

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #75, Summer 2022

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(page 34ff.) and Petra C. Sommer invites you to follow her instructions for a splendid rooster serving as a door stopper (page 42ff.) We wish you fun and good results – and, as always, do feel free to send us photographs of your works per email.

All parties interested in dry felting but despairing of the sheer variety of felting needles, the needle felt expert Helga Steegborn gives an overview of the different needle sizes and forms and at which stage of the felting process each should be used. (Page 52ff.)

After two years of pandemic standstill courses and workshop are slowly taken up again – for example the Filzkolleg of the Filz-Netzwerk in July (pages 12/13) and the workshops by studio Fiberfusing, the management of which was handed from Dorie van Dijk to Rianne Vermeulen. (Pages 14/15). Our schedule enclosure informs you about interesting workshops, shows and events: We are sure that you are going to find the right thing for yourself.

We hope you enjoy the reading and, naturally, summer felting!

*Best wishes,
Your filzfun-team*

Dear Readers

From your messages we keep learning that many of you would like to get ideas for self-made projects along with the artists' portraits and reports from the felting and textile scene. Saar Snoek from The Netherlands with her instructions for a trippy, colorful sea slug in our spring issue seems to have hit the nail on the head: With great pleasure we received many photographs of brightly hued slugs. You'll find a gallery of chosen photographs and some helix forms in double resist technique by Brigitte Funk (see filzfun No. 72, S. 48ff.) on the pages 64/65. In the summer issue, three of the felt artists portrayed should inspire you: Chantal Cardinal describes how a lapel rose is wet-felted (page 26ff.), Rae Swan made a spectacular night moth pendant with the felting needle

NOTE

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

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
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The autumn issue will be published on
August 30th, 2022
Editorial deadline: June 15th, 2022

Weaving Anniversary

In 1982, 17 women and men of Ilse-Petershagen in East Westphalia convened: they searched for discarded weaving and spinning wheels in attics and barns, dusted and repaired them, thus striving to rescue this old local textile craft. The oldest loom from 1796 is still in use today, as is a historical flax wheel. At the weekend of September 3rd and 4th 22 the Ilser Webstube celebrates its 40th birthday with a spinners' meeting and a cultural event with local artists and weaving demonstrations. *webstube-ilse.de*

Felted Planets with Annette Quentin-Stoll

»Eine kleine FilzWelt« (A Small FeltWorld) Annette Quentin-Stoll's workshop is called that will be held in the felto Filzwelt Soltau from August 19th to 21st 2022. Color, structure and shapes in felt are to be discovered. This course ends the »Licht- und Schattenspiel« exhibit of felted objects with Annette Quentin-Stoll and Robert Quentin. *filzwelt-soltau.de*

Textile Journey Through Time

Textile artists have been inspired by history and stories, literature and travel, old instructions and techniques. Chosen objects are seen in the show »Inspiration Time Travel« organized by the artTextil association in the water tower Dachau from June 24th to July 3rd 2022. At 3 p.m. a guided tour is offered during this period. *arttextil.de*

Merging Painting and Felt Art

The sheer force of colors and shapes in Ragy Enayats' paintings and the all-white felt sculptures made by Yvonne Zoberbier fuse in the show called »Verschmelzung«

(Fusion). Both artists have a specifically female perspective of mankind. The show on the Ars Avanti e.V. premises in the Alten Handelsschule Leipzig will last from July 15th to 31st 2022. *arsavanti.de*

Discover Fabric Patterns

More than 550 pattern books with more than a million great fabric patterns from the last 200 years are stored in the archives of the Augsburg State Textile- and Industrial Museum (tim). Now the tim has allowed online access to about 3000 of those patterns on the informative and entertaining platform CALICO. There you can not only find and admire these patterns but try them on with the help of model silhouettes or change them all around into entirely new designs by help of A.I. *calico.timbayern.de*

Weaving Summer in The Bern Oberland

July is in the sign of weaving at the Ballenberg center in the Swiss region Berner Oberland. During the weaving summer daily or longer courses for beginners and advanced weavers are on schedule where a range of products can be made from traditional kitchen towels to experimental 3D-structures to nothing less than »God's Eyes«. Get the whole program on the website. *ballenbergkurse.ch*

Solar Dyeing at the Floriade

That wool can be dyed with the power of the sun can be watched at the International Horticulture Show Floriade in Almere, The Netherland, in the Wolunie-Pavillon »Shades of Nature«. The sun rays also bring bright colors onto the inner wall, which is felted from sheep wool, creating an impressive stained-glass effect. The Floriade goes on until October 9th 2022. *floriade.com*

History of Cloth Production

Textile past and present merge in a free artistic interpretation: Martin Leuthold, icon of the Swiss textile design, revives our awareness of the bleacheries of early modern St. Gallen in a spatial installation in the textile museum. It connects the historic linen production with the ever growing communal object BIGNIK by the conceptual artists Frank und Patrik Riklin which is scheduled to last until 2050. The exhibit »gut – Am Anfang ist weisses Gold« (gut – in the beginning is white gold) can be seen in the Textilmuseum St. Gallen as of 29th January 2023. It is accompanied by an installation of the BIGNIK project in the hand embroidery machine hall (see photo). *textilmuseum.ch*

Baroque Avatars

A Feltmakers' Meeting in Pandemic Times – in Fulda and in Virtual Space

»Baroque« was the subject matter of the felt encounter 2022 which took place in special times and under extraordinary conditions. As great as the distance was between the feltmakers in Fulda and all those who joined via computer from their homes, the same could be said for baroque opulence and transience and the 100 pixel avatars in the virtual realm. ♡ Some board and other members of the Filz-Netzwerk arrived on a springy Thursday in the Fulda Youth Hostel, a very hospitable place situated beautifully overlooking the city that had last hosted the Filz-Netzwerk last in 2016.

Club Space in Gather-Town

In 2016, the halls had hummed with busy work, laughter and gossip. In 2022, however, the electronic stand-ins ran hot: As early as 9 o'clock the club space on the digital platform Gather-Town opened, complete with sofa corners and photo show that Margit Röhm had organized and equipped. The little avatars, substitute symbols of the absent feltmakers, were still wandering aimlessly around the virtual spaces. Cute! But they all vanish rather quickly.

As to my personal Avatar, I am still looking for glasses – after all, it should look like me. I am not really comfortable with my designing skills, but what can you get out of 100 pixels?

Ornaments on Felt

And suddenly, this time as well, the typical smell of sheep wool and wet olive soap wafts through the meeting room. We can start! In the next room, Susanne Schächter-Heil has been sitting on alert with camera and felting table, well prepared for the online workshop »Angel Wings on Felt«, in another room a pre-felt is made for the course »Ornaments on Felt« by Margit Röhm. The online meetings take their course, as usual there is a lot of exchange and the need to talk shop. Doris Niestroj's camera looks over our real shoulders from time to time, familiar too, only that sometimes monitors with faces are part of the scenery as well.

♡ We all (in our virtual surroundings) are allowed »A glance behind the scenes« at Annemie Koenen's, who is looking on herself. And behold – after the movie, small virtual chat groups greet each other, meet, rummage through slide shows of former encounters or they read the greeting address of filzfun-editor Helene Weinold. The long-missed bustle, laughter and animated talk was all of a sudden there again! We can meet, talk to each other in groups, we can stop and go as we please – genial!

Miniature Gardens

At the same time, in Fulda and all over the Republic fanciful, tiny baroque gardens spring to life on felting tables – the common project of this meeting. The organizers had been so busy preparing this unusual meeting that they could hardly think twice about the theme. Susanne Schächter-Heil had managed to felt an example – that is, each of us are aware of Baroque gardens in some way or other, but to felt one was quite another matter.

♡ Here the limits of a virtual meeting are represented by the lack of person-to-person inspiration. So, we were all the more astounded by the results: on the space of 30 x 30 cm reals gems were made, with shrubbery, tiny walls and accurate pathways. Ornamented fields alternate with meticulously trimmed flower beds, and the obligatory fountain or pond is hardly ever lacking. ♡ Whatever cannot be felted in the called-for delicacy is embroidered in or

around. And once again the feltmakers show that they can meet every challenge, if need be artistically free.

♡ As each annual felters' encounter, this one was framed by the annual Filz-Netzwerk e.V. members meeting. More than 80 % of the participants were present online. After Margit Röhm had closed the meeting around 10 p.m., there was the usual cozy get-together in the Gather-Town club as well as in the real meeting place in Fulda. ♡ On Saturday morning as well the club showed a busy crowd, before »Natur in Filz« (Nature in Felt) with Ina Jeromin and »Felted Transcience« with Margit Röhm began. Sustainability-ideas-discussions: It is great to »talk« again. ♡ Another »Look Behind the Scenes« is staged in the Ammertal Wool Carding Company, which even had hidden a gift voucher someplace in Gather-Town. After the movie was over, all 100 pixel avatars stormed out looking for the right password in the virtual premises.

New Homepage

For both real and digital members waited a further highlight on the last evening: Doris Niestroj presents the new homepage of the Filz-Netzwerks, which she had designed and realized together with her husband Nico Ellmann. ♡ When the communal days neared their end, when tension relaxes, we all realized: This encounter, be it live or virtual – was an actual, valid meeting with many possibilities to see, talk and to inspire each other. Nevertheless, we are greatly looking forward to 2023, to smell the typical whiff of sheepwool and dripping olive soap in real surroundings and to fill each others' wine glasses instead of toasting us on the screen.

BIRGIT BLUMRICH

Felt Encounter Project Steampunk

The next felt encounter will take place in der youth hostel Duisburg Landschaftspark from February 23rd to 26th 2023. The preparatory courses are scheduled for February 20th to 23rd 2023.

filznetzwerk.de

From Hat to Hazel Dormouse

Twelve Courses at the Sommerkolleg of the Filz-Netzwerk in Soltau

A wide choice of workshops on different felting projects, but also therapeutical feltmaking, taking photos of your own works as well as hosting creative courses is on offer by the Filz-Netzwerk during the felting lectures from July 4th to 22nd in the felto Filzwelt Soltau. The workshops last from one to three days, the adult education »Kurs aufnehmen« (Taking course) starts with a three-day program and is to be continued after the course of lectures.

True-to-Life Sculpture

A felted hazel dormouse is on schedule in Helga Steenborn's three-day workshop. The lecturer, who is famous for her true-to-life needle felted animal sculptures shows how bodily proportions are realized and how details like fur, paws, tail, whiskers and eyes can be made lifelike. ♡ Other treasures, found objects or other memorabilia can be felted in and so kept alive. Meike Raßbach invites already experienced feltmakers to share many experiments in her three-day workshop. ♡ »Alles nur geklaut« (Everything just pinched) Ina Jeromin calls her three-day course during which famous paintings are copied in combined needle- and wet felting techniques.

A Nuno Felt Stole

Three workshops, each for two days, are committed to hats and stoles: Barbara Eichhorn makes literally manifold headgear, i.e. crumpled, sturdy folded hats from fine Merino in Mono or Nuno felt technique that protect from rain and keep the head warm in cold weather. Elegant hats and caps based on a round template are the subject matter of Irina Kalaschnikow's first course which is followed by a second, dedicated to creating a fine stole from Margilan and mulberry silk and the finest Merino wool in Nuno felt technique. ♡ Practical objects for everyday use, which serve well as gifts will be felted in the two day courses by Tanja Kahl: Sitting cushions in scale/slab technique with broken lines, whose insulating pad can be folded together when one is on the road and hot water bottle covers with pre-felted patterns.

In her day course, Doris Niestroj shows how you can effectfully photograph felted objects and how to process the material for Facebook, Instagram or online shop purposes.

Therapeutical Felting

»Felting offers innumerable possibilities to loosen blocks, to foster fine motor skills, to enhance perception and to work on different subject themes«, according to Doreen Lüpfer’s expertise of working in homes for the elderly and in her own felt studio. She teaches basics for therapeutical felt courses and shows small, easy to make projects. ♡ »Kurs aufnehmen« (Taking up course) is the name of a program by Susanne Schächter-Heil, which will be continued until mid 2023 the after the three days in Soltau with remote studies, video feedback and live online courses with a final assignment and a Filz-Netzwerk E.V. certificate. It is meant for all who wish to teach courses or workshops. ♡ An experimental workshop which offers room for your own felting projects and experiments, e.g. with surface structures, three-dimensional forms, transparent surfaces or raw wool can be booked for a day. Experienced lecturers assist beginners and advanced learners alike. Also, kids can make their first felting experiences.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 14-15

Change in Atelier Fiberfusing

Rianne Vermeulen takes over the management of Dorie van Dijk’s renowned studio.

Atelier Fiberfusing in Amstelveen, south of Amsterdam, has long been a fixture in the feltmakers’ world. With heartfelt commitment, the founder Dorje van Dijk had engaged herself with the art of felting and had organized workshops, master classes, seminars, lectures and demonstrations with famous Durch felters and those from abroad since 2008.

Obsessed by Felt

Of course, I was familiar with that studio and its high-class courses. I studied

drawing, art and fashion history and textiles in the 1970ies. I fell hook, line and sinker for felt ever since I saw a model by Yohi Yamamoto in the Fashion Museum of the former culture capital Lille, where hand-made felt was used. Until then I had only known custom-made felt, those rectangular pieces that you can buy in hobby shops. A whole new world opened for me and I began to take courses with professional felters from the Netherlands and from all over the rest of the world, it seems. So, I made contact with Fiberfusing and got acquainted with Dorie and Herman van Dijk. ♡ When Dorie van Dijk invited me for a talk in 2001, I was very much surprised. She needed more time for herself, and new plans and she offered me the continuation of her life’s work. What a great and unexpected honor! I had never imagined I could be the one to take over Fiberfusing and to merge it with my own studio FYO (For You Only) Feltwear that I had founded in my hometown Uitgeest.

The Art of Organizing

As far as feltmaking goes, I have gathered a lot of experience. I have been designing clothing, shoes, accessories and wall hangings and experimented with different material combinations. I found many of the different techniques interesting, but their sheer number almost crushed me. Now I got the chance to concentrate on one of my biggest fortes: organizing and maintaining contacts to felters worldwide. ♡ Full of enthusiasm, I planned the program for 2020 in September 2019. Then came Covid-19. Nobody knew then how the pandemic would manifest itself, much less how it would hold the whole world captive over long periods of time. In mid 2020 I had to cancel everything. With renewed hope we started in 2021, but it soon became clear that many participants all over the world couldn’t travel freely. Only in November 2021 we managed to organize two small workshops which were great fun.

A New Dyeing »Kitchen«

During the pandemic halt we adapted the studio premises to the changed wishes and requirements lecturers had suggested, assisted with great drive and skill by Herman van Dijk. Most of the course hosts prefer smaller groups of no more than twelve people to be able to dedicate time to each. A separate room for theoretical lectures, for meals or just for a hide-out was newly built. This year

a »kitchen« for natural dyeing is added further. ♡ For 2022 there is quite a workload to be handled: Workshops with Marjolein Dallinga, Natalya Brashovetskaya, Bahar Bozaci, Irit Dulman, Charity van der Meer and Molly Williams are on schedule. The many Natalya Brashovetskaya fans will be amply rewarded: She is going to present entirely new techniques at the end of October. I look forward to greeting all these well-known artists at Atelier Fiberfusing in person – in this oasis of stillness and stronghold of creativity at the Amstel river.

RIANNE VERMEULEN

PAGES 16-17

Fingerprints of Apples and Pears

Karen Bruinsma documents the leaves of hundreds of fruit trees on felt labels.

The surrounding landscape of my hometown IJsselstein was once a fruit-growing region. In the 1970ies many new buildings were put up there, and the former park manager George M. Otter had more than thousand different kinds of apple, pear and nut trees planted in the recreation areas. All citizens were entitled to harvest. The names alone were melodious: Glorie van Holland, Tulpappel, Roomsche Griet or Koningin Emma. ♡ Many of the trees came from Germany, France and Switzerland, amongst them many old kinds 280 of which are unique in the whole world. After all, IJsselstein is called Europe’s fruit capital. Unfortunately, the trees and taking care of them were more and more forgotten in the past years. ♡ In 2021 I encountered the group Klimaneutral (Climate Neutral) that came to the rescue of this living museum. They made every tree visible in a geographical information system. By means of the many different kinds, students at the University of Applied Science carried out biodiversity research projects.

Ecoprint on Felt

I had the notion that even more public attention could be achieved by turning this matter into art. Together with

volunteers we picked leaves of 500 trees. Each was put in an envelope and the kind, place and number of each tree was noted. I started to cut out 500 labels from felt. ♡ Then I hydratisized every single leaf and eco-printed it on each felt label, somewhat like a thumb print of the respective pear or apple. The shapes of the leaves were most diverse – some are rather rounded with a small tip, like linden leaves, others are oval or longish.

Hand-Dyed Silk Yarn

I also dyed silk yarn with walnut shells and looked for enthusiastic embroiderers who would embroider the names onto the labels. The echo was considerable: I found 65 volunteers from The Netherlands, but also from Germany, Belgium and Norway. Some worked alone, others in groups, but there was always a connection to my project and to the history of these ancient kinds of fruit.

Apple Cake Recipe

Amongst them is Bärbel Helfrich, my friend from the Oberrot felting school. For my book she is writing the history of pomiculture during her youth in the Odenwald. Laetitia de Bruijn not only embroidered the names of apples and pears but also those of the embroiderers. Others looked for the origin of the trees. The Sturmer Pippin, for example, was traced back to England, where the researcher not only gathered information but was presented with a Sturmer Pippin apple cake recipe. ♡ In this way a textile archive of old fruit sorts was made which covers 462 labels with leaf prints and 17 labels with the name of the embroiderers. One label is empty, it symbolizes the trees already dead.

KAREN BRUINSMA

PAGES 20-25

Good Connections

The felt artist Chantal Cardinal is fascinated by the magic properties of wool.

Chantal Cardinal’s practice of felting is about »making connections, literarly by binding fibres together but also metaphorically by sharing the experience, learning from others and reaching out for

collaborations« that she finds in working together with schools or local sheep breeders and producers.

Magical Attraction

The Canadian artist, fashion and costume designer discovered wet-felting and it connected immediately with her. »I had sewn all my life, painted, done ceramics... but nothing really stuck«, she remembers. »I felt like I was more a jack of all trades even though I had built a life around clothing and costumes. When I realized in 2013 how a material can be made by wet-felting this technique was magically attractive to me.« ♡ She fell in love with wool, in her words a »sustainable gift of nature«. She is stil amazed by the breathtaking possibilities of artefacts that can be created with it. The range of her own artwork made under her own label »Felt à la main with love« stretches from wearable art to sound-absorbing wall hangings. »I think anything can be made out of wool!«, Chantal Cardinal claims.

A Studio in Vancouver

The artist comes from Montreal, but since 2008 she has been living with her husband in Vancouver where she uses 150sqft in an open-concept studio, a part of the Arts Factory. She likes the urban setting and the company of other artists from different mediums. »We can chat from across the room and help each other out with all sorts of resources.« It is even possible to take one’s pet there. »My cat Hilo used to love being in my coverall while I was carding, but she quickly outgrew that«, she fondly remembers. ♡ Her studio area is bursting with wool studies and artefacts. Under the big working table, she stores mountains of assorted breeds like Merino, Corriedale, Gotland, Iceland, Romney, Romeldale and Perrydale and several cross-breedings. She loves to document the different wool characteristics, even of single animals.

Sheep Shearing Help

Chantal Cardinal is committed to process local wool since she took part in a local artist call for submissions which caused her to look up sheep producers in British Columbia. »At this point I knew only very little of breeds other than Merino and Corriedale, as this was what her wool supplier offered«, she admits. »I went to a fleece auction where I asked a lot of questions and touched a lot of

raw fleeces. Then I drove to the nearest sheep farm and introduced myself. The shepherdess there just happened to be the auctioneer as well. She has since become my BFF – my Best Friend Farmer.« Together with her husband Brian the felt artist has been helping out with the sheep shearing ever since.

Art Instead of Fertilizer

Whereas in the beginning she used to buy prepared and carded wool, the Canadian lady settles mainly on raw wool these days. »My favorite thing is to use waste wool, like belly wool or pooply wool that would normally be destined for fertilizing the garden. To put it bluntly: I like to take shit and turn it into art. ♡ Her piece called »Wasp« (see page 21) was made from wool swept aside from the shearing of local Gotlands. As she tells us: »I would never have allowed myself to card beautiful Gotland locks, but by doing so on these assorted fibers I realized the beautiful wool structure of this particular breed.« ♡ »Whim« (see page 20) is almost one square meter. This art object can be changed around to create different perspectives and moods. »I like my work to be multi-functional and that it has more than just one ›look.«

Wet-Felting with and without Resists

The 54-year-old artist mainly uses wet-felting in her work, with and without resists, adding some needle-felting for assemblage, then wet-felting some more. She enjoys the challenges of scaling up her work and likes to experiment. Occasionally she dyes felt fibers with acid dyes, preferring gray to white wool because it gives a nicer hue. ♡ Chantal Cardinal finds inspiration in the tactile world of nature, as she says: in the structures of bark, lichen, foliage, rocks but also in the grain of the wood, the striations of rock walls or the ripples or movement of water. She starts every new object with a plan, as she has to prepare the fibers that will be used, but she is also very instinctive. »I think I have gotten to a stage where I can work with the fibers instead of forcing them into a certain shape.« ♡ She wet felts in stages, either adding layers, cutting here and needle-felting there and likes to experiment with different material combinations like wood, metal or plaster. In short, materials you would not normally associate with wet-felting.

Tools out of Wood or Clay

Chantal Cardinal's most important tools are her hands. She likes to make other necessary tools herself out of clay or wood or transforms existing tools to suit her purpose. For large-scale work she sometimes needs corresponding tool sizes, as for instance an extra-large pool cover or extra-long rolling poles. ♣ Many of her her objects were or are currently on show. This year she will be exhibiting a wearable and large-scale piece at the Harmony Arts Festival in West Vancouver from July 29th to August 7th. She is also going to host a felted flower workshop. Her piece »Blé« (see page 22) was juried into the Felt Fiber Transformed and will be exhibited in 2023.

Living Walls

Many people owe their felting enthusiasm to her workshops. In 2021 she was involved in a local elementary school and engaged 200 kids in creating Living Walls from raw wool under the motto »Living Walls: From Farm to Felt«. She was chosen by the organization Felt:Feutre Canada to develop an online workshop for making 3D soft sculptural succulents or plants. She calls them »P.Y.C.K.: Plants You Can't Kill. ♣ The physicality of feltmaking was one of the aspects that had attracted her to this wool medium, but it turned into a worrisome aspect as the years went by. She, an ardent active soccer player for most of her life and a devoted aerial dancer in climbing silks or on bungees had trouble moving at all after a bout of Polymyalgia rheumatica for many months. She says today: »I realize this shifted my practice from being in a hurry to finish something to appreciating the fact that I can.« ♣ One thing is clear for this most versatile artist: »When I discovered this ancient craft, I found a medium that would keep me busy for the rest of my life. I would never have imagined to become a felt artist, and now I cannot imagine not being one.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 26–29

Tutorial: Rose Brooch

Here is what you need:

- ♣ 8–10g of wool (Merino or what you like to work with) in 1 or 2 colors
- ♣ 1–2g of some accent fibers like silk, bamboo, Tencel (optional; I did not use here for this demo)
- ♣ something to make a resist (floor underlay or bubble wrap), approx. 25cm circ.
- ♣ 12" x 24" bubble wrap
- ♣ 12" PVC pipe or pool noodle or dowel
- ♣ 1 hand towel
- ♣ soap (dish soap for water / olive oil soap for rubbing and kneading)
- ♣ water in a container (I like warm water for my hands)
- ♣ something to distribute your water (sponge or browser)
- ♣ scissors
- ♣ needle for needle felting and base (may vary here)
- ♣ coil less pins (quilter's pin)
- ♣ needle and thread (optional; not shown in picture)
- ♣ permanent maker (not shown in picture)
- ♣ wire brush or toothbrush (not shown in picture).

Instructions

1 Trace out a circular pattern on your resist using a permanent marker and cut a slit from the edge to the middle.

2 Set up your work area with your hand towel with the long side up, your bubble wrap bubbles up and ready to layout on only half (we are going to fold it in two to wet down and roll). Divide your wool in 2 and place the resist pattern under your bubble wrap to use as a guide at first for our initial layout. Note: I used two similar color to add a bit of depth, but you can also use 1 color with accent fibers or any variation of your choosing.

3 1st ply (layer) of wool will be in a circular layout which I like to call »spiral« using half of color 1 (here it's a bright red). This will be the outside of my rose.

4 Note: your layout should be the usual pinch and pull with about a

1/3 overlap, starting with the edge and working your way to the middle. Don't worry too much about the middle, you can finish with an X of wool as long as you have a nice even layer.

5 2nd ply (layer) goes perpendicular to the first in a »starbust« direction. Here I used my second darker red. This will be the inside of my rose.

6 You may want to add a border layer to even out your layout if you feel the outer edge is too thin (optional).

7 Put in a squirt of dish soap in your water the water needs to feel a bit slippery) and use your browser (or sponge) to wet down your layout.

8 Fold the bubble wrap over and spread the water around by pressing down. Make sure all the air is out and all the fibers are wet. I like to say until it is »as flat as a crepe«. Note: if you use too much water, you can always towel some of it off. You want it wet, but not flooded.

9 Remove your resist pattern from under your bubble wrap. Cut your wet layout from the edge to the middle, like you did for the resist pattern.

10 Put your resist pattern on top and carefully pull out a bit of your wet layout by spinning your resist a bit in order to have about 2–3cm showing.

11 Close up of what that looks like.

12 Making sure to connect, by laying out your fibers under, lift the wet layout to start this second »spiral« layout. Here connecting bright red with bright red (outer layer).

13 This spiral should be a bit smaller than the first one and you need to stop before you overlap.

14 Leave a small opening.

15 Again, add a border if you feel your layout is too thin (optional). Wet down as in step 8–9 by adding soapy water and folding over the bubble wrap and pressing down.

16 Open up the bubble wrap and clean up the edges by tucking

in the fibers. Using soapy fingers, slide along the edge to comb the fibers in. Make sure to cover all your layout, above and below the resist pattern.

17 Make sure there are no fibers reaching across where the resist pattern is coming through to the top layer. If so, cut them and tuck them out of the way.

18 Fold over the bubble wrap and spend a bit of time rubbing on top of the bubble wrap using soapy water to slide along and start the agitation by creating a bit of a skin before you start the rolling.

19 Wipe off the soap.

20 Use the PVC pipe to roll your bundle (wool layout + resist pattern + bubble wrap folded in two) approx. 100 rolls, using the towel to hold your bundle.

21 Repeat this in the 4 different directions to encourage your felt to bind and shrink evenly.

22 Use the olive oil soap to do some rubbing directly onto your work to tighten your felt and work all the edges.

23 Remove the resist.

24 To create a petal, cut a small notches around the edges (optional).

25 All the notches need to be rubbed with soap to heal the edges. I suggest you make a first Rose without notches to see how it goes.

26 Knead, toss, rub onto the bubble wrap, rub between your hands »palming« to full your flower until it shrinks to a nice and tight felt.

27 Stretch the felt and full some more.

28 Roll up your rose and start working on some shaping.

29 Keeping it rolled up, rinse your rose shape in water to rinse out the soap or water with a touch of vinegar (optional) to neutralize the soap.

30 Gently squeeze out the water out and roll your rose shape in a towel to dry and finish the felting.

31 Rework the rose shape by starting to needle felt the roll from the middle. Keep needle felting as you keep rolling up your rose. You can use your finger to leave a bit of space in between the rolls.

32 Trick: if you tease your felt with a brush it helps to use those loose fibers to needle felt more solidly. You can also use a needle and thread to sew the rolled-up rose so it does not unravel (optional).

33 Shape by stretching out the edges, not everywhere, just here and there to give your flower its personality.

34 Voilà! Note: Use a coil less pin to mount.

CHANTAL CARDINAL

PAGES 30–33

An Octopus for Your Head

Rae Swon creates breathtaking hats and sculptures with the felting needle.

An octopus holds onto a hairdo with its many tentacles and watches you over a fishnet-like, rolled up structure, as if it were its favorite place. A pigeon's mask hides a face. Rae Swon's imagination seems boundless.

Baba Yaga Hut

The 32-year-old needle felt artist from Iowa in the U.S. is a master of the felting needle. She makes fascinating headgear but also fairytale-like sculptures, like the house of the witch Baba Yaga on with a chicken foot as a purse with a loop fastener or a warhog rising out of a wall. ♣ Since she has been 15 years old, the American artist has been devoted to art – first at the Interlochen Arts Academy, a boarding highschool, then at the Buddhist Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where she concentrated on traditional Asian art techniques. Later she continued her artistic work in Manhattan in a studio

for Verre églomisé (glass etching).

♣ As a teenager already she had studied needle-felting with Ann Cole and was immediately taken by the magic of feltmaking: »It felt like creating from out of nothing but a fluffy cloud. I liked that there was no stubborn count of stitches and that you can't really make mistakes, since the process is both additive and reductive: You can take material away or add it.«

Organic and Intuitive

Rae Swon usually starts her artistic object with a sketch, some relevant images or photographs and a kind of general plan, »but then, my pieces are made organically and intuitively.« In order not to have to shift the piece around more than necessary she works on big foam plates and starts felting with a holder of several needles. Then she fixes the form quickly with an electronic felting device which lends itself to make deep rills, if necessary. The details are made with one single needle.

♣ The artist's advice for beginners: »Felt your pieces much longer than you initially think it necessary! For a truly professional look and good durability the felt should be stiff to the touch.« At last she cautiously cuts off wiry hair and protruding fuzz with a pair of scissors. For a pelt-like look she adds long pieces of roving when the stiff basic form is ready. »If you learn to get a knack for designing a fur-like structure and to mix colors well, the animal sculptures will resemble their wild counterparts. Since I have been decorating my animal figures with hand-painted or gilded glass eyes, shiny clay noses and whiskers my work has definitely reached a new stage.«

Animal Rights Activist

Animals are her favorite motif; it has been so since she was a child. She grew up in an old farmhouse, surrounded by fields and woods and is still living there with her husband Graham. Until today she has always pleaded for animal rights and is active in the Mercy for Animals organization which brought the cruelties of industrial livestock farming out in the open. Last year, Rae Swon, in whose home live a black piglet called Ulalume and the cats Nobu and Kaneto, felted a series of hog portraits and donated 25% of the returns to animal protection.

Material: Industrial Fibers

This engagement for animal welfare is one of the reasons why Rae Swon doesn't

use sheep wool for her needle-felted sculptures but industrial fibers, such as Polyfil from recycled fibers, Polyacryl, flax and bamboo fibers. She explains her decision against proper wool use: »Moths had destroyed years of work, and Graham became allergic to wool. Furthermore I learned about the cruel way sheep are treated in the wool industry.« The discovery that Polyfil can be needle-felted much more easily settled the matter once and for all. »Acrylic, flax and bamboo fibers act more unruly«, the artist explains. »On the other hand, none such fibers can be wet-felted because they don't shrink in hot water. So when you prefer wet-felting stick to wool and buy it at small local enterprises that don't maim their animals.«

☞ Rae Swan is angry about the traditional view that textile art is womens' work, mere handicraft or some other negligible aspect of art, resulting in meagre pay: »I strive for changing the public view on this textile art form. With some of my bigger sculptures I try to contribute to the notion that feltmaking is no longer seen as a craft, but as art in its own right.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 34-37

Tutorial: Virgin Tiger Moth Necklace

These wonderful moths start off their lives as adorable fuzzy caterpillars known as «wooly bears». They have a special organ with membranes on it that they vibrate to emit ultrasonic sounds, used for wooing and to alert others of danger. They also evolved the ability to create clicks in response to bat's echolocation calls to protect themselves. They often keep their colorful under wings hidden, then reveal them suddenly to startle swooping birds away. When mistreated tiger moths play dead just like an opossum.

☞ These moths are cherished in North America where they are from. Feel free to pick a different species of moth that you love and use this as a general guideline! Look up some other decorative species, such as the footman moth,

regal moth, two-spot tiger moth, and oleander hawk-moth.

Materials

- ☞ Fiber: White, black, yellow, warm peach, pale gold (or you can choose other colors!)
- ☞ Felting needle and felting mat
- ☞ Scissors
- ☞ Needle and thread
- ☞ String to make necklace chain
- ☞ Glass eyes (optional)

Instructions

1 Felt a flat silhouette of your moth. I used a multi-needle tool to speed it up, but a single needle will work too. Felt it until it is very firm and around 4 or 5 mm thick. Trim the edges with scissors. I made mine around 20cm wide and 13cm high. If you choose to go smaller just know that you may have trouble felting antennae and legs that look delicate enough, you could try using another material though such as wire.

2 Build up the body by felting on a few layers of fiber. Add some extra thickness to the upper torso and divide it into three oval shapes (by felting crevices with your needle). Needle felt the whole thing longer than you think! You will later be felting grooves into the body which works best on a really firm form.

3 Felt indents into the form, creating horizontal stripes on the body and two vertical stripes on the wings near the body. The only material you will be adding are a ridge along the neck and a second layer of two wings. Note how I made the wing thick on one edge and it gradates to nothing so it can seamlessly be felted onto the base layer. I didn't felt down about one cm of the thick edge so it sticks up and casts a shadow.

4 Add color to the lower body and lower wings. I didn't have the warm peach color on hand, so I blended four colors together to make it: brick red, pink, yellow ochre, and lots of pale buttery yellow. I find that mixing adds slight variations that add to the beauty. You will have to reinforce the indentations you made in the previous step. Along the bottom edge I added a pale golden color. I put in a couple stripes of bright yellow here too.

5 Add black patterns onto your colored sections and upper torso. It can be hard to see what you're doing since your fluff covers where you're working. Don't stress about controlling the unfelted fiber too much. Remember that it will only go where your needle pokes. Focus on the journey of the tip of your needle and make it trace and fill the shape you want.

6 Add black patterns to the outer wings. Again, you'll be working a little blindly, but if you felt in nice straight lines, you'll be able to form a crisp geometric pattern. Any fiber extending beyond will get sucked into your shapes.

7 Form a long and very thin tendril for the antennae (you'll cut it in two later) and a shorter thicker one for the legs. I made my antenna 20 cm long and legs 12cm. I start by twisting a section of the roving and needle felting it, then twisting the next section and felting it, and so on. When you're done, tidy them up by trimming the fuzz with scissors and cutting the ends of the antennae into nice points.

8 Attach the legs to the back. Leave them in one piece with an unfelted gap in the center. This is where the necklace chain will slip through. After felting the two sides I reinforced them by sewing a thread through a couple times and tying a double knot.

9 Make eyes and attach them. I use glass cabochons that I paint the backs of with glass paint. Feel free to instead needle felt your eyes directly on with black fiber, or order pre-made glass or plastic mini eyes. Mine were 6mm. To attach, first needle felt little craters for them to sit in, add a drop of super glue to the back of one eye, place it and hold it firmly in position for a minute while the glue dries. Repeat with the other eye. If he's looking too bug-eyed felt a little ring around each eye in white to make them look more nestled in place.

10 Make a necklace chain! I finger knit mine. If you don't know how there are great tutorials on YouTube. The basics: Make a slipknot, hold each end of the string taut, reach your pointer finger and thumb through the loop and grab the taut string. Pull it through until it's tight and a new loop is formed. Repeat with new loop. I made mine 64cm long-big enough to comfortably fit my head

through. Feel free to braid yours instead or use a metal necklace chain.

11 Before tying your chain, loop it through the gap in the moths legs! Tie a double knot then trim the ends. Cut your antenna in half and attach the two pieces to your moth's head. Do this by holding the end in place and needle felting downward around the whole circumference of the antenna.

12 Add any finishing touches and trim any fuzz sticking out. I added a red neck band as well as pops of bright yellow around some of the black dots and in some stripes. All done!

RAE SWON

PAGES 38-41

Life Has Many Doors

From the Ore Mountains over Switzerland to East Frisia: Petra C. Sommer is artistically and spatially always open for new things.

Fabrics, yarns and fibers have always been there since she grew up in the Ore Mountains »as the child of a tailors' dynasty«, as she puts it. Sewing, knitting, making bobbin lace simply belonged to her life.

☞ She got into feltmaking in 2006, when she moved to the Appenzeller Country with her partner and worked as a cook and kitchen manager in a blind people's home. »The social worker made felted balls and dwarfs from felt with the handicapped,« she reminisces, »and a new door opened for me. I was immediately fascinated by this unfamiliar material, and already shortly afterwards I took my first felting course with Heidi Aschwanden in Altdorf in the canton Uri.«

Courses and Adult Education

Petra C. Sommer also found her love for dwarfs and mythical creatures. Soon she began to give courses and her work was shown in public. But she wanted to enhance her skills, so she took clothing courses with Inge Bauer, at Petra Bartels' in Italy, with Charity van der Meer in Bern and many other well-known feltmakers. Then she decided to take the three year advanced course »Fit in Filz« in Oberrot, where she graduated as a certified felt designer in 2019.

Nuno Felt with Ecoprint

But her energy and curiosity still weren't satisfied. »As a creative and curious human being I try to find new challenges, mostly with regard to material and technique«, she tells us. She makes Nunofelt with fine Merino of 16 to 18 mic which she dyes herself with acid or natural dyes. Because she prefers to work with natural materials, she likes to experiment with the Ecoprint technique.

☞ For thicker jackets she uses pre-felts from Merino, for gents' Alpine jackets, animal figures and interior decoratings Mountain Sheep wool »but always in connection with additional materials like silk, hemp or bamboo fibers.«

A Prizeworthy Wedding Gown

Quality, to Petra C. Sommer, is of utmost importance, especially with felted clothing: »That's why it was crucial for me to get the quality assurance label of the Filz-Netzwerk. That and my own high performance standards helped me to take part in the International Fashion Show in Soltau and other exhibits.« These were not the only successful ventures: In 2007 an article with photos of her work was published in a lifestyle magazine, and in 2020 she was awarded the public prize for an elaborated wedding gown at the international show »White Meets Gold« in Parma, Italy.

☞ Then, new doors opened wide for the 69-year-old artist. In the meantime she had moved from the mountains to the North Sea coast, from Switzerland to East Frisia. »Here I can live my life as a pensioner with a big felting studio, a sewing studio and a holiday home on the premises«, she says with great delight.

☞ She enjoys having so much room for her creative work, indulging in different materials like wool, fabrics and other fibers when felting, dyeing or sewing. She makes jackets, skirts or dresses mostly from self-made nuno felts which she enriches with lace, silk fabrics, hemp, viscose, mulberry silk fibers or wool curls and occasionally with beads or embroidery. »You have to try these garments on repeatedly«, she sighs. »The floral motifs that I often work into jackets should best not vanish in a tuck or a fold.«

Hiking Bags and Hand Puppets

In her Feltworld Studio not only clothing is designed and made. Petra C. Sommer always has an eye on current trends, so these days she makes the popular hikebags.

During the pandemic another door was pried open, she participated in courses online. »Via Dagmar Binder I learned not shy away anymore from collars, and also Yara Troynich's workshops for hand- and finger puppets created entirely new pathways for me«, she says.

☞ The artist presents her works at arts and crafts shows and in two business ventures. She makes felt models on order and looks forward to host courses in her own studio in the fall.

☞ Such is her life philosophy: »To make good use of every day – be it for my creative work, my garden, my holiday guests, nature walks or travelling abroad.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 42-46

Tutorial: Frisian Rooster

This proud rooster serves as a door stopper and decorates any hall. Felted by Petra C. Sommer it was filled with bird sand for the necessary weight.

Materials

- ☞ 60 g Merino fleece in petrol blue
- ☞ Some Merino fleece in white, red and yellow for the eyes, coxcomb, wattle and beak
- ☞ Wool curls, wool, silk or viscose fibers for decoration (optional)
- ☞ Pre-felt in white for the motifs
- ☞ Sound insulation foil for the resist, approx. 50 cm x 76 cm
- ☞ Plastic foil (Painter's foil)
- ☞ Permanent marker
- ☞ Scissors
- ☞ Felting equipment (Bubble foil, gauze, towel, water, soap, ball sprinkler, pool noodle or insulation tube, skid-proof mat, vinegar)
- ☞ Balloon
- ☞ Funnel, wooden spoon or wooden stick
- ☞ Bird sand and darning wool
- ☞ Sewing yarn and needle

Instructions

1 Draw the rooster's body shape, complete with neck and head, with permanent marker onto the insulation foil and cut it out. It resembles a calabash

with a big-bellied underpart and a not-too slim neck which is cocked sideways. Spread a towel onto your worktable, cover it with a big piece of bubble foil and put the resist on top. Lay out the beak first with a thin amount of yellow wool, then cover the body with delicately plucked fibers from the outside to the inside in rays.

2 Take care that the layer is evenly thick and that the fibers protrude from the resist's edge a little.

3 Sprinkle the whole surface with warm water.

4 Cover the wool with gauze and soap it.

5 Put a second piece of bubble foil over the work piece and turn the entire »sandwich« around, and take care that nothing shifts.

6 Now remove the upper bubble foil: Around the resist, the fibers of the first layer stick out.

7 Revert the protruding fibers close to the resist's edge, pull them tightly inside and moisten them.

8 The free part of the resist is now filled – in a radiant direction – with yellow wool for the beak and in petrol blue for neck and body. Wet it with warm water, cover it with gauze and soap it.

9 Put the second layer of wool on beak and body lengthwise with a slight overlap, wet it, cover it with gauze and soap it. Put the second piece of bubble foil on top and turn the thing around.

10 Turn the protruding fibers around close to the resist. Lay out the second wool layer lengthwise as well, wet and soap it. Turn the work piece around in between the bubble foil.

11 Lay out the third layer with a slight overlap, this time in the shape of a circle, wet and soap it and turn it around between the bubble foil.

12 Turn the protruding fibers over close to the resist. Put the third layer of wool on the second side in a circle as well, but this time without overlap. Wet and soap the wool and turn it around between the bubble foil.

13 Spread out the fourth wool layer, integrating the eye, the comb and a wattle. For each eye, form a ball from white wool in accordance with the animal's proportions and felt it lightly with soap to make it firm. Put a thin layer of dry wool on top to form a rim around the ball. Prepare the comb and the wattle from red wool in needle-felt technique. Put one eye onto the rooster's head and felt it, then cover it with a piece of foil. Put the comb and wattle onto the work piece and felt it in as well.

14 Both comb and wattle cover the eye. Don't be miserly with the wool, later after cutting it open there should be a fine rim around the eye.

15 Make the imposing collar ruff with wool curls, silk fibers or roving. Cover the whole width of the rooster's neck and upper body with foil, so that the decorating fibers are only fixed below the head and don't mingle with the body, but hang freely. Repeat the steps 13–15 on the other side of the work piece.

16 As an additional decoration, I cut out a Frisian landscape with windmills and sheep from pre-felt. Together with accentuating fibers I distributed it on the rooster's body.

17 When all decorations are completed, wet everything with warm water, put the gauze on top and soap the wool.

18 This side of the rooster should be felted well so no decorative parts can shift anymore.

19 Cover the whole work piece with painter's foil, soap it lightly and turn it around with care.

20 Adorn the other side of the rooster with matching material and felt it, too. Each side must be felted for at least 10 minutes.

21 Wind the workpiece up together with the bubble foil, wrap a towel around and start fulling. Open up the roll from time to time, turn it in a 90-degree angle, roll it up again and continue fulling.

22 Once the shrinking process has begun and the resist inside of the rooster is welling up, cut a small hole under the ruff and remove the resist.

Continue fulling the rooster with hot water and soap, turn it over and around, knead and throw it until the rooster is fully felted and has reached its desired size.

23 Rinse the finished felt piece in clear water. Put a shot of vinegar in the last rinse to neutralize the remaining soap suds. The tumble the rooster.

24 Cut the red wool layer open cautiously to free the eyes and remove the foil as long as the felt is still wet. Felt the edges thoroughly with soapy fingers. Then rinse the head once more and press it out in the towel. Put a balloon through the neck opening inside the felted sheath and blow it up to give the rooster shape. Let the felted rooster dry completely in a warm space.

25 Fill the rooster with darning yarn and bird sand: First push darning yarn with a wooden spoon or stick into the beak and neck. No hollows should remain unfilled.

26 When the neck is fully stuffed, put a cone in the opening and pour bird sand in the rooster's rump. Pay attention! The object should not get too heavy. Fill the rooster again with darning yarn.

27 Sew the neck opening together with needle and thread and sew fibers on with the felting needle to hide the spot.

28 Remove any sticking out fibers with a disposable razor, so that the felt gets smooth and the shining fibers show to their best advantage. Needle black pupils onto the rooster's eyes. Form the comb, wattle and neck again with your hands.

29 The Frisian rooster is finished!

PETRA C. SOMMER

PAGES 47

Shibori and Steel

Ruth Bucci-Baumer makes felt designs in the Japanese dyeing method and plans a joint exhibit with a metal artist.

In Japan, fabrics are artfully folded, wound up, pressed, sewed and bound with a special reserve and dyeing technique. The result are exceptionally patterned textiles, because where the fabric is tightly bound no dye seeps in. Some felted objects made by Ruth Bucci-Baumer are made in this tradition. »The most special thing about Shibori are the three-dimensional effects that enhance the texture of the different fabrics«, the Swiss artist declares. »I had the honor to learn it from the Australian Patrizia Black in the Lisio Foundation in Florence. Some years later, the well-known felt artist Marjolein Dallinga used it as well.«
☞ Ruth Bucci-Baumer designs clothes, images and accessories in the Shibori technique, loving the different shape and color effects this technique yields.

Courses at the Orphanage

Her initial profession was photographer and empowerment therapist and she lived for many years in Italy, where she had a big share in introducing the feltmaking enthusiasm by writing newspaper articles plus two books and hosting a TV show. For ten years, she taught kids in Thai orphanages feltmaking in the three months of winter. »I was even allowed to spread the felting virus in a womens' jail among its 160 prisoners«, she remembers.
☞ In 2016, Ruth Bucci-Baumer returned to Switzerland. She regrets not owning a studio anymore and teaching only rarely. Still, she has plans: »Meeting the metal artist Markus Meyer inspired me to try out new ways«, she says. »In the connection of hard, heavy steel and soft, malleable wool two different worlds meet. To combine these two elements brings out new challenges, and they are perfectly suited to the Shibori technique.«
☞ The results of this exciting co-operation will be presented during an exhibit next year. The filzfun is going to report on it.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 48–49

Natural Energy

Birgit Sahner felts individual earth spirits

»Being rooted in the earth is important for searching the treasure hidden deep in one's self with patience but intently«, says Birgit Sahner. »Gnomes, dwarfs and imps belong to the earth element and represent being grounded.« This is why the 55-year-old artist focuses on felting such creatures that she makes individually for the clients they should accompany.
☞ A beautician by original profession she first encountered feltmaking via the Waldorf kindergarten and school roughly 17 years ago. She was immediately taken by »the unimaginable possibilities wool offers«. Ten years later she made feltmaking her profession and sold her works mostly on medieval fairs. Today she mostly works on order.

Personal Information

With information such as the birthday of her client, one positive and one negative character aspect, strong points, weaknesses, dreams and visions Birgit Sahner sets off to work. In her 35 square meter studio in a small village in Rhineland-Palatine she makes her unique creatures in wet- and needle felt techniques. She uses sheep wool and sometimes Mountain Alpaka, but strictly only from animals that are well kept. In each of her imps, gnomes and dwarfs she puts a stone.
☞ Once the creature is ready, she takes it to the woods, where she gets a message that she conveys to the respective client together with the imp. »I have never met anyone who was not deeply touched when she held both in her hands«, the artist tells us. »This felted, natural being with its energy is a perfect way to enter the animated realm. It can be of help to some people to establish contact with their own consciousness and inner wisdom.«

Spiritual Life Coaching

Birgit Sahner passes her skills and experiences on in her courses. She has often encountered the wholesome effect of making such an animated being has on people. »This made me wish to assist people even more intensely and professionally«, she states. For that reason she started training as a spiritual coach.

Her Dream of a Farm

Together with her life partner Bernhard Unger, a gardener and aid for demented people she is looking for a suitable property to make their mutual wish come true: The Arte Misia Sense Farm, where the two will offer natural carving and felting courses, days to come into contact with the woods, but also spiritual life coaching, lectures and seminaries.
☞ Being close to nature plays an important part – just as with Birgit Sahner's felted creatures. She says of them: »These embodies natural spirits remind us in their unique message to pay closer attention to nature's soul.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 50–51

Felt Connects – Let's Swap!

Susanne Hantzsch and Konni Sswat at the International Feltmakers Association's Felt Swap

The idea is as simple as it is fascinating: Two feltmakers make their objects to given themes and surprise each other with them. These Felt Swaps, as these swapping across borders is called, has been organized by the International Feltmakers Association (IFA) already since 2014.
☞ Each member of the IFA can take part, regardless of whether you are a pro or a hobby feltmaker: For the swapping, each summer a different theme is called for; until now for instance fairy tales, the year of the sheep, circles, music, the underwater world, the year of the rooster or colors like red or green. The theme »Weave« of the IFA felt swap 2021 should inspire us, but in a freewheeling way. We thought about weaving in general, and how to weave felt parts together or other materials and embodied memories.

A Relationship of Souls

The organizer Henny van Tussenbroek drew the lot: The Sweden and Germany-bound artist Konni Sswat and I should be swapping partners. We both met at a felting course by Fiona Duthie and have been friends for a year. Due to the pandemic, we have never met in person. The swap result shows how close we are

to each other: How beautiful to find such a creative soul that shares my interests! To felt a surprise for the other gave us a lot of joy.

☞ I gave it some thought and then decided to felt a simple weaving frame – back to the word »weaving« and the corresponding technique, as it may be taught to a child. During these strange times I had felted many ambitious objects. With the swapping gift I wanted to return to something simple and original.

A Felted Weaving Loom

In my Weaving Loom, as my work is called, memories in fabric are woven. Light colors dominate: A light for the dark winter in the Northern Hemisphere. By felting in Margilan silk I strengthened a certain lightness and created transparency. I wanted to convey that feeling to Konni Swat in Sweden. ☞ I cut a many-fibered pre-felt that consisted of self-dyed Merino wool and Ecoprint cotton into strips. These I wove together, mounted them on Margilan silk, felted the object anew and shaped it three-dimensionally. Behind a small space on its back, I hid a small surprise for Konni Sswat.

Open-Worked Lid

Her felted bowl called »Wabi-Sabi« has an open-work lid, you can have a peep of the treasures within. Konni Sswat pursues her background theme from 2021 »Light in Darkness«. She, always on the lookout for perfection in the unperfect, left the light spot inside the bowl visible and felted some braided cords on its base. This construction lifts during the felting process and spans the bowl like a crooked spiderweb. You get an inkling that something is hidden underneath; the rays of light come out of the lid structure. ☞ In my opinion, such actions could create an even bigger and steadily growing community. We could introduce such an idea also in the German-speaking felters' scene. Exchanging techniques and having animated discussions live or online are pure inspiration and keep fascinating me to no end. ☞ Let's swap again – regardless of where we are, worldwide!

SUSANNE HANTZSCH

PAGES 52–55

The Right Felting Needle for Every Purpose

The Expert Helga Steegborn Explains the Differences and Advises on the Choice of the Right Needles.

With most felting needles you get a cross-section of three- or four-square edges. On the edges there are small barbs opening to the direction of the needle point. If you stick such needles in loose fibers these will be taken up and remain in the workpiece once the needle was pulled out. By continuing this process, the resulting bows and loops connect with the fibers, and you get a three-dimensional piece of felt.

☞ Felting needles were invented for the production of industrial needle felt squares. There they are built into a needle bar which stitches on one or from both sides into the prepared fleece. With their help also fibers can be felted which in a wet handling wouldn't react. This is the reason why industrially made needle-felt is not necessarily made from wool, but from other animal hair, jute, hemp, coconut fibers but also synthetic fibers like PES, PE, PA, PP and PAN. ☞ In the past decades the production of small needle-felted decorative items or felted sculptures became more and more popular.

Attention Should Be Paid

There are many different kinds of felting needles. They are all extremely pointed (Be careful!) and sensitive towards sideways shear forces. So that the needles won't break you should always pull them out in the same angle as they were put in. They shouldn't be used to remove small plant particles that eventually got caught in the wool. If resistance is felt turn to a finer needle. After a time, the barbs wear out and the grip on the fibers lessens. If you feel a marked difference between a long-used and new needle it is high time to substitute it. ☞ The needles differ most of all in diameter. The diameter, like with wire, is measured in gauges: the bigger their number, the finer the needle. ☞ On principle, the finer the wool the finer the needle should be. In the beginning one can use a rougher needle, but when the felt gets firmer fine needles are called for.

Gauge	Diameter Shaft in mm
36	0.55
38	0.50
40	0.45
42	0.40

(Source: Koptex.com.pl)

Different Forms

Felting needles differ in their diameter shape. The most common ones have a triangular diameter. There are also some with four spike star-like or even drop-shaped diameters. In my experience, the star needles make smaller holes and are especially suitable for getting a smooth surface.

☞ Apart from straight-shaft needles there are some with a twisted shaft. They can either have the triangular or star diameter. The twisted needles, to my knowledge, felt faster since they twist the fibers additionally once the needle is stuck into the felted object. Needles with a cone-shaped shaft don't break easily and make good material for beginners. There are also needles forked at the point, but these are mainly used in the production of dolls to fasten the hair.

Number of Barbs

According to the number of barbs a needle felts faster or slower. With only a few barbs certain subtleties like fine lines or eye luster are more easily achieved. Three-edge needles, for example, have three barbs each on each edge in gauge 32 and 36, i.e. nine barbs all in all. Needles in gauge 38 and 40 have six barbs, needles in gauge 42 only three. Star needles in gauge 36 and 38 have each eight barbs and crown needles only three.

☞ The layout of the barbs can make a difference, too. Crown needles, for one have only barbs at the points. They can be used to felt in lashes or to smooth surfaces.

Reverse Needles for Fur Effects

With the so-called reverse needles, the barbs are situated opposite compared to the other kinds, the openings starting from the point downward. So, they do not push fibers into the workpiece but pull out fibers from an already felted piece instead. These needles make for a fluffy surface. If you trim and comb the fibers to equal length the effect you get is fur-like. They can also be used for color gradients between felted layers. Reverse needles are available in different gauges.

Relaxing Work

Since felting needles were initially meant for machine use, handling them takes getting used to it. Beginners especially experience hand cramps, joint aches or sore elbows. That is why many sellers offer wooden felt needle holders for more ergonomic work purposes. Also felting needles with Fimo grips or other plastic modelling clay are on offer. With increasing practice felting without a holder can be quite relaxed.

☞ Needle holders with several widely spread needles are good for surface felting or bigger projects, since the physical force multiplies when stitching. To build up larger-sized projects and to smooth bigger surfaces my personal favorite is the seven-fold needle holder with a protective sheath made by Clover. ☞ It was just a couple of years ago that felting needles in Germany were only offered in three gauges: fine, middle and coarse. Looking for reverse needles was successful only abroad. In the meantime, more sellers offer a wider range, e.g. Filzrausch, Hof Kornrade oder Trolle & Wolle. I have ordered mainly from Heidifeathers in Great Britain and was always quite pleased with the results. ☞ Each feltmaker has, according to her own working sphere, her favorite needles. Some swear by three-edged needles, other by stars. I prefer spiral needles to all else. You have to be prepared to trial and error until you find your own personal favorite needle.

HELGA STEEGBORN

Helga Steegborn paints, draws and sculpts ever since she was in school. Some years ago, she discovered her passion for needle-felting. She masters in making true-to-life animal sculptures and is committed to pass on her experience in masterclasses and workshops. The artist shows her object under the name feltborn on Facebook and Instagram.

PAGES 56–57

Drents Heideschaap

History

Contrary to what you might assume, the label »heath sheep« for the Drents Heideschaap does not refer to a Nordic short-tailed sheep, consequently it is not part of the Schnucke family line. Often all heath sheep are subsumed under that line, but the Drents Heideschaap is a much older and much more original sheep breed.

☞ It is not easy to give a resumé of their breeding history. The breeding efforts may go back as far as 4000 B.C., which means that they were one of the first sheep breeds in Western Europe. Yet this applies only to the original type, which is called type 1 today. This breed, too was endangered by the beginnings of modern agriculture and its new standards. Their economization was strengthened by cross-breeding with the Schoonneeker Sheep, which brought the original breed to the edge of extinction. The flocks you can see today in the Dutch province Drente are mostly Drents Heideschaap of the new type, which are very popular due to their increase in economic value.

☞ Only in 1948 the original breed was secured in a single flock and the breeding could continue. In 1985 the breeding association Nederlandse Fokkersvereniging Het Drentse Heideschaap (NFDH) was founded which dedicated itself to its preservation. Contrary to other breeding associations, the breed's diversity was expressedly desired. In order to maintain it, the breeding is neither selected nor awarded with prizes or the like. ☞ The old type being rare still, we can proceed on the assumption that the wool here most likely comes from a flock of Drents Heideschaap of the newer type, but this can be verified, unfortunately.

Characteristics

The Drents Heideschaap of the old type is in its appearance a very ancient breed. Their body shape, small in the beam and slender, reminds of wild sheep. This natural type further manifests itself in marked horns and a mane in the rams.

Wool Quantity	Initial meas.	Final Measurement	Shrinking factor
5 g	20 cm x 20 cm	12.cm x 13 cm	1.5
20 g	20 cm x 20 cm	16 cm x 16cm	1.25

A mane on female animals, which can be hornless, is not common. Their heads have no wool, their noses are straight, and they have small, horizontally pointed ears. Sometimes the wool starts to grow between the horns, thus resulting in a shock of wooly hair, also the tail is fully woolled and reaches to their heels.

☞ Color variety of this breed is high, yet some fur markings are undesired. Especially the hairy body parts show a great amount of varied coloring. So, the head, independent of the fleece, can be whitish or completely black, but also light or dark brown. While pigmented spots are unwelcome in their fleeces, spots, blazes or dots can show in the hairy body parts a lot. The fleece is uniformly grey-white and only black with some animals, but these are mostly black all over.

☞ Keeping the Drents Heideschaap is uncomplicated, despite a close relationship to their keeper they don't require much looking after and they feed on their own most of the time.

Wool

The wool presents itself as a typical wool mix with long, straight hanging long hair and markedly finer underwool. The short kemp that only show after washing are mostly red with white sheep, and in case of the black ones, black.

☞ The wool can be divided easily, another fact that shows the difference to Schnucke breeds. The ratio kemp/wool is has shifted here in favor of the fibers. Staple length is about 20cm, at 35 to 40 Mikron. Each sheep yields about one to two kilograms of wool.

Felting

Regardless of the kemp the wool felts well, but the result is not very firm. This thin felt is highly structured and tends to form loops, but the underwool parts dominate to make a compact, sturdy piece of felt that does not shrink much. ☞ This is perfect for felt furs, the kemp hair felt slowly or next to not at all, which makes the process really simple, but in spite of that they never fall out later.

Conclusion

The wool of the Drents Heideschaap is suitable for many products, easy to process and often quite clean since the

animals are kept in the open throughout the whole year. Optically, this felt is quite pleasing and the felted furs draw a lot of attention.

MARGIT RÖHM

PAGES 58-59

Wool Inside the Speakers

Jörg Baltschun counts on local sheep wool in the restoration of used furniture and electronic equipment.

In the area of high-quality restoration of antique furniture sheep wool has been a fixture since decades, since the central element of balls used for shellack polishing is a core of clean sheep wool. It absorbs moisture well and stores it, too, which make sheep wool a perfect base for such a processing. At the end of 2018 this was the initial reason why I bought two sacks of sheep wool at a shepherdess in southern Kiel: I wanted to fill my polishing balls with it. I was also on the lookout for insulating material for loudspeakers. It is important that no sound waves are directed to the box itself. The reason is simple: Rendition is distorted as soon as the box itself makes a sound.

Example: Car Door

But this is not enough: Everybody knows how a hollow container makes a different sound than a filled or insulated body. Take for example car doors: In cheaper models they are practically empty and if at all, there is little insulation. If you slam the door shut you sometimes hear the built-in parts rattle, like for example the window lifter. With expensive cars there is a lot of door insulation so that they close with a rich sound. Often loudspeakers are built into the doors. Even a layman notices the difference between an insulated and non-insulated door when he sits in his car and listens to music. I The main insulating task for speakers is to avoid vibrations and unwelcome sounds. In the 1970ies they started to fill speakers with stone- or glass wool. The acoustic result is fine. But beware if you ever had to open the box – you ended up itching and scratching like crazy. In the coming years polyester, polyurethane

foam and polyester wool – in short, plastics, were built into them.

Extremely Low Price

I had no intention of using any of those and experimented with sheep wool as insulation and damping material. First, I was shocked at the low prices – a sack full of sheep wool could be had at 20 Euros apiece. Polyester wool would have cost five times as much. One sack I ordered online at a big auction firm, two more I bought directly at a lady sheep breeder in Kiel. The wool ordered online was practically garbage, very dirty and of a strange consistency. The wool from Kiel is in perfect condition, fluffy and very clean. The caveat you can read in »expert fora«, that wool has a characteristic pungent smell, I won't subscribe to. I equipped different devices with sheep wool: earphones, small speakers and radios that were using the new techniques. The listening offered ample proof: I am not going to use anything else but sheep wool anymore.

Harmonic Dampening

Sheep wool absorbs all vibrations and makes for a solid, balanced sound. Compared with polyester wool dampening I could hear a marked improvement. What you need to know is this: Wool transforms a double amount of sound! Because wool is a non-homogenic, natural material different frequencies are filtered better than when using synthetic wool, the fibers of which are almost identical. At long last that means that a harmonic dampening is audible over the whole frequency range.

Thanks to the wool fibers filling the physical area of the item's body is enlarged. So even with smaller equipment a better sound is achieved than any housing alone could guarantee. Also, the health and environmental aspect should be enhanced. All my technical restorations and special custom products are made with natural materials, whenever possible: e.g., with fish glue instead of industrial glue, with beeswax and shellack. I make my own concoctions or have them delivered by certified suppliers.

Great Fertilizer

Working with a natural damping material does not only protect the environment but also allergies through hazardous material can be avoided. At the end of an economic chain there is always the waste disposal. Sheep wool is a good fertilizer.

This should be the end of the article, but just you wait.

I go see other agricultural fairs on a regular basis. There I show the sheep breeders on photographs what can be made of wool. This is always met with great enthusiasm. The feeling to use such a super material is uplifting. That it can be used for products that meet an enthusiastic clientele is one way to show where our economic journey could lead to – if we are only willing.

JÖRG BALTSCHUN

New Life Through Upcycling

Jörg Baltschun is the manager of MoRobo, a company located in Kiel. He restores antique furniture and upcycles electronic equipment and other products. As he states: »So-called garbage can be turned into practical and high-class products.«

morobo.eu

PAGES 60-61

Ketschetschi schokak In the Feltmakers' Street

A visit to the feltmakers' workshops in the Turkish city of Afyonkarahisar

Looking for traces of the felting craft in Turkey we went from Istanbul to the former capital Bursa to Afyonkarahisar, which was simply calle Afyon before. The city's old part is on the foot of a mountain. There, up at the castle, a Turkish half-moon flag is dancing in the wind. You see tiny, often hidden houses which stretch to the horizon. At last we find ourselves on a road in the vicinity of the Bazaar: the feltmakers' street. For a European it might be surprising that several masters who produce identical goods have their workshops next to each other. But this situation corresponds to history – the different crafts had been organized in certain town quarters for centuries. This is an advantage for visitors interested in

handicrafts, so we can get an overview easily and without any loss of time.

Blankets for Dervishs

Over Jasar Kotschatsch's workshop there is a sign with his name and professional nomenclature »Ketschetschi« – feltmaker. Upon entering the small room, you see the fulling machine on your right and left a felting bow. Next to blankets, this oldest felting master also makes hats for Sufi Dervishs. The blanket shown is a rarity – first, because its red color, secondly for the tassels made of braided Angora curls that are decorated with a batik stripe at the edges. Such red blankets are used for prayer by the Dervishs.

Unique Patterns

Tasin Düsagatsch is an unconventional feltmaker. He uses patterns he makes up along the work process. The finished blankets hang on the walls. On the floor, wool already loosened is spread on a mat. There are two fulling machines which help making the blankets denser. He likes to make prayer blankets that the men carry to the mosque several times a day. As most masters, he is friendly, easygoing and very proud of his craft.

Machine Fulling

In Vatasch Djesorolu's workshop, who is the youngest of the masters we visited, stands an imposing electrically driven fulling machine, in the local dialect Psirme Makina. It costs as much as 10000 new Turkish Lira. A wooden board comes down on the folded felt blanket inserted from above. That all spots are

evenly treated tiny arm fixtures lift up from underneath and move the rolled blanket.

Even today it is a difficult task to lift these big, wet blankets and to finish them. At first carded wool is laid out on the pattern and the whole thing is rolled into a mat made of bulrush leaves that keep the wool together in its wet state. Over the years overlapping wool fibers got stuck on this mat, which results in a new material which became a signature sign of this craft. »This mat, Kalüp in Turkish, was made by my mother, Mrs. Hatidje«, the master told us.

Roving on Order

On his shop sign, Ismail Erkus informs us that he is carding wool. The shepherds take sacks full of washed wool and sew wool blankets from it after carding. If you have enough wool the carding service is paid in the traditional barter trade. Erkus does this work in the fifth generation already in Afyon. Most people know his workshop.

Shepherds' cloaks made in Ismail Erkus' workplace hang out to dry across the feltmaker street at all times. In this region there are many flocks and thus shepherds, these cloaks are still much in demand, whereas you can hardly find felted coats for small children anymore. Lets end our mind stroll through the feltmaking street in Afyon with a Turkish proverb: «It doesn't make sense to wear a coat once it has stopped to rain.»

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

Nasreddin Hodscha's Felt Blanket

When you visit Turkey, you will hear sooner or later of the humorous Nasreddin Hodscha, comparable with a prankster figure like the German Till Eulenspiegel. Of the many stories that deal with the Hodscha some are about feltmaking. Here is one of them. Once Nasreddin owed money to one of his friends. When they met again, the friend stopped him and asked: »Where do you go? When are you going to pay me back?« The Hodscha answered: »Don't be angry, dear friend, just have a little patience. I will sow the seeds of a thorny plant and it will grow until spring. Then a shepherd will pass by with his flock and their pelts get caught in the thorns. I collect those hair and make a felt blanket out of it. I will sell it and pay the debt back with what I earned.« His friend laughed somewhat mirthlessly. Then the Hodscha commented: »I can see how happy you are seeing the money already in your hands.«

This is a supplement of the magazine »filzfun« Issue #75 - Summer 2022 ISSN 2199-7314 · ZKZ 77098

publisher: mk Medienmanufaktur GmbH Döllgaststraße 7-9 · 86199 Augsburg, Germany verlag@filzfun.de · register court Augsburg HRB 18720 · USt-IdNr. DE813278048

Translations: Christina Hirson

»filzfun« comes up 4 times a year For information about each issue, subscription and more, check www.filzfun.de/en. The website is in English too!

Distribution Switzerland Wolkarderei Ursula Jaton · Degenmattstr. 68 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; The autumn issue will be published on August 30th, 2022 Editorial deadline: June 15th, 2022