

filzfun – The English Supplement

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Dear Readers,

when the morning fog dances over the fields and the enticing smell of dry leaves fills the air, the most beautiful time of the year begins for us creatives: the fall. A season that invites you to become still, to work creatively and to retreat into your work room in order to connect with fibers, forms and colors.

This issue celebrates the magic of connecting in all its facets – artistically, culturally and, naturally between people. This becomes plain in our portrait of the German-French artist Ariane Mariane, whose life and art merge seamlessly – she lives what she felts and she felts what she lives. (P. 28) Also Jill Harrison from Scotland connects nature watching with textile poetics. (P. 42) The Dutch artist Ellen Bakker, on the other hand, combines digital patterns with silk and wool to make highly individual art, while Margot van Leeuwen from the Dutch «Flower Bulb Land» makes impressive tapestries (P. 38)

Inner growth and textile design can complement one another, as Katrin Bigl shows as of page 54. She unites

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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systemic coaching and feltmaking as an inspiring healing concept. Current events are also an issue: The arts and crafts market «Wool Street» in South Tyrol (Trento Alto Adige) opens its doors in October of this year.

You're going to find gleanings from the regional meeting Südhessen, where hollow vessels were made, following Natasha Smart's felting instructions, and the 10th regional OWL meeting, where the participants felted really cute turtles- ample proof of the felting community's versatility. A special milestone was the opening of the so-called Feltmaking House on the premises of Sabine Reichert-Kassube's romantic Werenzia farm, a fine meeting place for artistic work and exchange. (P. 12)

Our instructions offer creative impulses for the fall: for example, a lovely rainbow fairy and a funny hand puppet. Regarding fixating techniques, please find Margot Röhm's report of the use of Shellac in the felting craft.

As of page 50, Ilona Riehle explains the letter resist technique. We present Dörte Schlüter's studioshop in the Munster Land (p. 56) and we learn about the beautifully embroidered cradle covers of the Kaitag in Dagestan (p. 60) Immerse yourself in our fall issue, full of inspiration, ideas and stories that connect.

Have fun reading!
Your *filzfun*-Team

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redaktion@filzfun.de

The winter issue will be published on November 29th, 2025
Editorial deadline: September 9th, 2025

Workshop «Kyrgyz Shirdak Techniques in Focus»

In this course, Asel Sapakowa and Sabine Reichert-Kassube dedicate themselves to a traditional, Central Asian textile art, the Shyrdak, from November 14th to 16th. 25. Asel Spakova is a textile master in the fourth generation with a small manufacturing plant. Sabine Reichert-Kassube has been working as a felt artist for 25 years and offers many feltmaking workshops – among other places at the Werenzhof in the South of Brandenburg. The students can make cushion-size Shyrdak carpets, or small bags. Two sturdy plates are made with different color gradients. These will be cut after a given pattern and then newly assembled. These so-called «twins» are sutured, padded with a second felted layer, quilted and embroidered with a cord. Next to the traditional, symmetrical designs, free patterning can be chosen. In Kyrgyzstan, symbols play a crucial role in the textile folk art. These can be plant or animal symbols, like the tree, the ram's horn or the wings of an eagle, or symbols of life, like family, community and love. Of course, during the course you will learn a lot about Kyrgyzstan, you will see photographs of their travels and there will also be a choice of Kyrgyz food.
www.arachne-textilkunst.de
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«C_THE_UNSEEN» Felters' Meeting 2026 in Chemnitz

The filznetzwerk e. V. invites all interested parties to the next Filzbegegnung (Felters' Meeting) – right in the heart of the Cultural Capital of Europe 2025. Under the motto «C_THE_UNSEEN_Ungesehenes wird sichtbar (Invisible Becomes Visible)» there will be a lot of feltmaking, exchanging, discovering and celebrating in Chemnitz from February 19th to 22nd 2026. New perspectives are the goal, since sometimes the essential is hidden. The felting encounter will encourage the audience to have a closer look at things hitherto unseen: quiet

ideas, delicate structures, to listen to unheard things. In workshops, during freestyle felting, city walks and in discussions we will search for traces: What is it that shows in felt when we give room to the invisible? Meeting point and studio is the Youth Hostel Chemnitz, a bright and generous place in the middle of the city. The felting encounter is meant for all who like to engage in materials, community work and new ideas and perspectives. A varied program is on schedule. You can apply as of October 2025.
filznetzwerk.de

Kunst & Design Markt (Art and Design Market) in Munich

From November 29th and 30th 2025, the intriguing Kunst & Design Markt takes place for the 12th time in Munich. Here you can see the drive behind small art labels. At the Design Market in Munich, which is held in the MVG museum, you cannot only watch and buy, but greatly enjoy – between street cars with street food that melts on your tongue, and workshop of brimming-over inventive ideas. At this industrial site, highly motivated labels, designers and artists show their sustainable art objects, all with sophistication, humor and great charm. The Kunst & Design Markt is no ordinary sales platform - Here you can learn the history and stories behind the products.
kunst-designmarkt.at

Video-Tutorial «Meeresmuschel (Sea Shell)»

The felt artist Ilona Riehle would like to guide you into the world of the multi-part resist technique and sculptural felt forms in her new video tutorial «Meeresmuschel (Sea Shell)». The center is a Spiny Cockle, a sea creature with many interesting details. It is the subject matter of a project that unites felting expertise with free design. Starting with the choice of materials, the making and using of several resists, feltmaking, the integration of the spines and the finishing: This video tutorial is ideal for all who would like to

discover 3-D forms and to enhance their feltmaking knowledge.
ilorie.de

D I Y Light Objects and Surfaces

In this felting course at Hof Kornrade in Halsbrücke, Saxonia, that will be held on October 26th it's all about making window decorations, storm lamps, lamps and other light objects as well as decorative elements for chains of lights. By using Wensleydale- and Blue-Faced-Leicester-Sheep wool, fascinating transparent and delicate surface structures are made. The students can try out different felting techniques, i.e. gossamer felt, surface areas and the making of hollow bodies. The wool is laid out in very thin layers. For decoration and design purposes, other materials and fibers can be used, such as hemp, linen, panicles of leaves, curls, silk fibers and fabrics. Wensleydale Sheep wool with its special sheen works well as a decorative element on Merino wool. Glasses for storm lamps will be provided, but please bring your own lampshades.
Date: 26th of October 2025, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Lunch break 1 hr.)
hofkornrade.de

10 Years «Wool Street» in South Tyrol

In the Passeier Valley in South Tyrol (Trento Alto-Adige) lies the small village St. Leonhard. Every autumn, the Kohlstatt Street turns into a vibrant meeting place for wool enthusiasts. On October 11th 2025 the so-called «Wool Street», an arts and crafts market with a special flair, celebrates its tenth anniversary. This «Wool Street» is a veritable declaration of love for sheep, their wool and the dedicated people who create art objects from it. Sonia Steger takes us for a first stroll.

On the street into the Passeier valley with its many sharp turns, I let my eyes roam through the bus window: first over fruit plants, mountain slopes in autumnal colors, meadows and alternating forests,

small hamlets and the small towns Riffian, Kuens and St. Martin. Tourist agencies would describe the landscape as «wildly romantic». My destination is St. Leonhard, because a friend had highly recommended the «Wool Street» there, an arts and crafts fair that is said to be really special. I get off the bus and amble toward Kohlstatt street where the market takes place. It is a perfect location, as I will later learn. In the olden days, there used to flow a brook through, which has been led underground in the meantime. Here the local craftspeople used to work, using the water power to run mills and machines: millers, bakers, blacksmiths and wheel makers.

~ In 1948, Alois Haller founded the wool spinners Haller that is now known under the name of Wollmanufaktur Spinnradl. In the front of the workshop I meet Andrea Haller, the daughter of the manufacturing plant's senior partner and the initiator of the fair, Franz Haller. Together with the members of the South Tyrolean Felt and Wool Association and the Sheep Breeders' Guild, he has been organizing the market for nine years now.

History of the «Wool Street»

«My father loves to process wool, so you can call him a dyed in the wool craftsman. Ever since his youth he has taken part in fairs and markets. It was his wish to gather wool enthusiasts; to create a place and an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and goods», Andrea Haller tells us. There are other purposes, too: «We want to increase the appreciation for sheep and their wool, and we also pursue a respectful handling of nature and an overall sustainability.» These ideas developed into an attractive and versatile arts and crafts event. In the meantime, up to 40 different parties exhibit their produce, mostly from South Tyrol but also from farther away. I am going to see this now.

~ It is no less than a feast for the eye – that's how I come to think of it. Strolling along the booths, I find knitwear, felted objects, woven items, sewn clothing, house slippers and hats in classical and modern design. Jewelry and bags, ceramics and home decorations. One can see many craftspeople actually working while they chat with the visitors.

Participatory Events

Now I take a look inside the yurt, where an audience of mainly children follows Francesca Premier's enticing performance: a picture-book movie,

accompanied by accordion music. For boys and girls alike, there are many participatory events, such as felting workshops. This year on schedule is a puppet theatre, the Teatro del Bidone, with their piece «The Wolf and Hunger (Il lupo e la fame)» with hand-felted puppets. Looking around and admiring has made me hungry. At the booth of the Sheep Breeders Guild there are delicious sheep meat specialties to be had.

~ I enjoy the «Schöpserne», a traditional lamb stew. At other stands, you can buy regional food, cheese and milk products, Speck and sausages. A booth with upcycled furniture catches my eye. At a closer look, the concept becomes clear: there is always wool involved, e.g. as an upholstery fabric for armchairs or lampshades. Nearby, a wood turner shows his spinning wheels and other wooden objects. Franz Haller is standing at his big carding machine that he has brought out in the open. His plan is: «For the 10th anniversary of the Wool Street I would like to show the old ring-spinning machine from the 1950ies. A huge hunk indeed, may this work!»

The collective Perma Culture Communal Garden Guggenberg/Ulten Valley sells herbs, vegetables and wool mulch materials. One member tells me that wool is a great long-time fertilizer, it keeps off certain pests and protects the vegetable plants. I am inundated with all these impressions. Once I reach the wooden fence behind which a small flock is grazing, I relax just by watching those docile animals feed. This is the perfect end of my visit, for sheep are the core of everything here – this initiative is a homage, or better, a declaration of love.

SONJA STEGER

Further information

The «Wool Street» in St. Leonhard / Passeier takes place on October 11th 2025 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the occasion of its 10th anniversary, there will be an exhibit titled «Textile Crafts» with about 30 works of art and artfully designed objects by South Tyrolean artists and craftspeople held at the St. Leonhard clubhouse in Passeier. All information at a glance under wollstrasse.it.

PAGES 12-15

Opening of the New Felting House at the Werenzia Farm

Sabine Reichert-Kassube's Werenzia Farm in the south of Brandenburg is a very special place: vibrant and restful, open and inviting. A place where people can meet, learn from each other and find peace – in short, a felting and nature oasis for the soul. Recently, the main farm house was opened.

The opening celebration of the new feltmaking house took place in May 2025 within the frame of Open Workshops Brandenburg. Around 80 people – among them many felters from near and far – attended. Accompanied by merry violin sounds and drums there was dancing, laughter and joy. Representatives from the village and some cultural institutions showed appreciation «for what has grown here.»

~ The Thursday Felting Group presented their latest works in a show called «Filzen macht glücklich (Felting Causes Happiness)». With the installation «Vom Überfluss zur Ordnung (From Abundance to Order)» the visitors were presented with a composition consisting of wool staples and fabrics which symbolized life's cornucopia, plus felted vessels and containers that house that abundance and give it meaning and shape.

In Love with a Farm in Ruins

It is a silent dialogue with the world when Sabine Reichert-Kassube's hands render wool alive. In the circles, spirals and mosaics she creates the natural flow is mirrored – not only in art but also in the daily life at her workshop farm. For more than 30 years, she has been working as a felt artist, more than 20 years she spent in Berlin. Six years ago, she fell for a dilapidated farm building between Berlin and Dresden – a ruin, but with a soul, as soon became clear.

~ In several construction phases, in the midst of elders, willows, frogs and ducks, a lively meeting place took shape. Sabine Reichert-Kassube likes to pass on her skills and opens doors into a world where working with your hands gains importance once more. Her courses and workshops invite all interested parties to get to know the interplay of water, wool and warmth, the symbolism involved and an almost forgotten world of silence

and concentration. Whoever comes here seeks a break from every day's hustle and bustle and finds inspiration in simplicity. Between wool baskets, felting tables, willows and herbs perfuming the air, ducks run, cats tiptoe in through the open doors and frogs croak in the pond.

☞ There was an initial fear that the trip to rural South Brandenburg would be too far for course participants, but they came to stay. From the very beginning, the place had great charm. Since 2020, the felt artist has regularly been hosting felt courses. She lets each group take part in the wonder of felting, surrounded by a pastoral landscape that enhances interpretations and concentration.

From Cowshed to Workshop – the New Felt House

It was a lot of work. Supported by friends, family, neighbors and dedicated craftspeople, the former cowshed was made into a workshop, the sheep pen into a bathroom, the attic was built into living quarters for guests. A garden was made, complete with a pond, willow hut and a magic mountain, lovingly connecting nature, art and everyday life.

☞ The former house had been deserted for decades and was badly damaged. It was built anew and is now a modern felt house. With wood, clay, chalk colors, old stones and colorful mosaics an exciting mixture between old and new materialized. After a year of restoring and building, the felting studio was moved into the new house – the new centerpiece of the Werenzia Farm – in November 2024. Since then, the house is full of creative life with its many felting courses, overnight stays and the making of unique felt objects, while the remaining work in and outside the house is still in progress.

Rooms for Art, Peace and Community

Next to the big studio with a felting and dyeing «kitchen», the new house has a small shop for unique felt art: wearable, like caps, jackets, dresses, vests and pieces of cloth, but also house decorating objects and vessels. In need of a break, you will find a big, cozy kitchen, the «Duck Room» is next to the felting table, in the «Frieda Room» two guests can stay. There is more accommodation in the main house and in the neighborhood.

☞ Apart from her Reichert-Kassube's courses for making lace felt, clothing and jewelry, the premises can be used for other projects. For the fall and winter of

2025 and 2026 there will be workshops held by international lecturers, among them Asel Sapakova from Kyrgyzstan, Annemie Koenen from The Netherlands, Renata Sichan from South Tyrol (shoes) and Helene Weinold (passement buttons).

Art Made from Felt, Stones and Everyday Life

The intense building phase of her art farm reflects on Sabine's felt art. She made colorful mosaics on the walls and floors – and simultaneously, her mosaic dresses were designed on her felting table. The contrast of grey cement and a flowering garden inspired her series «Rotklee und Beton (Red Clover and Concrete)», the many stones that had been dug out of the earth came back in the show called «Magie der Steine (The Magic of Stones)».

☞ At the Werenzia Farm nature, art, craft and communal life meet in a touching way. Those who come here are not only going to learn new techniques, but will be inspired by simplicity at a place that clearly shows what can be achieved when vision, dedication and handiwork unite.

LARA PYTER

Sabine Reichert-Kassube

For more than 25 years, Sabine Reichert-Kassube has been working as a felt artist and now she offers a substantial course range at the Werenzia Farm south of Berlin and at other places. The artist specializes in clothing matters and the making of lace felt.

spitzenfilz.de

PAGES 16-17

A Day of Felting Experiments

Tanja Kahl (from the studio «Filzkunst» and cashier of the Filznetzwerk e.V.) and Steph Selke (from the studio «Die Filzerei» in Heidelberg) sent out invitations for the Südhessen Regional Meeting in May 25. It took place in Tanja Kahl's cozy studio in the Gornheim Valley in the Oden Forest. The filzfun winter issue 2025 served as an inspirational source: Together the participants felted hollow containers over a ball with reverse patterning, a tutorial designed by Natasha Smart.

The eight felters were curious, they tested and tried out which advantages this kind of technique might have. The special feature of Natasha Smart's technique, next to directly felting over a three-dimensional body, is the way of laying out the patterning. It begins with laying out the wool threads that form the pattern, which are then covered with the wool destined for the container. At the end, after felting is finished, the whole work piece is turned around. After laying out the wool threads and the wool, the whole ball is wrapped up and then tossed around, hitting the edge of the bowl or jumping right across the table.

Different Approaches

A more detailed instruction you can find in several English books by Natasha Smart. What was remarkable: Despite the fact that a detailed instruction was available, the eight group members chose a different approach each. Claudia Hecker had already taken the trouble to make a test pattern with the dimensions stated in the book in advance. Another member decided to lay out less wool than indicated, different wool fibers were used in different grades of fineness as well as different-sized balls. The wool was moistened in one instance, in the next dry. Diverse materials were used to fix the fibers around the ball and the air was pressed out with or without foil. The felting-on differed often. All that happened before Smart's instructions finally took hold.

☞ In the end, after minor mishaps, there were only wonderfully successful results: Satchels, outer pots and even a hat! The day spent together offered many new impulses. Our sincere thanks go out to Tanja Kahl, who put her workshop at our disposal again. One thing, however, took a little of the enthusiasm away: Not all participants were fully convinced by the technique. Therefore, some of the eight participants of this regional meeting has her personal advice for interested parties.

Participants' Voices

Karin Beller was the only one who dared to make a basket with handles for starters: «I made a small basket over a 19-cm ball. I used fine Merino fleece, each layer in a different color. This made it easier for me to see where the wool already had been laid out, which made for a good, even quality. The handles should be felted on tight before wrapping the workpiece up in order to connect better with the body.»

Iris Beyer advises to choose the materials with care: «During my first trials, I laid out two different wool threads in the shape of a spiral and Sarifa fibers like rays. I used fine Merino fleece for the outer part and waste flakes for the inside. I am satisfied with the result. During the second trial, I used a rougher Merino fleece and, as a star-like pattern, felt wool threads and silk threads. The material stretched considerably at the first felting so that it didn't lay alongside the ball anymore. It was very troublesome to shrink it in such a way that it fitted the ball again. The pattern was completely loose. Nevertheless, it is an interesting technique. The initial felting in the pantyhose is playful and fun.»

~ Claudia Hecker recommends thorough initial felting. «The wool thread pattern, be it outside or inside, does not always connect well with the fleece. Here is my advice: The decoration that is put onto the outer wool layer last (and is later inside the object) should be rubbed well, before the ball in the pantyhose is thrown or bounced around. The inner decoration gets sturdier.»

~ Brigit Samson recommends to let air out of the ball in time during the felting process. «This technique has great potential for motifs that go around the ball in spirals or circles. I used extra fine Merino fleece, laid out rather thinly, the result was even. I laid out my motifs with knitting wool (part pure wool), silk fibers and silk fabrics. With thin layers some air should be let out of the ball, since the felt is going to shrink and is prevented to do so by a taut ball.»

STEPH SELKE

PAGES 18-19

Colorful Turtles

On May 25th 2025, Karin Twelkemeier arranged the 10th regional Ostwestfalen-Lippe (OWL) meeting in Versmold. In her studio «Filzgewerkel», the participants felted seven turtles.

Six feltmakers heeded Karin Twelkemeier's call. They met at the studio near Bielefeld at 10 o' clock. First, they had breakfast, where each group member contributed something. Then we started. To our pleasant surprise, Karin Twelkemeier had already prepared the resists for the

body and the carapace. She had sent out a detailed instruction beforehand and brought along a fine specimen of a felted turtle for our inspiration.

Thorough Preparation is a Must

Three resists were prepared, one for the body, one for the carapace (the «house» of the turtle) and one that keeps the latter connected with the turtle's legs. The pre-felt was cut into single pieces like those of the carapace and then put onto the wool in that very shape. In the next step, everything was connected. The challenge was to connect the cut-out pre-felt pieces of the carapace well and at the right spots with the turtle's body. Patience is required. It was also crucial that the carapace does not connect with the legs.

~ Thanks to the commitment and assistance by our host a colorful menagerie was made in just four hours. Each turtle is special and tells an individual story. Some participants liked the results so much that they started to make another once they got back home. ~ This day ended far too soon and we had much fun being together and felting the pretty turtles.

CLAUDIA ZIEGELSHECK

The next OWL meeting

will take place in the fall. The exact date will be communicated under filznetzwerk.de

PAGES 20-21

Learning to Felt 2.0

Online felting courses can be a valuable alternative to studio courses. The felt artist Ina Birke, the owner of the studio «filzgewandt», who offers online courses, gives a resume.

For more than 20 years now, feltmaking has been a part of my life. Working with wool and the versatility of the craft keeps fascinating me every day anew. At the beginning of my felting path were a couple of workshops that expanded my knowledge and improved my craftsmanship. Teaching others about feltmaking and the joy of it means just as much to me. Over time, I felt the urge to offer online felting courses to reach people that cannot come to my

studio in the Ore Mountains. But is it really possible online to learn how to felt?

~ I often asked myself that question. Today, after five years of being a lecturer online I can say: It works well – very well indeed.

To Learn at Your Own Pace

Especially creative women find it hard to leave family life for several days or weeks to attend a studio course. Online felting courses enable them to follow their passion and to improve their skills. It is so practical to attend from home and still be part of a course hosted by a great felt artist – who is maybe living on another continent. You can learn at your own leisurely pace at any time you choose that fits your daily chores. The surroundings are familiar and cozy and you have all the materials needed at hand. It saves time and naturally it is much cheaper compared with a studio course where you have to be physically present.

What Makes a Good Online Course?

Just as with studio courses, teaching is always individual. A good online course is not just a video tutorial. A mixture of video tutorial and step-by-step-instructions for download are a solid basis. Videos can be halted and rerun several times – a great advantage. I have experienced quite often that students rely too much on the teacher. Alone again at her felting table, the student cannot remember exactly how the single steps of a project go or how to calculate certain factors, such as shrinkage.

~ The thing most felters complain about that online you lack the direct exchange with other students. Everyone who has taken a studio course knows the enticing flair of the company of others, of felting together, to talk shop and to share the enthusiasm, last not least the fun and laughter. This is essential for a course to go well. But there are possibilities or substitutes for that, for example Facebook groups, commentary functions, live meetings via Zoom. Of course, a student needs a certain amount of self-motivation and discipline when it comes to online courses as well. In recent years, the net has been bristling with felting online courses – from simple felting basics to specialized workshops.

INA BIRKE

Personal Information

Ina Birke's online felting program comprises 4 different course steps: a

basic course, and advanced course, one about felt surface design and an online course to study for yourself. A studio atmosphere is created by a lovingly chosen packet of materials and weekly live calls on Zoom and an exchange via Facebook.

☞ More information about the online felting courses under filzgewandt.de/onlinekurse

PAGES 24–27

Colors, Fibers, Imagination

Taking a stroll through the charming streets of the Dutch town Deventer, you will come upon a small, extraordinary little studio. It is lovingly furnished; there is a shop space and an adjoining room for working. Here Ellen Bakker's brightly colored, graphic felt objects come to life. The artist, who combines silk, wool and digital patterns in a fascinating way, has been feltmaking for almost 30 years, combining traditional techniques with innovative ideas.

Ellen Bakker started her artistic career when she was a young adult: Barely 20 years old, she opened her own graphic design studio. But see soon found out that designs on paper weren't enough for her. «My life has always been a creative one – but when I discovered felting about 30 years ago, I was immediately enthralled», she tells us. It was the quaint magic of the material that intrigued her. «I fell in love with the idea that wool and silk could connect with just water and soap.»

Art Between Technique and Intuition

This fascination never left her. Over the years, Ellen developed a unique style, characterized by bright colors, soft surfaces and surprising patterning. In her objects digital patterns, printed or hand-dyed silk fabrics and wool merge into a harmonic whole. The core of her work is nuno-felting, which connects fine wool with delicate silk. This process requires a high measure of experience and sure instinct. «I combine hand-painted silk with Merino wool, which makes for extra flowing, graphic textiles», Ellen explains. For materials, she uses Pongee-5-silk, chiffon silk and Merino pre-felt.

But not just her hands are busy – also her expertise as a graphic designer adds to her felt art. She creates digital patterns which she has printed onto silk, which will be felted together with wool later. The results are textiles that seem modern and skillful at the same time. «All my work shows graphic patterns in bright colors, the texture is soft and smooth», she describes her style.

From Scarf to Wall Object

Ellen Bakker's repertory is surprisingly versatile. Scarves, covers, wall hangings, clothes and even shrouds – she knows how to find and make textiles for all purposes. Her typical signature shimmers through every item. «I am inspired by the next thing – be it a shadow or the colors of nature, a work of art, or things you find on the street», she says. This openness is mirrored in her way of working: «Sometimes I start with a complete picture in my mind; at other times I just get started and let the object lead the way. When it comes to orders, a conversation with the client is crucial – I really want to understand what they want.»

A Source of Inspiration and Exchange

Her studio in the heart of Deventer is more than just a working place – it is a meeting point. In front, there is a shop where Ellen sells her objects. In the back room, she works herself at a huge table, next to a professional felting machine. In the first floor she hosts workshops in painting on silk and nuno-felting. «The studio is my safe haven», she says. «It is a place where I create, research and share my skills with others.»

☞ Next to her art work, she is also a publisher. She has already published five books that introduce international felt and textile artists (we reported on that in a previous issue). Her own work is not included, she understands herself mainly as a curator and intermediary with regard to those books. And when she is not experimenting with wool and silk? Ellen loves to spend time in nature, riding her Iceland pony or her bike. She also likes to visit museums and galleries. «I think that beauty lies in detail, in colors and in the joy of making something valuable», she says. «Working with my hands connects me deeply to my own self, but also with others and the world around me.»

A Glimpse into the Future

Even after decades of creative work, Ellen Bakker has never lost her curiosity. Her

wish for the future is absolutely clear: «I want to develop further artistically, I want to inspire others – and to be able to do this kind of work, that I love so much, for many more years to come. Everyone who sees her work immediately feels that here technical skills meet with artistic passion – and the ability to make something so touching out of wool, silk and color.»

LARA PYTER

Ellen Bakker

The felt artist Ellen Bakker from Deventer (The Netherlands) regularly holds workshops and master classes, amongst other themes for example for painting on silk. Please find current schedules under: colorsofellen.com. You can see and buy her objects in her online-shop and, of course, in her Deventer Studio. colorsofellen.com/en

PAGES 28–31

«Art Begins with Letting Go»

With her distinctive art, the German-French felt artist Ariane Mariane became a star of the international felters' scene. In her Parisian studio merge artistic expression, paper, wool, structure, everyday life and intuition.

Ariane Mariane was born and raised in Germany, but she has been living near Paris for more than 30 years now. Initially, she had moved to France to study architecture, but she loved it there and stayed for good. Her life seems like an exciting and creative adventure trip. After graduation, she worked as a freelance graphic designer and made patterns for textile printing. Sitting for hours in front of the computer called for a meditative change, so she discovered feltmaking in 2004. What began as a mere hobby soon became a vocation. In 2008, she began to work self-employed, with her typical mixture of enthusiasm and «a lot of naive courage».

A Home full of Creative Fixtures

Today Ariane Mariane lives and works in an open studio, her «L'ARTventureLand». Living and working are seamlessly connected. «I feel no separation between art and daily

life», says the felt artist. She gets her best creative ideas while she is doing something entirely different- cooking, cleaning or tidying up. «I often lay out something, start to embroider it or paint on it, and then I get lost in the flow of inspiration», describes Ariane Mariane, who is at present studying to become a Gestalt therapist. Her studio is a lively place. The living room serves as a work room with several «creative posts», i.e. places where you can embroider, felt, paint, print or work with enamel or metal. She used to hold courses there, but today she invites creative guests for individual holidays in small groups from one to four persons. «I make an individual program for each of them – it should be inspiring and easygoing at the same time.»

From Felt to Mixed Media-Textile Art

Her artistic journey began with jewelry and felted flowers. Later, she made clothing, sculptural objects and the vests she is famous for, her «art vests», as well as extraordinary hats. She makes wearable art that embodies her desire to work creatively without dedicating herself entirely to the freedom of art. Life crises, especially the pandemic, caused her to overcome this rift. Today, Ariane Mariane calls herself a mixed-media textile artist with an emphasis on felt and free machine embroidery. «Feltmaking is my basis», she says. But in the course of the years many other techniques were added. Fabrics and paper are painted, written, printed on before they become part of the felting process. Also, the finished felt is often painted on, otherwise adorned or embroidered. Especially free machine embroidery opened up new realms of expression. Through pareidolia – seeing patterns or figures in certain structures – I find details I render visible with my needle», she tells us. This intuitive way of working allows her to avoid frustration, when carefully composed colors or shapes lose their shine or effect during the felting process. «That is why I like to work with paper. It stays true to color and lively.»

Paper Meets Wool

One of her most important discoveries was the connection of paper and wool. In 2016, she succeeded in felting in straw silk for the first time. For years, she experimented – often without success – with other kinds of paper. The breakthrough happened in 2023, when she learned Joomchi und Momigami, paper art from Asia. «Since then, I am able to felt in almost any kind of paper», she explains enthusiastically. Such

combinations opened completely new ways of expressing herself: Paper-wool-felt has a special feel and depth and is an ideal basis for mixed-media art. «This felt like I was learning a new language, a new level of transposing ideas into art.»

Intuitive, Free Work

During the pandemic Ariane Mariane suddenly found herself in front of locked gallery doors and cancelled art and crafts markets. Overnight she decided to teach online courses – first out of necessity, but then with increasing joy. Today, this is her main source of income. «This has changed my art completely», she states. Rid of the pressure to sell her produce, she was able to dedicate herself more to intuitive, free working. «I didn't have to make things that would sell – I could let go again, as when my passion for feltmaking first began.»

LARA PYTER

Ariane Mariane

In her four-month online course «Mixed Media Textile Art» or the open studio format «OPEN STUDIO», Ariane Mariane encourages the participants to get into working intuitively. Most courses are held in English, but in the fall of 2025, there will be the exception of mixed-media course in German.
arianemarianeworkshop.com
[@arianemarianearttextile](https://www.instagram.com/arianemarianearttextile)
[facebook.com/ArianeMarianeParis](https://www.facebook.com/ArianeMarianeParis)

PAGES 32-37

Tutorial: A Funny Animal Hand Puppet

Either as a playground companion, an imaginative storyteller or faithful friend – this puppet lends life to every play. Ideal for theatre or role plays or simple for cuddling.

Material:

- ✎ Merino wool in yellow, approx. 30 gr for the body (set aside some extra yellow wool to felt on single parts)
- ✎ Merino in dark red, approx. 4 g (optional: red pre-felt) for the mouth
- ✎ Approx 6 g white Merino for the eyes
- ✎ Some brown Merino or brown pre-felt

- ✎ A tiny amount of black wool
- ✎ Approx. 8 g of the brown and yellow wool were mixed (carded)
- ✎ Sound insulation foil or bubble foil for the resist
- ✎ 2 pieces of bubble foil, slightly bigger than the resist («foil to work on»)
- ✎ A small piece of bubble foil, a little bigger than half of the mouth resist
- ✎ Soap as desired (e.g. olive oil soap or curd soap, a grater)
- ✎ Ball sprinkler
- ✎ Hot water/vinegar water
- ✎ Felting needle
- ✎ Wire brush

Please note: Merino wool in the fleece is ideal (e.g. Austral merino) A hand puppet can be made also from Mountain Sheep wool, then the figurine gets sturdier. For beginners, felting Mountain Sheep wool can be easier to handle. Form and color are just a suggestion; they can be altered at will.

Instructions:

- 1 First the resists are made. Draw each resist on paper first, so you can make corrections, if required.
- 2 Transpose the resists onto sound insulation or bubble foil and cut them out. Start with the resist for the body. Measure your own hands and make the resist bigger by a third. (If the wool is laid out thinly, it can even be bigger). A trial piece can be felted beforehand in order to calculate the shrinking factor. The resist used here for the body is 40 cm long and on the widest side below 20 cm. Draw a line at the lower end of the body resist at a height of approx. 4 cm, this is helpful when it comes to laying out the wool.
- ✎ Make a second resist for the flapping mouth. To this end, fold a piece of foil in the middle and put the upper part onto the body resist, draw a mark and cut it out. The resist used here is 14 cm wide at its widest spot.

- 3 The inside of the mouth, brown spots, the little horns and eyes should be made first because they get felted on in the course of these instructions.

- 4 Prepare a pre-felt in red, or use finished pre-felt for the mouth. Cut it out, somewhat smaller than the mouth resist. I have also put on a small piece of pink pre-felt to serve as a tongue.
- ✎ Self-made pre-felt:
Lay out 3 very thin layers of Merino

fleece, sprinkle them with soap flakes and wet them with hot water. Press the work piece down cautiously and slowly on. For better orientation, you can put the resist underneath. Felt it on carefully, not too firmly. When the wool is holding well, but the connection is not yet stable, the felt cuts well in its dry state and can be felted on well.

5 Cut pieces out of the brown pre-felt for the spots. They should be of different size and shapes to give a livelier impression.

6 Take half of the white wool for the eyes. Here you should take care to weigh exactly, because they should be of the same size. Form a ball from each half, felt it, but not too firmly so they will connect with the body easier.

7 For each little horn, roll a small amount of fleece wool up tightly. Wet and soap it and make it into a firm roll. Take care that one end stays unfelted so the horns can be attached to the head later. You might put some more wool at the upper end to form a small sphere or a «stamp».

8 Roughen the pre-felt edges with a small wire brush, this makes the felting-on easier.

9 Put a piece of bubble foil onto your working place, bubbles facing downward. Divide 30 g of the yellow wool into two halves for the front and back part. Put the first half in three layers onto the resist. Take care that the direction of the fibers changes with each layer. The wool may stick out at the side edges of the resist. At the lower end, the wool should not extend the previously made mark. Then pull the resist out with care. ~ Sprinkle the laid-out wool with soap flakes, fill the ball sprinkler with hot water and spray the wool. Put the resist on and press it down cautiously.

10 Put the resist for the flapping mouth at the upper end of the body resist and fold the protruding wool carefully over: in the upper half of the mouth resist over itself, in the lower half over the body resist.

11 Fold the mouth resist up halfway and cover everything with the second half of the yellow wool. The direction of the fibers should alternate in the three layers. Here the wool should

stick out of the edge only very little (wool stretches when moistened, so there will be enough material to fold over later) Sprinkle the work piece with soap flakes and wet with hot water.

12 Now put the brown spots on the chosen areas. Cover it with the working foil, press them down and felt them on slightly by rubbing the bubble foil. (This works especially well with soapy hands.)

13 Remove the bubble foil cautiously and take care that the lower edge is a straight line. Flap the mouth resist down. Put the small foil piece underneath so that the mouth does not connect with the body.

14 Lay out the remaining 5 g of the yellow wool inside the flapping mouth, especially at the edges. Take care that there is enough wool at the areas that bend later. Put on the cut pre-felt for the mouth, sprinkle it with soap and wet it. Felt it on with care. In the beginning it is helpful to put on a piece of bubble foil so the pre-felt does not shift. Felt it on tightly until everything is connected and mind the edges.

15 Put the small bubble foil piece inside the mouth and bend it close. Put the working foil on, press it down well and turn the work piece around.

16 Felt on all the other parts onto the front side that is now facing upward. ~ Check whether wool from the backside has to be folded over the edges. Now put the brown felt pieces on. Felt on the horns. Loosen the wool at the dry end of each horn and spread it apart, put the end on, put some extra wool flakes on and felt them on. See to it that there is enough unfelted room to felt on the eyes.

17 Wrap a small amount of yellow wool around the spheres for the eyes, put them onto the upper part of the flapping mouth, cover them with some yellow wool flakes and felt them on. If necessary, put some additional flakes of the yellow-brown wool on the back part of the eyes.

18 Two small pieces of brown pre-felt laid up front of the mouth hint at a nose.

~ And now comes the part for which impatient folks get a cup of coffee to

steel them for the upcoming task: all parts are connected by careful felting. It may take a while – start with very delicate movements, so nothing shifts (whatever shifts cannot connect). If you sense the felt slowly getting denser you may rub a little more forcefully. Check the whole piece once in a while to make sure everything is in place.

19 Once all parts have connected well felt the rest of the body. Your movements should run from the outside towards the inside in order to keep the wool close to the resist.

20 Open the flapping mouth and continue to felt to merge the red and yellow felt. Mind the edges, they should get stable, too.

21 Turn the part around and work the back side. Start with careful movements, since there is hardly any felting still.

22 Treat the edges to make them stable.

23 If everything is well connected and the felt is stable, take out the resists and continue to felt the puppet from all sides.

24 Now you can roll, full or throw the puppet to make it even sturdier.

25 Put it over your hand and keep checking its shape.

26 Rinse the puppet under flowing cold water. Now comes the last step: The finishing of the eyes. Cut out a piece of the yellow felt until the white wool becomes visible. The cut areas should be felted once more. ~ Rinse the puppet well once more, vinegar water is recommended to get the remaining soapsuds out. Then you can tumble-dry your puppet, if you are in a hurry. A thoroughly felted specimen should pose no problem with that treatment.

27 At the very end, needle-felt the pupils on – then your puppet is alive and kicking!

INSTRUCTIONS: DÖRTE SCHLÜTER

Find more information about **Dörte Schlüter** as of page 56.

The Beauty of Nature

Margot van Leeuwen lives in the Bollenstreek – the famous land of flower bulbs in west of The Netherlands. There is her studio that formerly was a bulb storage shed. Her passion are big-size tapestries that she makes in a complex process. Her great idol: Nature.

Margot found feltmaking after her son was born 25 years ago. A course held by the felt artist Jolande van Luijk in Leiden opened up a new world for her: «I was immediately taken. You don't need any tools, just your hands – this was extraordinary. Since then, feltmaking has never let go of me.» She took a three-year course with the felt artist and anthropologist István Vidak from Hungary and the Dutch felt pioneer Inge Evers, who took her to Kyrgyzstan, the cradle of feltmaking. She built a yurt with them and made traditional felts like Alayki'iz and Shirdak. «It was incredibly impressive – to be in the midst of the mountains, sleeping in a yurt. This experience made we want to learn more», so van Leeuwen. Further courses with famous international felt artists as well as an art pedagogue training followed.

A Studio in the Bulb Shed

Since 2001, the former journalist and graphic designer has been working as a professional felt artist. Her studio is in the first floor of a former flower bulb storage shed, her roof terrace houses the dyeing kitchen and raw wool is stored there, too. «I put my fleeces in old bulb crates that let a lot of air in. I use electric pans to bate and dye wool, silk, raw wool fleeces and yarns. On the ground floor is my dye garden, where I grow chamomilla, woad, marigolds or hollyhocks, there I collect rain water, too», explains the felt artist.

Big-Size Tapestries

She loves to felt all kinds of things, but for some years now she has been concentrating on big-size wall hangings or tapestries. She works on order for interior decorators, e.g. for exclusive shops like Lema in Den Haag. She explains: «I offer three variants: Wall hangings from natural or dyed raw fleeces, combined with locks or other fibers.»

Woolscapes and Local Wool

In her so-called woolscapes, the beauty of the curls stands out – sometimes one can

even tell which sheep breed is involved. She works with local, hand-carded wool and sets store by harmonically colored curls of different breeds. The fleeces are provided locally or by hobby sheep keepers from other European countries. Her lucky streak is a Heidschnucken flock in her village. «I attend the shearing and select matching fleeces. These animals have the most beautiful curls.» The Drenth Heath sheep, the wool of which she often uses, is said to be the most ancient sheep breed in Europe. They are used for landscape preservation.

Slats for Great Acoustics

Another specialty of hers are tapestries with slats to improve the room acoustics, for example in restaurants or luxury accommodations. «I like to work with Mountain Sheep Wool that I combine with bamboo or viscose». These are done mostly in white – the play of light and shade makes for lively structures.

∞ For her framed wall hangings, she uses thin wool layers on cotton gauze. There, she uses special fibers – for example Alpaca wool she has been given as a gift, rabbit or cat hair, enhanced by moth cocoons, hand-spun wild silk or linen. Her personal project was her own silk worm production with Samia-Ricini-caterpillars. «I was fed up with industrial silk, So I bred my own – from egg to moth. It was very exciting, but also quite intense. Each day I brought a big sackful of leaves to feed the caterpillars. In the end, I had 400 grams of silk cocoons which will be used in a special object.»

Workshops, Exhibits and Educational Projects

Next to her orders Margot van Leeuwen engages in child and adult education. She holds workshops for kids and adults, teaches at schools and art institutes and hosts regular workshops in her studio. In the summer of 2025, she showed wall hangings made from naturally dyed wool and flax in the church of Metslawier in Friesland. She is also part of the initiative «Follow the Blue Line» which tells the tale of flax and linseed from their cultivation to hand-printed end products. (More under www.vlasroute.nl).

Daily Bewilderment

«I am astonished anew every day how much there is to learn – about wool, techniques and colors. My hands have learned how wool feels. Every new breed I work with is an adventure; it enriches my knowledge. I am very thankful for my

work and the continuing learning process regarding this craft.»

LARA PYTER

Margot van Leeuwen's Birthplace Leiden

The felt artist was born in Leiden, a city with a century-old tradition for wool. The Museum De Lakenhal documents how much the wool production has influenced the city: In the 15th century, Leiden was the biggest town in The Netherlands, in 17th century the most important textile center worldwide. Thousands of English, German or French refugees and those of the southern Netherlands found work there. The «Leiden Sheet Fabric» was internationally sought after, the characteristic cloth weightings as proof of origin went all around the world. www.lakenhal.nl

PAGES 42–44

Quietly Poetic and Delicate

In North East Scotland, surrounded by meadows full of wildflowers and orchids, sheep and seabirds, the felt artist Jill Marie Harrison lives in her 130-year-old cottage together with her husband, two horses, a cat, chickens and a flock of rare sheep. Here she makes quietly poetic objects: delicate paintings made from dry wool.

She started felting only late in life – with a flock of black Hebridean sheep and the recurring question what on earth one could do with their wool. «After moving to our croft in Scotland 20 years ago, I decided to buy six Hebridean sheep just to preserve the rare breed really», the 69-year-old lady tells us. «We had lambs and soon the six became twelve and so on! Soon the bags of wool were filling our barn and I began thinking of something I could use it for.» Her first felting efforts were, in her own words «very crude» but she enjoyed experimenting with the wool. «I remember the moment when I put glass on top of dry fleece and seeing the effect it gave. That was the beginning», so the felt artist says.

Dry Fleece Instead of Wet-Felting

What makes Jill Marie Harrison's objects differ from others is her technique. She

works mainly with dry fleece, without water or soap – a more painterly approach. «I find using dry wool to get more detail into the imagery. I often use tiny sections of the fiber to create interest and depth to my pictures», she reports. The finished pieces are delicate to look at but in actual fact they are quite strong. «On occasion I have had to remove a picture from its frame and have been able to lift the whole artwork out in one piece.»

~ She mostly works with wool from her own flock. She added a couple of Shetlands to her own flock of Hebridean sheep. «They are beautiful little Scottish sheep which have super soft fleece with lots of character», Harrison says. She dyes the fibers herself – even if they are unwashed or still show traces of grass and seeds. «This adds to the natural character of the finished artworks.» Her choice of motifs and images is spontaneous and free. «I don't sketch, but I just use my eye to place the fibers, although I often refer to a photograph of a certain image», says the Scotswoman.

A Studio Amidst Flowers and Wildlife

Jill Marie Harrison used to work in the back room of their cottage. Meanwhile, she has moved to a small studio in the garden. «It's so pretty out there in the summertime, with all the flowers and wildlife. A very inspiring place to work», she says. She has recently started to incorporate dried pressed flowers into her wool images. «Along the lane and in our fields, there are so many wildflowers, even orchids! Which I don't pick, I hasten to add», she chuckles. «But I use just a few other flowers occasionally – I think that the sheep fleece and wildflowers complement each other perfectly.»

Shows, Media and the Wish to Rest

She has been asked or invited to host workshops many times worldwide, but Jill Marie Harrison has declined to teach. «It is not because I am anti-social – but I would find it all too stressful being away from home and all my animals. Also, I don't think that I could teach people to do what I do. It takes a certain sort of person to be able to teach others and I am not very good at that.» Instead, she concentrates on working on order and shows. Her artwork has been already shown in galleries, newspaper articles and even on TV. One of her commissions, a big-size portrait – was in the finals of the famous Royal Academy Summer Show.

Another Stage in Life

She sells her work via social media and her own website, where interested parties can see and purchase her artwork. There is also going to be a new chapter in her life: «My husband and I are now about to move onto the next stage of our lives and are currently looking to move into a new house. We don't know where it will be – but one thing is for sure: I will definitely have a studio and hopefully lots of creative ideas from my new surroundings.»

LARA PYTER

Jill Marie Harrison

12 years ago, Jill Marie Harrison founded «Wool-Images». Her passion is to use sheep wool to make unique and extraordinary art. Her dedication regarding creativity and a love for detail are of utmost importance to her. wool-images.co.uk
[@woolimages](https://www.instagram.com/woolimages)

PAGES 45–47

Tutorial: A Rainbow Fairy

This little fairy brings color into each home. You can use her as a decoration at a season' cycle table, as a gift or the children can simply play with her – she bewitches with shimmering color and a soft demeanor. In this instruction we show you step by step how your own felted fairy is made out of colorful fairy wool and a little magic.

Material:

- ~ Approx. 2-3 g Mountain Sheep/Felting wool in fleece (skin-colored/beige)
- ~ 40 g strand of Multicolor wool in rainbow colors
- ~ 2-3 g Shiny viscose roving (Color Earth)
- ~ 1 Pipe cleaner
- ~ Felting equipment:
a fine felting needle, felting mat,
a pair of scissors and an awl (a tool to make holes in belts)

Instructions:

- 1 First the head is made with a small strand of felting wool fleece. Stretch the strand a bit and make a knot in the

middle. Then lay the strand to form a sphere and give it a round shape with the felting needle. To get the head big enough, put extra felting wool onto the sphere and fix it with the needle.

- 2 Once the head has the right size (approx. like a 2-Euro coin) make a hole in the middle with the awl, so that you can slightly feel its point on the other side.

- 3 Cut the pipe cleaner in half, put one half aside. Stick the other half (approx. 12 cm) in the hole you made in the head. Prepare a small strand of beige felting wool. Wind this little strand cautiously around the pipe cleaner for a neck and felt the end to the head with the felting needle. Now the first part is finished and we continue with the arms.

- 4 Fix the pipe cleaner you have put aside (approx. 12 cm) around the body, starting below the neck. The body pipe cleaner is laid upwards. That means the body gets shorter. Prepare two small strands of beige felting wool for the arms.

- 5 For the arms, lay out the felting wool at the end of the pipe cleaner and wind it around. To make a small hand, bend the end of the pipe cleaner downwards 2-3 mm. Then you can finish winding the wool around the arm until you reach the shoulder. Proceed like that on both sides.

- 6 Now the rest of the body is made. Wind the remaining wool around the shoulders and torso.

- 7 Almost finished! Pick a strand from the colored Merino and wind it around to make the upper body.

- 8 colorful, longer strands are required for the dress. You choose the colors. At this point, prepare a small piece of thread for the next step.

- 9 These colorful strands are put at the fairy's breast with the shorter side, so that the long threads hide the head (better put, the entire fairy). Put the small piece of thread you prepared around the colorful strands like a belt and knot it. Stitch once more along the thread with the felting needle.

- 10 Now turn the dress around, so you can see the head and the arms again.

11 Pull the dress down evenly with the felting needle and shape it.

12 At the end, the fairy gets a pretty hairdo. You need the 2-3 g shining viscose roving (Earth). You can choose the color of her hair, and also her hairstyle, at will. Here the strand for the hair is put onto the head and a parting is made with the felting needle. If you want her to have a braid, pluck everything cautiously to one side of the head and braiding can begin.

Have a lot of fun felting the rainbow fairy!

INSTRUCTIONS: KATRIN ROSENBERG

Katrin Rosenberg

11 years ago, Katrin Rosenberg started feltmaking during a professional advanced training, and she has been an enthusiastic felter ever since. Together with her family, she lives in Aham, Lower Bavaria and works as a kindergarten teacher. Needless to say, the children she cares for love the little animals or fairies she makes for their group rooms. On top of that, she holds courses for children and adults at the adult education center VHS Vilsbiburg.

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PAGES 48-49

From Coccid to Protective Film

Coccids are not only plant pests, but they procure the versatile shellac – a natural material that has been used as varnish, lacquer and in felting processes for thousands of years. Margit Röhm explains how felt can be effectively, biologically and lastingly stabilized with this environmental-friendly alternative.

Well, there it is, the coccid. Whoever finds them, like I just did on my Monstera, is likely to turn into a monster yourself. The plant withers, the floor is sticky and they refuse to be cleaned off the leaves or the ground. They are real pests.

Yet the coccid and this sticky matter have a decidedly positive side. In ancient days, clever people found out that you can turn the disadvantages into

something good. In Sanskrit writings, lac was mentioned already 3000 years ago, which is nothing other than shellac. We know it as shellac polish on furniture, shellac records from the early 20th century and to this day, shellac is an ingredient in cosmetics – even in food, although nobody wants to hear that. As additive E904 it is not rare at all. It is used for shine on sweets and makes that chocolate melts only in the mouth and not in the hands already. The disgust factor – to work with coccid feces – is done with and we can proceed to the initial purpose of this article.

Shellac as a First-Classe Fixative for Felt

There are many known ways to make felt firmer. On principle, you can use laundry starch, which is easy to apply and to be had in every store, but it doesn't last long. You may also use foods like starch, gelatine or Agar-Agar. These are also easy to come by and to use, but the dissolve in water and so the stiffened felted objects collapse when the surroundings are moist, not to mention the microbiologic indication. I don't mention here the diverse additives from the construction economy, because acrylates and resinoid bonds belong to synthetic materials, which I don't want to use around felt.

Shellac has some advantages:

- It is not water-soluble, because although it swells in water but doesn't loosen the firmness
- It is almost colorless. While other fixatives often leave a white, opaque cover, shellac leaves only a slightly yellow discoloration which attracts attention especially with white wool
- It is easy to apply, at least if you keep in mind some things.
- It is soluble again and, above all, biologically degradable.

How Shellac is Processed

Shellac is bought in small splinters and is soluble in alcohol. The cheapest variant is ethanol. There are certainly exact percentages of how much ethanol dissolves how much shellac. I, however, do it in a simple way. A handful of shellac splinters is put in a high glass and I pour ethanol in it. It dissolves as much as possible and the residue in the glass remains. I keep filling the glass until the shellac is used up. This makes for the same concentration. This solution can be brought onto the felt either with a brush

or with a spraying bottle. The shellac solution deeply penetrates the fibers and so also the entire felt. Thin objects are immersed completely in the shellac solution and the superfluous liquid is pressed out. Then the object is left to dry. Take care that nothing sticks, the shape can be taken care of later. The alcohol vaporizes within a couple of minutes and the object isn't sticky anymore. The shellac is not completely hardened at that stage. Pull the object into shape, and the shellac will harden completely within the next hours.

You can apply shellac in several layers, but keep in mind that the yellowish hue will get more marked. Take care that the pieces harden completely, otherwise the alcohol in the new shellac layer will dissolve the former layers and the item has to be shaped anew.

MARGIT RÖHM

Personal Information

Margit Röhm is the chair of the Filznetzwerk e.V. and has been working as a professional full-time felter for 15 years. triluna.de
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PAGES 50-53

The Fascination of Letter Resists

With wet-felting, you can use many different resists – from flat to hollow ones, reserve foils or those that comprise several parts. The felt artist Ilona Riehle explains the technique and the many possibilities of letter resists. They fascinate her the most.

The letter resist technique offers countless possibilities. Especially for 3 D-objects, there is no real substitute for them. You can create impressive forms that would not have been possible with only one flat resist.

What Exactly is a Letter Resist?

A letter resist consists of at least two flat resists that are firmly connected in the middle or at the sides, hence the name (Picture 1) I sew the parts together by hand (Picture 2). Depending on the project, the number of «pages» can vary, but I recommend not more than 5 to 6

of them (10-12 pages), otherwise it gets too complex. It is a simple principle: As when you read a book, each double page is laid out with wool. To proceed you just turn the pages. For letter resists, sound insulation or a laminate mat are suitable (Picture 3) or hot house foil, whereby the former lend itself better to the necessary sensitivity of your fingers.

Longer Stretch – for Volume

When the flat resists that get sewn together at the middle have a long-sewn stretch, that means that volume is created with that type. (Pictures 4 and 5) For instance, the object «Twist» was made with a letter resist of four pages. Each page can have a different form – the example shows an identical lower part, but the neck is differently made. (Picture 5)

Short Stretch – for Sculptural

ShapesWhen the flat resists that are sewn together in the middle have a short-sewn stretch, then they are ideal for making sculptural art objects from different parts, whereby each single part can be differently defined. The art object «Corallium» (see cover) was felted on a three-part letter resist (Picture 6 and 7). The pages deliberately differ in length and form, which makes for certain dynamics. A letter resist does not necessarily consist of an even number of pages, so five pages, for instance, are also possible. To this end, three resists are sewn together, but one double page remains empty – like when you miss a page in a book accidentally or at will.

How a Letter Resist is Made

If a certain form is on your mind, imagine the 3-D object spread out flat – as if it was opened up right in front of you. These single forms are the flat resists. For the cover object «Corallium» six sides were needed, i.e. three connected resists. (Picture 7) The creative process resembles architectural work – an exciting mixture of imagination and technique.

Laying Out the Wool – Side for Side

Laying out the resists on each side:

- ☞ Lay out the wool so it sticks out approx. 2 cm
- ☞ Wet it with soapy water
- ☞ Put nylon gauze on top and gently press it down
- ☞ Remove the nylon gauze

Before the pages are turned, cover the already laid-out side with a separating foil (painters' foil or a plastic garbage

bag) to prevent the wool felting between the pages (Picture 8) So page after page is handled. As the object gets heavier, I recommend to put the resist in such a way that on both sides there is an equal number of pages – so it remains flat and easy to handle.

Felting and Removing the Resist

Felting goes as usual. The separating foils are removed as soon as all sides are covered and have lightly been felted on. (Picture 9) The letter resists stay in the object for the time being and will only be removed when the felt is stable enough to keep in shape. Make a small cut in an unremarkable area, then pull the resist out with care. Sew the opening close or leave it open, according to your project.

Finishing – For Sturdy Results

Sculptural felted objects only work when they are stable. On the pictures 10 and 11 you see that «Corallium» is rather lopsided. The object is only truly finished when it stands on its own. (Pictures 12 and the cover) The shrinking factor in such objects is high, mostly between 1.6 and 1.9 – with «Corallium» it lies at 1.8.

ILONA RIEHLE

Personal Information

The felt artist Ilona Riehle has learned to felt via online and video tutorials. She offers step-by-step instructions now, like for example the new video tutorial «Meeresmuschel (Sea Shell)» with twelve download videos, so her students can work at their own leisure.
ilorie.de

PAGES 54–55

Systemic Coaching Meets Creative Felt Art

Sometimes, the solution to a problem is within us – all you have to do is to set it free. That's what it's all about in the so-called systemic coaching: to accompany people and assist them in finding their own answers. Katrin Bigl tells us about two ways of mindfulness that complement each other: her training as a coach and feltmaking.

Systemic coaching is a form of counselling that supports clients in finding their

own answers and ways for their private or professional matters. In finding and transposing their own approaches to a problem, the coach helps them to enhance their creativity and self-efficacy. This is different than a mere specialist counselling, where clients are offered ways out. Systemic coaching is no therapy and can never be a substitute for it. It nudges the clients to strengthen their self-help abilities.

A Method Suitcase

For every journey in that sense, the coach has a suitcase full of methods on board to make it easier for her clients to get to the core of a problem. Sometimes the means are simple – often paper in different colors and something to write on is enough for the required visualization. But there is no reason to neglect the other senses involved.

☞ Due to this I have pondered the question in which way one can connect feltmaking and systemic coaching – and I found out I am not alone with this question.

☞ The working team of the Filznetzwerk e.V. around Margit Röhm had the subject on their agenda already in 2023, with the theme «Feltmaking in Therapy and Pedagogy». They found out that there are many interesting possibilities to work in tandem with feltmaking and systemic coaching. You can use felted figurines for the system board, felted finger fidgets to fight nervousness or the application of felted surfaces in different colors at the so-called social atom – a method to show the interconnectedness between people and elements.

Felting for Relaxation

Following those ideas, I worked out two different approaches. The first one consisted in making use of the relaxing, meditative effect of the felting process for the coaching. One can felt intuitively with the client at the beginning, whereby the process is in the foreground, not the end result. It is all about relaxation through these repetitive movements, to arrive at one's own self, to make room for an inner dialogue – all this prepares the client to approach her or his problems more clearly. This only works with coachees who are already familiar with the craft, so the novelty does not dim the inner voice. The kind of wool and the colors chosen already hint at possible emotions that might have to do with the problem itself. In the post-processing, the coach could felt for or together with the client – for

example a finger fidget that can be taken home as a reminder of the sessions and the solution worked out. Also possible is a felted emergency bag that could contain the resources encountered in the shape of little notes or objects. It is easier to remember them that way and to re-activate them. A cord felted by the coachee to visualize the progress made can be helpful at home, by making a knot for each success encountered. Or it simply reminds the client: Hang in there!

A Felted Emotion Map

The second approach deals with materials – which of them should be made of felt to add a haptic impulse to an optical one. Next to the finger fidgets, a felted emotion map is wonderful to work with. Emotion maps depict a landscape on which the client can show where he stands emotionally speaking. When this map is made of felt, you cannot only depict meadows, deserts or cliffs symbolizing an emotional state, but different kinds of wool make for different haptic sensations – all this enhances the feelings involved.

~ The connections in the social atom can be symbolized by felted or hand-spun strings. They are all different, thick, tight, rough or else and can hint at social connections better than a drawn line could. A disruption or separation can be shown by cutting them off, which may also enhance the emotions. The system board as a method to represent the client's point of view of a concrete system can be made of felt as well.

~ A felted system board has the advantage that it is felted following the coach's ideas. The client has a choice what his personal system could be by choosing differently designed areas. Felted board figurines are good to handle and do not have to correspond to any familiar form. To separate or cast away the figurines, which is sometimes necessary, one can use the social atom strings or felted tongues in different shapes and colors, thus defining the quality of the separation. In systemic coaching as well, it becomes clear that felt is a capable mediator and every journey to your own self can be also one of touching.

KATRIN BIGL

Personal Information

Since 2009, Katrin Bigl has been an enthusiastic felt artist. In her workshop in Leipzig you can watch her felt, admire

the results of her passion or participate in different courses.

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PAGES 56–59

Klangschaf (Sound Sheep) – Where Felting Dreams Take Shape

Together with her partner, Dörte Schlüter lives in an old «Kotten», a more than 100-year-old cottage in Legden in the western Munsterland. The house is surrounded by 1000 square meters grazing of sheep meadows. Here, where Quessant Sheep graze, Dörte has fulfilled her dream: her own studio shop, where she felts, sells and holds courses.

«My first felt projects were made about 25 years ago, when I felt the urge to try my hand at the craft. So I ordered a book and an amount of wool and I just got started», Dörte Schlüter remembers. A long break followed, but six years ago she picked up felting again. «In 2016, we bought a small Quessant flock, initially not to have to mow these huge meadows anymore. After the third shearing I thought what a shame it was to throw the wool away and I kept the fleeces.» This was the beginning of many felted furs she made.

~ «Felting suits my personality really well. I love animals, I love colors, I am creative and full of crazy ideas», says Schlüter. «Wool is such a fantastic and far-reaching material. Of particular interest for me is working with the different kinds of wool by different breeds.» She especially likes to use the wool of her own flock. The annual shearing is something she looks forward to, to see how the wool grew and shifted shape.

An Unusual Colleague: Irmgard, the Sheep

«I am a passionate wet-felter, it offers real contact with wool. Needle-felting I don't like so much, but it comes in handy sometimes», the felt artist explains. It is used when needed, for example for isolated structures or small details, such as eyes. Sometimes I needle-felt animals, mostly sheep like the «Protest Sheep» or the one that dons glasses. Amongst

others, Irmgard was made – a small, needle-felted sheep that accompanies the artist and has lived through many adventures with her. «She is almost a star on Instagram, she is with me on each trip and she is my favorite co-worker in the shop», Schlüter chuckles. When wet-felting, she prefers the possibilities to felt in structures, fabrics and other fibers. She loves to make 3 D-objects, such as bowls, bags, hand- and finger puppets.

Her Own Work-Shop

In 2023, she quit her teaching job and wanted to work as a social education worker. But when she couldn't find a proper place, she decided to become a professional feltmaker. In April 2024, she opened her «Klangsschaf» workshop and store. «A long-time dream came true. I wasn't felting for myself anymore, instead I could teach my skills in workshops and tutorials», she reports. Already before, she had an online shop where she sold her handmade products on the side.

~ The workshop is in an old little house in Asback. In the back part there is a sunlit felting studio with two big tables, in the front there is a small shop space with hand-felted products, incense materials and healing stones on offer. «Clients coming to the shop can see my sheep right there, and they can watch them graze in the garden.» Today, she works again part time as a social worker in order to make a living. «Being a full-time felt artist was one of the most beautiful times of my professional life», she recalls.

Materials and Technique

For her felted furs, she uses fleeces of different breeds: Quessant, Jacob Sheep, Skudde, Drenthe Heath Sheep, Bentheimer, Bluefaced Leicester, Walliser Black Nose, Walachen and Pommern Sheep.» I'm always taken with getting to know the characteristics of the different breeds», she says. For other projects, she likes to use Merino or Mountain Sheep wool.

~ Next to felted furs, her specialty lies in animal figurines and fairytale creatures – mostly in the shape of hand- or finger puppets, sometimes a combination of both. One of her inventions is the «Sound Sheep», a small sheep-shaped shaker made of Merino. «I like to use small curls stemming of my flock. And I find exciting materials that I can felt into, like silk, hemp, other fabrics and sometimes even plastic fruit nets», she tells us. Dörte is highly inspired by nature and life as a

whole. «I often depict happenings and life phases in felt. When I quit as a teacher, I made a felted object that echoed that experience. When I had pneumonia, I made a «Pneumonean» and when I entered menopause Frau Wechselhaar (Mrs. Meno Hair)», she laughs.

Wool-Wellness

«To pass on my knowledge and infect others with my ideas of creativity is of great joy to me», says Schlüter. She regularly offers courses in her workshop. Not only to teach the fascination of feltmaking, but also to promote its profound positive effect on people's wellbeing, she has developed her project «Wool-Wellness». This feltmaking time-out is directed at women only and connects dealing with soft wool with caressing the soul.

LARA PYTER

Dörte Schlüter

You can find Dörte Schlüter's felted art in her online shop, her local shop and at different arts and crafts markets. On Insta, she announces new products and dates and loves to network with other felters.
klangschaf.de
[@klangschaf](https://www.instagram.com/klangschaf)
[erfrischend-anders.net](https://www.erfrischend-anders.net)

PAGES 60–63

Embroidered Cradle Covers of the Kaitag

The Kaitag, a small people with Turkish roots, still live in remote villages between the steep mountains of Dagestan. Their textile traditions – especially their artfully embroidered cradle covers – still fascinate by their bright colors, imaginative forms and expressive design. Mari Nagy and Istvan Vidák have looked for historical traces.

Historians believe that the Kaitag were able to survive in the narrow valleys in this region and that you can find them to this day in the Russian republic of Dagestan. A friend drew our attention to those remote villages, the women that live there and the extraordinary textiles that used to adorn the infants' cradles. These covers or wrap-arounds

are more than mere decoration. They tell of protection, beauty and symbolics and have been inspiring felt artists worldwide to find new ways of expression.

Robert Chenciner' Work

The French artist and textile collector Robert Chenciner visited remote, small villages in Dagestan several times in the 1990ies. He found original, very old embroidered fabrics, made by the village women, that used to cover the portable cradles. He assumed that they were made between 1760 and 1790, some exceptions are from the 1850ies. Around World War II, the production ended. Chenciner immediately saw the artistic value of this folk art, but he wasn't quite prepared how profoundly these textiles would startle collectors and experts. His research book, which was later translated into English, made the colorful fabrics famous all over the world.

Color Analysis

With the help of Harald Böhmer and Recep Karadag, the colors of the silk threads in the Kaiti covers were analyzed at the Marmara University in Istanbul. For the red color, dyer's madder, Armenian coccid and shellac were used. The yellow color was made with dyer's reseda, the blue one from Indian indigo.

~ The dimensions were obviously according to those of the wooden cradles. The short side, which is the length of the cradle, varies between 48 and 67 cm. The longer side of the cover measures between 95 and 110 cm. Some of those covers are mirror-inverted. They hung down from the cradles on the right and on the left side. The two patterned areas are similarly structured, but never identical.

~ The world of patterns of the embroidered covers mostly corresponds to typical ones for felted carpets from Asia Minor and Central Asia. Although they are embroidered, those patterns work very well in felt, too. During the last 30 years, the German felt artist Claudia Gemein has made a whole series of such felt objects in co-operation with the Turkish felt master Mehmet Girgic. Some Hungarian felt artists, including the two of us, made a couple of those carpets ten years ago. Photos show some details.

Inspiration from the Kaitag

In our felt art camp this year there were several lectures/workshops about the Kaitag and their textiles. The participants first designed small formats on paper,

then in cushion size. These sketches were checked as to whether they can be transposed simply and well. The colors and their composition were discussed. The basic color was blue, since we already had dyed a big amount of wool with indigo. The pre-felts were made with plant-dyed wool and later cut in seating size. One, made by Boglárka Erdélyi, we present here.

Carpets in Group Work

The five-day course camp in Kecskemét was continued in our studio, where we have many big working tables. The new lecture began again with sketches and making of the pre-felts. We worked in groups of three to five persons. The sketched pattern was first drawn with a pencil and then with a water-proof felt tip onto a white linen cloth. This made laying out the pattern easier and faster without having to decide on the colors first. Due to the sketched pattern, everyone could join the work. As usual, the pattern was built up from the middle to the outer side. After it was laid out, the entire surface was laid out with the same kind of blue wool. To ensure that the carpets felted evenly, we used only one kind of Mountain sheep wool for the blue basis and the plant-dyed pattern parts. In this matter, we also followed the tradition of the original covers.

Why are Kaitag patterns interesting?

In felt design, they have not been known before and are therefore a new challenge. They ask for a free way of thinking. Next to their being always clear and regular, there are many playful and accidental-seeming solutions that kindle a sense of freedom for craftspeople. Some thought them too difficult, for others it was a very energizing experience.

MARI NAGY AND ISTVAN VIDÁK

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