

filzfun – The English Supplement

Issue #79, Summer 2023

SPECTRUM

2 6 Out of the Felt and Textile Scene

EVENTS

2 8 International Art Textile Biennial
3 12 Face-to-Face Felting Encounter in Duisburg

EXHIBITIONS

3 14 In the Sign of Nature in Soltau
4 16 Yvonne Habbe: A Last Farewell
5 18 Helmut Hahn and Three Women Artists

WORKSHOPS AND MASTERCLASSES

5 20 A Wealth of Colors

ARTISTS' PORTRAITS

6 24 Dagmar Binder: The Felting Biologist
7 34 Tanja Gawin: »Bright is my favorite color«
8 40 Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann: Felt From the Green Isle

TUTORIALS

6 30 Birds of Paradise
9 44 Felt Meets Paper

SHEEP & WOOL

10 48 Sheep Farmer Elke Heer

PROJECTS

11 52 This is Quality Proven
12 56 »(Un)Perfected 10«

FELTING TRIP

12 59 Feltmaking With Bedouins

FELTING HISTORY

13 62 Uigur Feltmaking

REVIEWS

13 64 Books

Dear Readers,

The felt art we present in this issue is as colorful and multifaceted as life itself. Tanja Gawin, a Melbourne artist, is well-known for her brightly colored, humorous objects – be it a flashy tea cozy, shining sculptures or gaudy shoulder bags (see page 34 ff.). Inspired by Ireland's rich nature, Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann mostly uses luscious colors as well. Combining geometrical patterns, she makes state-of-the-art scarves, caps and other accessories (see page 40 ff.).

Dagmar Binder's impressive art is characterized by its organic-seeming three-dimensionality. Unique sculptural collars have become her trademark. With her instructions »Birds of Paradise« we learn about her chromatic side. Step by step, brightly colored birds arise – there are no limits to your own creative ideas! Another tutorial by Marlena Strauß may inspire you to make individual greeting cards.

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.*

For the first time in this *filzfun* issue we portray a lady sheep farmer in our new serial »The World of Sheep«. Elke Heer introduces us to her Coburg Fox Sheep Flora, Frieda and Fine and tells us why she has reduced her flock of 15 animals to just three (see page 48 ff.) Exciting impulses and interesting insights are offered in articles about the »International Art Textile Biennial« in Australia, two special shows around the subject of nature in Soltau, the exhibit »Genklang« of the Swedish textile artist Yvonne Habbe and the international feltmakers' group »(Un)perfect 10«. Interested parties who want to perfect their felted products by having them professionally examined will find two reports as well as important information concerning the Voluntary Quality Assurance offered by the Filznetzwerk (as of page 52). Have a lot of fun with your own projects and enjoyable reading hours with the *filzfun* 79!

*All the best,
Your *filzfun* team*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:
redaktion@filzfun.de
The fall issue will be published on August 31st, 2023
Editorial deadline: June 14th, 2023

Summer Academy in Soltau

The Filzkolleg event will take place in the inspiring and relaxing surroundings of the Filzwelt Soltau in the middle of the Luneburg Heath from June 26th to July 1st 2023. A cartload full of felting knowledge and skill awaits the participants in 13 different offers for beginners and advanced felters. Amongst others, there are the courses »Reversible Caps« with Heike Kojmann, »Yoga Mat« with Margit Röhm or »Domestic Songbirds« with Ina Jeromin.
filznetzwerk.de

Felted Works for The Felt Art Path

»What comes from nature goes back to it« – under that motto, the International Felt Art Path in Tissens in South Tyrol reopens again. Along this loop hiking path, felt art is showcased in the open air at different stations. The tourism board invites artists from all over the globe to provide their felt art for the event. In demand are big, quite densely felted objects from sturdy wool, preferably from South Tyrolean Mountain Sheep, without any artificial filling or chemical treatment. The cost for the objects can be billed. Suitable art works are always welcome, there is no deadline. Further information and application forms please find under:
edith.hofer@rolmail.net
www.tisensprissian.com/themenwege

A Walkable Butterfly Installation

Countless crochet enthusiasts took part in the artist Gabriela Drees-Holz' joint event, yielding a total of more than 2000 crocheted butterflies. The artist has achieved a veritable »golden Noah's Arc of the 21st century«. This communal art project can be ambled through, wonderfully scented flowers adorn the ceilings and walls of the spaces where all those butterfly flutter freely. The opening night took place in the Kunsthaus Dreho

in Liedberg last May. An accompanying exhibit shows works by twelve other local and international artists. On show is also another joint venture, i.e. the felted freedom carpet organized and overseen by Corinna Nitschmann (see *filzfun* 78). From July 7th to 27th this participatory work of art can be seen in the city church in Monchengladbach.
dreho.de

A New Online Meeting Place for Creatives

The successful fair »Textile Art Berlin (TAB)« has a digital successor: the textile-art-berlin-online.de. At the German-English platform textile artists and those interested in the field can find inspiring contents from the different sections familiar from the analogous fair. Textile artists present their work at the »market place«. In the »workshop« line one can find courses and workshops, »gallery« is an exhibition space. In the »magazine« interested parties can read current contributions regarding textile art. A jury selects images in a yearly tender offer which are shown alternately on the website's header. All works handed in get straight to the gallery. The Textile Art Berlin online understands itself as a new forum for the textile arts scene that has sprung up during the fairs held in Berlin before. Any textile artists who wish to show or sell their works on the new online platform find more pertaining information under
textile-art-berlin-online.de

The Color White

The show »100 Shades of White. Eine Farbe in Mode (A Fashionable Color)« in the Textile Museum St. Gallen sheds light on the many facets the color white boasts of in the fashion industry. The color is of highly symbolic value – white stands for peace, purity or a new beginning, which is mirrored in dress codes at baptisms, the holy communion or weddings. More than 100 objects – costumes, accessories and other textiles, photographs and advertisements allow for a glimpse at both the fashion and cultural history of the color of light.
textilmuseum.ch/weiss/

Nostalgic, Vital and Touching

Until 2024, the second International Art Textile Biennial (IATB) in Australia showcases innovative, contemporary art textiles reflecting an extraordinary wide range of works related to the textile/fibre medium

A total of 270 entries from 25 countries were submitted for the competition. A textile artist jury selected the final 35 entrants who show their work in eight Australian galleries in 2023/2024. »The IATB should be recognized around the world as a benchmark that documents trends and innovations in the art textile field«, says coordinator Gleny Mann, who established the IATB in 2021.

☞ Herself a textile artist and founder of the »Fibre Arts Australia« events, it is of great importance to her to support expansion, growth and inspirations for textile art practitioners. As she notes, textile art has been enjoying a renaissance after decades of being derided, ignored or seen as a »craft« merely – shorthand for »not art«. »Now textile-based art becomes a powerful and accessible agent in the examination of identity, society and politics«, Gleny Mann is pleased to observe. She describes the substantial range of concepts, techniques, material and presentation as follows: »...from intimate reflections to huge environmental issues and the challenges of living in an increasingly fractured and unstable world.« There is a common thread of innovation and experimentation in dealing with the textile medium.

International Contributions

Josephine Jakobi, the winner of the IATB award 2023 presents traditional crochet wherein she has worked egg cases of a Huntsman Spider. During a walk, the Australian discovered the egg cases in the forest soil and had the idea of highlighting the »crafts« of both spider and human. Evangeline Cachinero embroidered a dyed canvas. It took the artist 200 hours to finish »Our sacred Circle«.

☞ The German contributor Katharina Sommer printed and processed historical police mug shots from the year 1925 onto 1.70 m pieces of fabric. With her work, titled »Mug Women II« she wanted

to emphasize the often touching stories behind the faces. On one of those life-sized objects, for instance, you see a young, well-dressed woman who shot her lover, a medical doctor, when he wanted to leave her. Katharina Sommer embroidered the collar and symbolized the lady's lovesickness with red embroideries on her breast. The German artist was awarded the special prize »International Excellence Award«.

Camouflaged Felt Art

Two of the exhibits were by the Australian Samantha Tannous and Sayaka Ono from Japan. Tannous' »Toxic Mimic« is part of a series titled »Under Cover« which toys metaphorically with eye-catching camouflages in the animal and insect world. The wet-felted, circular wall hanging was made from hand-dyed Merino wool and silk cloths.

☞ The sculpture »Wriggling spiral« by Sayaka Ono was made in the vortex of the Covid pandemic. In the eyes of the artist, the spiral, made from New Zealand Merino, symbolizes the last two years of crisis but also new hope.

Rusted Memories

Nostalgia prevails in Gintare Joudele's work »My Childhood Toy Truck«. The result of driving along memory lane is a rusty toy car made from metal and mohair.

☞ The award-winning Brenda Livermore created three pulsating, red columns in the basket-weaving technique. Her source of inspiration was the vitality of the flamboyant Gymea lily. With »Fire Brand« she won the »Australian Excellence Award«.

A Great Start

The IATB 2023 opening night at the »East Gippsland Art Gallery« in Bairnsdale, Victoria was a huge success. »The gallery has been overwhelmed by the number of visitors that have viewed the works and with many, many accolades on the variety of what is exhibited«, Gleny Mann says proudly.

☞ The exhibition runs in conjunction with seven more galleries until the beginning of 2024. The logistics of moving the art works is huge and the coordination of the process quite a challenge, given the varying conditions of exhibition space.

☞ Work has already begun for the IATB biennial 2025. The organizers want the forthcoming event to travel to as many galleries as possible within Australia and probably abroad. »To showcase this extraordinary medium widely and one

day outside Australia as well«, is Gleny Mann's vision.

Galleries

The selected art works of the »International Art Textile Biennial« are shown in eight galleries in Australia in 2023 and 2024. Please find all details and exact schedules under fibrearts.net.au/biennale.html

VALESKA GEHRKE

PAGES 12-13

Face-to-Face Felting Encounter

Everyone was glad – after such a long time meeting in person again! Not online any longer, but live. Doris Niestroj reports on the Duisburg meeting that lasted for several days

After two years of abstaining from felters' meetings we were finally able to see each in the flesh again. The Deutsche Jugendherberge (DJH German Youth Hostel) at the Landschaftspark in Duisburg hosted us feltmakers for a long weekend.

☞ On Thursday morning already the first group arrived. These were the women who had started the instructor course called »Kurs aufnehmen (Taking Course)« by and with Susanne Schächter-Heil during the Filzkolleg. During the following months, they were provided with lecturing materials and they met once a month online, a perfect preparation for their future jobs. In Duisburg, the group presented their final works and was awarded their certificates.

Happy Get-Together

As of Thursday afternoon, the first participants came. The DJH, an example of historical industrial architecture, greeted the members of the Filznetzwerk in its subtly modernized premises. The overall joy we felt to see each other again was abundantly clear.

☞ After the official greetings our »headquarters« were prepared for the felting events. Each resumed his or her place, were busily felting or talking shop, some sipped a glass of wine or did all those things together. The subject was Steampunk. Not everybody knew how to

deal with the matter, so free felting was set up as an alternative.

Skilled Supervision

On Friday morning, we were given a tour through the impressive industrial monument of the former Meiderich Steel Works which is the centerpiece of the Landschaftspark. Chilled out, the group returned after two hours. The hands were cold, our faces red and other icy body parts had to thaw before we could start felting again.

Fairies Awake

The afternoons were filled with other courses next to free felting. Susanne Schächter-Heil brought dark pixies to life, in Monika Derrix' workshop we learned how to felt strap bags and Ilka Lehmann offered micro-macramé courses. In the evening the members' meeting took place, then again, we felted, shot the breeze, laughed and drank some wine.

☞ The whole Saturday was under the sign of felt, personal encounters and yes, also relaxing. The teaching of the elf, bag and micromacramé courses continued. After supper we organized a small exhibit of our felted objects.

Next Meeting in Berlin Wannsee

The days went by fast. As soon as we had settled down, it seemed, it was already time to say good-bye again. After cleaning up and many farewell hugs the DJH emptied out more and more. But this spells no real farewell, we are hopefully going to see each other in Berlin, Wannsee in February 2024 and in February 2025 in Roggenburg.

DORIS NIESTROJ

PAGES 14-15

In the Sign of Nature

Currently, the felto Filzwelt presents two shows that deal with corals, stones and animals

Originally, there was no plan to showcase the exhibits »Das gefilzte Riff - Korallenwelt in Not (The Felted Reef – Endangered Corals)« by the Dutch Viltkontaktgroep and »Like a Rolling Stone – A Living Wealth« with objects by Heike Fink at the same time or even spatially close to each other. But in the end this juxtaposition

turned out just fine. Both shows are connected by nature as a subject matter. Further, in full awareness of our environment's beauty and the danger it is in, the showpieces take in the full span between these issues, between animate and inanimate nature, between Australia via the Netherlands to Canada, between objects made in collaboration and those that are communally understood.

The Felted Reef

During the pandemic, Mathilde Pielkenrood, who finds corals fascinating and is fond of joint projects, had an idea: Themed »Corals Unite«, she appealed to 1000 members of the Dutch Felters' Association to felt corals. The feedback was overwhelming: There were far too many contributions for just a single wall hanging.

☞ With the priceless assistance of Liesbeth Wieberdink and counselled by Saar Snoek, the wealth of material was ordered by color, processed, arranged and then fixed to six big fabric-covered panels. The felto team came to hear of the projects (amongst other sources through the *filzfun*) and wondered how this luxurious felted water world would look on the high gallery walls in the Filzwelt loft. Now this can be seen for real. For the initiators, the coral project is living proof what collaboration can achieve and how versatile felt can be. But the crucial idea behind it is a plea to protect our planet, to stop global warming which is partially responsible for the bleaching and dying of coral reefs.

Rolling Stones

Nature is also central in Heike Fink's oeuvre. The environmentalist was so taken by the Canadian wilderness that she emigrated to a small village in Saskatchewan in 2006. There, felting, a mere hobby before, turned into a vocation and a career.

Oval, Square or Round

For Heike Fink, bedrock is literally the basis of our earth, everything is built onto it. This conviction turned into a communal achievement as well: Thousands of »stones«, oval and square, big or small, light-colored or dark...and all made from soft wool. More than 3000 altogether, they work as a living, playfully inviting installation – and over the course of time many more shall be added. How so? During her prolonged visit in June 23 Heike Fink is going to offer many more felting occasions.

Exhibits in the Soltau Filzwelt

Both shows mentioned above can be seen until August 17th 2023. Heike Fink's »Rolling Stones« also presents fascinating animal sculptures and is sponsored by the Canada Council for the Arts.

☞ Nature is prominent in other scheduled shows as well. As of August 20th, through 20th November 2023, the Finnish-Icelandic Felters' Union »filtti« show their installation themed »Disappearing Nature« with objects by 20 felt artists. filzwelt-soltau.de

ANTJE ERNST

PAGES 16-17

A Last Farewell

For the »Genklang« felt art exhibit in Gotland at the beginning of 2023, the artist Yvonne Habbe aims at an interpretation of the Swedish tradition of bell-ringing for the deceased

There is a tradition in Sweden called »själaringning«, which is bell ringing for the soul shortly after someone in the congregation has passed away. This bell ringing is temporally separated from the actual funeral. It is often possible for the initiated to read more from the bell ringing than just the symbolic sound. It may be that different bells are used, depending on whether it is a man or a woman who has died, how old that person was and to some extent also the social status of the deceased. These bells are ringing in different ways in different churches all over Sweden, but the tradition is most widespread in the rural areas. It is not known how old this custom is. Bell ringing for the soul of the dead is certainly a phenomenon in many other countries as well, likewise more to be found in the country parishes than in the city. It serves as a final greeting, speaking to everyone and reminding us about life here and now. In his famous poem »For whom the bell tolls«: John Donne (1772-1631), the so-called metaphysical poet admonishes: »(...) Therefore, send not to know / For whom the bell tolls / It tolls for thee.«

Felted Bells

The exhibition »Genklang« therefore is a silent interpretation of this tradition of the bell ringing for the soul. The entire

body of work on show is made of felted wool and consists of both sculptures and framed works. Most of the objects are adorned with embroidery stitches, and a part of the used material, i.e., wool and silk as well, is hand-dyed. The main work consists of a series of half meter high felted bells, which are naturally completely silent, given the choice of material. They are empty as bodies are when the soul has fled them. Stitched rows of marks in the bells become a kind of written testimony that each individual has his or her own story to tell, stories that fall into a common mass.

Valuable Memories

Another sculptural work shows the value of memories. On the wall are ten pieces of rolled-up fabric in shimmering colors. They are filled with shiny silk tangles and tied up with delicate sewing thread that can easily knot itself and becomes impossible to open. They symbolize memories that we do everything to hold on to, afraid that they will be lost. ☞ In the exhibition, also framed textile pictures under the theme »room of sorrow« are shown, visualized through imaginary vaults as a symbol of the inner rooms that everyone carries within, as for example a »room of consolation«. The vault stands as a symbol of both cathedrals and the hermit's simple abode. A place to seek refuge. It also refers to the common firmament under which we all live and operate.

About the Artist

Yvonne Habbe, born 1971, is a textile artist specialized in hand-felting of wool. She is active in Gotland, Sweden and has a background with a master's degree in archaeology. Yvonne works exploratively with the material and both develops and preserves one of history's oldest textile techniques. During the past year, she has been involved with an exhibition called »Reverberation« (Genklang in Swedish), which was first shown at Smålands Museum in Växjö and then in the GKF Galleri in Visby, Gotland. www.habbe.nu
Instagram: [@habbefilt](https://www.instagram.com/habbefilt)

YVONNE HABBE

Helmut Hahn and Three Women Artists

In the scope of the show »T.O.P. connection - eine künstlerische Auseinandersetzung mit Helmut Hahn«, the three artists Pascale Goldenberg, Gabi Mett and Judith Mundwiler are dealing with the artistic legacy of Helmut Hahn in co-operation with the Zons Museum. His extensive body of work is part of the Museum's art collection

Helmut Hahn was not only a textile artist famous for his big-size wall hangings, textile assemblies and beaded images. His legacy consists further of stage settings, costume designs, drawings, collages, object cases and photographs. His use of simple materials and techniques is conclusive. A certain rapport exists in the artistic approach of the three T.O.P. artists. They also feel committed to the material used, see it as an inspiration for issues that individually reflect personal, societal, political and historical aspects.

Connections to Helmut Hahn

At the beginning of her artistic career, Judith Mundwiler was strongly influenced by Helmut Hahn. Her free approach to fabrics, the tearing technique and sewing with open edges go back to his huge tapestries. Gabi Mett dotes on his special quilting art, and Pascale Goldenberg felt increasingly drawn to his artwork in the course of the preparations for the show.

The Artists' Answer

Intensive studies of his catalogues and research in the Museum's archives got the preparations going. Certain analogies were found in the listed areas: Photography, photo manipulations, stage settings and costumes, drawings, textile assemblies, object cases and big tapestries. The three artists answered to each realm with their own works, either already finished or made especially for the event. The astounding variety found in Hahn's collections was successfully taken up by the three artists. There is alienation of photographs by means of painting over, embroidering or digital printing. One installation each is linked to Hahn's stage designs. The drawings convolute was complemented by Pascale Goldenberg and Gabi Mett through their own drawings, embroideries, installations and objects.

Individual Stories

The textile assemblies and object cases were quite impressive. Here each artist found correspondences easily. Found natural objects in black boxes, the interpretations of French proverbs or historic cans evoked many personal stories before the spectator's eye. The big-size works were congenially mirrored by Pascale Goldenberg and Judith Mundwiler.

∞ This was the first time the artistic group has immersed itself in another artist's body of work in such an intense way. The process of approaching the matter from all sides, developing the concept and the final realization with the help of the dedicated Museum staff was a very rewarding experience.

GABI METT

PAGES 20-21

A Wealth of Colors

Curious women, fond of experiments and sharing their passion for the felting craft met for the course »Filzkleidung mit experimentell selbstgefärbter Seide (Felted Garments in experiments with hand-dyed silk fabrics« at the Ländlichen Heimvolkshochschule Hohebuch, an adult education center

The magical interdependence of wool, silk and soapy water under manual influence resulting in a delicate nuno fabric was the content of Kerstin Scherr's workshop. Preparatory work was needed, though: Silk fabrics were painted or sprayed on (the watercolor technique) as per individual taste.

Creative Painting on Silk

Each participant looked forward to be inspired by the objects Kerstin had brought along and to find their own ideas and impulses to create images. Already in painting the silk, a wealth of possible colors could be enjoyed, an enhancement in creativity. The freshly painted silk was ironed for a long time after drying to fixate the colors. Ideas came flying while voluntary nuno test patterns were made from the colored silk fabrics, wool fibers or other animal or natural fibers fitting the respective project (seamless clothing). One could always test her limits, but these were often surpassed

through Kerstin's steadfast and patient supervision.

∞ Even when you were anxious before you immersed yourself more and more in the visual and haptic exploration of color, structure, density or transparency. How will the hand-painted silk react to the extremely fine Merino wool? Do the patters survive the felting process? Does the specific layout matter? How to take the shrinking into consideration? How does the choice of wool colors influence the color play of silk fabrics? Crucial matters indeed.

Harmony and Contrasts

According to each felter's project, a lot of patience and stamina had already been required to paint the silk, measuring 6 meters times 140 cm. In a meditative way, you could achieve harmonically flowing gradients or sharply contrasting colors or patterns. After the silk was dry and ironed, patterns were made for the seamless clothing envisaged (jumpers, skirts, tunics and vests). Then, with the help of the nuno test patterns, the shrinking factor was calculated and layout measurements were done accordingly, resists were cut out and put onto the painted silk. Other classic nuno-felting steps followed.

Wonderful Garments

Kerstin shared all her expertise and great treasure of experience with joy and assistance, she sure was a reliable companion on one's road to an individual piece of art. On the last day we all complimented each other for the striking pieces of clothing that we had made. Each participant was filled with pride and satisfaction about her work and took home a lusting for more.

∞ The overall care and catering of the Hohebuch team enabled us to further concentrating on the crafting process. Each one's tedious everyday life was interrupted by a leisurely balance for a while.

Courses and Workshops

Ländliche Heimvolkshochschule
Hohebuch
hohebuch.de

TANJA NICKOL

The Felting Biologist

Dagmar Binder succeeded in unifying all her talents and interests in her professional life, which are art, handicraft, a researcher's disposition and a love for languages

Already as a kid, Dagmar Binder was fascinated by the colorful realm of fabrics surrounding her childhood home. Her mother and grandmother were experienced seamstresses and sewed many usable items for their home.

Magical Attraction

»Especially these magical fabrics that you could sheath yourself in, which turned you all of a sudden into a queen, a wizard or a pirate attracted us children mightily«, Dagmar Binder recalls. She first tried her hand in sewing when she was still small. No wonder then that she wanted to become a costume designer, followed by the inkling to become a maritime biologist or professional explorer. Today, with a wink, she calls herself a »felting biologist« – at least »my work seems to mirror the great fascination that the beauty and variety of nature has for me, all its different shapes and sizes and their sheer inventive power«, she declares.

Fascination Felt

But her career started as an interpreter for Spanish and English. »I guess this sounded more down-to-earth than dabbling in art, which always reeks of poverty. Since I grew up in the German Democratic Republic, studying languages always spelled a desire to see the big wide world«, she explains. She worked only shortly as a literary editor, then she took up studies at the former Art University Berlin. A seminary about room installations changed her life. The lecturer explained the basics of felting to her – and Dagmar Binder fell for it hook, line and sinker. »I was literally enthralled by the combination of surface design and spatial modeling, painting and sculpture. I tried to learn everything about it and to find ways to make the light organic forms that were on my mind.«

»Within a short time, she rented a studio and got to work. Soon the »lucky happenstance felting«, became, as she put it, her vocation. She gave up on becoming a teacher and ventured out into freelancing. »During the first years, I just studied for all it was worth. I worked

on my individual approach but had to rely on jobs on the side. For about 15 years now I have been working fulltime in my studio in the Art House Flutgraben e.V. and I am busy hosting courses at home and worldwide«, she says.

From Surfaces to 3-D Shapes

»At first, I tried my hand at felting surfaces. I designed fabrics that I sewed together. These jackets or hats had their seams outside since felt doesn't have to be chained off«, Dagmar Binder recalls. Today, though, her focus lies upon three-dimensional forms »that can be made entirely without seams. Felt is the only textile material which allows for that«. Her body of work comprises both wearable and abstract art.

»Sculptures and three-dimensional wall objects are my favorites. But they require a lot of time and it's not easy to find a clientele with suitable space and budget«, she admits. With her art objects she uses other, stronger fibers than wool in order to achieve the necessary stability and expressive surfaces.

Fashionable Clothes

Where felted garments are concerned, functionality and fit are the crucial factors. Here she uses delicate Merino wool and silk fabrics which are pleasing to the skin and make a fine yet dense felt. »When I started to felt, most felted clothing was relatively rustic, practical but could hardly be pronounced fashionable. I became convinced that this had to change. For years I fiddled with all kinds of problems and ideas; e.g. to lay out the roving purposely in certain directions to get a good fit for a jacket. Mostly I use combinations of Merino or needle fleece. The latter has short, curly fibers which complement the long hairs of the roving and yields the desired density«, she explains.

Exploring and Experimenting

In the realm of wearable felt art Dagmar Binder has been specializing in making sculptural collars and scarves which she sells in boutiques and on fairs and markets. A further commercial foothold are courses online or on suitable premises.

»Here not only my know-how regarding feltmaking is called for, but also my language skills. I teach courses in English and Spanish.« Next to the classical felting canon she wants to provide her clients with new ideas, perspectives and encouragement for their own creative path. After all, the art of felting is so

unbelievably versatile and opens up countless new ways and techniques. »For me, at least, exploring and experimenting are strong and exciting motivations. And lasting ones as well – even after all those years I've never been bored for a split-second«, claims the »felting biologist« enthusiastically.

Dagmar Binder

Current workshops and dates
textillabor.de
Instagram: *@textillabor*

Free Seats

There are still some free seats for the year-long felting course »Filzen« in the Jugendkunstschule Berlin Lichtenberg, Wednesdays from 4.30 – 6.30 p.m. Youngsters and young adults are especially welcome. Please apply at the following web address: *juku-lichtenberg.de*

VALESKA GEHRKE

Tutorial: Birds of Paradise

Hinting at the forthcoming summer months, Dagmar Binder shows how to felt brightly colored colibris or autochthonous bird species

MATERIAL

- » Approx. 5 grams of colored, fine wool
- » Merino roving 19 mic (or even finer) and some delicate Merino or needle fleece
- » Felting equipment: Bubble foil, a towel, a pair of scissors, measuring tape, ball sprinkler, soap, gauze or fly-screen, maybe small sponges and a fine felting needle
- » A Sheet of Paper DIN A 4, a pencil, colored plastic foil, a garbage bag or brown baking parchment

INSTRUCTIONS

This colorful project is fun for both experienced felters and beginners. Those who want can try it out together with their children or grandchildren.

1 Draw the bird's contours on a piece of paper by proceeding from a symmetrical approach, i.e., a middle axis.

Apart from the wings, the body outlines should fit a DIN A 4 sheet of paper.

~ Length: Beak 3 cm, Head 4.5 cm, Body 11 cm, Tail feathers 11 cm

~ Width: Middle of the body 7 cm, Head 5.5 cm, Wings each 7 cm (on the A4-sheet). Here you might want to extend beyond the edge.

~ The beak, the head and the body are comparatively wide, since later, the drawing is going to be folded along the middle and said parts get narrowed down by half.

2 Cut the shape out from plastic or baking parchment so it can be put under the bubble foil to see where you are going.

3 Moisten the foil a little bit and put a thin layer of fleece onto the beak, the body, the head and the onsets of the wings and tail feathers. The fleece will hold all other fibers well even if they haven't been laid out sufficiently crosswise. Additionally, it strengthens the middle part and the onsets of the wings and the tails.

4 Cover the workpiece with gauze, moisten it a bit and soap it. Like this, the wool clings well to the bubble foil.

5 Now we see the bird from above. As a next step we cover only the wings and tail feathers that can be seen at first glance (see step 6) The head and the body will be folded later and will disappear into the inner part of the bird. They don't have to have pronounced coloring.

6 Cover the wings and the tail with colorful roving in your preferred colors. For wing tips, twirl each end of the wool portion between your fingers to make it pointed. Pay attention that you put more wool onto the onset of the body; it is one of those parts that should gain stability.

~ Put a small portion of lengthwise fibers over the beak and the neck to render a firm connection between beak, head and body.

~ Cover the workpiece again with gauze, moisten and soap it and press it smooth and even. Don't rub yet.

7 Now put a second layer of bubble foil onto your workpiece and turn the bird around belly-side. The wool should be laid out over the entire surface, comprising the beak, the undersides of the wings and the tail and then only the head and belly.

Use some more fleece in the wing tips so that they get sturdy enough.

8 Two small dots for the eyes can be put on, unless you want to add the eyes with the help of the felting needle when the bird has been pre-felted.

~ If this side is fully laid on, put again some gauze on top, press it down and smooth the contours out a bit. Take only a little amount of water, the wool shouldn't swim. If necessary, take the surplus of moisture away with the towel.

9 Now fold the bird along the middle axis, like a paper plane. Beak, head and body are thus only half of their original width. They will felt together and achieve a double thickness for stability.

~ In order that wings and tail feathers do not glue together, put a piece of plastic foil in between. A rectangular sheet is enough, since only a slight curve has to be cut along the back.

~ After the folding is done, we see the bird sideways in a flight position.

10 Let's start felting then! Cover the workpiece with bubble foil, render it moist and soapy, so both your hand can glide well to massage it from both sides.

11 As soon as the surface has felted a bit and the fibers don't seem to shift anymore, you can massage the workpiece with your hand. This time use hot water and a substantial amount of soap.

12 Beak, body and head should now be well connected before the resist is taken out. Spread the wings and massage their upper side. The feather tips might have to be separated when they cling too densely together. If you cut them in shape at all, do only away with what is absolutely necessary.

~ As long as no fibers are cut the felt is most stable and doesn't fray.

13 When you have a rather firm pre-felt in which all the bird's parts are closely connected further measures to densify the workpiece are required. Wring it out, adding a little moisture helps. Roll it from all sides. Pay attention: The rolling direction is the one that shrinks most.

It is therefore for you to decide whether the figurine should be long and slim or shorter and stockier. In between throw the workpiece in a bundle on the working table. Roll beak and head one more so they are stable and bend them in the right direction.

14 Rinse out the soap, tumble-dry the bird or put it in a towel. Spread the wings as if it was ready to fly and let it dry completely by hanging it on a thread.

~ A piece of advice: Such avian creatures can be made in different sizes. You can also build a pretty mobile from several such birds. Feathered folks are great to rid your stock from small pieces of waste wool, but of course you can model your figurine after special kinds of birds, imitating their characteristic shapes and colorful plumage.

~ Have a lot of fun in inventing new felted animals!

INSTRUCTIONS: DAGMAR BINDER

PAGES 34-39

»Bright is my favorite color«

It all started with a colorful tea-cozy that Tanja Gawin liked so much that she started to make extravagant cozies herself – the beginning of a successful feltmaking career

Tanja Gawin, who has been living in Melbourne since the mid-nineties, found the photo of a joyful, multicolored tea-cozy on Facebook ten years ago. A friend had made it, following a tutorial by the knitting book author Loani Priors. These tea cozies are an item of everyday use in Australia, since next to coffee, people down under also enjoy hot tea in the British fashion.

~ Back to Tanja Gawin. The 56-year-old was fascinated by Loani's objects. »They kept inspiring me and showed me many ways to live out my creative ideas.« As she freely admits, she was never one to follow the directions of others. Instead, she designed her own knitted tea cozies. »They were as crazy and brightly colored as I wanted them to be. The only condition was that a tea pot had to fit into them«, she recalls with a chuckle.

From Knitting to Feltmaking

But knitting, with its exact calculations of loops and the like was not for her at all. Years before, she had given it a try, for love of her daughter who was then seven. Luckily, in Loani's books she found a felted tea cozy – and she switched from knitting to felting.

She took her first course with the felt artist Elizabeth Armstrong in Melbourne. »There and in countless other workshops, either online or on site, I soaked up all possible information regarding the various felting techniques like a sponge. I just love to learn something new! This is the essence, the zest of life for me!«, says Tanja Gawin, full of enthusiasm.

Objects with a Distinct Personality

She inherited her artistic strain from her grandmother, who had been a successful ceramic artist. »Up to her 90th birthday she was busy in her studio and never stopped trying out new things. As a kid I often spent my holidays with her. I sat by her side and played around with clay«, the oldest of three sibling tells us. ~ Like her Granny, Tanja Gawin has found her characteristic artistic style. »My felted objects have a personality of their own, you cannot mistake them for somebody else's work«, she claims proudly. Her body of work comprises vessels, sculptures, lamps, bags and jewelry. What most of those have in common is COLOR. »My favorite color is gaudy, to echo Walter Gropius«, she admits with a wink. She has both broadened and restricted her play of colors in the meantime, i.e. for lamps she favors a certain restraint. »Today I use two different color palettes: One as cheerful and gaudy as my heart tells me, the other with muted colors like off-white, grey, black, a little gold, sunflower yellow or a mix between yellow and orange.«

Exploration and Experiment

When Tanja Gawin is busy trying out new felting techniques, she kind of vanishes from the face of the earth for some time. »This is the reason why I rarely work on order. Because when I show up again I don't really feel like going back, repeating what I've done, instead I look forward to my next adventure«, she describes her policy. ~ During the past years, the many online workshops offered were like a »treasure chest of innumerable possibilities« for her, and she took part in many of them. »I felted nearly every spare minute«, she says with a laugh. During the pandemic, for instance, she took part in online courses by Ariane Mariane and Fiona Duthies. »It was with great joy I found free style sewing and learned that you can draw on felt with a thread. My 50-year-old Bernina and I became best friends.« She elaborates further: »During one of those endless lockdowns in Melbourne I made my felted tiles, interpreting Fiona Duthies' work titled ›Creative Sparks‹. Ariane's

workshop inspired me to make the ›Bodacious Beauties‹.

Humorous Creations

Her felting projects clearly benefit from the fact that she graduated as an architect. During her studies she learned all about proportions, colors and 3-D. ~ Even as a student, free and nude drawing were her favorite subjects. »Straight lines and attending to minute detail I didn't like too much. That's the reason why I turned my back on my architect's career pretty soon and further educated myself in the areas of kinesiology and psychotherapy«, she recalls. »For fifteen years now, I am a social worker, but my heart belongs to feltmaking.« ~ And felting indeed takes up more and more space in her life, literally so in her tiny house in Melbourne. Starting from the edge of the kitchen table, her felt works have conquered the whole dining room in the meantime. The meals are served on the coffee table. Her partner takes it in stride and likes to find a new funny or odd creature in the morning. He often is heard laughing aloud. »When my objects make people smile, I have reached my goal«, Tanja Gawin says, beaming.

Tanja Gawin

Tanja Gawin's felt objects were shown in many exhibits in Australia. In the Australian »Felt Magazine« she has published several articles. Currently, the artist is preparing a series of workshops. ~ Please find more information under smileworksfelt.com.au (this site is in the making)
Instagram: @tanjagawinfelt
Facebook: @Smile Works

VALESKA GEHRKE

PAGES 40-43

Felt From the Green Isle

Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann emigrated from Germany to Ireland and has opened her own textile studio there. She makes environmental-friendly clothing and accessories from felt

»We jumped into our new life with great enthusiasm; we wanted to start something new«, Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann

recalls. About 40 years ago, the professional make-up artist moved from Hamburg to Ireland together with her husband. In the midst of nature, surrounded by woods and wild meadows the two bought a 200-year-old cottage in Western Ireland. »At first we renovated the Irish cottage, cultivated a garden and set up a greenhouse«, she tells us.

An Artistic Challenge

For the self-supporting couple it was not easy to get settled in a different culture at first. In everyday life, rural as it was, Astrid Tomrop-Hofman, whose childhood had been full of art and handicraft, longed for a change and an artistic challenge. »So I started painting on silk. I opened my own textile studio in Ireland in 1999, called it ›bombyxMori The Silk Studio‹«, she says proudly. Bombyx mori is Latin and means »silk worm«, a caterpillar that spins silk threads.

Wool and Silk

Sometime later the artist discovered wool as a suitable material, when a friend visited them with a German acquaintance who made her familiar with felting. »Regina Schröder got me hooked on feltmaking in 2002. I was immediately taken with the many possible combinations of wool and silk«, she fondly remembers, adding: »The dialogue with the material and a combination of art and craft in transposing a thousand of years-old technique grips me to this day.« ~ From her friend she learned the felting basics, always trying to improve her lessons. But she wanted more. During several visits to Germany, she ventured into the three year-long adult education program »Fit in Felt« at the Oberrot felting school. She graduated in 2015. Packed with so much knowledge and experience, Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann created her own label »bombyxMori Wearable Art«. »I produce environmental-friendly clothing and accessories like scarves, hats and cuffs. Abstract pieces of art like sculptures and tapestries are always a welcome challenge and definitely a change in my artist career«, the 73-year-old artist, now a grandmother of two, explains.

Embroideries and Applications

She most prefers to work in the wet-felting technique with wool and silk, but also with biological cotton. »I like to use different kinds of wool, such as raw wool, Chubut extra fine (in color or off-white), Merino d'Arles, Mountain Sheep, Stone

and Kap wool, Fin & Icelandic wool, only to mention a few«, she enumerates. Silk and natural fibers (bamboo, linen, ramie, cheesecloth, fine nettle, sequined fabrics and Irish Tweed result in astounding effects in her work.

»The icing on the cake, however, are embroideries and applications«, the artist reveals. Geometric patterns and rich colors characterize her innovative designs. »I just love to play around with silk, recycled materials, paper, bright colors and combinations of different textures.« She is intent on working in a spontaneous way and to get into a creative flow.

Felting is Joy

The emigrant gets her energy from her surroundings and Ireland's beautiful nature. The different kinds of light, music, painting and architecture are her sources of inspiration. »When I don't felt, I like to go to cafés with friends, or to museums, art exhibits. I also greatly value walking my two dogs in those pastoral landscape«, she describes. She finds it essential to stay curious and to welcome new things.

»Of course, one should be in unison with oneself, or at least try to be«, she says with a laugh. Her curiosity was satisfied by taking other courses and workshops. »The stimulating, interesting contact with the renowned felt artists Fiona Duthie and Judit Pocs offered strong support regarding my artistic possibilities. I would like to thank them here and there with all my heart, they gave me so much to take onto my further felting path.«

Her own creations give her power and joy of living and the artistic approach strengthens her self-esteem. »Feltmaking is an immersion, dealing with so many different facets at once gives me a kind of inner peace.«

A Planned Exhibition

For her, it is always very special to be able to show and share her works in public. At the end of last year, her objects were part of two exhibitions in Dublin: »Sculpture in Context« (The National Botanic Garden) and »The Felt Stained Glass Exhibition« in the Pearse Museum.

The latter travelled to Vienna and was presented at the Kallo Gallery. At present, the artist is busy preparing for the annual show »Sculpture in Context« in the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin from September through October 2023. Next to that she will participate at the

»Shorelines Arts Festival« in Portumna, County in September.

The artist

Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann
bombyxmoriwearableart.com

Instagram: [@bombyxmoriwearableart](https://www.instagram.com/bombyxmoriwearableart)
Facebook: [@Bombyx MORI - wearable art facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010794760088](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100010794760088)

VALESKA GEHRKE

PAGES 44-47

Tutorial: Felt Meets Paper

With felt you can make beautiful greeting cards for each occasion. Marlena Strauß shows how it's done in a step-by-step tutorial

The instructions introduced here are for a birthday greeting card. But there are no limits to your own creative impulses! The motif on the card can serve almost any purpose, so the tutorial works fine for Christmas cards, cards announcing someone's passing away, Easter greetings and many other occasions.

MATERIAL

- Merino pre-felt natural off-white
- Merino roving (perfect for using waste material)
- Soap (in my case, only self-boiled sheep milk soap)
- 1 sheet of strong A 4 paper or photo cartons
- Felting equipment: A pair of scissors, a super-fine felting needle, felting mat, gauze, aerosol sprinkler, a bowl of water, roll cutter or paper scissors, maybe a folding device, ruler, hot-melt gun, a pencil

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Cut a small rectangular piece out of the pre-felt (can be square as well). Mine measures 7 to 11 cm. It is used as a »canvas«.

2 Draw on this little piece of »canvas« with Merino wool. Start a putting a finely fanned out piece of light-green Merino wool onto the pre-felt.

3 Then roll very thin strands between your fingertips and add them as threads – which later form the stems. These should be fixated with a few stitches of the felting needle at their proper place.

4 You make the blossoms by rolling some wool fibers into a tiny ball. Put them onto the end of the stems or simply onto the green surface, felt everything on with the needle.

5 The blossoms can come in all shapes and colors, round or longer, and they may differ in size.

6 In order to catch the character of a flower bouquet tie the stems together with a piece of wool in a contrasting color. Lift the lower end of the bouquet slightly and put a woolen band underneath (i.e. wool fibers that had been twisted into a string). Just tie the ends in a knot.

7 Fixate the ribbon around the bouquet with a few stitches of the felting needle and the felted blank is finished.

8 Now wet-felt the image. For that purpose, put a piece of gauze on top of the workpiece and wet it with soapy water.

9 Press the air out of the image with soapy hands. If you move your fingers lightly in circles the fibers will begin to connect.

10 As soon as you think that the single strands won't shift any longer you can take the gauze away and finish felting the image.

11 Rinse the little piece of art and lay it out flat to dry.

12 To make a card out of the sturdy DIN A 4 sheet fold the sheet in half twice in the middle, resulting in four rectangles. Now cut the right lower square off with the scissors or the roll cutter. The square in the upper right (which should hide the backside of the little felt) is folded to the direction of the left upper square. These two parts form the card's cover. Now fold the upper part downside and the card is ready for the finale.

13 We cut a window in the card where the felted image can peep through. Measure the size of the dry little

felt peace and cut the shape out of the front side of the card.

~ **Advice:** I always orient myself on the little depiction (not on the entire felt piece, because the image needs a rim when glued on.

14 Now glue the felted image with the hot-melt gun into the card. In the end, the right upper square (see step 12) will be glued onto the backside of the felt, respectively on the left upper quadrant.

15 The greeting card with individually designed felted flowers is ready to cheer somebody up!

16 If you like you can add a saying or a drawing.

~ My advice: I use an inlay paper which is put into the card. So the card can serve other occasion as well.

Personal Info

The Tyrolese born in 1987 has been working as a freelance felt artist for two years now. Together with her husband and her five-year-old boy she lives in Stanz near Landeck. She occupies the cellar, having set up a workshop there where she makes her felted objects: witches, fairies, vases and spectacle cases, but also modern headbands and daypacks. She sells her objects at markets or at her small self-service shop called »Inser Ladele (Our shop)« in the neighboring village, which she runs with two other freelancing women. For her felt objects she sets great store by Tyrolean Mountain Sheep Wool from the nearby Ötz valley Regensburger Sheep Wool Center.

Instagram: [@kellerhexe.at](#)

Facebook: [@kellerhexe](#)

[kellerhexe.at](#)

INSTRUCTIONS: MARLENA STRAUSS

PAGES 48-51

NO to No Sheep

Elke Heer lives with her family, three sheep and many other animals on a farm at a forest's edge in Lower Franconia

»It simply doesn't work without sheep«, says Elke Heer with a chuckle when she is looking at Flora, Frieda and Fine. The three Coburg Fox Sheep are kept mainly for landscaping by the 61-year-old lady,

but also for their beautiful wool and simply because she likes the animals a lot.

Her First Sheep

In 1994, Elke Heer joined a friend of hers who already kept sheep at a spinning course, where the wool of those sheep was dyed. »I thought this was great, so I went and got four sheep of my own from this friend. The Skudde completed the family zoo, already consisting of two horses and two goats«, Elke Heer recalls. Together with her husband she lives on a farm in the midst of nature in the Steiger Forest.

~ But this was only the beginning. In the course of the years, dairy sheep and Gotland Pelt Sheep were added to the flock, which grew to a total of 15 sheep including the lambs. »I kept this flock for about 15 years. I milked the goats and dairy sheep and made cheese from the milk«, Elke Heer tells us.

~ Over time, the animal and nature lover found it increasingly difficult to give away the lambs to be slaughtered. She found hardly enough time to process the wool. Therefore, Elke Heer sold first the ram and one by one she made the flock smaller. Her experience as a sheep breeder is forever dear to her: »Sheep husbandry gave me a wonderful time. I loved especially raising the lambs and keeping night watch before and after the ewes gave birth, so many interesting things happened that enriched my life.«

A Frugal Breed

For a couple of years, she managed without sheep, but then the three Coburg Fox Sheep found a new home at the farm. »This is a local country sheep breed which adapts well to this special environment. Our summers here are warm, the grass not really lush and the Coburg Fox are frugal animals to begin with«, she explains, while the sheep graze next to her on their 3 hectares pasture. »At birth, the lambs are of a reddish brown. The wool gets lighter after a while, only the head and legs keep their original color«, the 61-year-old describes. »Moreover, they yield a beautiful fleece«, she adds enthusiastically.

Using her own wool

The shearing of her sheep is done by a professional shearer who comes to the farm once a year. The greater part of the wool is carded. »I mainly spin the carded wool. It is not really suitable for felting as it is. I felt it only in combination with

other sheep wool. Whatever I can't use goes straight into my garden. There, sheep wool works as a valuable fertilizer and is great for mulching«, Elke Heer knows. Via her own sheep breeding she discovered feltmaking and graduated from the Felting School in Oberrot after three years of »Fit in Felt« education in 2022. She describes her creative output as follows: »The focus of my work lies in items of everyday use, like cushions, carpets, bags and lamps, mainly from self-dyed wool. In the meantime, I have grown very fond of nuno felting as well.«

A Help with the Stable Chores

In summer she loves to felt out in the open at a big felting table under a beautiful willow tree which is directly behind the sheep pen. But only after her work is done. The three sheep have to be cared for: Muck out the pen, feed them, carry water and bring them to the paddock. »Then comes shearing, worm cures and grooming, like paring their hoofs. The pastures have to be fenced in and maintenance is time-consuming. But I have some help in the pen at least, my Australian Shepherd Luna comes with me each morning and evening.« Apart from Luna and the three sheep Elke Heer keeps two cats, chicken and bees on her idyllic farm. At this inspiring place she would like to pass on her experience. So she plans to make a small garden for plant dyes and prepares for courses where she can share her passion for wool, natural dyes and felting with others.

Elke Heer

[naturfilz.com](#)

Instagram: [@naturfilz](#)

New Serial: »The World of Sheep«

In a new serial we introduce sheep keepers and shepherds and their flocks. Prominent themes are wool, feed, grooming and breeding.

VALESKA GEHRKE

This is Quality Proven

Angela Teuchert and Ulrike Stengele wanted to make sure: They had their felt works examined independently and received the seal of quality »Geprüfte Qualität – Handgefertigter Filz« by the Filz Netzwerk. They describe the objects that were scrutinized in the filzfun

After graduating from the three-year-long education program »Fit in Felt« at the Wollknoll company in Oberrot I (Ulrike Stengele is reporting here) the Filznetzwerk allowed me an extension by a neutral certification of my works. I wanted to meet the challenge. Experts who don't know me and don't know my way of working would closely examine by objects and further elaborations. The certificate gives eventual clients reassurance that they have bought an item of superior quality.

Nuno: A Delicate, Light Scarf

I cut the silk chiffon in parts, covered them thinly with Austral-Fleece and connected the spaces in between with Wensleydale roving. To mark the transitions, I laid on wicker yarn for lines. The outer edges are neatened with Gotland roving in the break-over. It is a play between light and dark, whereby the refracted light in the Wensleydale waves enhances the overall lightness of the scarf.

Hollow Vessels:

An Everyday Bag with Strings

This light bag for all purposes is felted as a hollow vessel with pre-felted batches. The colors match the primary color and are partially defined by lines. Several thin strings serve as a strap.

Surface:

See what's Beautiful and Useful

An even surface was laid out in a delicate color gradient and covered with a pattern. For the pattern I cut the untreated edges of the surface away, turned the workpiece and re-arranged them on the front side. I wanted to draw attention to all what's hidden in the obvious. These strips were again worked on. I made trivets out of these surfaces; the cutting edges gave a nice effect.

Individual Keepsakes

This is Angela Teuchert's turn: In the summer of 2020 I graduated from the

felting school in Oberrot as a felting designer. During the three years of training, it became more and more important for me to make high-quality felt, i.e. it should be flawlessly executed and the artistic, individual objects should relate to the person ordering in terms of a special meaning. My work ethics left the impersonal, clinical felt ware behind which had been produced for the walk-in customers on handicraft markets.

☞ I wanted to enhance this artistic way with the certificate »Qualität im Filz (Quality in Felt)«. My future clients should be in the position to order well-made products. This is all the more important if clients want to have a very personal, emotionally fraught keepsake. I make handbags, warming bottles and cushions with often lifelike portraits of four-legged friends which have passed away.

A »painted« portrait of a dog

One example is the seat cushion I made as for the training module »surface felt«, bearing an image of a much-loved dog. The portrait was laid on sturdy Mountain Sheep wool and was »painted on« with several kinds of wool, fibers and some hair of the dog itself.

☞ At the task »Hollow vessels« I followed my interest for exciting surface structures. I made a handbag with a flap in a reptile-scale look in the slab technique.

☞ I made a table runner for module »Nuno felt«; the inspiration was a poem by Nazim Hikmets: »Living like a tree, single and free, yet brotherly like a forest, this is our heart's desire.« The poem describes a good way to live relations and so I depicted my family as a stylized forest. The poem was applied in the Potch technique.

The Voluntary Quality Assurance of the Filz Netzwerk e.V.

Felt is a multi-talented material, my favorite. And it is a lot more than pure fun. Sometimes, it is difficult to make it clear to lay people that felt and felt art are sturdy, resilient and sustainable, none of which is a mere side effect.

☞ It's good then to just say: »I am entitled to the Quality Assurance Seal from the Filznetzwerk association.« To the question: »Such a thing exists?« I say: »Yes!« Because: »The associations are committed to foster the felt handicraft«, as it says in the Filznetzwerk statutes. It's obvious that the Filznetzwerk aims for high quality felted items. Since 2011 now it offers a voluntary quality assurance.

Feedback and Recognition

As it says on their website: »It is in the nature of handicrafts that feltmakers work alone in their studios. The wish to hold their work in esteem, to get assistance such as overall feedback has increasingly become an issue. When participating in the voluntary quality assurance process, the manual felters get exactly the feedback they need to further promote their produce and craft skills.«
☞ But actually this is much more than a feedback, it spells recognition for your work and bears evidence to the quality. Those who volunteer for the certifying process proudly receive their certificate, the tags and the logo they received online.

The Course and Criteria of the Examination

The produce is examined by three associates ordered by the managing board whose products have undergone the test already. The objects are handed in anonymously, the quality and craft is scrutinized and when all requirements are met, the seal of quality is granted.
☞ Yet, what exactly are the criteria? You have to hand in a surface felt piece, a hollow felted vessel and a nuno felt sample. More exact information please find under www.filznetzwerk.de at the heading Qualität im Filz (Quality in Felt).

Apply now!

Have I made you curious or have you pondered for a while to apply? Just go ahead! The next date is June 23rd 2023. You don't have to be a member of the Filznetzwerk, if you aren't, the certificate is still open for you at a certain fee.

Infos and Application

<https://filznetzwerk.de/freiwillige-qualitaetsicherung>

The Artists

Ulrike Stengele
ulrikestengele.de
Angela Teuchert
angela-angefilzt.de

ULRIKE STENGELE, ANGELA TEUCHERT,
MEIKE RASSBACH

»(Un)Perfected 10«

The felt artists Silke Koch and Susanne Hantzsch have founded an international, inspiring online felting group. From 10 grams of wool each the group members conjure a great variation of felted objects

»The deepest sense of community comes by felting together«. This Albert Schweitzer quote, albeit a little altered, best describes the group called »Perfect 10«. Nine advanced felters meet on a regular basis and talk shop. What is so special about that? It is an international group meeting online in video conferences.

Exchange with Like-Minded People

It was founded in 2022, the original initiative came from Susanne Hantzsch and Silke Koch from Germany. Both nurture and cherish an international exchange with like-minded artists. The members know each other personally or from other online courses. All have been felting for a long time and are always on the lookout to perfect their own style and the implementation of technical subtleties. The members are: Petra Schmidt from Germany, Susanne Weber and Birgit Aigenbauer from Austria, Kelly Driscoll from both the US and Austria, Astrid Tomrop-Hofmann from Ireland, Kim van Waardenburg and Henny van Tussenbroek from The Netherlands.

Experiments with 10 g of Wool

Why is the group called the »(Un)Perfected 10«? Susanne Hantzsch, our creative head, suggested that we work with only 10 g of wool. At each meeting, a challenge is planned for the next, the limited wool amount always being 10 g to felt something interesting. We all like to experiment, it isn't about a perfect result at all. We meet online about every two months and we present our objects. The web cams help that we can see the objects clearly. It's not the finished object that counts: We explain the way the object was made, from the first idea or sketch, how we puzzled over the resist, the choice of wool and the finishing. We also talk about felting courses and other news from the scene and we show each other all the other new things we have made in the meantime. We think about each new task intuitively and always as a group. Our first subject was »Holiday Feeling« and we felted keepsakes in restrained, monochrome colors. Each object told a personal history.

True Challenges!

Then we chose colors we don't like or those we have but hardly ever use. This wasn't as easy as it sounds. Then we repeated the steps with the same resist but with colors we are fond of. But this felting project wasn't over yet! Susanne encouraged cutting the felt object we had struggled for so hard. Said and done – and the results were astounding! The objects seemed entirely new and different, with a certain je ne sais quoi that they hadn't had before.

Creative »Travelling« Objects

For another meeting, we made a pre-felt in our favorite colors and sent it to another group member. She in turn integrated the pre-felt in a new object and sent it back to the former member. This idea of co-operative work will be pursued.

~ Another challenge was to felt a vessel with a lid made of red wool. Here it became quite obvious that each group member was sure of her own style and that both the artistic and technical advancement was considerable.

Susanne Hantzsch

thefeltsideoflife.de

Instagram: *@shantzsch_thefeltsideoflife*

Silke Koch

filzsi.com

Instagram: *@silke_koch_feltartist*

SUSANNE HANTZSCH, SILKE KOCH

Feltmaking With Bedouins

Ruth Bucci-Baumer taught Bedouin families in Egypt how they can use local wool. In the filzfun she reports on her travel experiences

These very poor families live in the Sinai Desert. They lack almost everything. The children are mostly out in the streets and the women stay in the houses. But all would like very much to work and to make some money. It is hard to get supplies in this part of the world and if there were any, they would be far too expensive for the Bedouins. But almost every family owns sheep and goats, some have camels.

Through the Habiba Organic Farm Organization I learned that it would be worthwhile if the Bedouin children and women could turn the wool of their sheep into produce. I was delighted to meet that challenge in the cold winter. For many years now, I had been gathering experiences in orphanages in Thailand during the winter months.

Processing Their Own Wool Supply

But here everything was different. Only local wool was to be used, but this was neither cleaned nor carded. There was no warm water to be had. Everything turned out too difficult. The first tries at felting were, well, tough. Hand carding tools are not sold in Egypt and importing them is quite an ordeal.

~ The only thing to do was to bring along everything from home, so I packed colored wool from Germany and a hand carding tool in my suitcase were

Other Obstacles

I had to wash the sheep wool first, also using a hand brush to get rid of all the dirt. Soon I had found a young Bedouin who loved carding the wool. At school as well all children were eager to try it, but their enthusiasm waned quickly. But no wool, no bag – yet every girl wanted one. After one and a half week of intensive search, my acquaintance here found suitable wool and the feltmaking started to be more fun after all. Many, many soap stones were made. But the making of the bags sure dragged along.

Enthusiastic Feltmakers

I was allowed to visit some Bedouin families and to felt with them. Some mothers with elder daughters were much taken by the craft. We found an even better quality of wool and the products thanked us for it. All came out well due to these women's joy and commitment, and the children never wanted to stop at all. They kept calling: »Rut, Rut!« which made my head buzz after two or three hours.

A Meeting of Different Mentalities

During my stay, the wife of the owner of the Habiba Organization, an Italian lady, was always more than helpful – be it concerning the language spoken or in any other way. I had no idea of Arabic! In this organization I met many young people from all over the world interested in Permaculture, who often worked as volunteers there for a long

time. It is great to live and work with so many different mentalities. I held a workshop also for these young and chipper people.

☞ For the future, I wish we might find a way to send these Bedouin families a turnable hand carding machine.

Ruth Bucci-Baumer

Facebook: @Ruth Bucci Baumer

Instagram: @rutbu49

Organization Habiba Organic Farm
habibacommunity.com

RUTH BUCCI-BAUMER

PAGES 62-63

Uigur Felting

Mari Nagy and István Vidák report on the Uigur felting craft in Western China

We were reluctant for a long time to write this short report, the reason being that most people are unfamiliar with the situation in Western China. Experts certainly know more, but for the past 30 years it has been almost impossible to travel to the land of the Uigurs.

☞ Nonetheless, over the course of many years, we did have some contact with Uigur felting. Sonja Katz, our dear Swiss felting friend had visited China in the early 1980ies and bought an Uigur felt blanket there. We were able to scrutinize it in her studio in Schaffhausen. The blanket is 160 x 100 cm and weighs 2.5 kilos. The colors comprise white, a fiery red, pink, sand yellow and a kind of purplish blue on a dark-brown base. The patterns show a wolf's tooth and a ram's horn, always differently arranged. The blanket is separated in several areas. In the middle is a pattern called an eye. On the left and the right side is a triangle which serves as a lucky charm.

Uigur Felt Blankets

Paris boasts of a lot of museums with a wealth of collections. From all these, the Musée de l'Homme was the most important one to us for decades. Its successor today is the Musée du quai Branly. In a permanent exhibit we saw Uigur felt blankets for the second time. A part of this exhibit was dismantled and never again restored. As far as we know, the blanket were moth-ridden. In that

small exhibition room we could see a three-minute film on how they were made in a rural workshop.

☞ The first sequence showed a flock, the shearing of the sheep, the laying out and rolling of wool, followed by rolling it with human feet. The film was made by Kevin Kling in the 1980ies.

☞ Many years later, around 2010, we met the orientalist Lajos Máthé, who had visited the province Xinjiang, where the Uigurs live, several times. He had bought some publications about their felt art, for example prayer rugs which we perused.

☞ Again years have passed. In 2018, Aserbajdschan's famous carpet museum organized an international felters' meeting. Scientists, artists and experts from East and West were present. Here we heard a lecture by Christine Martens, who is based in the US. She had spent two months of field work in Western China. Unfortunately, we can only use one of her photographs. We echo her thoughts laid down in the publication »Risala« which sheds light on the life circumstances of Uigur felt masters.

About the Uigur People

Eastern Turkestan, also known as the Uigur Republic of Xinjiang, is situated at the northwestern tip of today's China. It is mostly populated by the Turk-speaking Uigurs and some other, smaller people. This region is full of windswept deserts, high mountains and rich, irrigated estates. It borders several countries: Mongola, Russia, Kazhakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, India, Kashmir and Tibet. Some Uigurs emigrated as shepherds, others settled down and cultivated the land. Elements of Manichean, Buddhist and Islamic faith form their religion and rule their everyday life. Also felting is part of their cultural history.

Felting Information

Each week there still is a big animal fair in Kashgar, where farmers and shepherds bring their sheep. The latter are brought to the desert mainly for the mountain farmers. As per the felting book author Hans Bider, there are many kinds of different sheep breeds kept in this region.

☞ Shearing takes place in spring and fall, and after shearing the felting starts. In former times, the wool was loosened up with a kind of bow, which is called Dikan or Jagatal here, but nowadays all you see is carding machines.

Laying out the Patterns on Reed Mats

The wool was spread on a reed mat, called Tunkitan locally; it is 2 x 5 meters long. First the contours of the patterns are drawn, then filled up with colored wool. In a next step, everything was covered with off-white wool.

☞ Laying out was done by two or three people. They used a wooden fork for that purpose, then they sprayed the workpiece with water, rolled it up, tied it together and rolled it anew with their feet.

☞ Over time, the use of a felt kneading machine became widespread. Up to the 20th century, the wool was plant-dyed, but today only chemical colors are in use.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK

PAGES 64-65

Always Well Dressed

A blouse, a tunic, a sweater or basic shirts – the bestselling author Sabine Schmidt shows how such favorite tops are sewn in her book »Näh doch einfach! Meine Lieblings-Oberteile nähen (Simply start sewing my favorite tops)« with the help of many patterns. For each model, you find picture instructions and videos. Those refined clothes in sizes 32 to 60 can be combined in many variations and for whichever occasion. The detailed instructions are suitable for rookie seamstresses and offer a lot of room for one's own creative notions.

Bewitching Motifs in Cross Stitch

The illustrator Daniela Drescher takes us into a fairy world with her book »Liebevolle Stickereien nach Motiven von Daniela Drescher (Endearing Embroidery after motifs by Daniela Drescher)«. The fanciful motifs – figurines, flowers and animals – are finely cross-stitched and adapted to modern times. The photographer Viktoria Egert set the embroideries lovingly in scene. Short videos and mini-tutorials invite you to a relaxed hour of stitching. Even beginners should have no problems embroidering the arresting motifs.

Sweet Joy of Crocheting

The third volume of the crocheting book series Pica-Pau of the gifted designer Yan Schenkel is out! The Argentinian artist is famous for her crocheted animal figurines.

~ From Roberto Teckel to Alberto Seagull and Amalia Giraffe – a total of 20 funny crocheted animals would like you to take over. Brief introductory stories turn odd figurines into individual characters, joy is guaranteed. Expressive details, such as caps, scarves or tiny jackets support the figurines' individual characteristics. The step-by-step instructions are accompanied by photographs and not only professionals, but also beginners can profit from the basics expounded.

Make Your Own Textile Objects

The British textile artist Alice Fox shows how to make beautiful objects from plant parts you can grow yourself or collect in nature in her new book »Wilde Fasern (Wild Fibers)«. There are vessels made of wild plants, objects from sewed-together leaves or stones wrapped up in strings – the found objects are given new life by alienating them with various textile techniques. The author exceeds in combining creative work and the change within the natural cycles of nature and its places. Alice Fox informs on cultivating, harvesting and processing of linseed and nettles from the garden and she enlightens us concerning the processing of fibers from different plants: from daffodils over blackberries onto rhubarb.

Papier trifft Faden (Paper Meets Thread)

In her book, Anka Brüggemann shows how paper is embroidered on with blazing colors or sewn together. The author presents her latest collection of upcycling books. She is intent on the variety of the materials and describes the most important stitches. The book offers 25 projects, each with its own level of difficulty, which should result in charming paper objects with surprising embroidered motifs: wrapping paper for your next present, paper bags or bookmarks with a monogram, but also interior decorating objects like small tapestries or toys like paper houses or animals. The detailed step-by-step tutorials are easy to follow. Those who do not want to stick (only) to the templates can follow up on their own ideas anytime – depending on the text or illustration on a page.

This is a supplement of the magazine
»filzfun« Issue #79 - Summer 2023
ISSN 2199-7314 · ZKZ 77098

publisher: mk Medienmanufaktur GmbH
Döllgaststraße 5 · 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
Wollkarderei 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 fall issue will be published on August 31st, 2023
Editorial deadline: June 14th, 2023
