

# filzfun – The English Supplement

## Issue #76, Autumn 2022

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Dear Readers

feltmaking connects people across national borders. In this filzfun issue, we are pleased to take you along to many fascinating felting events and places here and abroad. For instance to interesting textile art shows in Ireland (pages 8/9) and Austria (page 12 ff.), to the peerless Feltrosa in Italy (pages 20/21) or to meet some of the last practising felting masters in Anatolya (pages 63/64) – let yourself be inspired by the many intricate ideas and objects!

The three felt artists and craftswomen here portrayed will certainly enrich your view on current felt art: Bella McBride from Canada (page 28ff.) and Hendrijke Kühnapfel from the Bavarian Allgäu (p. 36 ff.) have brought needle-felting to perfection, as their whimsical animal sculptures amply prove.

### 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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The Austrian Claudia Wirtitsch in turn has specialized in outdoor shoes made from felt and leather (page 34 ff.) For all interested parties looking for a fall project please find two detailed instructions: one for a wet-felted basket with a handle made of a piece of driftwood (page 50 ff.), the other for a brightly colored, needle-felted frog (page 54 ff.) With this fall edition, Helene Weinold takes leave as editor-in-chief after six busy years. We are convinced she has given the feltmakers's scene a lasting impulse. Thank you very much for your great commitment! Our new colleague Valeska Gehrke will take over with fresh verve. She has a thorough journalistic training, press experience and of course a great affinity and sensibility with regard to the felters' world. Together with the experienced corporate publishing specialist Miriam Riedl we have a young, highly motivated team that will continue to successfully pave the way for your favorite felters' magazine. You are encouraged to contact Valeska Gehrke directly ([redaktion@filzfun.de](mailto:redaktion@filzfun.de)) for any ideas, suggestions or feedback you might have. Let's be curious about the forthcoming issues!

*Sincerely yours,  
Hermann-Michael Kießling, Publisher*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:  
[redaktion@filzfun.de](mailto:redaktion@filzfun.de)  
The winter issue will be published on  
November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Editorial deadline: September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Felt-Created Space

Für 2023 the German Filz-Netzwerk association plans an international travel show about »Filz gestaltet Raum« (Felt-Created Space) and invites all Netzwerk artists or those belonging to different unions, like the International Felt Makers Association, to take part. Applications must be handed in by latest April 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 per e-mail. All tender details and the application form please find on the Filz-Netzwerk's website or via this QR-Code. [filznetzwerk.de](http://filznetzwerk.de)

## Friendship Vessels

Seven graduates from the Oberrot felting school have been sending half-finished work objects to each other over the years. Each addressee added on something surprising and beautiful. The results are, among other things, exceptional bowls and baskets. More than forty of these »Vessels of Friendship« are on show in the felto Filzwelt in Soltau from August 27<sup>th</sup> through December 6<sup>th</sup> 2022. Apart from that, the »Die Sieben« (The Seven), as the group calls itself offers an embroidery workshop on September 17<sup>th</sup>. [filzwelt-soltau.de](http://filzwelt-soltau.de)

## Textile Art in Heidelberg

The artists Pascale Goldenberg, Gabi Mett and Judith Mundwiler have joined forces in the Textile Open Project (T.O.P.) and present the outcome of their co-operation in the textiles collection Max Berk in Heidelberg from October 16<sup>th</sup> 2022 to January 29<sup>th</sup> 2023. Because they are not making their exhibition programme public the show is called: »T.O.P. secret«. [museum.heidelberg.de](http://museum.heidelberg.de)

## Regional Meeting in Full Bloom

»Wilder Wegesrand« (Wild roadside) set the theme at the Filz-Netzwerk's Ostwestfalen-Lippe meeting in Karin Twelkemeier's studio in Versmold. »The

roadsides are quite drab nowadays, insects find less food«, says the host. In view of a steadily declining variety of flowers, herbs and grasses the felters made a wealth of blossoms in shining colors that are busily visited by felted insects.

[filzgewerke.de](http://filzgewerke.de)

## Textile Handicrafts Introduce Themselves

Must-be meeting place for all that hold textile handicrafts in high regard is the Maierhof of the cloister Benediktbeuern at the weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2022. During that occasion 140 artisans from all over Germany and seven other European countries offer, amongst other items, individual clothing, hats, leather goods, carpets, toys and jewelry. Further wool, spinning and knitting utensils will be collected during the textile market in Benediktbeuern that will be distributed in Ukrainian refugee centers, mainly in Poland.

[textilmarkt-benediktbeuern.de](http://textilmarkt-benediktbeuern.de)

## An Amorous Tête à Tête during the Wool Circus

Everything revolves around sheep and wool during the weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2022. The wool circus at the Freudenburg castle in Bassum in Lower-Saxonia is organized by the association Kunst und Kultur rund ums Dreieck e.V.. Look forward to a market with all kinds of wool produce and a literary tête-à-tête with musical accompaniment, different performances and workshops and tons of information regarding wool processing. For more information please contact the organizer Suse Schmid. [suses-remise.jimdofree.com](http://suses-remise.jimdofree.com)

## A Picnick Blanket for the Whole City

St. Gallen's city center of was covered with a huge piece of cloth made from 2850 red-and-white elements and so turned into a picknick place to sit on for all citizens. The organizers of the

Swiss Projects BIGNIK with the seventh recurrence of the event have further strenghtened the ties with the long textile tradition of St. Gallen. The monumental picknick blanket keeps growing every year. The first popular picknick events took place after a concept established by the performative artists Frank und Patrik Riklin on surrounding meadows, but since then the »Tuchflutungen« (Cloth Floods) have moved to villages and now the idea has taken over the city for the first time. [bignik.ch](http://bignik.ch)

## Stained Glass Effects with Wool

*International Felt Art Exhibit »Stained Glass« in Dublin*

Glass: hard, smooth, cool to the touch. Wool: soft, coarse, warm. The differences could not be any greater. Yet the two materials can be harmonically combined, as the international felt art exhibit »Felted Stained Glass Art« in Dublin amply proved. Felted objects in the stained glass-style were on show – very often with the strong dark contours that are characteristic for the leaded historic colored glass windows and reverse glass painting, but there were also quite free interpretations of the theme.

### Participants from all over the world

On show were the objects of 30 artists from Ireland, Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the US. Some of the most influential felt artists of the world had accepted the invitation and made a felt object especially for this occasion. Amongst them are the chairs of some feltmaking associations, like Mandy Nash from the International Feltmakers Association (IFA), and famous felt artists like Maria Friese (France), Ellen Silberlicht and Deb Koesters (USA) or Leiko Uchiyama (Japan). The curator was Dr. Niki Collier, who had developed her own felting technique in the glass painting style.

∞ The exhibit took place in the imposing ambience of the Pearse Museum, a former school building in the St. Endas Park in the southern part of Dublin. The school's founder, Patrick Pearse, was committed

to the idea of surroundings as a source of inspiration and to bring out the talent in all his pupils, ideas that went far beyond the contents of traditional school subjects. This feeling is shared by the curator, Dr. Niki Collier.

### Exciting Technique

Regarding stained glass-technique, i.e. glass painting with wool, Dr. Niki Collier has developed a method that can be followed by beginners, good results are warranted. First pre-felt is made in the desired colors. It will be cut in different forms and combined into a new image, e.g. a feather or a bird, then it is felted onto a base. The connecting lines are needled on with black wool and evoke the enhancing dark contours of stained glass-painting. The result is a slight 3-D effect, so that the finished pieces really do like stained glass. The cutting (destruction) and new combining (creation) form an important process and the outcome greatly profits of it. This can be translated into all kinds of difficult life situations: Something went awry, yet due to our own resilience we can put the pieces back together again in a different way.

### Communal Work in the Tower

Because one works on a felted background even beginners are rewarded with convincing results. Thanks to the support from the public authorities videos and online workshops were made which were extremely popular during the Corona lockdown, when live courses were impossible. In this way two big panels were made. Made of many individual pieces, these are the biggest exhibits that were ever on show in the Pearse Museum. One is 7.5 m in length and hangs in the museum's glass tower. This communal work continues to grow, it is still possible to add another self-made felted piece to this impressive collection.

☞ Unusual is that the works of both beginners and those of experienced feltmakers are represented. The former found their interest in feltmaking kindled, the latter were inspired and strengthened in their creative process. In her opening speech, Dr. Niki Collier emphasized her concern that everybody should get access to art, regardless of their various faculties or backgrounds.

### A window with a view

Next to this impressive communal project there were other larger-size formats (up to 60 cm x 85 cm) to be seen. I personally

found the finely detailed and harmonic piece by the Irish artist Claire Merry called »Window on Howth« especially alluring, as well as the Mixed Media object »Roaming the Ocean« made by Susanne Weber from Austria.

☞ Susanne Hantzsch from Germany titled her exhibit in stained glass-technique »The Rose«. It is an arrangement of up to nine pre-felt layers made of most delicate Merino on a felt base, enhanced with silk fibers. These were felted and formed in the floral shape.

☞ The opening drew many interested parties, even the artistically inclined ambassador of Bulgaria, Gergana Karadjova, came by. The museum director Brian Crowley and artist Liz Nilsson, one of the 50 Irish Craft Heroes emphasized the individuality of each object in the encompassing motto »Stained Glass«: Each single one mirrors the artist's personality, they both claim.

☞ Many of the exhibitors had travelled to Ireland for the opening. We were so happy to be a part of this international high-profile show and to connect with so many other feltmakers. Many of us had already met during online courses, that's why we soon fell into an easy camaraderie and talked shop and our interpretations of the stained glass felting technique.

SILKE KOCH

PAGES 12-14

## A Dialogue Between Wool and Plastic

*Textile artists from seven countries were inspired by the CraftArtFusion project of wollmodus, the results of which can be viewed in Vienna in October.*

Every two years CraftArtFusion, a project by the Austrian artist collective wollmodus, sets up a theme regarding an artistic connection between wool and other materials. In the past they dealt with wood, metal and paper. The current motto was »Wir WOLLen Kunststoff« (A word play, a combination of the word wool and want, which doesn't work in English – approximately »We want/wool plastics«).

☞ An archaic, natural material steps into a rather controversial dialogue

with an omnipresent, problematic material in terms of production and disposal. Indispensable, sometimes even lifesaving in medicine and technical realms plastic in incredible amounts is used for disposable packaging. Due to its durability, it is swarming through all of the world's oceans and every single organism contains microplastics already, including us.

### A nudge to think

The challenges of our times are pressing, even threatening, like never before: animal extinction, climate crisis, wars and other catastrophes force us to change our habits and life models. We still act as if the natural resources were endless, and we put them to waste. Art can reach people on a deeper level, can touch and make them aware. It can be a pioneer of a heedful, sustainable and visionary way to treat nature and its beings and resources, especially in connection with traditional crafts and carefully chosen materials.

☞ As in the past years the ArtCraftFusion tender was directed to international artists of all fields who work with sheep wool and wish to create innovative textile art in connection with plastics beyond the limits of high-quality craft techniques.

### Humorous and rousing

The jury chose objects from 30 artists and artist collectives from seven countries (Germany, France, Canada, The Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and the US) for an exhibit that will open in October in the artistic 6<sup>th</sup> quarter of Vienna. They all fulfill the tender criteria in a special way and show the different discursive and creative access of each artist – from playful and humorous over ambivalent aesthetics to deeply stirring.

### Workshops and Lectures

The show is framed by an expansive programme schedule. An expert lecture on waste and sustainability, a movie followed by discussions and several upcycling workshops are planned.

☞ Almost all artists will be present at the opening, which is a special occasion for them and the public to exchange artistic views face to face.

☞ The theme for the next CraftArtFusion Project in 2024 is already set: »Wir WOLLen Ton« (We want/wool clay).

SAWATOU MOURATIDOU AND DANICA BEYLL

## Felt Paradise

*Swiss artists show their own garden Eden.*

»Eden« was the motto of a show in Daniela Melberg's studio in Ebikon in the Swiss Canton Luzern. In this peaceful, joy-filled garden the people live with each other in peace, and also with the animals and plants. The rich variety of life unfolds itself in harmony and creativity. Thus inspired, five women made five different felt objects that they presented to the public.

☞ For a year and a half, they had looked into the matter from different angles. They worked on their objects in Daniela Melberg's studio or at home. From the advice and ideas shared by the course instructor each chose her personal key aspect of paradise.

### Knowing Curtains

So Nathalie Kogan und Brigitte Zahner made curtains titled »Durchblick« (Curtains that are in the know). Marina Waibel immersed herself in the realm of funghi and lichens and felted a kind of half-forgotten wonder world with a great sense of humor and imagination.

☞ Nature's wealth and luxuriance, so alluring for insects, inspired Kathrin Jauslin to large wall hangings with Calla blossoms, fantasy flowers and leaves, while Brigitte Zahner felted the lettering »Eden« from plant-dyed wool in various shades of purple and warm yellow.

### Fish and birds

Colored fish and birds of paradise were the focal points of Daniela Melberg herself, and the lush flower meadow for a hanging chair made by Nathalie Kogan is a fine invitation to linger on and dream.

DANIELA MELBERG

## Symphony in Green

*Intricate experiments with green-colored felt*

How can felt turn green when you don't use green wool? Margit Röhm, the chair of the Filz-Netzwerk, offered this challenge to the feltmakers scene in spring. It was greeted with enthusiasm and experimental joy.

The task was to make a green felt piece from 10 g of wool in any desired technique and to document the process by means of photos.

☞ Most participants – women only – mixed yellow and blue wool fibers with the drum tease or hand carding equipment or simple by hand. The latter method didn't yield an even green tone, »but when it is felted later the fibers mix again«, Margit Röhm said during a Zoom meeting where feltmakers could exchange their experiences online.

### Lemony yellow and emerald green

»A fiber mix from green and blue wool will not always be successful«, she says. »The question is: What exactly is blue? And what yellow?« A promising mixture was shining lemony yellow with an emerald-tinted blue. Ina Jeromin contributed that a green hue can be reached when you dye a bit black on yellow.

☞ Birgit Blumrich reports: »I made the craziest mustard shades with Kap merino in yellow and black, but no olive green. Only with mountain sheep wool I got a satisfying color. In my experience, a lemony yellow is better than egg-yolk yellow«.

☞ Martina Hoffmann mixed a green shade each from black and yellow respectively from blue and yellow. She carefully documented her findings. Conclusion: The mixture with black yields a dark olive, while the variant with blue is shinier, as Margit Röhm explained, as she presented the project during a dozen episodes on the Filz-Netzwerk's website.

### Finger puppets and vessels

Most feltmakers use their wool mixtures for actual projects. For instance, Kerstin Waizenegger and Silke Koch made finger puppets, Claudia Hecker and Martina Hoffmann bowls, Birgit Blumrich a frog and Heike Kojmann a cap with a contrasting blossom in the middle of its upper part.

☞ With almost scientific meticulousness Doris Niestroj handled the challenge. She explains: »For some time I had planned to start a collection of felt test samples from carded color mixes. There can be a lot of difference with mixed and carded wool color before felting and after.« From short-fibered, slovenly carded merino wool (18 mic) in lemony yellow with many small knots and long-fibered, carefully carded Merino (21 mic) in light blue, a bright May green was supposed to come out, »yet the two qualities clearly refused to meet«, as Doris Niestroj remarks.

They still refused to do so during felting and fulling. »My yield was three test samples that were a long way from a fresh May green«, she concludes. »Now I have the first three color samples for my catalogue. But will I ever use them in an actual project? I doubt it.«

### Needle-felt experiments

Bettina Caspari used yellow and blue needle felt and wrote in Beate Bossert's paper technique the word GREEN three times. »Here it becomes obvious that we need a marked surplus of yellow wool to reach a detectable green shade«, Margit Röhm comments. »The lower part, in which yellow is penetrated only with a few blue fibers, seems green while the upper part remains blue.«

☞ Because Kerstin Waizenegger mixed the fibers for a felted vessel by hand and not by carding, the single-color layers and flakes can still be seen on the cut-open felt piece. Margit Röhm advises: »Despite that or just because the finished felt objects do seem unmistakably green. When you look at the wool mixture you can see also here a marked yellow surplus.«

### Wool with a reddish tint

The yellow strand wool of Liane Schiemanns leaf garland has a strong reddish tint that could be detected in the laid-out wool already. Nevertheless, after felting the leaves came out green.

☞ Heike Kojmann tried out different layers for her cap and decided on a black wool base with a second layer in petrol and one topmost in yellow.

☞ »Can you see what happens when we take up water and light?«, asks Susanne Schächter-Heil, giving the answer herself: Small figurines that first take up yellow light and then blue water turn a shiny green.

### Stained glass-technique

Susanne Weber presented an image in stained glass technique (see pages 8-11) and wrote: »The pre-felt wool is of a delicate rosé, which is covered with all kinds of fibers and fabrics, amongst others viscose, silk, hemp, kozo bark, Angelina, organdy, hand-dyed bamboo cloth, Trilobal, soy, milk and banana fiber, sari fabric waste and paper. I felted on the same rose-colored wool covered with hand-dyed silk. The green here was achieved by mixing yellow and blue acid colors.«

☞ Heike Spiekermann solved the problem in a totally different way. She didn't mix

colored fibers but felted a bowl from a natural-colored wool/polar fox mixture with leaf-like motifs made of white pre-felt and dyed it afterwards in an elaborate process. »I treated the bowl with cold mordant, then I dyed it red with birch leaves and then came another color bath together with a rusty iron piece, which turned it to green«, she explained.

### The color of hope

Annette Prüße followed another path. »How do you felt a color without properly using it? Either as an association or as an answer«, she writes about her felted wall hanging with the question: »What color is hope?«  
☞ Commenting her own experiments, Heike Kojmann resumes what most feltmakers experienced during their trials: »It was a lot of fun. I look forward to the next challenge!«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 20-21

## Three Times Starry Night

*At the Feltrosa in Sala Baganza three textile versions of Van Gogh's famous painting are made.*

Reproductions of »Starry night«, one of the most famous paintings by Vincent Van Gogh, were the core of this year's Feltrosa event that took place in the municipality of Sala Baganza, near Parma, after a long wait due to the pandemic. Three huge textile interpretations of this masterpiece were put together by craft artists from all over the world.

### International Audience

Participants from many countries, amongst those Portugal, Denmark and Sweden came to this Italian felt art festival. »The big group of Russian and Ukrainian feltmakers that had been regulars at the Feltrosa since 2013 was unable to come this year«, says organizer Eva Basile with great regret.

☞ Uncertainties due to the pandemic discouraged the Feltrosa organizers from inviting tutors from abroad and the course program, which was designed in 2020, was hosted by Italian experts this year. In Romina Dogliani's workshop one

could learn to make large cushions in the shape of stones. Under the guidance of Lara Caputo elastic sculptures were created. Karin Monica designed a workshop on the manufacture of headwear for the mid-season: decorative but not overly warm.

### Printing with plant dyes

Luana Firmani held a programme dedicated to the extraction of colors from local plants and the making of printing pastes and screen printing with temporary matrixes on paper. Since weaving has become very popular lately, Laura de Cesare led a weaving workshop. Two macramé classes were fully booked: It seems this rediscovered technique kindled a lot of curiosity. Also the documentary »in questo mondo« (in this world) about women engaged in shepherding and sheep farming was met with lively interest.

### 63 Squares

The height of Feltrosa 2022 was the communal art project »Starry Night«. A high-resolution image was segmented into sixty-three square fragments that were then drawn and entrusted to the people convened in an online meeting. Each party was to reproduce a segment in a 50x50 cm textile piece. A lively word-of-mouth campaign soon was set in motion, and in the end we had three »Starry Nights« altogether, each in the format 450 x 350 cm: There were felted, woven and knitted segments, patchwork, silk screens and other contributions in all kinds of artistic techniques. All three were then exhibited as a triptych. Some pieces were left missing, only the dark canvas background showed. We learned that some of the fragments got stuck in customs or couldn't be properly finished altogether, especially those from Russia or the Ukraine.

EVA BASILE

PAGES 22-23

## Horses, Felt and a Lot of Imagination

*A fairy-tale equestrian show found an enchanted audience in the Odenwald.*

Nothing less than how to save the planet was the subject of a wonderful horse show on the Upper Lovcreed Stud Farm owned by Ursel Wiegand and Herbert Löser in Ober-Liebersbach in southern part of the Oden Forest. Felt Costumes and stage props played a crucial role. ☞ This fanciful story, told in horse training elements, dances, music and light dramaturgy, tells as about the lucky star Fortuna, giving earth the life-sustaining light. An herb-collecting woman realizes it is threatened of extinction. Accompanied by meadow fairies and wool elves she embarks on a trip to a fire island where a mighty sorceress dwells. Impressed by the prancing of a courageous stud the sorceress agrees to fight the evil. She brews a magic potion that gives Fortuna back its light and is so able to save the planet.

### Shiny black Morgan horses

The training shows of the shiny black Morgan and elegant Lusitano horses – directed from the saddle as well as in a free training scenery – were of a high quality and enthusiastically applauded by about 600 horse lovers in a total of three events. Next to a quadrille other elements of advanced dressage were shown and cheeky ponies made for a lot of fun. ☞ The actors' costumes and props were mostly self-made, and here I come into play. As the creator of the leafy wood, I felted true-to-life felt leaves, albeit in a monumental scale, and also fancy ones at that. This amply shows my love for the woods, and I tried to convey their great variety.

☞ I used different, sometimes hand-dyed, kinds of wool, pre-felts and raw wool. The leaves were skillfully staged by a local dance group, rendering the leafy forest alive for the audience.

### A hat for the herb gatherer

Next to the big, felted leaves I created other costume parts for the dancers. Leaf cloaks, headdress and girdle I decorated with insect and beetle motifs to enhance the forest magic. For the cloaks single leaves were stepped with the sewing machine, the headdresses



were embroidered by hand. The herb gatherer's hat is felted from white Chubut wool and was then hand-dyed.

☞ Because I was bound in the planning of the show from the very beginning, my ideas for the leafy forest and the dancers' costumes were taken up and realized.

☞ This remarkable spectacle was organized by Ursel Wiegand together with her husband Herbert Löser and many other horse-crazy and creative helpers. The interplay of different narrative and technical genres was brought under way and the audience loved every minute of it.

BÄRBEL HELFRICH

PAGE 24

## A Four Decade Weaving Jubilee

*The Ilser Webstube (Weaving House) celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with a festive weekend at the beginning of September.*

When a group of 17 women and men from Ilse in Eastern Westphalia started to kiss looms and spinning wheels awake in dusty attics and barns, they never dreamt that their commitment was continued over four decades. But the Ilser Webstube has been since then a well-established cultural event spot in the city of Petershagen, the city that Ilse with its approx. 400 inhabitants belong to. On the first weekend in December the Webstube celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with two open house days.

☞ The Nahrwold family still house the Webstube. In the beginning, they offered their grandparents' parlor. On six looms in the cramped space the weaving expert Frieda Reimler from Minden used to pass on her expertise of warping and weaving.

### Renovated Space

In 1993, the Webstube added more space, when the old stable on the Nahrwold farm underwent reconstruction. The town Petershagen, the district Minden-Lünnecke as well as the NRW foundation financially supported it, but also many volunteers put in many hours of work in the new Webstube. On a total of 150 square meters on two levels now 13 looms and three spinning wheels find room. The oldest loom from 1796 is still in use, as is a historic flax wheel.

### New focus: Spinning

In order to engage other craftspeople, a spinning group was founded some years ago. With financial aid from the federal support program LandKULTUR six spinning wheels plus accessories were bought and spinning courses were offered. Since then, spinners from the region meet every first Friday in a month in the Webstube.

☞ Now, the association has 32 active members who pass on their expertise in courses. 40 years after the group first met, the Webstube remains a live museum where active participation is encouraged, a place full of creativity and fascinating possibilities to make artful products.

VERENA SCHMIDT

PAGE 25

## Jubilee in Red

*The Tuchmacher Museum in Bramsche is 25 years old.*

A quarter of a century ago the Tuchmacher Museum (clothmakers' museum) opened in the Lower Saxonian town of Bramsche – on the mill's premises, where more than 400 years ago already different kinds of cloths were produced. The celebration is wholly in the sign of the color red that is of special meaning to Bramsche clothmakers: 200 years ago palliators and clothmakers alike dyed woolen cloths red. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the production of red uniform fabrics for the Hannover Army gained economic importance. Today the »Bramsche red« is a hallmark of the town Bramsche and the Tuchmacher Museum.

### Fluffy Woolen Blankets

The museum has documented the evolution of the basic cultural techniques spinning and weaving over the millenia. Its central pieces are the textile machines that are more than 100 years old. Until today, red fluffy wool blankets are made on them. Experienced museum technicians – old clothmaker masters among them – allow for a glance over their shoulders and explain the many working steps of the blanket making process, from washing, dyeing, combing the wool to the spinning of yarns and onto weaving, fulling and adorning. At the occasion of the museum's 25<sup>th</sup>

birthday a woolen blanket in red with gradients from pink to orange are made on these historic looms.

☞ The show »Red – 25 Years Tuchmacher Museum« presents many red-dyed objects, based on the natural materials madder and Cochenille made by the Osnabrück designer Anette Rega, iconic objects from Bramsche and a retrospection of the past years plus the cycle »Ariadne sees red« by the object artist Angela Schilling.

### Two exhibits

There are two more hommages to the Bramsche red in this festive year. From September 17<sup>th</sup>, Ana Streng's exhibit »Dem roten Faden nach« (Follow the red thread) deals with the combination of art, textiles and culture in past and modern times. Under the title »RotRotRot« textile objects made by Nike Finger-Hamborg meet the colorful paintings of Sibylle Hermanns as of December 9<sup>th</sup>.

☞ A special highlight of the jubilee year is the cloth market on September 11<sup>th</sup>: Then, textile craftspeople and artists sell handmade fabrics, clothes and accessories and inform on special textile techniques like dyeing wool with natural materials.

ILKA THÖRNER

PAGES 28–33

## Whimsical Realism

*Bella Mc Bride's life changed when she found her passion in needle-felting. She creates 3-D life-sized animals with a generous dash of humor.*

Whoever approaches the big grey heron at the pond will wonder why the bird doesn't take flight. Well, it seems absolutely life-like, but it was made by Bella Mc Bride from loose wool and a barbed needle. The 49 year-old Canadian has found her purpose in life in designing felt sculptures.

☞ To say that she is merely passionate about her work would be a drop in the bucket. »It's what gets me up in the morning. It's what drives me to continue on bad days. It's simply who I am now and I'm not sure who I was before.«

### From illness to art

»Before« means before 2010. This is when the botanist fell ill with fibromyalgia and had to give up her job, since working

outside her home was becoming too difficult. At that time her mother-in-law took a class in needle-felting but didn't particularly like it and gave supplies and materials away to her daughter-in-law. Bella Mc Bride asked how it was done and got the reply: »You just poke it!« So poke she did and made a little pink big that she sold online within a couple of days. »From then on I was hooked and I have never stopped since«, she tells us.

☞ For her, it is still great »to make something from nothing«, as she puts it. »If I want a two-headed raven ... done! A groundhog smoking a pipe ... done! You are only limited by your own imagination.«

☞ Animals are Bella Mc Bride's favorite models – as 3D sculptures, at least life-sized and often much bigger and almost always with a humorous detail. Many of her objects are inspired by Christmas, like for example a series of owl tree toppers.

### At home in nature

As a former botanist and wife of a forester she finds nature her main motivator for her work. There is no lack of it around her home, since the McBrides live in the middle of an 85 acres woodlot; that is a tree-covered mountain slope on one end and fields on the other, where deer often graze. »Our property stops at the banks of the creek where we often see bald eagles diving for fish and herons landing on the banks«, she explains.

☞ She and her husband have built the new studio space on a former terrace almost entirely with used or secondhand materials like discarded windows and doors. »It sits up quite high so it's almost like a tree house ... and it's even filled with needle-felted critters like a tree-house should be!«, the artist describes her new favourite place in the world. They are currently working on adding a teaching studio where she can lecture for beginners and advanced feltmakers alike.

### Found objects

She keeps storing things she can use for her felt art: Here a clothesline pulley, there an old tobacco tin or a broken floor lamp. For her imaginative sculptures Bella McBride tries to source her wool as locally as possible. »Luckily, Canada's oldest woolen mill, Briggs & Little is in my home province, this is my favourite wool to work with. It's not too soft, not too coarse, it's just right.« She supplements her choice by exotic fibers.

☞ She does indeed make advance plans for a new creation, »but I have learned

to listen to the wool and let it take me where it wants to go«. Quite often a recycled object, like a teapot or a candlestick will help her decide which direction to go, »but I have no idea if it will be a fierce hare or a happy rabbit, whether it will be holding a robin or a pipe or something else«.

### Monumental mouse heads

Her preference for larger than life animal sculptures the artist sees as »whimsical realism«. »I love making giant faux taxidermy mouse heads to hang on your wall or a giant chickadee to sit on top of your Christmas tree. I am currently working on larger-than-life insects. And I mean big ones. I made a Polyphemus moth that is mounted in a 90 cm x 65 cm frame and I'm currently working on a giant potato bug.«

☞ Here is her advice for any parties interested in needle felting: »Practice, practice, practice, and don't give up.« She won't say practice breeds perfect outcomes, because there is no such a thing as perfection. Art is a continual learning curve.

☞ Her plans for the future are to experiment more with movement and wet felting, and to teach classes again after the Covid standstill. »I want to dedicate myself to projects that really interest me, I don't want to fall in the trap of making pieces, that I know will sell.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 34-36

## Bewitching Shoes

*Claudia Wirtitsch specializes in making outdoor felt shoes.*

Of a golden yellow color, with a curved heel, delicated ankle straps and with a decorative rose on the instep – these are the most elaborate shoes Claudia Wirtitsch from Upper Austria has made in her felting studio so far. They are her contribution to the 12th art show »New Life of Traditions« under the motto »Footprints in History« in St. Petersburg. For this event, artists from all over the world felted a shoe from a homeland fairy tale.

☞ Claudia Wirtitsch decided on the tale »The poor bandsmann with the golden shoe« by Franz Grillparzer in 1848. She

tells us her deliberations: »How did shoes look in those days? What kind of wool do I use that the shoe turns golden? How do I make the heel?« Step by step she succeeded to make the fairytale shoe and sent it in. »I was so relieved when I was informed that my shoe had reached Russia safe and sound.«

### 2019 First Nuno scarf

It is barely four years ago that Claudia Wirtitsch first came into contact with feltmaking when she felted a Nuno scarf at Barbara Tansil's workshop on the Myra farm in Muggendorf in Lower Austria. »I was so fascinated that three weeks later a big felting table was moved into my studio«, she tells us. »Then everything went really fast. Until the end of 2019 I took several other feltmaking courses, amongst others for baskets, veggie furs and slippers. On August 2020 I taught my first class in basket felting.« In the meantime she offers regular courses for different felting matters, also for felting shoes.

### Online course in Russian

These are especially dear to the mother of five, since she felted her first pair of house slippers at the end of 2019. »It was clear: when you can make slippers, shoes should not be a problem.« She took a course in making Oxford shoes in Hanau with the Ukrainian artist Inna Oleynik and was enthusiastic. »On the way home I already planned my next pair.« In spite of language barriers she managed to follow an online course in Russian by Inna Oleynik and Ksenia Melnikova and made two pairs of ankle boots.

☞ Now she has taken an advanced education programs at the GEA Academy of the Waldviertel workshops and has made leather half-boots o shoemaker's basics. As she puts it: »My vision is to harmonically unite felt and leather, and my dream is to design and make individual, exclusive shoes.«

HELENE WEINOLD

## Courage for New Paths

*A creative crisis brought Hendrijke Kühnapfel to needle-felting.*

Hendrijke Kühnapfel has been a creative person all her life. She was born in Hannover and grew up in the Rhineland. After graduation she moved to the Allgäu in Bavaria in 1982 to learn the goldsmith profession at the vocational school for glass and jewelry in Kaufbeuren. She never actually worked as a goldsmith, however, but the artistic approach never left her.

«In the meantime, she is working as a nurse in a home for the elderly and had to cut back on working with noble metals. »As a goldsmith, your hands are raw and your fingernails get dirty, something that's not appropriate in the caregiver business«, she says. This is why for a while she freely embroidered on antique linen and silk fabrics. »But at some point I was no longer fulfilled doing that.«

### Felt wool from her daughter

In this »creative crisis«, as Hendrijke Kühnapfel calls it, she found a wicker basket full of felt wool when she house-cleaned. It was a relic from her daughter's youth, the mother of three recalls. She didn't want to throw the material away, so she scrolled through the internet and got caught by instructional videos by Sara Renzulli (Sarafina Fiber Art) on YouTube. »Her instructions work greatly and she has a lot of humor.«

### A sleeping mouse

Her first felt project was a sleeping mouse that she still keeps in a box and which she keeps showing around as proof »that also in an advanced age you can learn something new«.

«In the following months she bought all kinds of used materials, among them two hand-carding tools and aluminum wire in all kinds of thicknesses as well as large amounts of wool that she sorted out as per shade, not quality. »I think my work special because of the colors I use«, Hendrijke Kühnapfel says. »I always card rough wool together with fine wool in many different colors. I never work monochromatically, it is too rigid and lacks liveliness.«

### Bending wire and chiseling

The skill and precision of the trained goldsmith make her a good needle-felter.

She knows how to bend wire and needle-felting is a lot like chiseling, as she explains. »In order to treat a surface after my own imagination I neither use brushes nor scissors, but single needles with ever finer points. This technique fixes well and allows for minimal corrections.«

«Henrijke Kühnapfel often felts animals. She found out that all animals can be built up on a single frame, »mouse or horse, cow or rabbit and also the human animal«.

### Essential rendition

Fur hairs or feathers are never worked out in detail. She does not strive to give a life-like rendition, she rather likes to understand »an animal's essence and soul«. Her felt sculptures get their animated look from the way they cock their head or other refined postures.

«Soon after the 59-year old artist had discovered needle-felting for herself the pandemic rocked her life: In her work as a division manager in the home she was confronted with infection protection measures under difficult hygienic circumstances, with grief and loneliness, »an experience that was new and very tiresome«. At home she continued to work on her felting technique during the lockdown, when she had a moment's peace and quiet. Moreover, she renovated her house, the former post office building in Günzach, together with a couple of motivated handymen.

### Contacts via Instagram

Via Instagram, Hendrijke Kühnapfel has established contact with needle felters all over the globe and enjoys the feedback regarding her objects, also concerning orders. In the future she plans to show her work in local artists' exhibits.

«Apart from that I want to make a fairy tale program with felted figurines«, she says. »I am a reader trained for demented persons by the German fairy tale association. I would like to refine this issue and to make it suitable for kids and adults as well. This could be a task that relates to several generations.«

HELENE WEINOLD

## Tutorial: A Chicken in Needle-Felt Technique

### Materials and Tools

- « Aluminum wire, Ø 2 mm for the basic frame
- « Florist wire (fine, paper-coated)
- « A handful of raw basic wool and waste fibers in natural shades
- « Small amounts of wool in black and red for the beak and the eyes
- « Beeswax (e.g. from a candle) to rub the aluminum wire with to get a good grip
- « Hand carding tools or animal brushes to mix the wool
- « Felting needles in several thicknesses, felting mat

### Instructions

Her way of working she explains by means of some photos of how a felted chicken is made. »Just follow the photos. Chickens come in all possible colors, they may be plump or thin. You can't do anything wrong.«

- 1 Start with the basic aluminum wire frame.
- 2 The feet are made from wire, wound around with wool and then needled.
- 3 The body shape is made from coarse wool.
- 4 Body, neck and head are formed and designed with colored wool.
- 5 Tail and wings are put on and the whole chicken is fleshed out with colored wool.
- 6 Comb, wattle, beak and eyes are put on.
- 7 The finished chicken!



## Six Sisters – Six Carpets

*During the pandemic, a group of women felted Shirdaks under the guidance of Annemie Koenen.*

2021: What a year, the second one of standstill and boredom. For us creatives it was like a curse to be alone and isolated. But still, to continue our exchanges via Zoom and online courses was a blessing. ☞ At the beginning of the Corona pandemic a couple of felt enthusiasts had met in several of Annemie Koenen's online courses. In one of them, she suggested to felt a twin Shirdak cushion. We all wanted to take part!

### A Corona project

Two of us expanded this idea spontaneously to end up as a communal project: a carpet instead of a cushion, where all could take a part. Quickly six Overrot feltmakers decided on this Corona project: Annika, Diana, Elke, Monika, Svetlana and Vroni. Via Zoom and a WhatsApp-Gruppe we agreed upon six colors and three motifs, the choice and combination of which was left to everyone's individual decision.

☞ The preparations and the bonding we felt turned us into six sisters. What a great feeling that was: each of us lives in a different part of Europe – in Germany, France and Bulgaria – and yet we were connected to each other and to Annemie Koenen who instructed us online.

### Feltmaking in front of the camera

The Shirdaks' upper and lower flat pieces were felted during a camera running, we were wide awake in the night at times when all the world slept fitfully. Some of the sisters felted the six plates in one piece, other could only make single ones due to a lack of room. Each felted in one color, cut the felt up in six squares. Five were sent to the other sisters and one was kept.

☞ Inspired by the Hungarian book »A Nadudvari Nemez Műhely« by Vétro Mihály Diana drew three different motifs on paper and distributed them to all the sisters.

☞ To combine the six colors, to cut the three motifs out and to sew them together and decorate it with a tassel was a challenge for each one at home, but we knew the other five were busy, too – and just as determined and motivated.

Not only in the homes the carpets were omnipresent. The pieces travelled to Austria during the holidays, to France, Bulgaria and they were made on meadows with sheep grazing, in the mountains or during a camping trip with a view of the sea. Monika even moved to the Allgäu. She took extra care to have everything ready to continue to work on the carpet in her new home immediately.

### Creative solutions

Making the tassels was exciting as well. Elke spun them from the wool of her own Coburg Fox sheep. Vroni and Annika decorated the plates with a Kyrgyz stitch they had learned from Annemie, called Chirash. Diana found a method on the internet how to braid them with eight threads. Svetlana learned from old craft masters in her mountain village in Bulgaria to braid a colored cord and Monika spun all tassels including the lining herself. To sew it together and to quilt she used sock wool for its sturdiness. ☞ To quilt the Shirdak, measuring 1,50 m in length and 1,07 m in width and weighing more than 3 kg required quite an effort: it was monotonous and slow and still – and maybe because of that – a true balm for the soul in these times.

### Deep connections

The seasons changed, the days went by, and we continued to meet online for work. Our kids and husbands, banned into home offices and to online teaching often helped, always curious. So, we all got to know the other members of our families and the talks turned more personal, sisterly, about all kinds of things: the carpet, the world, ourselves.

☞ This co-operation and the communal work during the Zoom meetings helped a lot not to lose our balance. Finally due to Annemie Koenen a great community had formed itself that is currently thinking of further projects together.

SVETLANA KAMPS

## The Last Sleep Under Wildflowers

*Annemie Koenen designed a felt blanket with floral ornaments serving as a funeral shroud.*

Bright red and decorated with many colored flowers is the blanket that Annemie Koenen felted on a client's order. It is a very special covering, because one day the dead body of this woman will be shrouded in it for her last journey.

☞ »I have felted some funeral shrouds on order already«, Annemie Koenen reports. Often the reason had been an illness or near death. »I work closely with the person«, says the Dutch felt artist. »If possible, we lay out the decorations together with friends or family members. This is always very impressive and thoughtful.«

### Motifs from strand wool

For the shroud in life-reminding red with a matching cushion Annemie Koenen used five kilograms of Australian Merino fleece in different shades of red. The ornaments were made with strand wool, wool balls and different wool threads. »My client was deeply touched when we laid out the flowers together«, she tells us. »It did not take her long to do it and she was quite enthralled.«

### Matching cushion

The felted shroud should measure 200 cm x 300 cm and the cushion, filled with raw wool, should be made from the same piece of felt. This is why Annemie Koenen laid out the wool measuring 240 cm x 375 cm and was pleased that everything went as planned. To make the shroud 100 working hours were required.

☞ When a person is dealing with his or her eventual death long before it comes and tends to put all affairs in order such a shroud could become a part of everyday life as a blanket, thinks Annemie Koenen. »Only when the grim reaper finally shows up this familiar blanket goes with you on your last journey. If I had my choice I would opt for that.«

HELENE WEINOLD

## Felted Loafers for Romeo

*For her donkey's sick hoof, Cornelia Schurer felted sheep wool slippers.*

Most people value comfortable, warm and breathable felt slippers to wear inside their home, and in Russian winters felt boots fight off the cold. But felted slippers for a donkey? The experienced donkey keeper and shepherdess Cornelia Schurer from the small village of Bayershofen near Augsburg felted custom-made shoes for her male donkey Romeo because of his sore hoof.

☞ Already months ago, the seven-year-old Catalonian donkey showed signs of lameness on his left front foot. The diagnosis of the vet was crushing: White Line Disease (WLD), an illness of the white line, a flaky structure that connects the inner hoof bone with the outer horn capsule. Fungi, bacteria and other microorganisms that horses and donkeys are always exposed to can attack this hoof area and the hoof wall starts to crumble. »When bad comes to worst, the animal loses the inflicted hoof«, Cornelia Schurer explains. Then it has to be put to sleep.

### Taking off the hoof wall

She didn't want this to happen. First the hoof expert carved out the afflicted area between bone and capsule, in order to preserve the outer hoof part. Daily, Cornelia Schurer disinfected the hoof and bandaged it carefully. »In the front it grew back«, she tells us, »but then the sickness spread to the right and to the left.« So at long last a big part of the horn wall had to be removed so more air could reach the sick part.

### Moist climate

Without the protective and stabilizing horn part Romeo always stepped down in great pain which led to an unhealthy malposition. Over months, Cornelia Schurer had to laboriously pad the hoof with Molton and stretch-bandage it, because the horn only grows about a centimeter each month. »The bandaging alone cost 20 Euros per week«, she recalls. »Moreover, I could hardly change the bandages alone – I never had hands enough. What really worried me, though, was the moisture and dampness under the bandages. This didn't seem to foster the cure.«

### Velcro fastener and leather sole

The wool of her Krainer Stone Sheep crossed her mind: Why not felt a sturdy shoe out of it? It was worth a try. One day long she made sketches, patterns and felt samples and then she felted her first tailor-made hoof shoe. Strips of fabric from a discarded tarpaulin and Velcro fasteners helped the perfect fit. A leather sole was sewn on by hand to make it more durable – a donkey is rather heavy and always in motion. She stuffed the inner part with sheep wool and Romeo tried the shoe on. And guess what? The donkey became more agile again, he ran normally, no more signs of lameness showed, and he even fell into a jog trot, something he had not been doing for several months.

### Skin-care Lanolin

In the meantime, Cornelia Schurer had made more shoes just like the prototype so she could change and air out each after four days. »I am really thrilled that the hoof stays absolutely dry and the air can circulate«, she recalls. »I even think that the wool fat lanolin additionally cures the hoof, because it had gotten a fine shine.« Only when rain is about to fall she puts a stretch bandage over the felt shoe and protects the leather sole with adhesive tape.

☞ The news of her invention has already spread. A pony keeper ordered a shoe for her miniature Shetland pony that has laminitis, another dangerous hoof affliction.

☞ Romeo will have to wear his felt slippers for a quite some more time, until his front hoof's horn wall will have regrown completely. But the donkey keeps his cool: »Now he hands me over the sore hoof on his own account«, says Cornelia Schurer, »obviously he realizes that the device helps him to get healthy. It is no longer difficult for me to put the shoe on even when I am alone, it feels more than a comfy slipper now for him.«

HELENE WEINOLD

## A Center for Celebrating the Annual Circle

*A colorful carpet is made from felt samples and felt designs.*

Twice the big box with felt objects made by my sister had already found its way back to the barn, where old, unused things are awaiting the bulk collection. But always, in the last minute, I dragged it back. There was so much loving work in there. Felted-on or needle-felted pieces, test pieces, color studies, animals, fairies. My sister, a special education teacher, was a self-taught feltmaker and had discarded many of her experiments.

### Variety of sizes and colors

Now I spread the small treasures on a studio table at Sabine Reichert-Kassube's Werenziahof in Werenzhain. She suggested I make a carpet or a blanket out of these pieces. I was a feltmaking student myself but couldn't quite imagine how it could be done – there were too many variations in size, thickness and color. But Sabine Reichert-Kassube encouraged me and so the idea to make a carpet for the annual circle celebrations which I host eight times a year in an herb maze on our property in Hohenbuch came to life.

☞ On the first evening the round carpet lay on the bubble foil – a raw version with many layers of under- and filling wool of my sister's wool stock: White-blue-emerald for winter, green and yellow for the spring, red and yellow for summer and brown-colored and black for autumn. A big shifting around and back ensued, exchanging, laying out, taking away, cutting until I liked the result. I even wanted to include a fairy with a paper head. Would it keep together?

☞ I was inspired by the exquisitely felted garments around me, and Sabine Reichert-Kassube kept up her support. She taught me to conceal the hard color transitions or different thickness of the material with a just a hint of wool before I wet the layed-out parts and fulled them. ☞ A sigh of relief after the first fullings: The different felt pieces really did connect. The work went faster than expected, but I had second thoughts about how my sister greet the project.

### Joy and gratitude

After the rinsing, tumbling and drying I sent her a photo of the finished annual

cycle celebration carpet that, after two days of attentive work, measured only 110 centimeters. When she spotted the many fragments of her former work in there, she felt gratitude and joy to have her work valued so. She said that even though she lives 250 km away she could always be with me now and the coming annual cycle celebrations in the herb maze.

~ The big cardboard box with waste material has turned into a small bag – maybe this will be the beginning of a new carpet or a diaper changing mat for my newborn grandchild.

RUNA H. KRAATZ

PAGES 50-53

## Tutorial: Felt Basket »Flower Meadow«

*This decorative basket made from mountain sheep wool could house your present knitting project. Helene Weinold made it following Kerstin Waizenegger's instructions.*

### Material

- ~ 150 g Mountain sheep wool fleece, white
- ~ Small amounts Merino fleece in light green
- ~ Merino roving in different shades of green and the desired colors for the blossoms
- ~ Bubble or sound insulation foil for the resist
- ~ A driftwood branch
- ~ Felting equipment: skidproof mat, bubble foil, gauze, ball sprinkler, warm water, soap, fulling pin, towel, vinegar, disposable razor
- ~ Pearl cotton and a pointed embroidery needle

### Instructions

**1** Cut an oval resist out of bubble or sound insulation foil. The depicted felt basket is 25 cm long, 19 cm wide and 16 cm in height. The resist should measure 42 centimeters in length.

**2** Cover your working place with the skidproof mat and spread a

big piece of bubble foil onto it. With a project of the size mentioned above the foil piece should not be smaller than 60 x 130 cm, so it can be folded over the workpiece when it is turned around. For the decoration inside the basket lay out some fibers of Merino roving in different shades of green as grass raywise in the middle of the resist. Pay attention: The bottom layer will show later as the top one. When the bottom of the basket is to be decorated with »grass« or »flowers«, lay out first the blossom circles, then the grass and then the actual wool material.

**3** Add some roving blossoms in desired colors to the grass. Wind the fibers round your finger and put them onto the resist in ring form. Also here keep in mind: What's to be shown on top must be the bottom layer.

~ Advice: Take note on which side of the resist you have layed our the decorative items for the inner basket bottom. I mark the respective side of the basket bottom with a small yarn ball that I keep taking up when I put layer atop of layer. So, I can prevent the ornaments meant for the bottom materializing in the handle later.

**4** Cover the resist with a thin layer of Mountain Sheep fleece. The outer fibers should protrude approx. 2 cm over the resist's edge. Moisten the wool with some water from the ball sprinkler.

**5** Fold the bubble foil over the workpiece and turn the whole »sandwich« around. Remove the bubble foil from the side that is now on top. Fold the protruding fibers over close to the resist's edge and take care that there are no bulges.

**6** Put a thin layer of Mountain Sheep fleece also on this side, like above with fibers protruding and wet it with the sprinkler.

**7** Turn the work piece around by means of the bubble foil and fold the protruding fibers over, fitting tightly.

**8** Cover the middle of the oval within the folded over fibers with a further layer of Mountain Sheep Wool. Wet the wool and turn the workpiece around with the bubble foil. In this way, both sides of the resist should be covered with several thin wool layers. Pay attention that there are no bulges or coils at the edges which are difficult to remove during the felting and fulling process. How many layers are

needed depend on the size of the basket and what for what use it is intended. A basket for heavier things needs at least three to four layers of Mountain Sheep Wool on both sides so that its walls get robust enough.

**9** Now comes the design for the outside of the basket bottom. Make sure once more that the correct side is on top (see step 3). Place a thin green layer of fleece in the middle of the oval.

**10** Starting from this center lay out roving fibers in different shades of green as grass radiant over the oval's edge. Moisten the fibers and turn the work piece around with the help of the bubble foil.

**11** Fold the protruding green fibers over tightly around the resist's edge.

**12** Add as many wool fibers rings as you want in the blossom colors to the green fiber tips. Also put on other blossom colors if you want.

**13** Spread the gauze over the workpiece, sprinkle warm water over it and rub the gauze gently with a piece of soap. Felt on the wool by brushing it lightly.

**14** When the fibers start to connect and no loose ones can be picked off, remove the gauze, and rub directly on the felt.

**15** Turn the workpiece around and felt on the fibers on the bottom side.

**16** Wind up the long protruding side of the bubble foil piece to form a rolling core. Then wind the work piece up and full 20 times with only a slight degree of pressure. Open the roll, turn the piece around at a 90° angle and roll it again 20 times. Full the piece in all directions from both sides until the felt gets firm. Then keep rolling the piece without the core in all directions.

**17** Put the branch serving as a handle crosswise on the upper part of the work piece and fix the opening cut with threads. Attention: This opening must not get too big!

**19** Cut the felt open along the marked line. Make sure not to cut off the half-circle latches: They must keep connected in the middle by a wide piece.

**20** The cut-out felt latches in a half-circle form will be later put around the branch to complete the handle, then they are sewed together. Remove the stencil from the inside of the hollow felt.

**21** On the basket's inside now shows the motifs that were laid out in step 2 and 3.

**22** Rub the basket's edges with soapy fingers and the rolling pin from the inside to the outside so that a smooth surface is achieved without any bumps. At this stage, it really pays off when the lay-out and turning around of the fibers was done with great care. Knead the workpiece, throw it, and continue the treatment from the inside and outside in order to strengthen the felt more and to give the basket form. The felt should really become firm and stable so the basket gets sturdy. When the basket is felted fully through rinse it in clear water and put it in water with a shot of vinegar for a short time to neutralize the last soap suds. The tumble dry, form it and let it dry.

**23** Grass and blossoms can be seen even better if you remove any sticking-out Mountain Sheep fibers that have worked their way up through the Merino motifs with a disposable razor. Take care that the patterns are not damaged by the razor.

**24** Put the two felt latches in the middle of the upper part around the driftwood branch and sew them together with bead yarn and a pointed embroidery needle in the herringbone stitch.

**25** Embroider the blossoms, stalks and leaves of grass with bead yarn, if desired. The basket shown was adorned in French knot, stem stitch, backstitch, lazy-daisy stitch and chain stitch.

**26** The finished felt basket is ready for use - for example as a handicraft basket.

KERSTIN WAIZENEGGER AND  
HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 54-57

## Tutorial: A Frog in Needle-Felt Technique

A so-called Dyers Frog (*Dendrobates tinctorius*) from the species of tree climber frogs lives in tropical rain forests and boasts an eye-catching coloring: The back and the upper side of the head are black with yellow strips, the legs an iridescent royal blue and with a light blue belly. Helga Steenborn, a master in making true-to-life animal sculptures with the felting needle, gives step-by-step instructions how the small frog can be needled from wool.

### Material

- ✎ Mountain Sheep wool or other coarse wool fleece, white, for the basic form
- ✎ Merino roving or the like, royal blue, light blue, yellow, light and dark grey, black
- ✎ Felting needles in different thickness and shape (See the article 'Felt Needle Does Not Equal Felt Needle', filzfun no. 75, page 52 ff.)
- ✎ Needle felt mat
- ✎ Small wooden (cocktail) sticks
- ✎ Handicraft wire, thin
- ✎ 2 glass beads, Ø 4 mm
- ✎ Wool thread (e.g. tracer thread)
- ✎ Mending needle
- ✎ Sharp and pointed scissors
- ✎ Household scissors or a wire cutter
- ✎ Water, soap and a base mat to wet-felt the legs

### Instructions

My advice: Your frog may want to look like the real Mc Coy. Therefore, I recommend looking up pictures of it on the internet and to print them.

**1** Wind coarse white wool (e.g. Mountain Sheep) on approx. 5 cm length tightly around a wooden stick and needle from time to time to fix it. When the desired length is reached, pull the stick out.

**2** Build up the frog's body with a further amount of coarse wool, always checking back to the photographed images.

**3** Cover the upper side of the body with fine wool (e.g. Merino) in yellow.

**4** There is still time to make corrections on the shape.

**5** Cover the lower part of the body with fine light blue wool.

**6** That's how the frog's body should be looking at this stage.

**7** Needle the pattern onto the upper side with black wool.

**8** You might want to refer to the photos here.

**9** The frog's legs are needle-felted. Prepare a strand of dark royal blue wool: One side for the hind legs should be approx. 4 to 5 mm thick, the one for the front legs 3-4 cm thick.

**10** Turn the photo at a 90° angle to the left, so that the strand runs horizontally.

✎ Wet-felt the prepared leg strand as well as a long thin strand (or two short ones) for the toes.

**11** Rinse the finished wool strands and neutralize any remaining soap suds in vinegar water. Then let them dry.

**12** In the meantime, needle on the dotted pattern on the lower body part with black and dark-blue fine wool.

**13** Cut eye slits with sharp and pointed scissors (see photo). Put the beads on a wool thread (or tracer thread) and sew them into the slits through the head.

**14** Fill the gaps near the eyes with matching wool and needle them shut. Then encircle the eyes with a tiny amount of grey wool. Needle on the eardrums lightly behind and below the eyes, also in light and dark grey.

**15** Needle on the mouth with a small amount of blue. Work with a coarse needle to make the dents for the nostrils.

**16** Cut the front legs out of the wet-felted wool strand in dark royal blue: they should have body length and be beveled at its thinner end. Needle on dots with black wool.

**17** For the toes for each leg cut two pieces from the light-blue strand and bend it over in the middle (= 4 toes per leg)

18 Needle on the toes with some additional wool at the beveled ends of the legs and round the tips of the toes with a small amount of wool.

19 Prepare fine handicraft wire and a mending needle.

20 Cut a piece of wire for each leg, make it a little longer than the leg itself. Bend the end over and pull it through the leg hollow with the mending needle. Cut the protruding wire and bend it over as well.

21 Cut slits for the body's front legs, put them in and needle them tight with additional royal blue.

22 Cut out the hind legs a little longer than the entire body, bevel them at the thinner end and needle black dots onto the legs.

23 For the hind legs' five toes cut two longer parts each and a shorter one. Bend the longer parts in the middle and needle on the toes at the beveled end (see photo) Round the toes' edges with additional wool.

24 Pull the wire through the hind legs, as described in step 20 for the front legs.

25 Cut slits for the hind legs into the body, push the legs in, needle them on tight with royal blue and bend them into shape.

26 At first glance, the felted frog can hardly be told from the original.

HELGA STEGBORN

PAGES 58-59

## Herdwick Sheep

### History

The origin of this breed is unknown. It is said that some animals got stranded after a shipwreck in Great Britain, but this seems a bit far-fetched.

∞ With certainty, though, a breeders' association for the Herdwick sheep was founded in 1844 and the breed has been officially acknowledged since 1916. Genetically Herdwick stem from Nordic shorttails. But a Herdwick sheep has no short tail. Phillip Walling, who describes the breed in a book in great detail deems it most probable that the Herdwick is a crossbreed between sheep brought by the Vikings in the ninth and tenth century onto the British Isles and such that were already populating Cumbria.

∞ Etymology has it that Herdwick comes from herdwike, an old Nordic word for sheep pastures, and all sheep breeds grazing in the Lake District Hills probably went under that name.

### Description

When you spot a Herdwick sheep the first thing that meets the eye are the virtually inverted colors. With other breeds, legs and head tend to be darker than the rest of the pelt, but Herdwick have a white to light grey head and white, sturdy legs. The wool ranges from light to dark grey. While newborn lambs are usually dark grey or black, they tend to get lighter when they age. The legs are woolly until the knees and sometimes to the ankle joints which enhances their sturdiness. The protruding head has hardly any wool; the rams have spiraled horns. Their faces seem to be smiling, which makes for an overall friendly impression.

∞ The withers height of the rams is approx. 75 cm and that of the ewes of approx. 70 cm the Herdwick belongs to the middle heights. The rams weigh between 75 kg and 90 kg, the ewes between 60 kg to 65 kg. Herdwick ewes are in heat seasonally and bear one lamb each in April.

∞ Herdwick are very robust and frugal which makes them ideal for the Lake District's bare landscapes and the harsh climate. They are exceptionally faithful concerning their habitat and are said to be coming always back to the pastures where they grew up.

∞ The wool is very coarse and short-fibered and is therefore mostly processed

in carpet making. Since the wool yield per animal is rather low (1.5 to 2.5 kg) the factor wool for their keeping is negligible. But they fatten well and due to their ruggedness, they are very suitable for landscaping purposes.

### Felting

Even at first glance one could deduce that the Herdwick wool doesn't felt well. I was a little vexed by its unusual look and still looked forward to try it.

∞ The first try with raw wool seemed to be successful at first, but the felt couldn't be used. The thin surface could always be pulled apart again. Probably the sample didn't contain enough hair, so it felted only in irregular spots.

∞ Yet I had heard from Herdwick wool felting well, so I bought new wool – washed and carded this time, and the fleece's single parts were mixed, which made the total judgment easier.

∞ I found out the following:

Wool	Initial Weith	Layout meas.	End meas.	Shrink. factor
Raw wool	3 g	20 x 20 cm	12 x 12 cm	1.66
Raw wool	10 g	20 x 20 cm	15 x 16 cm	1.3
Roving	3 g	20 x 20 cm	11.5 x 11.5 cm	1.73
Roving	10 g	20 x 20 cm	14.5 x 15 cm	1.3

### Felt Fur

It seems this kind of wool is appropriate for sitting furs which also look interesting. But this is not the case. The hairs don't stick to the felt and can be pulled out rather easily.

### Conclusion

I would love to attest that this lovely sheep's wool is fit for feltmaking, or to offer an idea what else to do with it. Herdwick wool may have its place and some items for daily use or carpets are made of it. Nevertheless, into my studio it won't move.

MARGIT RÖHM



## The Finest Yarn on Earth

*Catrin Porsiel went out of her way to find the legendary musk ox with its equally fabulous wool.*

Regarding the Musk ox (*Ovibos moschatus*) you'll hear fairy-tale like superlatives. It is said that his wool is the finest on earth, his yarn is the rarest, most precious, luxurious and lightest. Eight times warmer and a thousand times softer than sheep wool.

### Both shy and aggressive

And not only concerning its pelt the Musk ox is special: The bear-shaped, round body and the fluffy impression hides its shy, aggressive character. To comb or shear its fine hair is unthinkable. Only a cooperative of Alaskan Inuit collects its hair laboriously in the fields. The Umingmaq's yield (meaning the »bearded one«, as the Inuit call it) is meagre. Only two to three kilograms can be so obtained per year and per animal.

☞ The Inuit spin the wool themselves and offer the yarns under the name Qiviut (fluff). It has all shades of brown. It can be dyed, but this always damages the quality.

### First disappointment

To be able to knit one centimeter in height you need 760 g of wool fibers. These are so yielding that 30 g should be enough for an average scarf. I wanted to try this out myself: Online I ordered the desired, »pure Musk ox yarn«. When it arrived my disappointment was severe: Mixed with Merino it was lacklustre, dull and non-authentic. It was soft, yes, but softness does not mean much as a criterion to me, after all, also polyester is soft.

☞ Hairs of the Yak, a wild cow living in the Central-Asian highlands, of the wild Buffalo of North American origin, of the Guanaco, an old lama species from South America make for similarly exclusive yarns. These animals live in extremely cold regions, which causes the fineness and warmth of their wool. They don't belong to European countries is what I think. But I would like so much to check out the spinning or knitting of those fibers!

☞ My knitting project was put on ice for the time being. Now I wanted to see a

real living Musk ox. A visit to the zoo in Borås (Sweden) should make it possible. But far from it: The small herd in its huge compound was not visible to the naked eye. I succeeded in finding an animal stockman, but when I asked how I could approach the objects of my interest there he only laughed. Was I perchance suicidal?

☞ At the Lüneburger Heide zoo I tried my luck once more: It was said that they had a couple of Musk oxen. Full of hope, I found only a widowed animal, the second had just died. It hid completely, in its grief it had moved in the farthest corner of the stable. The zoo is looking for a new partner. In Norway, Musk oxen propagate well, but the government prefers to allow the surplus numbers being shot instead of bringing them elsewhere to ameliorate their decrease in number.

☞ There was no turn to the better, as it is often the case midway through a fairytale, with the subject Musk oxen – be it finest yarn or not so fine yarn. No yarn, no photographs, no hope, don't you agree?

### Blanket against fibers

Giving up is not an option for me if there is a spark of hope. I kept insisting and was almost down on my knees asking whether it was possible to collect some stray or brushed-off wool over the coming months and to keep it for me. I found a willing stockman – in exchange of a Swedish wool blanket from my treasured collection.

☞ This is how I got a small amount of Musk ox wool, and I entrusted my Swedish yarn spinner to spin it for me. Finally, he agreed. The result is beautiful, but definitely not worth the trouble. I now own a few balls of Musk ox yarn of a wonderfully rich, middle-brown color.

☞ In the meantime, I knitted this luxury into lace arm gauntlets. Such a great result! In comparison to knitwear made from fine goat hair it can even seem a little coarse (see *filzfun* no. 74, page 58/59). If someone wants to try out for herself: I have a few wool balls and the gauntlets to give away.

CATRIN PORSIEL

## Blankets for Donkeys, Horses and Camels

*A visit to some of the last felt craftspeople in Anatolia*

Ödemis is a town in Western Anatolia with approx. 80 000 inhabitants. On a map you'll find Izmir quickly, the nearby 5-million metropolis. Tire is 70 km away from Izmir and from Ödemis to Tire it is just a stone's throw. 1990 we were there for the first time. There used to be many more feltmakers' workshops in the old town near the bazaar in those days. In one of them we met Mehmet Gavar.

☞ On the workshop entry at the doorway there hung several finished felt pieces to attract customers. He made, amongst other things, traditional shepherds' coats and different kind of sweat blankets for beasts of burden. He told us much about his work.

### Two Different Formats

The simplest sweat blanket is a thin, sturdy felt blanket that is folded many times and placed on the donkey's back, before the wooden saddle is fastened on top of it. This method is called for when loads are to be carried and for riding the donkeys. In Gavar's workshop such blankets were made in two different shapes: bigger, square ones and smaller, more rounded blankets. The simply patterned square shows often only one or two bigger dots in a mirror image. The version with rounded edges is used for riding donkeys. Mehmet Gavar says: »At the edge you can often see a wolf's tooth pattern that we call 'Disli'.«

☞ In 1997, a smaller blanket weighed a kilogram and cost about one Turkish Lira, a bigger one was doubly heavy, and the price double as well. »When the clients bring the wool that the sweat blanket only costs half as much«, Master Mehmet calculates.

### Weight three kilograms

Sweat blankets that are used as upholstery when riding without a saddle are thicker than the variants described above. They weigh approx. 3 kg and cost 3 Turkish Lira. Also, their patterning is different from the thinner blankets. The motifs always show a mirror image, but master Mehmet and his neighbor Master Tesandar use more

complex patterning, similar to those they use with bigger felt carpets.

### Strengthened with leather

The best sweat blankets are strengthened with leather and embroidered with colored wool yarn. These items are great examples for a successful combination of felt and leather. Mehmet Gavar reports: »When we have to handle too many orders, we don't make the leather supports ourselves, but we order them at the nearby saddler.« Also the leather reigns for horses are sometimes lined with felt so that they don't chafe as much.

☞ Our own collection boasts of two original sweat blankets: one from the village Bademli, the other from Ödemis. When we bought them in Ödemis we were the first customers of the day, bringing the first money to the workshop counter. The master rubbed the bills against his chin – first from the right, then to the left, threw them on the floor and said: »Allah bereket versin« (May Allah send blessings).

### Festive red

With the inhabitants sweat blankets in basic red are popular for weddings, during which the animals are exquisitely adorned. The blankets usually measure 54 cm x 72 cm, and the fringes are 15 cm long.

☞ In Ödemis and Tire, they used to make many saddle blankets for camels, today they do that solely on order. The simple specimen of this approx. 150 cm x 50 cm blankets have no patterns. More artful, richly embroidered kinds are put under the saddle for camel races and fights. The best time for such a fight is late winter, the camel mating season. In these spectacles exists no question of life or death. The winning animal must press his adversary to the ground by his strong neck, which is watched by several judges. Only especially bred camel stallions take part in these extremely popular show fights. The winner is a great honor to

his keeper. In 1974, Harald Böhmer, a renowned expert for plant dyes in Turkey took a photograph of a fighter camel in the Mender Valley in Anatolia.

### Handicrafts Changing

Of course, we were not the only experts to have visited Turkey often in order to study artisanry. Our colleague Ferenc Ispay, a Hungarian researcher, writes about his experiences in the 1950ies: »The only means of transport in Tire or Ödemis was your rare coach. Everbody else rode on horses or donkeys to the mountains – men, women, children alike.« ☞ The world has changed a lot in the meantime. We were lucky to experience many facets of the way these people used to live. The atmosphere was homey, the people led a quiet life, always willing to shoot the breeze amongst themselves and amongst us, too.

☞ Two decades later the changes can be felt. Since 2014 all you can see on the street are cars. Many felt workshops are closed, and it is a miracle that some seem still have enough orders. The remaining workshops loosen the wool with the carding machine and not with the bow anymore. Felted coats, sweat blankets and felted carpets are no longer trodden upon with bare feet, but densed by means of fulling machines. We remember with great nostalgia the photographs from 1997 that we took in the workshops of Mustafa Yürel in Bademli, Nuri Kümürçü in Kula und Mustafa Desandar in Ödemis. ☞ Deplorably, the feltmakers are no longer much estimated in modern society and their traditional crafts will soon sink into oblivion. We therefore recommend all interested readers to book a trip to Turkey soon.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

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This is a supplement of the magazine  
»filzfun« Issue #76 - Autumn 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](http://www.filzfun.de/en).  
The website is in English too!

**Distribution Switzerland**  
Wollkarderei Ursula Jaton · Degenmattstr. 68  
CH-4421 St. Pantaleon · Suisse  
Tel. (0041) 619131333  
[www.atelier-pecora.ch](http://www.atelier-pecora.ch) · [atelier-pecora@gmx.ch](mailto:atelier-pecora@gmx.ch)

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The winter issue will be published on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Editorial deadline: September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022