martin had invited four international experts to deepen their mission (unpaid yet priceless): To bring handicrafts involving wool in all its complex splendour nearer to female, theoretically also nearer to male participants.

~ As a relative beginner – I had felted at the Zakynthos Summer Academy at Sawatou Mouratidou only once – I almost felt like a fraud, when Sawatou firmly answered my question: »Which class do you suggest for me?« with: »Try Charlotte Sehmisch, she's a good match.«

~ I had just grown ten centimeters. Sawatou Mouratidou, who had shown

her work at the Art Berlin recommended an advanced course – and this after a somewhat retainedly original scarf, a beautiful bracelet and several crazy experiments.

### Embroidery and Dyeing

The decision didn't come easy. The 5<sup>th</sup> Advanced Felt Education offered, next to Charlotte Sehmisch's architectural approach also »Färben mit Pflanzenfarben – Plant Dyeing« and »Ecoprint-Upcycling«, both by Franziska Ebner and for me as a fanatic upcycler almost a duty. I sent a (thankful!) friend to Dina Elmani-Zanka's workshop »Einmaleins des Nassfilzens – Wetfelting Basics«, for »Stitching Felt« with Vanda Robert another acquaintance, a felting expert, signed on enthusiastically. And I – tataaaa! – chose to experience Charlotte Sehmisch.

~ The introvert, quiet German knows what she is talking about. This might be why she does not say much, but when it is of utmost precision. You sense how she wants to immerse each single participant into her skills and art, even if they can't understand her intellectual and/or spatial imaginative power at first. She constructs geometrical shapes, inserts foils for complex hollow bodies, conjures the Willendorf Venus lying down three-dimensionally made of white wool and stacks walls on top of each other in such a way that nobody thinks of sheep wool anymore.

### House-Like Forms

Can you sense my fascination? I hope so. For three days I was allowed to learn how folds are laid, how compartments are made, how to cut strategically in »roofs« and »floors«. From these shapes which resemble terraced houses a headgear is made which warrants a reception at the Queen of England – or at least a visit at the races.

~ Scales from primeval animals have formed under my hands and tectonic plates were shifted, while outside in the yard the dyers and printers made magic with bright colors from curry or gorse. The embroidery students' achievements cannot be described. I have to go there next time!

~ This all took place between wonderful Greek lunches, a parish atmosphere like in a Czech fairytale and a warm-hearted community of many fine women. It was my first advanced course at wollmodus but certainly not my last!

INGRID LUTTENBERGER

PAGES 26–27

## Zentangles on Felt

*In an online course with Annemie Koenen, feltmakers made a book with their favorite embroidery stitches*

That felt is a fantastic base for creative embroidery is a well-known fact for most feltmakers. A master in both skills is Annemie Koenen, who signs her felted objects with a miniature embroidered rose and knows and teaches almost forgotten stitches like the prehistoric one.

### A Prepared Book

During the pandemic, the Dutch artist has developed a course program – both online and offline – for embroidery on felt. The courses are comprised of two teaching units of 10 resp. 7 modules that lead to a personal »Favorite Embroidery Stitches Book«. The ladies who took part (no men have applied so far) get an already prepared book with a practical spiral bind into which seven felted pages, embroidered on both sides are put during the workshop. An individually embroidered felt cover sets the project off.

~ The first online course of the described kind brought together women from Belgium, Germany, England and Austria. In a Facebook group the group exchanged their experiences and showed each other the progress they had made. »Recently you can see more and more embroidered »Zentangles« like the ones you scribble subconsciously while on the telephone or thinking about something«, Annemie Koenen states.

### Prehistoric Stitch

»The exciting idea from the very beginning was to make a kind of embroidery stitch dictionary«, Stefanie Koch said upon completion of the first unit. »Next to line, chain, buttonhole, filling, connecting and weaving stitches my booklet contains some little knots and one special stitch that you can't find on the internet nor in a book: the prehistoric stitch.« She highly values this online offer. »It provides continuity for stitching and felting and I can share my experiences with other felters to an extent not be possible if we actually sat in a room together.«

~ Gudrun Kessel is enthusiastic, too: »With great expertise Annemie showed us how we could »capture« all corners and edges of the felt so it turned into a

beautiful »page«.« At each online meeting she looks forward to the preliminary round, where all show what they have embroidered the week before. »The many different ideas were so beautiful to see.«

### A Participant from England

Janine Rees from England has been feltmaking for twenty years. She reports: »Three things have inspired me to take up the embroidery needle again: I am learning how to embroider in the Sashiko technique from the mother of a Japanese friend. During the pandemic I spent more time at home and began to embroider for simple relaxation. And finally I discovered Annemie Koenen's offer to make a book out of our favorite stitches – what a great opportunity to learn more about it and to further develop my skills.« She enjoyed filling each embroidered page with a story of its own. »I even designed the pages of my notebook pictorially to illustrate the newly learnt stitches.« ~ Now she looks forward to part 2 of the course: »To be able to share this kind of creativity with a small group of fellow enthusiasts and an endlessly patient and talented instructor was wonderful indeed.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 28–29

## Feltmaking Against the Corona Blues

*During the pandemic halt an advanced course established contact via distance in Oberrot*

The dozen feltmakers who got together for the third module of their »Fit in Felt« advanced training in mid-October were so glad each other again. They had waited for one and a half years for this moment – and they should have been busy preparing for their final works during that halt. But the pandemic put the brakes on the course for a long time.

### Don't You Just Give Up!

»Standstill and batting down the hatches! So the spring of 2020 began«, Angelika Bomas and Evi Schmiederer remember. »Our third module at the Oberrot Felting School was, even only for the moment, history! But thanks to modern media and

the irrepressable creativity and strong ties in our group we soon settled one thing: We would not give up our dream of communal working.«

### Color and Joy

The felting class decided to start a good mood-project themed »Joy and Color«. »Each of us felted a piece of exact measurements for another group member who could then process the work further in her own fashion – sent by mail«, Angelika Bonas describes the activity. »The results were very convincing and fully complemented the feeling of our creative connectivity that was not to be deterred by physical boundaries.«

~ The forced break took much longer than they had expected. When it became clear over the course of the year that the next two blocks would also be canceled the group urged instructor Claudia Capiello to give them an assignment: Three hollow balls of different size and stability were to be felted. This called for exact calculations of the amount of material and surface layout required. »Rather tricky«, as Angelika Bonas put it.

~ Also for the felting school that belongs to the family business Wollknoll the pandemic was not easy to handle, as manager Sonja Fritz admits: »But we dealt with the situation as it was and tried to make the best of it.« She is happy that nobody in the team fell seriously ill and that shipping was only briefly interrupted during the lockdown period.

### Additional Room for Courses and Workshops

In order to be able to offer workshops with a hygiene concept in »Filzhausen«, as Oberrot-Neuhausen is sometimes playfully called (remindful of Duckville, where Donald Duck lives, which is »Entenhausen« in German), Sonja Fritz had the winter garden annex insulated and furnished as an additional working space. »So it is possible to work at the recommended distance«, she explains.

~ »Moaning and complaining don't help«, says Sonja Fritz. »One should try to see things in a positive way. There are so many things in the world a lot worse than our German pandemic situation. I am happy that we are healthy, that we all work well together: co-workers, course participants and instructors.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 32–35

## Slashing as a Trademark

*Mandy Nash is a jewellery designer and a felt artist*

»I have two careers: One as a jewelry designer and one as a feltmaker«, Mandy Nash says about herself. For almost 40 years, the Londoner with roots in Wales has been designing jewelry, working mostly in non-precious metals, such as anodized aluminum, and she, like her friends, is still impressed by the fact »that I have been able to make a living by doing something that I so enjoy.« Shortly after leaving the Royal College of Art in London she founded her own studio in Wales in 1990. There she makes her bold pendants, bracelets, ear studs and brooches, as unique specimen or in series.

~ Her passion for feltmaking does not date back that far, but it is no less intensive. »I was introduced to feltmaking by a friend almost twenty years ago, and slowly but surely, this wonderful medium has taken over my life«, Mandy Nash tells us. »I started with very little knowledge gleaned from a one-day introductory workshop and soon found out that there was so much more to learn – even today I am still discovering that there are endless permutations to this incredible medium.« For instance, she was delighted that felt makes a perfect canvas for machine and hand embroidery.

### Working With Resists

At first she restricted herself to flat felts and played mostly with colors and patterns. A badly taught workshop almost put an end to her using resists for sculptural felt objects, but »Jenny Pepper rescued me in that she explained the process in an understandable way.« At that time, around 15 years ago, Mandy Nash worked with six to eight layers of mostly Norwegian wool, as she needed to make a sturdy felt for bags and rugs. »This took a considerable amount of effort and time«, she recalls, sighing: »If only I had known then what I know now!«

~ Over time, the artist further developed her skills, experimenting with sculptural forms, tested the creative potential of resists. She spent endless hours trying out different kinds of wool and how to make use of their characteristics for tactile, three-dimensional objects. She rejoiced endlessly in trying out fabrics and yarns as textural »extras« and in working at

a larger scale than in her jewelry and playing with patterns.

~ That feltmaking would be a part of her life in the future became obvious at the latest when she converted her attic into a felting studio. »I could no longer work in my kitchen as my stash of wool kept growing«, she reminisces, »and my studio in the craft center was dedicated to making jewelry.«

### Refining Techniques

In the beginning she had felted items of daily use as bags and rugs. Later she started to make less functional pieces. Around 2008 she began cutting slashes into the felt – a technique that became her trademark and which she is forever refining developing further. »Originally, all the pieces were stitched before cutting, which required precise planning in advance before making the felt«, she says. »I had many requests to teach the stitched/slashed work. Because my method of working focused on sewing skills rather than feltmaking I looked for an effective way of creating a similar effect without any stitching. Many, many test samples later I managed to recreate the effect and transferred it to three-dimensional pieces as well. I still continue to play with this theme, and in the meantime I have developed better and quicker methods to this end.«

### Vessels and Hats

Sculptural objects are of great fascination to the artist. »Once I made my first vessels, I was hooked. My house is full of them! The three-dimensional shape has endless potential for form and decoration.« But unfortunately, these art objects, having no real function proved hard to sell, Mandy Nash says regretfully. In 2010, she tried, at first reluctantly, to design hats. »Really, they are just functional vessels – and they are much easier to sell!« She is convinced that each hat is made for a certain person, although it may take years until hat and person finally meet.

~ Another light bulb moment for the jewelry designer and felt artist was the discovery of multi and book resists that let her imagination go. Mandy Nash started off by making abstract forms. Because she had been collecting fish from all around the world in different materials and techniques she had the brainwave one day to make a felt fish using a book resist, and Lo and behold: »It has become one of my most popular workshops!«



## Raw Material Bergschaf Wool

These days bergschaf wool is her favorite material for hats, bags and felted sculptural forms. »It felts easily and quickly and I love the way the colors mix and blend.« However, she uses a whole variety of wools for different projects. Amongst others, she highly values the soft but hardwearing Shetland wool, not only for its wide range of natural colors.

## A Book About Bags

During the pandemic many galleries and shops were closed, so jewelry sales slowed right down. Mandy Nash made good use of the standstill and wrote a book, *Making Felt Bags* which was published recently. A second book, *British Wool for Feltmaking*, which she coordinated and edited as chair of the International Feltmakers Association (IFA) with other members of the organization will be available in January 2022. Her cooperation with the IFA – as an exhibition manager, as assistant chair and now as chair enables her to »make friends with wonderful feltmakers and to spread my enthusiasm for feltmaking.«

## Online Courses During the Pandemic

Until 2020 Mandy Nash regularly travelled the country teaching workshops. Since active participation was no longer possible, she started to instruct her clientele via Zoom. »This has proved successful and opened up a new audience to me as students did not need to travel anymore to take part in a workshop. Students can also purchase the recordings of sessions so that they can felt at their own pace and in their own time zone.« Although she misses the hands-on element of felting together, »it was wonderful to meet feltmakers from all over the world online.«

»The time of the pandemic enabled the artist to experiment more with different wools, to enhance her slashing technique and to work with multi resists towards three-dimensional forms. But she never runs out of plans, for example to use her techniques for pieces of a larger size. As she puts it: »I always have too many ideas and not enough time!«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 36–39

## Tutorial: Scarf Corona Virus

This project is suitable for feltmakers with a fair bit of experience, and I have assumed prior knowledge when writing these instructions. Do read through all the steps before you start so you understand the process.

»It will take at least a day to complete a scarf. You will need approximately 200 to 250g of merino wool tops; I used three colors but you can use as many as you like. You will also need your usual felting kit. I laid the wool directly on a non-slip mat – three 150cm x 30cm ones from a pound shop. For the resist I used bubble wrap, four pieces, approximately 130cm x 12cm. This makes a 100cm long scarf. You can play around with these dimensions and experiment for a longer, shorter, thinner or thicker scarf.

1 Using the color that will become the tips of your scarf, lay the fibers over the entire length of the bubble wrap with the tail end of the shingle into the center and the head just a little over the top edge.

2 Overlap each end by about 1cm – you will not be folding these over, they get cut off once you have felted the scarf.

3 With your second color reverse the procedure by laying the fibers over the entire length of the bubble wrap with the tail end of the shingle into the center and the head just a little over the bottom edge.

4 Close up showing the detail of the lay out.

5 Wet down your fibers with warm, soapy water and carefully turn your work over.

6 Fold over the loose fibers of the first color (tips side). Repeat laying out as in step 1.

7 Fold over the loose fibers of the second color (the middle of your scarf). Then lay down the fibers as in step 3.

8 Cover the entire length of bubble wrap.

9 With your third color, lay the fibers down at right angles to the first layer with a 1cm overlap on the edges.

10 Carefully turn over and fold over the loose fibers on the edge then repeat step 9 without overlapping the fibers at the edges allowing the fibers to meet the turned over edge.

11 Repeat steps 1 to 10 on your second bubble wrap resist and lay the piece alongside your first, with the »tips« color on the outer edge and the inside color matching in the center.

12 Lay a fine layer of fibers over the center of these two pieces using your third color and wet down.

13 Repeat steps 1 to 10 twice more laying the third piece on top of the first and fourth on top of the second, with the »tips« color on the outer edge and the inside color matching in the center.

14 Cover the whole length with a layer of your third color with a 1cm overlap on the edges and wet down.

15 Along the length of the scarf, lay a row of fibers, head of the shingle towards the center and tail pointing to the edge. Repeat on the other side overlapping the head end in the center.

16 With your first color, matching the head end of the shingle to the edge, lay a row of fibers. Wet down and carefully turn over.

17 Fold the loose fibers over the edge then repeat step 14 allowing the fibers to meet the turned over edge. Wet down.

18 Repeat step 15 and 16. Wet down, cover with a piece of bubble wrap or netting and gently rub to settle the fibers. Turn over and repeat the rubbing.

19 You may want to cover your scarf with some thin dust sheet plastic to hold in place when you roll. I roll 50 to 100 times with a noodle lengthwise, then fold in half and roll widthwise. Turn over and repeat.

20 Check that all your fibers are stable (if not, roll some more with the noodle) then repeat the rolling as in step 19 but without the noodle.

21 Warm up your piece and roll on itself, throw, and massage (with soapy hands) until it is almost fully felted. You might need to warm it up several times.

22 Make sure that your scarf has shrunk to a meter in length or less.

23 Cut the narrow sides straight and pull the resists out of the felt tubes.

24 Cut open the long edges: Cut a narrow strip lengthwise so that the edges are straightened at the same time.

25 Cut each flap into strips, carefully avoiding cutting into the center. I used a watercolor pencil to mark 1.5cm strips although you can make them wider or cut random sizes but don't make them too thin!

26 Warm up your piece and roll it on itself, throw and massage (with soapy hands) until it is fully felted. You might need to warm it up several times. Rinse well to remove all the soap and leave to dry.

MANDY NASH

PAGES 40–44

## Felt with Eyes

*Margit Röhm's specialty are fanciful fairy tale creatures and animals. Lately she has been elected chair of the German Filz-Netzwerk organisation*

»Regardless of what you make, in the end it always has eyes«, a client once said to Margit Röhm. The artist deems this an apt characterization of her work. »Of course, the different pelts and locks of my figurines and their special surface design are typical for my art. But indeed, magically, you always can find a head with eyes on my felted products.«

~ What she, rather prosaically, calls »felted products« are literally fantastic, primordial beings. »This has developed over the years and turned into a passion«, Margit Röhm tells us. »When I found out how valuable hand puppets can be in bringing up children and how much joy

you could give to them I preferred them to anything else. You can make all kinds of imaginative animal beings, that's why I felt almost exclusively hand- and finger puppets.«

### Droll Containers

Apart from hand puppets, the feltmaker from Ulm is known for droll containers of all kinds and for all purposes: Backpacks in a dragon's shape, a funny frog as a sewing kit (see filzfun Special No. 4) or sheeplike baskets with cuddly curls.

~ Since 2004, hardly a day passed without Margit Röhm practicing her feltmaking. During her third pregnancy she experimented with many creative techniques, amongst them with felting, in the beginning without much enthusiasm. »Because the popular products I could see on fairs were not to my taste at all I wanted to find out why everybody else seemed to think they were so great.« But after a couple of times the felting fever proved contagious and led her to a new career.

### Professional Feltmaker

The beginning wasn't easy at all. »For financial reasons alone I was soon forced to sell my felted objects and to teach other people how to felt«, the mother of three recalls. She taught feltmaking classes at schools and kindergartens and offered her works on sale at artisans' or Middle Age markets and occasionally on the internet. »Slowly but surely feltmaking turned into a new career«, she says. »My daughters, all grown up by now, never knew it any differently: a home full of wool and a felted object in every corner. Hearing: »Mama, have you been felting in the living-room or shorn a sheep?«, has always been a part of our creative family's daily life.«

~ In her detached house in the North of Ulm Margit Röhm has established a studio for wet-felting. She only takes to the felting needle in exceptional circumstances. »I am particularly intrigued that I can make seamless hollow containers«, she says. »Exactly this seamless technique makes felt so resilient.«

### Fascination for Raw Wool

Initially she preferred »finest, dyed Merino wool«. But then Margit Röhm discovered the variety of domestic sheep breeds and their wool, which she has been presenting for years in the filzfun serial »Sheep & Wool«. »At a feltmakers' meeting I learned the technique to felt furs and

became immediately convinced that this was exactly what was still missing in connection with my hand puppets. Suddenly new horizons opened up«, she explains. Over the years her commitment to different kinds of sheep, their wool and the different characteristics thereof has deepened. »Now I process raw wool from at least 30 different breeds. For a book I made test patterns from wool of a total of 47 different sheep breeds.«

~ For a long time, Margit Röhm has taught in courses how to make hand puppets and animal-shaped containers. Now she has decided to give teaching a break. »It is difficult to explain why one doesn't want to do something anymore which used to be fun and brought considerable success.« If at all or when she might teach courses again cannot be answered at this moment.

~ However, the lady from Ulm will continue to serve as an ambassador for feltmaking: Since spring Margit Röhm is chair of the German Filz-Netzwerk Association, of which she has been an active member. To her, the exchange between the felters and their networking are very important, but she is already looking forward to organizing events again after the pandemic has decreased. »There are internal and international shows that we will enjoy after the pandemic, as we will the Feltmaking Course of Lectures which keeps showing us how much even expert feltmakers can learn from each other.«

~ She is impressed by the many people dedicated to feltmaking, each in her or his different way or intensity: »People who felt for a hobby or for relaxation, or craftspeople who make a living of it. I am inspired by how my predecessors Sigrid Bannier and Susanne Schächter-Heil successfully juggled this motley crew of creative heads and it is important that I continue in their footsteps.«

### New Homepage

Because the digital network will play a bigger role in the future Doris Niestroj works on a new homepage for the Filz-Netzwerk which will start in 2022 with many interesting possibilities. Margit Röhm would like to support professional feltmakers who faced financial losses during the pandemic with a day of open studios during the European Artisan Days. Additionally, she plans, together with the whole managing and organizing board, to increase public relations about the quality and advantages of felted products and to breathe new life into

feltmaking as a modern pastime.

» Wool, once you understand it, is an absolutely grand material«, Margit Röhm enthuses. To bring a textile seamlessly in any desired form is a small miracle that keeps entrancing me every new day. So do the endless permutations offered for design and that it is an archaic craft laden with meaning – all this continues to fan the flame of my enthusiasm that has not ebbed away in 16 years.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 45–47

## Wool Paintings

*Jill Harrison uses the fleeces of her own sheep for her detailed, delicate wool paintings*

An impressive ram's head with twisted horns, crows on a fence or a landscape with a grazing flock, but also portraits, amongst others of the singer Amy Winehouse, the tennis player Serena Williams or the great Marilyn Monroe: Jill Harrison's detailed images with impressive light/shadow contrasts seem to have been made with a watercolor brush. But the Scottish artists does not use watercolors, but fibers from fleeces of her own flock of sheep.

### Six Hebridean Sheep

The 65-year-old artist studied Graphic Design at Bradford College of Art and later, when her four children were grown up she took up her love of art again learning sculpture with bronze and clay. She discovered her passion for painting with wool only ten years ago, when she, her husband and her grandson had moved to Scotland into a croft cottage with 14 acres of land. »Shortly afterwards we decided to buy six black Hebridean sheep«, she says. Six sheep soon became twenty and bags of wool kept piling up at home. Jill Harrison tried to teach herself wet-felting, but she wasn't satisfied with the results. »Then I experimented in my own way of using dry wool and pressing it under glass,« she describes her unique artistic approach.

### A Hand for Portraiture

She combed and placed the fleece into shapes, e.g., sheep or other images, making good use of the different natural

shades of the wool. She placed the glass on top and framed them. A couple of them found their way into a local Art Show and to her joy they were bought on the spot. »This is how my addiction to working with sheep fleece had started. My love of portraiture soon took over and I started to create large works of expressive faces in large-size, dramatic and emotive portraits.« Jill Harrison was especially fascinated by silent movie stars, like Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, of whom she made a double portrait, but she also portrays contemporary stars. »The images would just grow as if by magic«, the artist muses. »The process starts with a painted backboard. The wool image is built up in layers. Then I comb and blend the different colors of fiber to make up the shades that I desire. I use the combed-out fibre so sheer that you can see through it. When I am happy with the finished picture, I place the glass on top and frame it. Thus the artwork is safely sealed between glass, board and frame and it stays in place.«

### Hand-Dyed Raw Wool

Jill Harrison cannot imagine using anything but fleeces of her own flock, which she dyes, unwashed and uncombed, with powder dyes. As she puts it: »I know my sheep and their wool. The different fleeces give my work its own character.« In order to be able to dye all desired shades she acquired a white Shetland ewe. »Sometimes, though, she enhances the images by wild flowers or even with leaf gold. »Once I had been commissioned to make »Wonder Woman« and I was adamant that she needed a golden tiara. It actually came out really well, I think.«

### A Garden Studio

Until recently the artist worked in the back room of her cottage, but now she has moved into her own little studio in the garden. »It is great to have my own private space where I can indulge myself listening to my music and immerse myself into playing with wool.« She much loves the Scottish countryside and the proximity of the rugged coastline and is pleased with how everything turned out right for her the last couple of years: »I never ever set out to become anything more than a Mum and a housewife – and least of all I dreamt to move to Scotland to become a wool artist who is actually selling her work!«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 48–50

## Elves in the Enchanted Forest

*The Artelab Society in Lombardia, Italy, invited children to a magical quest for hand-felted figurines*

Faggio and Biancospino, Camomilla and Violetta have hidden themselves in tree crutches, below trunks and roots in the Arlate forest – only to be finally found by children. The little felted gnomes, elves, fairies and animals are part of a project that Elisa D'Angelo and Eleonora Pirovano of the Artelab Society in Lombardia have organized bring a little joy to Italian children whose life had been strongly restricted during the Corona pandemic.

### Feet Made of Modeling Clay

For two months, the two women felted a total of 120 figurines from carded wool and a wire skeleton in both wet- and dry felting technique and named them for plants, e.g., Prezzemolo (parsley), Tiglio (linden) oder Trifoglio (clover). The dwarves were outfitted with feet made of modeling clay and lead so they could stand upright.

### Music in the Bosco Incantato

The two women hid the finished figurines in the wood that was turned into a truly enchanted forest, a »Bosco Incantato«, by means of music, draperies and tinkling bells. For three days, small groups (owing to the pandemic rules) of children from 3 to 10 years were provided with hand-drawn maps and then sent out on a search for small magic folks. Whoever had found an elf or a dwarf, a frog or bird was allowed to take the new friend home. »The number of children was limited so each had a chance to find a little doll or animal«, Elisa D'Angelo recalls. »We never thought it possible that within three days already all time slots were fully booked online.«

### Enthusiastic Treasure Hunters

The small treasure hunters' enthusiasm was huge. Chiara Russo called the event, where two of her children had taken part, a »truly magical experience«. »The search for dwarves in our forest with fitting background music, bewitching decorations and wood-carved signs was the epitome of what we all had missed so much – adults and children alike – during

the long, excruciating lockdown here in Italy. My children were so happy to come home with their new pixie friends.»

HELENE WEINOLD

## Artelab

The Artelab Society was founded in 2006 to foster social and cultural events in the small village of Arlate in Lombardia, between Como and Bergamo. Each year Artelab organizes four seasonal events, amongst others creative workshops with natural materials for children.

☞ Apart from the seasonal schedule the society, together with four village administrations and with the active help of schools and senior clubs had 3000 red poppies knitted or made from carded wool in remembrance of soldiers killed in action in World War II.

ELISA D'ANGELO

PAGE 51

## Felted Banknotes for ARTerhalt

*For the project «Emergency Money for Artists» (Künstlernetgeld) Irene Reinhardt designed «Filzgold» (Felted Gold) from wool and composition gold*

Each artist could really use a licence to print money in times of a pandemic. The project «Künstlernetgeld zum ARTerhalt» (approx. Save the Arts) of the Coburg Artists' label Verwertungsgesellschaft comes close to one. Be it false 50 or fake 100 € notes – the artists determine the face value of this fantasy money themselves. The value is the price for the small artworks in original banknote size.

### Exchange against Euros

The artists involved designed their »money« in individual handicrafts, signed and numbered the notes. »Counterfeiters« and clients were brought together in an online currency exchange where the two activist artists Oliver Heß and Martin Droschke of the Verwertungsgesellschaft posed as receivers of stolen goods – without provision. The counterfeit money

was exchanged against real Euros as per the printed-on value. Next to such an online sale there was a shop window exhibit in the Künstlerhaus Nürnberg and in the electric utility station in Erlangen.

### Emergency Money in the Time of Crisis

The project has a historical background: In times of crises often emergency money was printed and handed out, for instance at the times of hyper inflation in the 1920ies. Also private institutions worked with emergency money in order to pay outstanding wages. That money was made of paper, leather, fabric, even from china or aluminum foil.

### Unique with a Safety Thread

The Coburg felt artist started from there and felted banknotes in the fanciful currency »Filzgold« (Felted Gold). Each note is unique, gilded with composition gold and furnished with a gilded safety thread. The different values are limited to ten specimen each.

IRENE REINHARDT

PAGES 52-54

## A Dress is a Kingdom

*Claudia Arndt made an extravagant dress to be used as a stage setting for the puppeteer Annette Hanning*

The project with the puppeteer Annette Hanning from the theatre »Kleine Welten« (Small Worlds) allowed me to combine matters dear to me: co-operation and individuality, theatre and sculptural handicrafts, dream and reality, inside and outside – a true fabrication in silk and felt.

### A Moving Stage

A moveable fairy tale stage with two different places to play – reality and the world of dreams- was the order, a kind of dress that should serve both as a costume and stage setting. During a first try with a cloak we watched with fascination how effortlessly places and spaces open through folds and the enlargement of a lush amount of fabric, how the color concentration and the folding over of the cloth widths endlessly create new images, how the movement of a body conveys the illusion of proximity and expanse, valley

and hill, dark forests and bright meadows. Suddenly you see niches, a cave entrance or fantasy worlds.

☞ During the working process with Annette Henning, who is a master tailor herself we decided on a poncho vest with slits at the sides which offers support for the actress and allows for free movement for arms and body.

### Why Felt?

Felt has its own material characteristics – it can seem sturdy, dim, fine as well. It has and gives structure. It is light and robust; it can be formed, and it is flexible. Moreover, felt is easy to transport because it doesn't crumple: this is important, because Annette Hanning is often on the road with her mobile theatre »Kleine Welten«.

☞ Everything must be carried by the player, moved around, acted out. When she forms the space with her legs, turns the puppets alive in her hands or renders a story atmospheric to by her voice modulation she must not be heavily burdened. The dress should be light – as light as a double-sided cloak with a surface of nine square meters can ever be! And finally certain places – colors and structures – must sit exactly where they are needed in the course of the story. In the end we decided on a dress put together from hand-dyed wool and cotton gauze. It was sewn by hand since machine seams would have been irritating. Finally, a landscape is a kind of natural patchwork in itself.

### Less is More

I wanted to create a landscape image solely via colors and the structure of the colored areas which should have meaning and should underline the story, but also awaken associations on the side of the audience. The stage setting costume has to »carry« the figures, kindle the imagination and still remain mysterious. Annette Hanning's style of production and design are small formats and quiet, intimate sounds, a kind of quaintness which demands close looking and listening.

### Back to My Roots

I come from a theatre family. As the child of a single mother, an actress, I spent a lot of time in the theatre: during rehearsals and shows, backstage or up front. I breathed in the atmosphere and magic reigning there, while I silently drew or worked on something in the background. Later I became an actress,

too, but a part of me liked working with my hands better. So, I turned to fine art, to painting.

☞ My grandmother, also an actress, passed on her love for handicrafts to me: In her apron pouches there were always needle, thread and scissors. During my art study at the HdK Berlin I learned SoftArt and devoted myself to working with textiles. Feltmaking is, among the many other techniques, a wonderfully creative part of that. I love mixing and combining too much to settle for one single textile technique. With gratitude and joy, I took up working for and with the theatre, to be a part of this enchanting dream world again and I am happy about Annette Hännig's invitation to bring a piece about dreaming forth into reality together.

CLAUDIA ARNDT

PAGE 55

## A Virus to Take off

*On Steph Selke's Corona blouse the spiked Covid 19 virus shines in fluorescent wool*

»I liked the idea of a virus that you simply could take off again«, the felt artist Steph Selke says about her work »Pull over the virus«, a second-hand blouse with felted-on spiky Corona viruses that shine under black light.

☞ The blouse was made in the wake of the art event REMIX! with the institute of science EMBL (European Molecular Biology Laboratory) in Heidelberg, funded by the European Commission. For this project Steph Selke had felted three big depictions of cells that scientists work with every day.

### Special Coloring

Later the Corona blouse followed, »of course prompted by the given circumstances«, as Steph Selke tells us. She sees the object also »as a symbol of our consumerism that surely plays a big part in this misery«. As she explains: »My thoughts and work revolve around touching, handling, making things clear and graspable.« For the nuno felt work the artist used Merino roving of 16 mic which she had dyed in a fluorescent color by Heike Diehl, a.k.a. as Frau Wölffchen, »because scientists also color the cells with fluorescent algae and corals.«

### Exhibit in Münster

The felted cell images were lighted with black light during the Night of Research at the EMBL building and were later on show again at the event NeckarOrte in Heidelberg. Until mid-October, two of the cells and the Corona blouse were on display at the show: »Longing – Ein Sehnen im Raum« at the Hawerkamp premises in Münster.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 56–57

## Wall Image as an Admonition for Watchfulness

*With Catrin Beck, pupils from Querfurt felted a tapestry for their gymnasium*

A plea to treat our planet Earth with more emotional awareness and to value and protect its beauty was transformed into a felted tapestry from sustainable sheep wool by 18 pupils of the Burgstadt Gymnasium under the supervision of Catrin Beck. The communal work titled »Wachsamkeit (Attentiveness)« was felted in the annual project week at the end of the school year.

### Earth in Focus

»At a closer look of the felted image conveys the theme's main idea«, Catrin Beck explains. »Our beautiful mother Earth, whose protection is worthwhile, is situated in the center. On her left side all is bright and friendly; positive colors and shapes are in the foreground. The right side, however, is designed with more negative, darker details.« Also worked-in pieces of black plastic foil warn of the dangers of the ubiquitous microplastic.

### Needle-Felted Details

At first the students needle-felted motifs like ladybugs, butterflies, blossoms, a rainbow, a turtle and a whale, but also a spiked Corona virus and a fish skeleton. These single parts were arranged around the blue planet on white sheep wool and wet-felted in – assisted by a sander – before all students rolled and fulled the table-sized image.

### Endurance and Commitment

The felt artist Catrin Beck, who offers various creative courses in the frame of an all-day school project, is very pleased with the students who worked with joy, perseverance and commitment. »It is not so simple for the untrained to »paint« with wool, but the young girls have mastered the project well with their curiosity and fun.«

☞ The felted tapestry will have its place in the newly built school building, an admonition to a sustainable use of the world's resources. As Catrin Beck remarks: »Wake up and move into action« could have been another name of this impressive textile image.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 58–59

## Feltmaking without Plastic

*You can hardly get by without plastic when felting, but for many items a sustainable substitute can be found. Corinna Nitschmann presents some alternatives*

Always this silly plastic material when you want to felt! Bubble foil, sound insulation, painting foil... do we really need it? Yes and no. This must be answered by everyone individually; I will come back to that at the end of this article.

☞ The first important thing is not to buy any new plastic materials especially for your felting ideas. Bubble- and other foils can be re-used since you often get them as packaging material. This makes a lot of sense.

### Felt Mat and Fulling Materials

Instead of waterproof foil or a skid-proof drawers' insert from the Swedish furniture retailer the following alternatives have stood the test of time:

☞ A bamboo roller blind from the hardware or furniture store: I have been using my roller blind as a mat for 15 years and I roll up my felt objects therein as well. If it skids on the table put a moist towel underneath. The bamboo blind must be completely dried after use, otherwise it starts to show tiny moldy specks.



Raffia bast fiber (Vidarama mat): This mat has a much finer structure than a bamboo blind. The cutting edges should be roller-burnished and basted with bast, so they don't fray – but then the mat is ready for use: Put it on a table, moisten it with a little water, lay the wool out, roll it up, tie and roll it. In order get a greater width you can baste together several of those mats.

☞ My advice: If you want to make snow-white felts you need a mat of its own that is only used for white wool, otherwise you may get colorful fibers in your white.

☞ If you carefully think about the ecological benefit or damage of single materials the question arises whether one should felt on top of something that has been transported thousands of kilometers – Raffa is imported from the tropics of Africa. On the other hand, it is a re-growing resource that can be composted after a long use.

☞ A normal table or any wooden surface: You don't really need something bubbly or wavy under the wool. I like to felt on a table or a wooden plate which is not quite smooth. You can build a simple felting table, and instead of a table top you can fix latches or bars next to each other.

☞ My advice: Before using it make sure whether the tabletop might suffer by getting wet or whether the natural wood should be treated with wax or stained.

☞ Repp table sets: Cotton placemats with repp structure are suitable for smaller felt projects but can easily be sewn together into bigger pieces. I like them a lot because they take up surplus water well yet still contain enough moisture to felt properly. Due to their special woven texture, they do not slid around the table. I felt balls and cords exclusively on them.

☞ Moist towel: A simple, but efficient felting mat!

☞ An old piece of surface felt: In Mongolia, the felt carpet that is used as a mat or to roll new rugs in is called »Mother felt«. Since it is already firmly fulled the laid-out wool cannot felt in.

☞ An old piece of carpet / wall-to-wall carpeting: This is the favorite felt mat of the Hungarian felt artist Bea Németh. After a move or a renovation there are often pieces left. You can also ask for patterns or waste material at your local interior decorator.

☞ A discarded shoe rack, trunk trim or car mat: Admittedly, these are mostly made from plastic, but it is always better to re-use them instead of throwing them away. These long-lasting mats often have

burlings or are otherwise rippled and often have an edge so the water cannot flow down from the table.

### Resist Material for Feltmaking

Corrugated paper, cardboard boxes: From a pizza or a shoe box simple resists can be cut out. Of course you can only use them once, but so what? It has never bothered me to cut them out a second time, and I never produce in series of 50 equal pieces for which I would use just this same one resist.

☞ The cardboard softens and depending on the type and shape of the hollow felt it may tear while removing it. It helps to try out which kind of cardboard is suffering more at fulling, or which stays more stable and can be pulled out of the hollow pre-felt in only a few scraps after fulling is done.

☞ Old Denim Jeans: This hint for sustainable resists came from a dear feltmaking colleague. The denim pieces should not be too thin or frayed, otherwise the wool felts in between the denim fibers. When you neaten the edges to prevent them from fraying the resist can be re-used. Who likes thicker resists can sew a kind of oven mitt from denim. Put two parts of equal size on top of each other, sew them together along the edges. Leave an opening in the seam, turn it around through it and top-stitch the surface so the layers won't skid.

☞ The above mentioned repp place mats can serve as resist material as well: Cut them into form and seam them – so you get a long-lasting cotton resist.

☞ Too firmly rolled felt piece »Felt corpses« get a new life as resists. They should be completely fulled through so that they no longer felt with the loose wool strands and then cut into the desired shape.

### Scrim or Gauze

Gauze or scrim from plastic fibers we like to use when the dry wool is moistened, soaped or when the air is to be pressed out. Good to know: These auxiliary means did not exist before, and with a little patience you can waive them altogether.

☞ The gauze or scrim is said to prevent the fibers from clinging to your fingers when you lift them from the surface or grope around on half-moistened wool. Just act more calmly and lift your hands slowly off the surface, then no scrim is needed! And if this is required at all, I recommend an old drape or curtain: You'll save it from the waste bin, and you can work faster.

### Felting Clothes

In my experience, the felting of clothes is most connected to unnecessary plastic use: Disposable gloves, painting foil, bubble foil – one tends to believe that without these items making a very thin felt is almost impossible.

☞ The question is whether it justifies the workload and the bigger ecological footprint to make more delicate garments out of the raw material wool? For summer blouses, wouldn't it be more practical to use linen, nettle cloth or hemp? How about felting jackets from local wool instead of clothes from Merino that are worn directly on the skin?

☞ But back to plastic: If you must use disposable gloves at all try to treat them with care and use them more than once. A good alternative are thin plastic bags that are common in every household which are pulled over the hands. Also waste material of waterproof foil is convenient to softly rub a finer piece of felt.

☞ Painting foil can be rinsed, dried and folded for the next felting session.

☞ Scraps of old discarded lining material can substitute for painting foil. They are not compostable but at least find another good use before they go into the waste bin. Densely woven synthetic fabrics tend not to felt in, but that should be controlled sometimes.

### Conclusion

So, is plastic absolutely necessary for feltmaking? The answer is no. If you want to abstain from it, you should be prepared to invest more time in experimenting with other materials, cutting out resists more often or limiting yourself to felting with locally obtained wool, if possible.

☞ On principle, feltmaking uses up some resources if you count the water and electricity required. Clean water is getting scarce in the world. In times past, wool was washed in natural bodies of water, something that is no longer possible. Also, the considerable amount of soap should be taken into consideration which also puts a strain on the environment.

☞ Feltmaker who give courses, like I do, too, should ask themselves: Could I imagine teaching alternatives for plastic in my classes or should I take lessons out of my schedule that I no longer find reasonable in that respect – and if not, why not?

CORINNA NITSCHMANN

# Jacob’s Sheep or Four-Horned Sheep

## History and Origin

The Jacob’s Sheep, also called Four-Horned Sheep or Multiple Horns Sheep is now a common breed in Great Britain that originally came from Asia Minor. It’s name is derived from a biblical source: In the first book of Moses the shepherd Jacob is allowed to choose »all spotted, mottled or dark lambs« as a reward for his services to Laban’s flock. (1. Moses 30,27-35)

☞ The breed in its present-day form stemmed most likely from a flock kept in an English park in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At first, they were only kept for decorative reasons. Only in 1969 a breeders’ community was founded and the breed established itself as a fine provider of meat and wool. The four horns may originate from Viking Sheep.

## Race Description

The Jacob’s sheep is a sheep of middle height with a spotted skin. The head has no wool and has two to six horns for rams and ewes alike. The color is white with black dots, breeding efforts desire a color relation of 60 % white and 40 % black.

☞ The horns, as already hinted at, are of great variety in number and look. The upper horns should grow backwards and the lower ones forward, without bothering the animal too much. But considering all variations, we find some that can be very irritating for the animals.

☞ Grown rams weigh up to 85 kg, the ewes up to 60 kg. They render good meat.

## The Wool

The pelt of the Jacob Sheep is supposed to be of mixed wool, yet the fleeces I worked with here don’t echo that statement. We clearly find uniform fibers of middle length and very differing in fineness. I would tag the wool as quaint.

☞ As per information of the breeders’s association, the Jacob Sheep develop kemp sometimes and the fineness of the fibers or their coloring show great differences, that is why the denomination »mixed wool« is considered suitable. As one breeder says, the focus lies now

Weight	Initial Size	End Size	Shrinking factor
3 g	20 cm x 20 cm	11.5 cm x 11.5 cm	1.74
10 g	20 cm x 20 cm	13.5 cm x 13 cm	1.47

on fine wool, and their efforts make the kemp almost entirely disappear. But even without kemp the fineness varies strongly.

☞ It is important to note that the dots should clearly be separated from the white part of the Jacob’s Sheeps’ skin. There is no melange to speak of. For practical purposes this means that the colors can be separated relatively easy.

## Felting Tests

The following tests were carried out with a very soft Jacob Sheep wool. I think this appropriate because the wool’s softness is a breeding prerogative and might be found often.

☞ As usual, two surfaces were felted, one with 10 g, another with 3 g of wool.

☞ I really cannot say that this kind of wool felts willingly. It takes up a lot of time for it to felt together and the result is not really firm. Also, the shrinking lags behind most other kinds of wool. The felt remains soft and easy to stretch. A difference between the dark and light areas could not be detected here.

☞ Still, wonderful furs can be felted from Jacob’s Sheep Wool. It felts well enough to stay on the top layer of hair and bad enough so that you need not be on the alert that the hair on the upper side of the fur might not felt in properly. These furs are quickly made and look quite beautiful.

## Conclusion

As with felting every bi-colored wool the wonderful structures are enchanting. Especially two-color fleeces are most suitable for felting raw wool simply because the felt doesn’t blend uniformly but stays spotted like the animal that provided it.

☞ So, what is to be done with this kind of wool? Anybody who doesn’t like making sitting furs (which is definitely the best use for Jacob’s Sheep Wool) could make cushions, maybe animal-shaped, or felt pieces for pets to lie on. The felt stays relatively soft, but at the same time it is sturdy and easily cleaned. My cats dote on their felt mats!

MARGIT RÖHM

# Surmaks and Hunting Gloves

*Felted Objects of Kazhak Immigrants in Mongolia*

Some Kazhak tribes immigrated to Mongolia in 1924 and still live there. Many of the approximate 80.000 Kazhak descendants are shepherds. They erect their felt tents in the spring next to their house or on the summer pastures, because – as they maintain – they feel better there than in solid houses. We have been researching the Kazhak folk art for over 30 years and were happy to make interesting discoveries and new friends during two study trips in 2014 and 2015.

## Surmaks for the Yurt

A kind employee of the town museum of Bajan Ölgij invited us to his yurt. It was full of wonderful mosaic felt carpets called Surmak in the Kazhak language.

☞ These Kazhak surmaks are made with little material expense and very efficiently. Not a single centimeter of raw material is thrown away. There are always two carpets made at the same time, they are »like brother and sister«, but have different front and back sides. The patterning is usually in five parts. Looking closer, one can see that the right and left square, after having been cut out, are sewn together complimentary to each other. The same applies to the narrow strip that is running under and over the carpet’s middle part. The middle part in itself is a complementary piece of another »brother carpet«. Where cut edges run together the adjoining lines are covered with yarns twisted and needled on in S-or Z-direction. In the Kazhak culture the colors red and blue symbolize life and death.

## Ropes Made of Yak Hair

The tent of a hunter we intended to visit stood 10 km away from the next village near a brook. Its water was so pure that not only animals but also humans drank from it. On the trip through the scraggy mountain areas, we met Yaks. Their long hair is very valuable for making ropes of excellent quality used for animal keeping or in connection with the Yurts. The thickest rope can easily tow a car.

## Hunting with Eagles

Not only Kyrgyz, but also Kazakh hunters

are very skilled falconers, here they work with eagles, often the Golden Eagle. If you enter the tent on the mens' side in winter – immediately to the left – you see the bird of prey sitting on a low wooden log. Its eyes are covered with a leather hood.

~ The bird is flown off from horseback. It sits on the hunter's arm who takes off the bird's hood at the right moment. It soars, finds its prey – a rabbit, groundhog, or even larger prey like foxes or wolves – shoots down and tries to break their spine. The eagle flies back to the hunter with the dead prey and is given a gift of food in exchange.

### Felted Hunting Gloves

During the hunt the bird's owner needs a felted or leather glove to protect himself against the talons. These gloves were usually made by the women, but this work has become rare today. The mitten

shown here is a cherished treasure in our collection.

~ It is made of five felted pieces. The thumb piece and back and front side were each made from two parts. A fifth, brown felted piece is fastened thereunder. On the inside the mitten is lined with black velvet. The seams, as with the carpets, are made of a decorative pattern.

### The Magic of Ancient Things

Together with the hunter's wife we made two small mosaic carpets. Mrs. Saule told us during the work: »My mother had many felted carpets. Some of were so worn and tattered that I cut them apart and sewed the better parts together again. The bad ones were put aside. Yesterday I pinched some wool out of them which I now put into the new wool. After fulling the old wool will be invisible. Old, tried and tested things have magical powers. When making a new felt object the used fibers

will strengthen it, so we always try to put a small old piece into the new.«

~ One whole winter Mrs. Saule worked on the embroidery for one carpet. In her life, she has made 30 to 40 of them, as she says. Two are presented here.

~ How beautiful it would be and how estimated a Kazhak woman would feel if all carpets or other textiles she has ever made were subject of an exhibit! On show would not only be mosaic carpets(sürmak), felt carpets with felted-in patterns (ala kijis), embroidered cushions (djamurka), knotted carpets and knitted tights, but also carpets made from sheepskin and bedding filled with wool. All those items are full proof of the skills and the sense of beauty these women possess. Apart from their families these are her greatest treasure.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

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