

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #74, Spring 2022

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Dear Readers,

Have you noticed something while leafing through the current issue? Through this filzfun issue runs a thread – more precisely, a colorful thread. In some contributions you will see corals and other fascinating maritime creatures in the brightest of colors. A whole „reef“ made of felted corals was made by the Dutch felting association ViltKontaktGroep as a communal project (see page 12ff.), which was, amongst other sources, inspired by a crocheting project by the Australian sisters Margaret and Christine Wertheim, which is currently on show in Baden-Baden (see Spectrum, pages 6/7).

The Dutch felt artist Saar Snoek is especially committed to the wondrous water world (see page 24ff.) Many of her works base on the overwhelming forms and colors of maritime creatures. She is especially taken by Nudibranchia, the true sea slugs that she fondly calls »Nudis«. As with butterflies on land, they have a similar variety in shape and coloring. One felted rendition, modelled on the beautiful star slug you may soon be wearing as a brooch on the lapel of a muted blazer: Saar Snoek tells the filzfun readers the secret how to felt those »Nudis« in a detailed step-by-step tutorial. Send us a photo of your own sea slug! We would be pleased to present some of these endearing objects in one of the next issues.

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.

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Apart from the coral project in The Netherlands, other communal projects came to life during the pandemic with the aim of supporting the felting community: Some challenges presented by the Filz-Netzwerk we have already reported on (see filzfun no. 72, page 8ff.), Annie Veldkamp's SHARE project that boasts of about 2000 felted dolls, many of which were elaborately embroidered (see page 48ff.) and a tree wall hanging by Gabriele Schilcher, with a treetop composed of many wish leaves made by textile artists from several countries (see pages 54/55).

All these actions demonstrate the great team spirit of feltmakers around the globe, notwithstanding all difficulties. What a pleasurable experience!

*Best regards
Your filzfun-team*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de
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Playing With Light and Shadow in the Filzwelt

Felted objects by Annette Quentin-Stoll and photographs by Robert Quentin are shown around the theme »Licht- und Schattenspiel« (Play of Light and Shadow) in the felto Filzwelt Soltau from April 24th to August 21st, 2022. At the show's ending, Annette Quentin-Stoll will hold a felting workshop in the museum on August 20th und 21st 2022.
filzwelt-soltau.de

Paradisiac Felt

The garden Eden, where people, animals and plants once lived in paradisiac harmony was the inspiration for a felt art show in Atelier Werner Kleiber in Ebikon, Switzerland that will take place from May 20th to 22nd, 2022. Brigitte Zahner, Kathrin Jauslin, Marina Waibel, Nathalie Kogan and Daniela Melberg present their individual interpretations of the mythical paradise.
meldani.ch

Textile History – Elegant and Provocative

Textile art objects made by national and international artists are to be seen in the Königshain castle in the Upper Lausitz region until Mai 22nd 2022 in a show called »Elegant und provokativ«: elegant, like the famous little black dress or provocative like youth fashion culture – in this sense, also textiles are turned into art by contemporary artists – for instance Jutta Kohlbeck's piece »Once upon Today« (see photo).
museum-oberlausitz.de

In Memoriam Mary Fogg

17 members of the group Quilt Art were inspired both by Mary Fogg's art of living and her textile expertise to create their exhibition »Material Evidence« which is open to the public in the Textile

Collection Max Berk in Heidelberg from März 6th through September 1st. Mary Fogg was a founding member of an association of renowned artists in 1985. She passed away at the age of 95 years in 2016. The current show is based upon her concept of 'remembrance' and, in technical terms, the forceful scope of stitches' design.
museum.heidelberg.de

Varied Issues at the Filzkolleg

The Filz-Netzwerk in co-operation with the felto Filzwelt in Soltau offers a summerly feltmaking lecture course from July 4th to 9th, 2022. On schedule are feltmaking lessons for all experiential stages, an open workshop and offers for teaching purposes. »In times when real encounters have become rare Soltau offers the space and protection by a much-tested hygiene concept to enjoy feltmaking from all possible perspectives«, as the organizers Ina Jeromin and Susanne Schächter-Heil assure.
Information and application: filznetzwerk.de

Workshops for the Creative

During the adult education program offered by the Austrian felting collective wollmodus in in Laab im Walde, Lower Austria from July 7th to 10th, 2022, participants are invited not only to felt, but to dye, embroider, braid with willow branches and to decorate items with beads. The instructors are Nina Demidova (Nuno-Felt and Mediumprint), Kim Bons (Wicker Work), Anja Lampert (Abstract Embroidery) and Betti Paw (3D-Insect with beads).
Information and application: wollmodus.at

A Crocheted Coral Reef

More than 20 000 people from all over the world have crocheted their coral to form a monumental reef that was on show at the Biennial in Venice in 2019 and which is still shown at the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden until June 26th, 2022. This »Crocheted Coral Reef« by Margaret and Christine Wertheim is the centerpiece of the exhibition »Wert und Wandel der Korallen« (The Value and Change of Corals), drawing attention to the much endangered real coral reefs in the world's oceans.
museum-frieder-burda.de

A Day in the Sign of the Helix

Experiments with Brigitte Funk's double Resist Technique at the Regional Meeting

Identical resists and yet a trove of the most different results: How strongly the choice of wool, fabrics and additional fibers reflect on the finished project as well as on the single feltmaker's personality became obvious at the regional meeting Ostwestfalen-Lippe of the Filz-Netzwerk in Karin Twelkemeier's studio in Versmold. After the temporary pandemic halt, twelve feltmakers greatly enjoyed the meeting with its many fun moments, lively exchange and communal creativity.

∞ For a day they experimented with the double resist technique following a tutorial by Brigitte Funk from the filzfun issue no. 72 with the aim of making brightly colored, sculptural helix forms with varied surface structures.

Three-Dimensional Spirals

Prepared pre-felts, wool in color gradient, sari silk threads, white tencel fibers as well as various kinds of silk, an old blouse or other pieces of fabric that lend themselves to be easily felted-in served as material for the three-dimensional spirals. The trick of Funke's technique is that the pre-felt of a drop-shaped resist is cut open spirally and is then wrapped around a second resist, also covered by barely

felted-on wool, with the cutting edges arranged at intervals. Due to the varying strength of the different materials the felt shrinks to a solid, sculptural helix form.

Attention Required

Since there was only one day at our disposal the drying time of the felt on resist 1 was determined rather short. When not completely dry, the fibers wouldn't connect everywhere with the bottom part of resist 2. When this happened, thread and needle came to rescue. »We realized for our own good that it does make great sense to read the instructions carefully and follow them closely«, said host Karin Twelkemeier, with a wink. Here she offers another piece of valuable advice: »When putting on the small pre-felt pieces, take care that nothing shifts. You have to really pay attention.«

Window Decoration

»The snail shell, or helix forms – also combined with dried flowers – look fine when hanging from the ceiling or from a window frame«, Karin Twelkemeier suggests. Several of those objects in different sizes and colors can be arranged into a mobile. When the shell's opening faces the floor, a butterfly's or caterpillar's head may peep out. ♡ Karin Twelkemeier strikes a positive balance of the day's work: »It was pure fun! Each helix is a unique piece and an interesting decorative object with an individual surface.«

ANKE GÜTTLER AND HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 10–11

A Fair Around Sheep

At the Slow Schaf Fair in Münsingen mostly regional exhibitors showed a range of sheep and goat produce.

In the biosphere Swabian Alb sustainability, biodiversity and nature protection are written in capital letters. The most important agents of nature protection are, without any question, the flocks that groom and maintain the ancient juniper heaths as four-legged lawn mowers. Small wonder, therefore, that sheep were on focus at the Slow Schaf fair. In the late fall, it attracted, in combination with the fair schön&gut,

many visitors from near and far to the albgut Altes Lager location in Münsingen. In the former granaries about 190 chosen exhibitors presented mostly regional specialties as well as inspirations regarding sustainability in housing matters, clothing and lifestyle.

Helix Logo

Already at the entrance some animals of the flock owned by the Münsinger Schäferei Stotz showed what it was all about in the one half of the combined event. At the Slow Schaf you could learn all about culinary aspects and gather many other interesting facts around sheep and goats. This was achieved in co-operation with Slow Food Deutschland e.V. and the Slow Food Convivien Stuttgart, Tübingen/Neckar-Alb und Ulm - the reason why the logo advertised not a cuddly lamb, but the slow-food helix.

Lamb Sausage and Goat Milk Soap

Under the motto »Gutes und Schönes von Schaf und Ziege« (Wholesome and Beautiful Things of Sheep and Goats) the offers on show varied from lambs' sausages and lambs' meet to cheeses, goat milk soap, pelts and wool blankets of different sizes, felted decorative items and those for daily use as well as fashion collections made from pure wool. High-quality products from Merino wool could be admired, next to blankets and socks from Alpaka wool; shoes sheep pelt and slippers and felted wool waited for clients; wool for felting and felting needles were as available as raw and knitting wool. The artists showed felted art objects, scarves, bags, fantastically designed animal figures and in accordance with the upcoming festive season Christmas trees, Santas and Nativity figurines.

Cashmere Wool from Nepal

The offers were not limited to wool from the local biosphere. One booth had high-quality Cashmere wool products from Nepal – amongst them shawls, machine-knitted and then hand-felted that were delicate and light as an elfin web. Also, wool clothing in bright checkered patterns from Ireland was on show. But the greater part of the exhibitors were local producers, often the bio-wool came from their own farms or at least from neighboring providers.

♡ Keeping sheep and goats has been a characteristic trait of the Swabian Alb for centuries. And if you ask the exhibitors

and the public of the Slow Schaf this will and should not change in the near future.

INGRID ZELLNER

PAGES 12–15

Enchanting Waterworld

A huge felted coral reef was created in The Netherlands.

The Corona pandemic put public life to a sudden halt in the whole of Europe. Also in The Netherlands, the feltmakers' association Viltkontaktgroep (VKG) was no longer able to organize felters' meetings. But as we all know, crises do breed sometimes new and exciting ideas – for instance the coral reef project, planned and successfully realized by Mathilde Pielkenrood, a very active VKG member. ♡ Liesbeth Wieberdink, who co-operated especially in the final phase, spoke with Mathilde Pielkenrood about her initiative and the resulting installation.

Inspiration and Idea

Mathilde Pielkenrood: During the pandemic I had a lot of time to look for new felting inspirations on the internet. My aim was a big-size format that should direct one's attention to nature's peril. Luxurious crocheted corals caught my eye (see Spectrum, page 6/7). These small maritime animals that cannot move are very much threatened by the rising water temperatures. I was thrilled by the various forms and colors of the corals. Felted, such sculptural work depict nature's wealth of different shapes and most astonishing shades.

♡ My internet search led me to Sara Vugt's »honderdduizendbomenproject« who, together with more than thousand volunteers, had embroidered a whole forest. All this made me think of felting a coral reef wall with interested VKG parties. The regional coordinators immediately warmed up to the idea and its realization began on the spot. We connected remotely and were also able to celebrate the VKG's 30th anniversary; it was founded in 1991.

Tender Offer and Journal

Liesbeth Wieberdink: How did you proceed? Did you make a detailed plan?

Mathilde Pielkenrood: No, not at all. I simply started with the image I had before my eyes: to bring a whole lot of corals in different colors and forms together. It will work out somehow, I thought recklessly then. In January 20 21 we wrote to all 1000 VKG members and invited them to felt corals until July 21 and to send them to my home address. I was pleasantly surprised by how many felt creations I received and my personal contact with the mailman intensified with every new day.

~ Liesbeth Wieberdink: Did you inform on the process and pass on new information?

~ Mathilde Pielkenrood: Yes, in May I distributed a photographed coral journal with the items that had accumulated until then, and I encouraged all members again to take an active part. Each following month I issued an update, so all in all I sent four reports.

Muted Colors

Liesbeth Wieberdink: I remember that in one coral journal the audience was admonished not to use too bright or flashy colors anymore. What was that all about?

~ Mathilde Pielkenrood: Yes, that's true. I received so many parcels with different corals that it became more and more difficult to combine the various colors. Then I contacted Saar Snoek and asked her for advice. She had already hosted workshops for felting coral and had won the World of Wearable Art Award (see portrait, page 24ff.) with a coral costume in 2017. During a workshop she confirmed my impression and told me that she sometimes soaked certain contributions in an additional color bath in order to better harmonize the colors.

A Sea of Corals

Liesbeth Wieberdink: I still remember well a visit in your studio, during which I wanted to see what kind of corals I myself should make. I could hardly believe my eyes: Wherever I looked there were felted corals, hundreds of them, in different colors and ranging from simple to intricate shapes and sizes.

~ To bring some order to the chaos we spontaneously started to sort things out. It became clear that you were still on the look-out for a suitable method to arrange everything into a pleasing whole.

~ On the spot the two of us went to the utility store and set to work a bit later with a staple gun and plywood

boards. We spend many hours sorting, combining, stapling – and also removing and rearranging, until at last we were satisfied with the result.

~ The mutual creative work was so much fun that we finished decorating all plywood boards. On hindsight I think that one needs a sparring partner in such a big project to achieve a good result.

~ Many days of arranging and combining followed until we had reached a stage where nothing matched anymore. We had to act to warrant context. Some pieces were felted again to make them smaller and firmer, some were re-worked as to color or just used in parts. The more panels were finished the more difficult it got to maintain a structural unity. Finally, we were done: Six big wooden panels with felted, color-coordinated elements formed a coral reef.

~ On the last panel we arranged all whitish corals and arranged some who still had a hint of color at the left and packed them densely. On the right side, however, the course of the coral bleaching, their dying, becomes obvious. These are arranged less densely, and the last corals almost tip off the frame. I hope that the future will show a more hopeful sign than expressed with our felted reef.

Experiences For the Future

Liesbeth Wieberdink: What do we conclude? What insights, hints and helpful suggestions can we pass on for such communal projects that involve many participants?

~ Firstly: Good communication and clearly defined working conditions enhance participation. One should point out, though, that not all handed-in felt objects were used. After all, it is the end result that counts, meaning that all contribution might have to undergo transformations of all sorts.

~ Secondly: Gather a small team of people that get along well with each other. One single person must be the decision-maker. To carry out so big a project alone is almost impossible.

~ Mathilde Pielkenrood: Over time it became clear that I had to make definite decisions, which I communicated accordingly. Liesbeth Wieberdink has helped me a lot and we discussed the various facets emerging from such large-scale project work. I was pleased that Liesbeth always left the final word to me and that we could discuss everything together. Not every felt object got a prominent part, but we are very happy

with the overall outcome and effect of the installation.

~ The result worked out well and showed great variations. We are very happy that we can exhibit our coral project at different events, and we are negotiating for even more occasions. Our coral project speaks for itself and also offers an insight into the endless possibilities of feltmaking.

INTERVIEW: LIESBETH WIEBERDINK

PAGES 16–17

Stitch for Stitch Hope and Joy of Living

High Quality Exhibits at the 8th Quilt-Triennial

Every three years, Heidelberg becomes the place to visit for ambitious patchwork quilters and textile artists from all over Germany and abroad when a choice of art quilts is on show at the Textile Collection Max Berk. At the end of 202, that time had come around again: For three months, the show familiarized the public with the astounding development of patchwork quilting, ranging from a blanket made of discarded clothes to unique art work. In the meantime, the show has travelled to the Kreis Museum at the end of the year (see info box)

50 Chosen Works

Almost all participants went about this competition with immense creative spirit and put their hearts and souls into it, noteworthy in these exceptional times. The quality was notably increased, and the ideas had more depth compared to former Triennial applications, but one could feel the inclination to convey hope and a joy of living through artwork. From 159 applications, the five-people jury from Norway, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Germany chose 50 exhibits stemming from 15 European countries. For the first time, there were contributions from countries like Greece, Poland, Slovakia and Romania.

~ The share of younger applicants has increased remarkably. The award for talented young junior quilters went to 31-year-old Paulina Sadrak, an art graduate from Lodz for her work »9x11«, a transparent, delicate color

study in machine embroidery giving the impression of a worn patchwork quilt.

~ The jury gave the innovation award for big formats to the 26 year-old Hungarian Dóra Márföldi for »Quicky«: An upcycling-object, the surface design of which, together with hand-quilted natural materials that show signs of wear, create a certain faded noblesse and evokes a link to this century-old traditional craft.

Positive Message

Two objects were deemed of equal quality in ranking for the Doris-Winter-Memorial Award. For the first time ever, the jury decided to split the 5.000 Euro prize money and to give it to the two Swiss artists Rita Merten and Heidi König. Despite all differences, both objects show a determined will to convey a positive message. »Physical Distancing« by Rita Merten machine-traces the social commitments and the symbolic hope of people in the time of lockdown in a highly emotional and imaginative way.

~ Also, Heidi König, with her object »Kunterbunt« (Brightly Colored), wanted to contrast the daily bulletins and recurring concerns around Covid 19, lockdown, sickness and home office with something happy and brightly colored, as she put it. The gaps in this 3-D object change its impression relative to the viewer's standpoint and filter the impression into a kind of traditional kinetic art.

~ The aspect of occupying space characterizes also many other objects, for example the Slovakian communal project »What we cover up with« made by the academic Miroslav Brooš and his student Terezia Krnáčová which consists of three waves of plastic sacks and waste lying on the exhibition floor.

Political Statements

Quite politically engaged is »Freiheit, Gleichheit, Solidarität« (Freedom, Equality, Solidarity) by the Austrian Ursula Bierbaumer-Bohle, who deals with the subject »Black lives matter«. From the socio-cultural program »Living Fabrics« derives the object »Garten 4« (Garden 4) by the artist Nesa Gschwend: Over travels throughout Europa, but also to Georgia or India the Swiss artists has encouraged people from all social classes and age cohorts to take part in communal textile work. Similarly ambitious is the contribution called »A Place to Live« based on Pascale Goldenberg's Afghanistan Initiative: Drawings of Afghan women dwelling on their dream

places to live are projected onto a patchwork of white, recycled pieces of linen.

~ Corona and its looming aftermath are sensed throughout the show's content, noting all pertaining facets like standstill/stillness, sticking together, relationships and complications, but it also serves as a means of setting an example against depression or the awareness or fear of one's mortality.

~ Other works, playing with colors and forms aesthetically, thwart too loaded meanings and remind the visitor pleasurably of patchwork quilting8 origins instead. These round off the exhibit, the aim of which is a well-balanced overview of all possible features of contemporary Art Quilting.

DR. KRISTINE SCHERER

PAGES 18-19

3-D Resists and Ecoprint

Open workshop with Nina Demidova in the Wampendobl Paradise

Four women and four different projects: It was no easy task Nina Demidova had envisaged for her five-day course in the so-called Wampendobl Paradise. On Petra's and Marc's farm she accompanied the participants individually, with great patience, competence and skill.

~ A white Nunofelt coat, a darkly patterned wool coat, a light woolen jacket and a Nuno felt sweater were to be made. For all works 3D resists were prepared. This technique makes it easy to register the peculiarities of human build, e.g., a male midriff or a woman's bust. Nina Demidova taught the group how to transfer the measurements onto the resist.

Layer Direction and Shrinking Factor

In order to identify different shrinking factors trial felts were made under different laying conditions (crosswise, only lengthwise, both length- and crosswise). For the white Nuno felt coat, for example, the wool was laid out crosswise, for the pure wool jacket and the dark coat only lengthwise.

~ Other than with a 2D-resist the arms have to be made separately and then

sewed onto the torso, Nina Demidova explains, adding: »To get a better fit, the arms should be made separately with 2D too, and then put on the torso.« She also showed her participants how to precision-form contours or openings (edges or collars) with the help of a laid-in thread.

Plant Dyeing on Nuno Felt

Because of the larger-sized projects these five days were very busy. Only Petra Hermann's pullover was ready on the fourth day, so she used the extra time to get acquainted with Ecoprint. To be able to try out different dyeing techniques and to compare the effect of finished prints, Petra Hermann had prepared, next to her pullover, a poncho and a Nuno-felted scarf.

~ Three methods were used for Ecoprinting: Print with iron sulfate only, print with nuno-felt drenched with iron sulfate cloth and pomegranate stock and print with dyed leaves and colored pieces of cloth.

~ In all three methods the textile in question was briefly soaked in a vinegar bath. On the briefly wrung-out pullover Nina Demidova, Petra and Marc Herrmann distributed leaves of maple, walnut, horse chestnut, oak, fern, rose, ginkgo, eucalyptus, bramble and Chinese chestnut. Then the pieces of cloth soaked in iron sulfate were laid on, the whole thing was tightly wound and tied in water-proof material. Then the bundle was steamed for five hours. After cooling and unpacking the eucalyptus shone in bright red, walnut and chestnut in light brown, the fern contributed a little green and all motifs were framed with a small shadow in delicate grey due to the sulfate.

Effects with Pomegranate Stock

The poncho was put briefly into an iron sulfate solution after having soaked in the vinegar water. After a choice of fresh leaves had been put on, all was covered with cloth soaked in pomegranate stock, rolled, packed and steamed. After unpacking we saw more muted and darker colors compared to the pullover dyes.

~ For the third print on the scarf the leaves were soaked in warm water with black acid color, also the covering cloth pieces were dipped in water with acid color. Due to the color processing of the leaves, a relatively uniform brown with the leaf contours in a distinct black emerged.

All three techniques allowed for an accurate printing of the delicate leaf veins on the printed fabric.

ULI REITERER

PAGES 20–21

How to Felt Raw-Wool Carpets in Pairs

At Elvira Altdorf couples felt a complete fleece together.

For many years I have been felting in Elvira Altdorf's studio. I know the road to Übach-Palenberg, the studio, quite often even the participants, but this time it was different: I went to take part in a workshop together with my partner. In a couple felt course we wanted to felt a complete sheep wool fleece.

☞ Three couples came for the course weekend. Gerd and Gisela brought fleece of their own sheep, which they know by name, and already carded wool of the same breed. We chose the colors and soon two light-colored and a dark fleece covered the working tables. We asked ourselves: Would these colors show differences in the felting process?

☞ Elvira Altdorf gave the men who had never felted before a basic instruction, explained what happens in feltmaking and outlined the schedule.

A Lot of Water and Soap

Then the worktables were prepared. The fleeces were spread out with the curls down onto foil and layered with roving on the back. We distributed a lot of liquid soap and hot water on our work pieces and noted that such a fleece literally »swallows« quite a lot of water. In order to properly wet them we even used a garden hose with a sprinkler connected to the hot water faucet. Within a couple of minutes an intense sheep smell wafted through the studio.

☞ Now the felting started and finally we could begin rolling the fleeces. Due to the sheer size of the objects, it was advantageous to work in pairs. Now patience was asked for: rolling, unwinding, turning around, rewinding, continue rolling...In the evening of the first day we were rather exhausted, had sore muscles in our upper arms but still looked expectantly to the next day.

Weight: 50 kg

In the morning we continued rolling, controlling and rolling again until Elvira Altdorf gave the signal for throwing. Since I like throwing my felt work to densify the fabric, I tried to lift the fleece, but, oh dear: I was not able to raise it more than 10 cm because it weighed more than 25 kg. We combined forces and soon found out that the wool was shrinking well. This clarified yesterday's question: The brown fleece got dense much faster and shrank more than the two light-colored ones.

☞ In front of the studio stood big troughs ready for rinsing the soapy water, again the garden hose came in handy. Then our carpets moved to a vinegar-water bath. Finally, they could be admired, stretched out on the working tables.

☞ Elvira and Heinz Altdorf's culinary feasts kept up morale during the two days. It was a lot of work, but also great fun. The men, all of them greenhorns, had finally gotten infected by the felting virus themselves. When they said goodbye, they asked for a refresher course.

UTE STEPHANI

PAGES 24–27

The Discovery of Slowness

The Dutch felt artist Saar Snoek is fascinated by the wealth of organic forms and colors.

»Feltmaking, for me, is something between painting and sculpture«, says Saar Snoek. She should know, since she studied painting at the Royal Academy The Hague and works in the collective Snoek/Hagens together with the painter Sasja Hagens. »Sasja Hagens paints, and I cut her paintings apart with a CNC milling robot and put them together again in an entirely new way.«

Felting with Cold Water

Despite her studies, she doesn't consider herself a painter. »I am bad at quick decision-making«, she explains. »Painting is simply too fast and emotional for me. This may be the reason why I fell in love with feltmaking.« Even there she mostly uses cold water in order to slow the felting process and to be able to watch

how the wool reacts to each ever so slight action. »Because everything happens so slowly – and how much I love that! I find time to transfer my own energy onto the wool. I use hot water only at the end of the process. I don't want to shock my fibers, they should be allowed to move freely about at will.«

Risk of Failure

Because the 48-year old artist experiments a lot in her objects she is constantly walled-in between two extremes: On the one hand, she likes to exert »complete control« for transforming her ideas technically flawless and perfect, on the other all experiments run the risk of failure.

☞ »It is exciting, sometimes also confusing, when I allow myself to play around regardless of the eventual outcome«, she tells us. »I greatly value technical perfection, but I don't want that only technique determines the result. Feltmaking for me is a medium, like a certain painting color or a computer, and I use it to sculpt organic forms.«

Walking Her Dogs

In her eyes, wool is an ideal medium and material »since it seems to carry in itself the legacy of all growing things«. Saar Snoek begins with a certain idea and thinks its possible realization over on the long hikes she takes with her three dogs. Then she develops a strategy, designs resists and makes pre-felts.

☞ Nature and its variety of organic forms and colors enchant the Dutch artist, which is mirrored in her felted sculptures. If at all possible, one should be able to wear them – wearable art. Her very first large-size project »Human Nature«, a costume in the shape of a detailed coral reef, won the Aotearoa Reward at the World of Wearable Art Fair in New Zealand in 2017.

Three-Dimensional Nature Studies

»I make three-dimensional nature studies and, at a later stage, abstractions of natural phenomena in felt«, Saaar Snoek describes her way of working. She dyes the materials herself – with the exception of the color black – with Dupont silk dyes to gain an almost painterly freedom in her use of colors. »You can treat wool like color«, she says. »You can build layers, enhance, pinpoint light and shadow.« ☞ That she dyes the materials herself has a simple reason. In her opinion, when you order each gram of wool in the right color for a certain project it always takes

a lot of time before you can actually begin. »My fine white wool, mostly Chubut in roving and fleece I buy in large quantities, the same goes for silk fibers and fabrics.«

Dyeing in a Water Bath

Not to have to move the wool around too much while heating the dye bath, she uses the water bath technique and dyes »in a jam jar for tiniest quantities or in a metal bucket when I need much more«. The respective vessel is heated up with a shot of vinegar in a big pot until simmering point. »It has to cool down rather slowly when the dye from the water has worked its way into the wool or silk«, she reveals her tricks of the trade. »With my special, unconventional dyeing technique I get wonderfully alive color variations.«

A New Studio

During the past two pandemic years, when many exhibits and workshops had to be cancelled, Saar Snoek decided to change a few things in her life. So she has finally started building a separate workshop in her garden in Westerwolde, south-east of Groningen. It should be ready in spring and has enough space to teach small groups therein – in the midst of a sanctuary for bees, butterflies and birds.

»Despite that she regards herself more an artist than a born teacher she loves »the interaction when teaching and inspiring other feltmakers«. In the summer of 2021 she held a course about corals at the occasion of the ViltKontaktGroep anniversary (see page 12ff.) with 31 participants: »That was a lot of fun, but I do prefer smaller student groups, where each works on her or his individual project.«

Brightly Colored Sea Slugs

Unusual are her Nudibranchia workshops, where felted images of brightly colored slugs are made. Each participant brings three photographs of her personal favorite and together they look for a way to felt them. »This is a chaotic and somewhat risky attempt, but since everybody makes her own kind there is always so much inspiring creative energy«, Saar Snoek reports. »Of course, I could just press a certain model onto them and say: That's how it's done! Then each group member would take home a similar-looking thing.« She consciously decided against that because she wants her course members to have the freedom

to experiment, to fail and to gain experience. »I believe the Nudibranchia is no end result, but a limited, three-dimensional space to try yourself out. My workshops might not appeal to everyone, but I truly put my soul in them.« (All filzfun readers inclined to felt such a maritime creature will find Saar Snoek's instructions on the following pages.)
»Even now, the artist plans for times after the pandemic. Amongst other plans, she will host courses at Wollknoll in Oberrot and in the studio Fiberfusing in Amstelveen, but also in her own new studio and other places.

Hats as Wearable Art

Apart from that, she has begun to take lessons from the milliner Marianne Jongkind, »a true master of professional millinery«, as Saar Snoek puts it. »My aim is to combine my felt sculpture technique with traditional millinery crafts to make wearable art.« Wearable nature sculptures are for her a chance to approach the strange relationship between humankind and nature. »We adore nature and at the same time we keep destroying it to an alarming degree«. The Dutch artist has contributed three objects for the current competition World of Wearable Arts in New Zealand. After she won the Aotearoa-Award in 2017 with »Human Nature« and became a finalist in the »Common Ground« competition in 2018, her object »Wild Things« is nominated for the Aotearoa-Award which will be given in September 2022.

»Keep your fingers crossed«, Saar Snoek asks, and announces: »I hope I will be able to present some of my new hats next year!«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 28-33

Tutorial: Sea Slug Brooch

Material

- » 11 g Chubut-wool tops in white, yellow, orange, lilac and red
- » Thin silk fabric (margilan or chiffon), ca. 20 cm x 20 cm
- » Impact sound insulation for the resists
- » Plastic foil
- » Pool noodle, insulating tube or similar for rolling
- » Single-use gloves (or thin plastic foil)
- » Chop sticks
- » Fineliner
- » Felting needle (5 star, gauge 38)
- » Pins
- » Sewing needle and thread
- » Solufleece (watersoluble fleece for embroidery)
- » Felting equipment (bubble wrap, non-slip mat, water, soap, ball sprinkler, towel)
- » Brooch pin (optional)

Instructions

In this tutorial I will demonstrate how I use a prefelt assemblage to construct a simulacrum of the gem sea slug (*Goniobranchus gemini*). I made a drawing of the slug and deconstructed it in an exploded view of two-dimensional elements. I marked the parts with letters that I will refer to in the tutorial. For the layout direction I used a red arrow for the first layer and a green one for the second. A is the body, B the mantle, C the gills, D the ruffles, E and F are for the rinophores, G is the chimney.

1 Draw and cut a foam resist template for the body (A) and the two spikes (E) In my example the length of the body is 21 cm. and the width of the belly 9 cm. The spikes are 4 cm wide at the base and 6 cm. high. Put the body on bubble wrap with bubbles up and lay out one thin diagonal layer of wool. Make a small overlap. Wet it with cool water with a tiny bit of soap and sprinkler and fold your bubble wrap over the body.

2 Rub on top of the bubble wrap with wet hands and a bit of soap for lubrication. Rub till all air is out and the fibers are flat. Flip over the whole package.

3 Now the other side of the body is facing upwards. Fold over the wool and tap it gently around the edge of the template. Lay out diagonal wool to fill the gap. Don't use too much water and soap, your fibers will float of your template. Repeat step 2.

4 After you flipped your package, you add a horizontal layer of thin wool with a small overlap. Repeat steps 2 and 3. When both sides are covered in two layers, fold over the bubble wrap and massage on top of the bubble wrap for 5 minutes, repeat on other side.

5 Pay attention to your edges, rub them gently against the edge of your template for a seamless connection. I use vinyl gloves, or a piece of plastic.

6 Check if the fibers move when you push them, if they stay in place, you are ready to roll. Fold over the bubble wrap and use a rolling bar. Roll 50 times, open check creases, edges and wetness, turn 180 degrees and roll again 50 times. Flip the package over and repeat in a perpendicular direction. The body of the slug is now ready.

7 Make the spikes the same way you made the body. Cut the spikes open on the underside and felt them with a bit of soap. You can rub directly on the felt with soapy fingers.

8 Felt and shrink them as much as you can. You can knead them in your hands and use a chopstick to roll it on a ribbed mat. Use plenty of soap so the ribbed mat will not damage your felt.

9 Now you have two hollow spikes, let them dry. Make a piece of prefelt for the mantle (B) The size of my oval is 21 cm x 13 cm. Lay out two perpendicular layers of wool a little bigger than the oval template. Use the felting procedure as described above: rub on top of your bubble wrap thoroughly and roll 50 times in 4 directions. Let it dry.

10 Now it is time for the gills (C). Cut a square piece of thin silk, margilan or chiffon, a bit wider than your hand. Lay out your wool very thin in a radial direction. Wet it and repeat step 2.

11 The other side of the silk is now facing upwards, lay out thin wool in a circular direction. Repeat step 2.

Rub thoroughly on top of the bubble wrap and roll 50 times in 4 directions. Let it dry.

12 For the ruffles (D) we need a thin strip of prefelt that is 1,5 or two times the circumference of the oval mantle, in my case 90 cm x 6 cm. Lay out a very thin layer of roving in the angle of the red arrow, after that a second layer vertical. Wet it with some soapy water and rub on top of the bubble wrap. Roll 80 times horizontal, flip over and repeat. Let it dry. All the prefelted parts are ready: the body, the mantle, the spikes, the gills and the ruffled edge. Now the fun starts!

13 Make a small cut at the belly of your slug and remove the template. Stitch around the cut and secure with double knot to prevent stretching of the cut when you work on your slug.

14 Fold the mantle in half and pin it along the curve of the body. You can use a fineliner to mark the center of the chimney is, the position of the rinophores and fit the outline of the mantle.

15 Cut the outline of the mantle. Cut a piece of solufleece (water-soluble fleece for embroidery) cut it a centimeter wider than your mantle.

16 Use a felting needle (5 star gauge 38 preferably) to decorate your strip, in my case a purple line. Connect both ends with the felting needle.

17 Use a thread and a running stitch and pull it to gather pleats in your strip and distribute the pleats evenly around the oval. Use a backstitch to attach the strip to the solufleece along the line. The top side of the strip is facing inwards. In the picture you see the back of the solufleece, the strip is already folded outwards.

18 Draw the dotted pattern on the mantle.

19 Fold over the ruffled strip for a nice clean edge. Lay the mantle on top of the solufleece and use the felting needle to attach it to the white ruffles and background. Needlefelt the pattern on your slug. Use a short fiber and make sure to make nice sharp lines, going around the shapes with your felting

needle, bring in the loose fibers. You can add some yellow fibers to connect the mantle to the ruffles. Cut a small hole in the mantle, you can always make it bigger, never smaller.

20 Stick the chimney (G) through the hole. Pin the mantle to the body. Make sure it is centered. I used red pins to check the position of the rinophores.

21 Brush up the base of the spikes with a wire brush until they are fluffy and hairy.

22 Cut holes for the rinophores and stick the spikes through and pin them. Cut a hole in the circle made for the gills and sew it on the chimney with a small backstitch. Attach all loose parts with a backstitch, small stitch in front, bigger on the inside. Cut off the top of the chimney.

23 Stuff your slug with pieces of bubble wrap, make sure the tail is stuffed too and wet it with lukewarm soapy water. Put a thin plastic sheet over your slug and rub it gently with a piece of soapy bubble wrap. This way you felt the separate parts together, the backstitch only functions to hold things in place while felting. Take your time and make sure you don't felt the ruffles together.

24 Use your soapy fingers now directly on the felt and go over all the seams. Gently smooth out the wrinkles if you don't like them. Felt the ruffles between your fingers and don't forget to work on the connection of the spikes, keep the chimney open.

25 Once everything is felted together you can add some more soap, your felt should feel like chamois leather. You can start to shrink now, by rolling in a cotton sheet, gentle rubbing, kneading in your hands. In the process of shrinking, it works for me to stuff my slug with template foam to shape it and stretch it. Take your time and do not use very hot water yet!

26 Bring in some leverage to stretch the ruffles.

27 When you think you are finished with shrinking -you are not- you can push the chimney inside the body. Cut the gills in a flower shape and the ruffles on the desired length.

28 I made loose rinophores from a felted roll cut in half and stick in the holes after the slug is finished.

29 In this case I think the rinophores are too big, so I cut them off just above the body. Use some very hot water and soap and give the slug a final shrinking and stretching session. Stuff it with bubble wrap when it is hot and soapy and push with your finger. Keep shrinking and stretching until nothing happens anymore. In this stage you can do a lot to influence the final shape. Rinse it and give it a quick spin in the spin dryer. Stretch it and stuff it and position it with pins in its final shape to dry.

30 Don't forget to give your nudi an intimate shave after you finished it, so it looks nice and smooth and underwatery.

SAAR SNOEK

PAGES 34–37

Her Heart Beats for Nuno Felt

Anna Vidák continues the family tradition, placing emphasis on her silk-felted clothing.

Among felting enthusiasts, the name Vidák has been ringing a silvery bell for decades. Her parents, István Vidák and his wife Mari Nagy have greatly contributed to the renaissance of the felting craft in Europe approximately 40 years ago. Through extensive research, travels, courses and works of their own they considerably helped to increase its popularity. Legendary are the felt art archives owned by the Hungarian couple, where East and West have met and learned from each other since 1984. Anna Vidák, their daughter, experienced their enthusiasm for wool designing from the cradle and followed in her family's artistic footsteps.

The Smell of Wool

The 41-year-old reminisces: »As a child I met many felt artists. I travelled throughout Europe, I took part in countless felting meetings and courses and was duly impressed by the wide color range, the softness of wool and the many

forms it could take. The smell of wool meant home and community. I loved feltmaking and was always so proud of my parents.«

Desired Profession: Fighter Pilot

At times, however, it looked as if she would take an entirely different path. »As a teenager I wanted to become a fighter pilot«, Anna Vidák told us. Her parents took this with a gram of salt and financed a parachutist training. Anna jumped from a height of 800 m without the slightest fear, but she soon decided that the army was not really her cup of tea. Already during her studies in cultural anthropology and cultural organization she pursued an artistic, teaching and research-oriented trajectory. Simultaneously she graduated from the secondary school for feltmaking and got her teacher's degree.

Brightly Colored Butterflies

The young felt artist drew from many sources: »I was very impressed how the Dutch feltmaker Inge Evers designed colored silk butterflies on white felt«, she tells us. »From the German feltmaker Katharina Thomas I learned how to make thin, big-size felts on the felting machine. Claudia Gemein, who I worked for as an au pair for her daughters, took me along to Mehmet Girgic in Turkey, where we worked on a Kaitag felt blanket collection for a whole month.«

™ Already at the age of 22, Anna Vidák took over the felters's training at the Hungarian Traditional Workshop from her father István. This is a four-year training program where adults learn everything about wool and feltmaking – ranging from the production of simple balls to blankets. In the year 2004 she organized, together with her parents, the 8th International Felters' Meeting in Hungaria. Amongst other projects she was responsible for the felt clothes exhibit in the Museum for Art and Crafts in Hungary. She was immediately taken by it. »I fell head over heels in love with silk felt gowns and wanted to learn how to make them myself.« The chance to do so came up soon. At the meeting she made friends with the Norwegian May J. Hvistendahl, a respected master regarding silk felt fashion who invited her to Norway.

Mosaic Nuno Felt Made from Waste Fabric

For a month, she sat in at May Hvistendahl's classes, got more and more

skilled and even surprised her host by inventing an entirely new technique. She tells us: »When I arrived, May had to travel to Switzerland for a week to hold a course, but she encouraged me to start working anyway. I did not dare yet to use new silk fabrics, so I started layering pieces of silk fabric waste, covering them with wool and felting the workpiece. According to May, this resulted in a new method – the mosaic nuno felt.«

™ For 16 years, Anna Vidák has been designing and making clothes from Nuno felt and she is still enthusiastic: »The meeting between silk and soft Merino is a very feminine, very versatile and physically less demanding work compared with traditional feltmaking. You need a high level of material knowledge and practice.« She is proud to name some of the most famous Hungarian feltmakers as her teachers, among them Kinga Huszti, Judit Szaniszló, Melinda Klátyk, Flóra Kovács and Anikó Boros.

Studio in Kecskemét

In 2005 she founded her own felt studio in Budapest and held Nuno felt courses for adults for the first time in Hungary. Eight years later she moved to Kecskemét, where her parents also live. She lives there now with her husband, her three children and the family dog, a young Golden Retriever. She loves working in her 60 sqm studio in the yard, where she can watch the kids frolicking with the dog. When her own felting table (250 cm x 120 cm) proves too small for a project or a group is to be taught, she moves to her parents' studio 10 minutes away, where a six meter long working table is at her disposal.

™ As part of a MMA stipend by the Hungarian Academy of Arts Anna Vidák travelled a lot between 2019 und 2022 and taught aspiring felters her specialty, the making of silk felt fashion.

Inspired by Local Costumes

In the past two years she has made a 10 piece-collection of dresses, skirts, jackets and vests for women and girls, her inspirational sources beeing folk costumes and patterns from the Kalotaszeg region in Transsylvania. The collection boasts skirts, hand-pleated by Anna Vidák when the item is half finished, with bead décor and intricate machine embroidery of traditional motifs such as blossom or a tree of life. »It is of great importance for me to resurrect old crafts and techniques and to use them«, the artist states. »Quality work is an

aesthetic value in itself- a unity of work and art.«

~ The artist is literally boiling over with new ideas. Until summer she wants to furnish a small church with nuno felt textiles with white patterns on white silk. She is already looking forward to »the festive handing over, where all members of my family will appear clad in felt.«

~ With such an ambitious penum there is not too much room left for her hobbies, like folk dance, paragliding and travelling. But Anna Vidák never sees her profession as a burden anyway, but states instead: »The joy of working is the basis of human happiness.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 38–43

In Love with Fibers

The versatile felt artist Galina Blazejewska experiments with sheep and alpaca wool from many countries.

From physics to feltmaking: Galina Blazejewska went a totally different professional way ten years ago. In the treatment of fibers, in designing and making most diverse felt projects she found her fulfillment. Who sees her objects can hardly believe they were made by one and the same person: tiny bags in animal form with a clip fastener, a still life from felted apples in grey, black and white, fantastic clothing, cushion covers with sculptural animal motifs and fake fur models from raw wool – the variety is almost overwhelming.

From Belarus to Poland

The first thirty years of her life the 58-year-old Blazejewska spent in Minsk, the Belarus capital, where she studied Physics at the State University and got her diploma. Today, she lives a thousand kilometers westward in a small Polish village near the Black Sea. In a neighboring garden she cultivates plants to dye fabrics and for Ecoprinting.

~ Taking the long way home to feltmaking in 2007, she first went into knitting, as she tells us: »I remember that I was looking for a new design for a knitted jumper for a friend. I came across an interesting scarf that a schoolmate of mine had made.« This was a felted scarf, and Galina Blazejewska immediately

wanted to know more about this unusual technique. But this did not prove easy:

»Then there used to be only sparse informations about feltmaking in Russian language, and to buy any kind of wool suitable for felting in Poland turned out to be extremely difficult.«

First Scarves

But she wouldn't let go and began, despite all the obstacles, to learn the feltmaking craft. »My first scarves were proudly presented to all my friends, family members and acquaintances. Whoever showed the slightest interest had to listen to my stories about the wonders of feltmaking.«

~ She looked on the internet for other sources for different kinds of wool, silk and other natural fibers. Even then she sold her work at local events and fairs in Poland and won her first students and clients. About 10 years ago she ventured to take the decisive step to make felting her profession. Since then, she has continued to produce new goods continually - on sale mostly via the internet – and she is invited to shows and hosts felting courses.

Dream of a Studio

A room in her house with a big table, many shelves, a dressmaker's dummy, a photo corner and a computer table is dedicated to her creative work, but Galina Blazejewska pines for a separate studio with several working tables: »There I could give courses, meet my girlfriends or work on communal projects, I could receive also clients who want to try on my felt fashion pieces.«

~ She does only wet-felting and is still fascinated by the interplay of water, soap and movement which leads the wool to combine with different textiles and fibers, how colors mingle and a wholly new material comes to life.

~ In the beginning she used many roving and fleece wool from specialists' shops: fine Merino for clothing and accessories, rougher mountain sheep wool for slippers and bags. »But then came my »Heureka« moment, when I bought samples of different sheep- and Alpaca fleeces«, she fondly remembers. »This led me to new and exciting discoveries.«

Trips to Sheep Farms

She further explains: »Working with raw wool is a lot different than using ready-made, carded and dyed wool. The crucial factor is the quality of the fleece.« Before the Covid pandemic

limited her travels considerably the felt artist went to sheep and Alpaca farms in Poland, England, Lithuania and Hungary. Everywhere she familiarized herself with the local traditions of animal keeping, shearing and the preparation of the wool for feltmaking, spinning and weaving.

~ When buying fleeces advertised on photographs online, she thinks one had better trust the animal keeper. She can process a clean, skilfully shorn fleece without further ado, i.e. laborously cleaning and carding it. »During felting I often change the soapy water«, Galina Blazejewska describes her way of working. »I wash and rinse my felts, comb them and separate the single locks, so I get clean, shiny and fluffy curls.« The finished works are dyed with Jacquard dyes for wool and silk. When having integrated other natural fibers such as Viscose or cotton she resorts to universal dyes from Polish provenance.

~ When the subject raw wool comes up, Galina Blazejewska expresses a lot of enthusiasm: »When I work with raw wool fleeces and comb the locks with my fingers, I feel the wonder of the fibers in my fingertips. I consider myself an important link in the chain of the natural wool cycle, from breeding the animal until its wool is processed to wearable clothing items.«

Experiences with Alpaca Hair

For some time now she has been gaining experience with alpaca hair which is deemed difficult to felt. »Alpaca hair is quite different from sheep wool«, the artist explains. She does not use alpaca solely to felt but also for spinning and knitting. »Alpaca locks are a lot more smooth and slippery than sheep curls. But also fleeces of individual animals felt differently. That's why it is important to choose the alpaca fleece for each project with care and to make trial patterns of each sore-bought fleece. Only then you get an inkling how the material will behave throughout the felting process.«

~ Galina Blazejewska's daughter is a vet specialized on alpacas. There are a lot of them kept on farms all over Poland. »Through her I have the unique chance to get to know the animals and their keepers better and to buy fleeces from reliable sources«, says the artist. In the year 2017 she designed a complete clothes and accessory collection from alpaca hair, which became a cherished show piece at the Central Farmers' Exhibit in Warsaw.

Details with the Felting Needle

From raw wool, Galina Blazejewska makes veggie felts or works the fleeces into her felt projects. She loves to »paint« with alpaca hair and sheep wool. A good example is a series of cushion covers with true-to-life images of a rooster, a swan, a turkey hen or a stag. »For the rooster I dyed long curls of Welsh Mule sheep blue, green and orange. After having laid out the image I moisten and rub it from the back until the colored wool connects to the basis wool. Details like the eyes or the beak I add with the felting needle, when my workpiece has been wholly wet-felted.«

Meticulous Planning

The artist cannot completely hide her academic past in the natural sciences, for she plans her projects to the last detail in her mind – from the necessary shape of the resist to the interplay of fabrics or fibers until the actual felting. All this runs through her mind on her daily walks or before she falls asleep. During the work process she often resorts to tools and support from household items, for instance a travel soap container, a rolling pin, a structured bathmat or a sander to felt nuno projects. Her felt objects are rolled between two layers of bubble foil: »Especially with fleeces this comes as a real help, because due to their oily surface they are very difficult to moisten.«

☞ Galina Blazejewska has been making a name for herself in the international felters' scene for a long time. She is a member of the International Feltmakers Association (IFA), where several of her objects have been shown, as on many other national and international exhibits. Her collection »The Wings«, for example, was part of the »Soul of Felt« exhibit shown in Germany, The Netherlands and Italy in 2016.

☞ Next to her creative work, Galina Blazejewska loves to travel and to meet new people. »All this came to a sudden halt with the pandemic«, she says regretfully. »But I hope to be on the road one day soon to meet other feltmakers, to host courses and to pay visits to alpaca and sheep farms.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 44–47

Tutorial: Colorful Hat with Dreadlocks

»On dark, grey days I need colorful accessories«, is Galina Blazejewska's seasonal advice. For this reason, she has designed this hat for the filzfun readers, which gives off a playful note by a tuft of felted cords.

Material

- ☞ Merino wool tops 18mic of one or several colours
- ☞ Offcuts of ready-made felt, wool yarns and offcuts of cloth
- ☞ 50 cm x 100 cm dyed cotton cheesecloth (or margilan silk)
- ☞ 5 g Viscose fibers
- ☞ Sound insulation foil for the resist
- ☞ Permanent marker
- ☞ Felting Equipment (Bubble foil, a bowl, water, soap, ball sprinkler, gauze, scissors, disposable gloves, a ruler, thin plastic foil, a swimming noodle or something similar as a rolling core, towels)

Instructions

- 1 The measurements given refer to a hat with a head circumference of 57–58 cm.
 - ☞ To make the resist, draw a rectangle 50 cm x 48 cm. Narrow the bottom end for 1cm on each side and draw a curved line in each top corner (see image). Cut the resist out, leaving a few extra centimeters at the bottom of the drawing.
- 2 Place the bubble wrap on the working table (reverse side facing the table and the bubbles facing up) and place the template on top. Start layering the wool from the bottom end of the template (50 cm away from the top). The first 8 cm we lay the wool in one direction only. Try to lay the wool evenly and not too thick, allowing for 1.5 to 2 cm of wool to protrude from the resist's edge. Cover the rest of the template with a thin layer of wool. I lay the first row of wool with a lean towards the right, the second row with a lean towards the left. You can use your usual method of layering the wool, the only important factor is that the whole area of template should be evenly covered by wool.

3 I use different colours wool by layering it in a color blocking manner. Make sure that you allow for 1.5–2 cm to extend beyond the edges of the template.

4 Sprinkle the wool with warm soapy water, cover with the netting gauze and gently rub the entire surface of the wool making sure that all the wool is wet. After that, remove the netting, cover the wool with a second piece of a bubble wrap (bubbles facing the wool) and turn the resist on its reverse side.

5 Put the protruding fibers around the resist close to the edge

6 Cover this side of the resist exactly as we did it on the first side, but this time make sure that you do not allow the wool to extend beyond the resist's outlines. Sprinkle the wool with warm soapy water, cover it with gauze and rub gentle over it.

7 Cut circle shapes from the pieces of ready-made felt and prepare wool yarns of your choice. Place those circles, pieces of yarn and smaller fragments of felt onto the surface of the hat. Do not decorate the lower 8 cm near the bottom edge that was carefully layered in one direction only.

8 Then place the pieces of colored cheesecloth on top of the wool ensuring that the entire surface will be covered by it (apart from the bottom edge of 8cm height). The edges of cheesecloth need to cross over one another. In order to make the dreadlocks lay a rectangular shape of wool on the top of the template (18 cm height, 15cm width). The wool is being laid out vertically only. The wool overlaps the top edge of the hat for 1 to 1.5cm.

9 Cover the wool by a piece of cheesecloth, sprinkle it with warm soapy water and cover it with a piece of thin plastic foil.

10 Then put down a second rectangular shape made from a different-colored wool that is being layered vertically only. Again, cover it up with a piece of cheesecloth. Sprinkle with warm soapy water. Remember that each layer of wool needs to be separated by a piece of a thin plastic.

11 Viscose fibers create a shiny surface for the hat. Place the viscose over the entire woolen surface, either in a cloud formation or in long, fine strands. ∞ Now the design of one side of the hat is complete. Sprinkle with a warm soapy water and gently rub the entire surface through the netting. Make sure there is a soapy froth on top of the gauze - if not, add more soap.

12 Remove the gauze, cover the piece with a second piece of bubble foil and turn it around.

13 Remove the netting, cover the template with a second piece of a bubble wrap and turn it upside. This is the side that also needs decorating. We repeat all stages of our decoration with circles of ready-made felt, bits of yarn and then pieces of cheesecloth.

14 Prepare wool for your future dreadlocks on this side of the hat. To start with, cover the rectangular shape of the wool with a thin piece of a plastic. Then place the wool down in a vertical fashion, covering the rectangular shape. Remember that the wool strands should overlap the top of the hat for 1 to 1.5 cm. Cover the wool with another piece of a plastic bag and gauze and make a second rectangular woollen shape in a different color. Check that at the end you have 4 rectangular shapes at your disposal, separated by foil, for the dreadlocks.

15 Then also cover this side of the hat with viscose strands for shiny effects.

16 Now you can begin felting the hat. Cover your work with a second piece of bubble wrap and roll it tightly around your rolling pin. Roll 50 times without any putting pressure on the rolled-up fabric. The wool rubbing against the bubble wrap makes a soapy froth. If we either do not see this froth or a lot of water is coming from the roll means that we either have to add more soap or drain the excess water with the towel.

∞ Uncover your roll and flatten any creases in your work. Wind your work around the rolling pin, this time starting from the opposite end and roll again 50 times. Uncover the workpiece, flatten the creases, and repeat the process starting from the third side of your hat and then from the fourth. Then turn the hat to its reverse side and roll again from all four

sides 50 times. Altogether you should therefore roll 400 times.

17 Check the state of your work. Touch the cheese cloth and viscose fibers and pluck slightly. If the wool is well entangled now you can move to the second stage of the felting process. If the viscose and the cheesecloth are still loose then continue winding up and rolling again.

18 Before removing the resist, you need to reinforce the bottom edge of the hat. In order to do so, we cover the hands with disposable plastic gloves and rub the wool along the hat's bottom edge.

19 Following that, work on the side edges of the hat and make sure that the felt has no more creases and/or bumps.

20 Now you can remove the hat from the resist. Continue working with the hat from the reverse side. Shake the piece lightly, knead it, throw it into the air carefully, rub it against the bubble wrap. All this needs to be done lightly and without much force in order not to damage the piece. Make sure that the edge of the hat is not turning on itself. Drain excess water if needed.

21 Turn the hat on its good side. Flatten the rectangular base prepared for the dreadlocks, remove the pieces of foil and cut the single layers in strips of 1 to 1.3cm width.

22 Rub each strip of wool between your palms. Then rub each dreadlock against the bubble wrap.

23 Continue felting the hat. Shake and throw it in the air more vigorously now. Pay special attention to the bottom edge of the hat. Gather the edge together and rub it between your palms. Repeat the process several times: rolling dreadlocks, throwing the hat into the air, shaking the piece and felting its bottom edge.

24 Check the size of your hat. For a circumference of 57-58 cm it should be 26 cm wide.

25 Rinse the finished hat afterwards thoroughly in clear water and put it in a water bath with a shot of vinegar to neutralize all remaining soap

suds. Let it dry either on a hat block or on a bowl of a similar size. I strongly recommend not to iron this piece, it might damage the textured effect.

GALINA BLAZEJEWSKA

PAGES 48-50

2000 Dolls Unite across Borders

Annie Veldkamps international art project SHARE is guest in Vienna.

Let's go back briefly to the spring of 2020, when the whole of Europe was gripped with the first Corona wave, when we watched what happened in shock and soon in isolation, too. We all remember the disturbing feelings of uncertainty, fear and sinking courage.

∞ The Dutch textile artist Annie Veldkamp shared these feelings, but she wanted to give a sign of encouragement and solidarity with all afflicted, the patients and the hospital personnel, the lonely and those threatened in their professional existence together with many others. She designed a small figurine from white felt and called for participation in the planned communal work SHARE on the internet - in Dutch »Deel met elkaar« (to share).

Overwhelming Echo

Within soon, around 200 people from twelve countries signalled they would like to have a part in it. Annie Veldkamp and her co-workers were quite overwhelmed and set to work greatly motivated by the favorable reception. They made white felt as a base material and packed and shipped around 200 DIY parcels. Everything needed to make and enhance the five dolls, each about 30 cm big, was included: Outlined felt, needle, thread, white yarn to sew it all together and red yarn (to embroider), filling material and a brief instruction. So in the early summer of 2020 hundreds of women (and some men, too) all over Europe worked on this communal art project, with the very same materials and across thousands of kilometers connected to a strong idea: to pull a team together and to make something that visibly boosted morale in times of physical distance and the quasi-standstill of many areas of public life.

Embroideries and Details

That this attempt proved more than successful became soon obvious, when in the course of the following weeks parcels kept accumulating at Veldkamp's doorstep. She tells us of the joy and surprise when she opened each single item: The individual signature of all who took part, the variety of embroideries and the unique details, not to mention the messages contained therein, which were all impressive and quite touching. Around 2000 dolls, 200 of them individually embroidered were sent and, despite the obstacles the pandemic caused, were begging to be shown to the public.

~ First the organizer and her team documented the lavishly decorated figurines and printed a brochure about the project. The first public show in Annie Veldkamps Dutch home village was followed by four other shows in the region. The participants – artists from Sweden to the Ukraine – were kept on the current via the social networks concerning the growth and progress of the communal project.

Presentation in Vienna

In Austria, Sawatou Mouratidou, Evi Psaltidi and me had been busy sewing and embroidering SHARE-dolls. This made me think to present the results in my Kabllo studio in Vienna. The implementation took some courage, though – until a generous funding commitment by the Cultural Office of the 1st Viennese district financing was shaky – and flexibility and great personal effort by all parties involved, especially by Annie Veldkamp.

~ She herself and two co-workers travelled from The Netherlands at the end of September 2021 to fasten the dolls on a fixture that I had built with a friend and installed in an emptied studio space. It took two full days until the 2000 figurines swayed over a surface of nine square meters.

Positive Energy

When we finally opened our doors for spectators it was only singly or in pairs they could enter the show, walk around and take in all the bewitching details in: a lady in a bikini, a nurse with Rasta braids, a pregnant woman, a Syrian refugee woman in traditional attire, a boy carrying a big heart in front of him, five family members who hold each others' hands ...they all tell their own story. All those dolls are connected by a strong positive energy, a mood and power

which coming from the single figurine to embrace all of them. It makes you wonder and feel touched.

~ About 70 people visited the show already on day one. Some came a second, even a third time to enjoy the unique atmosphere in peace, to sit on a chair in between the dolls and see even more. For a little fee they could buy a white doll to embroider it and to become a part of SHARE as well.

Prolonged For a Week

Due to the great echo demonstrated in the guest book we decided to prolong the show for a week to a total of four weeks. In the end, around 300 visitors had seen it. There were many animated talks and discussions concerning the manifold ways to approach art, the challenge and thoughts about the pandemic and regarding personal experiences and destinies.

~ The final decision how to proceed further with the doll show has not been made yet. Maybe they will travel to other places, to new admirers, possibly they find a permanent place in a Dutch hospital. Annie Veldkamp is open for various possibilities on which she is certainly going to report further (see info box).

DANICA BEYLL

PAGES 51–53

Thread Games with Endless Cords

Creative Hand and Brain Training

Often the simplest things bring a lot of joy: A couple of cords of different length from felted wool give kids and the elderly an occasion to create something playfully, simultaneously training the hands and the brain.

~ Apart for the traditional lifting-off games, such as »Witch's Broom« or »Prisoned Thumb« the colored cords can serve as »painting material« for images. This might be a possible project for the resting hours in a nursery.

Hollow Felt as a Basis

The basis is a hollow felted surface with a dark and a light side to be played upon on both sides. Thereon you can lay out colored cords in different strength and

length, alone or in pair, into figurative or abstract patterns and Mandalas. The laid-out shapes stick well on the soft felting pads without any additional help.

~ The cords are kept well-arranged in a box, wound on wooden pegs, they also can be stored inside the felt bases without pegs. After the game, it is required to remove the motifs.

Inspirational Stories

Picture book stories, rhymes or verses might offer occasions for such pastime. The children can lay out their favorite motif in remembrance of a certain story. Afterwards photographs are taken by their parents or other grown-ups, so a whole gallery of images could be shown in the end.

~ Simple layouts of felted play cords enhance the childish fantasy. From experience I know that they start to invent their own motifs after they have been shown one or two forms.

~ Playing with the endless cords trains – way across the creative aspect – dexterity and the brain. The traditional games train permanently the crossing over of the vertical line of the brain. Both hands come into play and connect the two halves of the brain. Doing something with both hands at a time supports the brain's maturing.

HELENA VETTER

Tutorial: Felting Endless Cords

Material

- ~ Merino or South American wool roving in chosen colors
- ~ Waste yarn material (optional)
- ~ Measuring tape
- ~ Scissors
- ~ Felting equipment such as anti-slip mat, terry towel, a small bowl with warm water, olive soap and vinegar)

Instructions

1 Part an 120 cm long, finger-thick yarn band for an approx. 100 cm long cord from the wool.

2 Let the yarn band roll (in its dry state) on the skidproof mat, but keep each end loose (approx. 5 cm) for the so-called 'beard'.

- 3 Lay the dry, fluffy ends on top of each other.
- 4 Roll the connecting areas dry.
- 5 Dunk the thus-prepared cord in warm water.
- 6 Scoop the wool cautiously and pull it off.
- 7 Dunk the soap into the water.
- 8 Glide over the loose fiber wad with the wetted soap.
- 9 Turn the wad around between your palms, renew soaping and work with increasing pressure.
- 10 Change the work piece from one hand to the other, squeeze it strongly between your hands like you would a dumpling.
- 11 Take turns in stretching and then crumpling the cord between the hands until it is sturdy.
- 12 Turn the ready-felted cord a couple of more times onto the skid-proof mat, then rinse it thoroughly under running water and in the end put it in a water bath with a shot of vinegar to neutralize the last remaining soap suds.
- 13 A loose string of fibers has turned into a firm, shrunken cord.
- 14 By felting-in knitting or crocheting yarns interesting effects can be achieved. Cut the yarn fibers to the length of the fiber band and lay it onto the fiber strand. The roll the fiber strand with the yarn on top at first in a dry run, then wet-felt it.

HELENA VETTER

PAGES 54–55

A Tree of Hope

Artists from several countries took part in Gabriele Schilcher's communal project »Aufatmen« (Breathing a Sigh of Relief).

In early spring of 2021, after the last long lockdown in Austria the idea was born for the felt/textile project »Aufatmen (Breathing a Sigh of Relief)«: a tentative opening, a »being allowed to see each other again« went hand in hand with the first tender leaves and the re-awakening of nature.

☞ The feeling of happiness that accompanied it, the hope for a hint of »normality« and re-won freedom have inspired me a lot. During the forced retreat it became painfully clear to me how crucial being together, sticking together and a trust in the future are, especially in the time of crisis.

Wishes and Desires

In my creative hours I made a stately tree with empty branches from a cotton curtain and some plant dye, rust and textile fibers. In the scope of a communal project, it should invite gathering positive energy, express wishes for the future or other desires and, last but not least, to make leaves in all kinds of textile techniques that should give new life to the tree as a symbol of courage and steadfastness.

☞ Many creative people from Austria, Germany and Scotland followed my call via Facebook, e-mail and the International Feltmakers Association (IFA) and made artful contributions to form a lush leafy canopy. Our mutual wishes and hopes are the stem, and they grew together with the felted roots and silk fibers to a widespread net that nurtures, carries and takes care – even in a pandemic.

Various Textile Techniques

Next to many variations of hand-felted leaves one can find works made in other techniques in the foliage of the tree. Here some examples: the big chestnut leaf by Ingrid Siegl from waxed, a leaf printed on cotton made by the tattoo artist Julia Karner and a foto-realistic alder leaf from the »house tree« transposed in t-shirt transfer technique by Monika Strell from Scotland. Not all who were touched by the project are skilled feltmakers or otherwise accomplished in textile techniques. It was very important to me, that these

people, too, should be on board with their contributions and photos, and so I used differed transfer techniques or transposed some especially beautiful leaf photographs into felt.

Sun Print and Medium Print

In this way also the »written leaves«, the »Schreib-Blätter«, were made by five creative ladies from an open writing workshop in the Burgenland, as the title says, with words. Accentuated backgrounds and some single pieces were sun-, eco or medium-printed (following a tutorial by Olga Kazanskaya in the filzfun No. 62).

☞ When the last contributions had trickled in at the end of August, I spent many hours to combine wishes and leaves to a harmonic whole. Now the textile tree is finished and prepared to travel in the public sphere, to become visible – in all places where passers-by can look and wonder or simply be touched, despite the prevailing sour mood.

☞ The last station planned is a presentation in the frame of my exhibit »Poesie in Filz und Textil« (Poetry in Felt and Textile) in a gallery in Lower Austria at the end of August 2022 (see info box).

GABRIELE SCHILCHER

PAGES 56–57

Krainer Stone Sheep

History

Even though Stone Sheep have become a rarity today, they used to be widely known in their home areas, e.g. Kärnten, Slovenia and Friaul. They were kept mainly as milk sheep, which still warrants a certain popularity. The breed came under much pressure, because they were numerous cross-breeds with East Frisian Milk Sheep to heighten the milk yield. The original breed survived only in very few choice regions. A breed cleansing in 1938, which forbid breeding of the less productive races in favour of Mountain Sheep almost nailed the coffin on the Krainer Stone Sheep, for it almost became extinct. But in the 1990ies opinion slowly turned and the ancient breeds were rescued from oblivion. During that time, the regulated breeding of the Krainer Stone Sheep began

anew. Despite all these efforts, the Krainer Stone Sheep is considered an endangered domestic animal breed even today.

Characteristics

The Krainer Stone Sheep (abbrev. KST) is a rather small, fine-boned sheep with thin but strong legs. The head has no wool, the nose profile is straight, and the small ears protrude horizontally. They can have horns or not, and both sexes may have them. Whereas the horns of the ewes are sickle-shaped, the rams develop helix horns.

☞ The animal comes may-colored: often black or white, in the past years, however, grey and checkered animals took hold as well. Especially the heads are variegated. The tail has to have wool.

Wool

The Krainer Stone Sheep are usually shorn twice – in spring and in the fall. The wool differs from animal to animal and regarding the respective bodily area. On principle, it is a rather coarse mixed wool, more or less hairy and containing much short kemp. To separate the wool hardly makes sense, because it contains only a few long top hair, but a lot of short hair that cannot be taken out of the lower wool part entirely.

Feltmaking

For the trial patterns, the quantities of wool for each were adapted. In the future, one trial set each with 5 grams and one with 20 grams will be laid out and felted. Especially with mixed wool this is advantageous and allows for a better evaluation (see info-box below).

☞ Basically, this kind of wool felts very well and yields an extremely sturdy and stable felt, albeit it contains a lot of kemp in some places, which is not only a nuisance but can disturb the felting process. Stone Sheep wool shrinks a lot and turns very firm accordingly. The kemp sticks out of the finished felt and makes it haptically very disagreeable.

Conclusion

The Krainer Stone Sheep wool is anything but cuddly. Yet for objects designed for wear and tear or stable containers their

wool is wonderfully suitable and can be made into veritable »boards«.

MARGIT RÖHM

The Home of The Krainer Stone Sheep

Krain, a region in Slovenia with the capital Ljubljana (formerly Laibach) used to be an independent country and duchy, belonging in turns to Austria, Slovenia and then to Yugoslavia; today it is a region of Slovenia. There the breed is also called Bovska, which leads us to the Bovec hard cheese that must only be produced from the milk of those sheep.

PAGES 58–59

The Finest Fibers from Goat and Sheep

Catrin Porsiel has dedicated herself to precious wool and offers a very personal statement.

As the ungrateful goat complains in the Brothers Grimm fairytale: »I just sprang over brookèlets / and found no single leaf ...« Goats are said to be quite volatile and impish creatures. This is what the old tailor in the fairy tale »Tischlein, deck dich (The Wishing-Table, The Gold-Ass, and The Cudgel in the Sack)« found out, after he had believed the goat's false lament and had chased away his sons for being negligent herders. Stuck he was – alone with his grumpy goat.

☞ We do not know of what the breed that goat was, but we can assume it was a she-goat that was kept for milk and overall subsistence of the tailor's folks.

☞ I would have pardoned an Angora goat anytime: Its wool is the most beautiful in the world, I bet. Maybe its hair is not as delicate as that of the muskox (that pertains to goats in zoological

taxonomy), but it is still extremely silky, shiny, fluffy and soft.

A Sultan and his Goats

The term Angora derives from the Turkish city Ankara. Already 3500 B.C. Angora goats and Karakul sheep were kept in the area that is now Turkmenistan. When the Mongol hordes swept the country, a legend has it that a Sultan refused to hand over his beloved flock of goats and together they fled to Ankara. Under the name of Muhayyar the Sultan sold the goat wool. The Europeans pronounced it Mohair.

☞ It is said that the highest quality mohair comes from Tibet for climate reasons. But since today everything everywhere is more concerned about the ready money than nature protection, Tibet is more or less grazed already empty: The farmers enlarge the number of their flocks the moment they are offered more money for it – a true vicious circle, not at all fairy tale-like. But since fairy tales usually have good endings, I too kindle some hope.

Yarn from the Gotland Lamb

Until then I recommend the wool of the Gotland Pelt Sheep. The quality is similarly high and well suited to knitting. I have a special, slightly fluffy yarn made from a first lambs' shearing wool. As opposed to the Angora goat hair, the Pelt Sheep wool can be spun without any previous treatment. Mohair yarns, however, are so smooth and delicate that it must be spun with other fibers to maintain shape.

☞ Gotland sheep and Angora goats need their own home areas to render their wool so unique, again a matter of climate conditions. Unfortunately, they can only be bred in in Central Europe with a decline in animal health and wool quality. While the Angora goats love a warm and dry climate, the Gotland sheep thrive on the rough Baltic Sea climate and the wild herbs that grow on the island's lime soil.

The Marriage Band Trick

Researching about animals providing such luxurious fibers I came upon a further breed: The Orenburg Goat, the wool of which is considered of even higher quality than Angora hair. In the city of Orenburg in the South of Russia women have been keeping this breed since the 19th century. They spin most delicate yarns and knit them into artful patterns. According to the folk lore, the yarn must be so fine that a finished knitted afghan can be pulled through a wedding band.

Laid-out weight	Initial meas.	End measurement	Shrinking factor
5 g	20 cm x 20 cm	9 cm x 9 cm	2.2
20 g	20 cm x 20 cm	12.5 cm x 12.5 cm	1.6

The Orenburg goats are bred in brown, red, black and spotted, for the traditional wedding shawls also in pure white.

☞ Another example of gossamer-wing spinning art can be found on the Scottish Shetland islands, where I actually put the wedding band trick to test. Also, the traditional Shetland sheep's wool is of high quality, but it is lackluster.

☞ And how did the bitchy she-goat fare further in the tale? The tailor took revenge: »In his fury, the tailor jumped up, fetched his barber's knife, soaped the goat's head and sheared her as smooth as the palm of his hand.«

CATRIN PORSIEL

PAGES 60–61

Tüdzölés Embroidering with the Sewing Machine

Mari Nagy and István Vidák revive an old folk-art tradition.

Two years ago, we visited the village Méra in Transsylvania and met Erzsébet Varga (80), a folk-art master, and Erzsébet Kuti (77). The two seamstresses are deeply familiar with the village traditions and were keen to tell us about them.

☞ When the youngsters get their confirmation in the spring, they ceremoniously defile on the main road to the church in splendid traditional attire. The young men wear a brightly embroidered little jacket from blue, fulled fabric which is called »Bujka (Hides itself)«

Tulip and Zinnia

Since 1900, the embroidery thereon has been made with green and red cotton yarn on a foot-pedal Singer sewing machine from 1900. »Tüdzölék«, (padded), the two women call this. The most cherished motifs are the tulip, the garden zinnia, a bird, the edge motif »Hunyadi«, and the old Hungarian national coat of arms.

Plant-Dyed Embroidery Yarn

We wanted to put this kind of machine embroidery to test on felt. For this purpose, we made small satchels in red, brown and indigo from thin but firm felt plates. For the embroideries, we plant-

dyed thin woolen yarns yellow, burgundy red and green.

Arts and Crafts Heritage

After first and successful trial runs, we ventured further to embroider clothing that our seamstress friend Gabriella Kiss made patterns of and had sewed them according to our directions. Our goal was to design new, contemporary interesting vests and caps on the basis of traditional costumes, thereby bringing the folk-art heritage into the present.

☞ Success proved us right: the machine-embroidered garments were shown at various exhibits and fashion shows in the summer of 2021 and were very well received. Also, our daughter Anna (see her portrait on page 34 ff.) used the technique for some of her couture designs.

☞ We will continue this exciting work to create clothing and accessories that should be often and joyfully worn or used.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

PAGES 62–63

Scythian Felt Art

Testimonials of an ancient horse people

15 years ago, in the three big cities of Berlin, Munich and Hamburg a much-commented exhibit about the antique Scythian horse people was on show, mostly with fabulous golden proves from the times before Christ was born. The visitors came in hordes as well. But also the view on items of everyday use that were preserved in the icy, frozen graves, amongst them Scythian felt works made this exhibit unforgettable. It is worthwhile to look back on it.

☞ The textiles and other precious items, especially the gold findings, were lent by the State Museum Novosibirsk and other, smaller Russian museums for the show's duration. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to take any photographs, so we show here some drawings of certain objects.

A Warrior's Headdress

In the burial mound of Olon-Kurin-Gol exceptional felt objects were found – despite the fact that felt, like other organic materials, usually decays quickly in the ground and is therefore hardly ever preserved.

Burial gifts for the warrior were felted caps, felt stockings and many other items of daily use. One of the caps is shown in the show's catalogue, which is unfortunately out of print now. The objects are dated back to the Pazyrik culture before Christ was born. The pointed cap was made from fine, natural brown wool and seems very thin yet sturdy. It covers the whole head save the face. The point is almost twice the height as the head circumference; hence the headgear looks like a long-necked bird, presumably a water bird. The hollow form is composed of several patched pieces with small seams at the sides.

☞ The outer side was adorned with several sewed-on wooden figurines, all approx. the size of the palm of a hand. Upon a closer look you recognize two wonderfully carved foals and a deer with a bell ring. A part of the bird's head is decorated with wafer-thin, painted little golden plates. The object measures about 60 cm by 25 cm.

A Cap with Wooden Ornaments

A Mongolian-German team of archeologists discovered the grave of a rich warrior, the so-called burial mound no. 1 in the Altai mountains between 2004 and 2006. Hermann Parzinger, the chief curator of the Scythian Exhibition, was leading the excavations then.

☞ The cap found there is better preserved than the one from Olon-Kurin-Gol. Its parts were sewn together with great care. This headgear as well is decorated with wooden figurines: two foals and also a deer with bell rings. ☞ The head of the birdlike shape is covered with a small golden plate. The decorations and the size of 68 cm x 25 cm are very similar to the exhibit mentioned further above. Unfortunately, we do not know what the animals might have symbolized for the young warrior. He had long blond hair, and on his shoulder, there was an animal-shaped tattoo.

Stockings Reinforced with Leather

In the middle of the recreated mummy vault there was a mummy lying on a grey felt blanket in a wooden coffin. Funeral rites obviously called for the dead being laid on a felted blanket regardless of his or her social status. Further important burial objects, like for instance felted stockings, were presented in a glass case.

☞ Archeologists found the mummy of a princess or countess preserved in ice, who was buried with a similar kind of stockings. These were sewn together

from thin, flat white felt, the sole was reinforced with leather. Over the ankles runs a red ribbon, presumably woven. The upper part of the stocking is also padded with thin, red leather. The patterns show ram horns, a motif that still can be found on felted blankets in Central Asia today. The motifs complement each other in their positive-negative design and cover each the same amount of surface.

☞ Looking at these exhibits, many questions arise, that will probably never be answered: Why were the stockings so long? Did they really require the leather sole part? How were they fastened to the legs?

☞ The history of felt stockings in Central Asia goes way back when. In our book *Felt Art* (Budapest 2004) we introduced a similar piece from the Turfan desert in Eastern Turkestan. These stockings are even 2000 years older than those of the Scythian burial mounds. A leather shoe with felt stockings had preserved well in the hot desert sand. It was found in the Xinjiang province in China, where the Uighurs live, in 1990.

A Princess' Mirror Image

The already-mentioned Scythian princess obviously loved being beautiful, as women strive to be until today. She used to look into a valuable mirror that was most likely kept in a satchel. Such a container was also found in burial mound no. 3.

☞ The satchel, like the other objects on show, is approx. 2500 to 2200 years old. It is half rounded, and the upper backside part can be folded over. This object was presented in a darkened exhibition space, together with other light-sensitive items. Therefore, we could not see how many parts it consisted of and how they were sewn together. In any case: the lower part was sand-colored, from natural wool, and decorated with cords and tassels.

☞ A description of the natural dyes used was given in the catalogue. The red color was made of Kermes lice that were probably shipped from Indian or Armenian dealers to that part of the world.

An Enigmatic Object

In the young princess' grave a longish, tube-shaped felted object was found, strengthened by thin wooden sticks. It is made of natural brown wool with a diameter of 7 to 8 cm and a length of 70 to 80 cm. In the exhibit this piece was deemed to be a kind of headgear, but such a use is hardly imaginable. On the pointed part of the object one can detect a wood-carved stag, a mountain goat and many of the already mentioned water birds.

☞ We share all the other experts' opinion that the most beautiful felt items were found during excavations at the Ukok plateau in the Altai mountains. Herman Parzinger made a dream come true, with indefatigable strength, meticulous preparation and consistent research. The results remain invaluable for our art and cultural history – and also for all that have been taken with the craft of feltmaking for decades.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

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CH-4421 St. Pantaleon · Suisse
Tel. (0041) 619131333
www.atelier-pecora.ch · atelier-pecora@gmx.ch

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de;
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