

filzfun – The English Supplement

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Dear readers,

Feltmaking leaves traces – often more than is visible at first glance. Not only talking about materials, but also in the thoughts, memories and encounters that may arise during the artistic process. Our fall issue invites you to go looking for those many various traces yourself. We meet artists who go their own ways and leave unmistakable traces: The Swiss-German felt artist Eveline Carcaterra turns felt in emotional spaces (as of p. 26), Elena Weitmann makes imaginative felted images and seasonal worlds for small children (as of p. 34), Catherine O'Leary from Australia combines felt, drawing and embroidery (as of p. 42), and at Sandra Smeyt's Kleinhaever Farm, impressive encounters between humans and animals are always in focus (as of p. 56). How differently such traces can look like we would like to show in further reporting. The Filznetzwerk invites you to a show called «Verbindungen (Connections)» which deals with the

subject in a highly individual way (as of p. 12), while at the travelling felt project of the «Filzlichs», each object is gaining traces of its existence with and after each turn (as of p. 18). Some footprints last longer than the life of a person. With an obituary for Claudia Blickling (as of p. 22) we pay honor to a feltmaker who enriched our community with her great creative talents, her heartfelt friendliness and her commitment. The Felting Academy opens up new perspectives with felted lamps (as of p. 48), traditional knowledge is made available through learning about felting- and fulling pins (as of p. 52) or about the beautiful bi-patterned carpets of the Turkmen. (as of p. 60). Those who want to muster their own creative senses can relate to two instructions: either to felt a fanciful play mat (designed by Elena Weitmann; as of p. 38) or a needle-felted ammonite on a chalkstone rock by Inge Visser (as of p.30).

Have fun reading and looking,

Your *filzfun* Team

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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A Weekend Around Wool and Crafts

On October 24th and 25th 2026, the 8th Backnang Wollfest (Wool Festival) is held on the premises of the Freie Waldorfschule in Backnang. The Wollfest has turned into a popular meeting place for all who are interested in wool, yarns and textile art and craft. Around 85 traders from Germany, Austria and England present a wide range of high-quality yarns, fibers, accessories and hand-made produce. In addition, there is a variety of programs and workshops, events the clients can take part in connection with crocheting, felting, spinning, weaving and dyeing. You can also meet a number of well-known designers and experts from the wool and felters' scene. The hungry will be fed and there are lovely places to sit around inside and outside of the school buildings. Kids and youngsters up to 18 years get in free of charge.
backnangerwollfest.de

Making Artful Hats

In this course hosted by Saar Snoek at the Wollknoll company in Oberrot, interested parties can learn various techniques around millinery and how new materials may be used therein. From November 23rd to 27th 2026, some of the themes listed will be dealt with: Working with hollow felted bodies and their being fixed by hat wire in order to make the constructions stable and light at the same time. Each participant can design her or his personal hat model – from quaint to extravagant – and there will be enough room and time to learn from each other. You will get an introduction on various stiffening methods, the proper choice of material and the shaping of structures by means of steam, just to name a few items on schedule regarding the art of millinery.
saarsnoek.nl

Course: Creative Dyeing with Natural Color Extracts

Natural plant extracts make the dyeing of wool and fabrics much easier. It is unnecessary to first soak and boil the plants. Ready-made extracts are simply diluted in the color bath and the wool, previously bated, can be dyed. With two different bating solutions, almost each kind of fabric can be dyed, wool and silk as well as cotton, hemp or linen. During Dieter Kaiser's course, participants can work on pattern with extracts from dyer's-weed, cochineal, reseda, logwood, shellac and many other ingredients. You will learn how to mix them and how to enhance the color range through different pH values. On the third day, additional blue, purple and green hues can be made in an indigo vat. In the end, there will be a whole binder of recipes and color samples, so you can dye at home as well.
wollknoll.de

In Focus: Art, Nature and Felt – Felting Encounter 2027 in Hohebuch

From February 11th to 14th 2027, the Filznetzwerk e.V. invites you to Hohebuch in the Hohenlohe Land. Under the motto «Art & Nature», an eventful weekend is planned, brimming over with encounters, exchanges and new perspectives. Together we take a look at the numerous connections between nature, design and felt art. Several so-called 'impulse workshops' are on schedule, relevant lectures, a felt show and a visit to an art museum. There will also be the members' meeting. The adult education center Heimvolk in Hohebuch is the right place for it: quiet, with a lot of room for communal work, shop talk and new ideas. We are looking forward to an artful weekend encounter in Hohebuch. Please find more information on the Filznetzwerk e.V.'s website
filznetzwerk.de

The Art & Design Market Comes to Augsburg

From October 3rd to November 1st. 2026, the former post office storage hall in Augsburg becomes a meeting point for all who value special designs, hand-made produce and conscientious processing. At the Kunst & Design Markt, 150 creatives show their objects, such as fashion, jewelry, art, stationary, furniture and culinary highlights – all sustainable, often regional and always unique. Next to international labels, also local entrepreneurs like villamarie ceramic, Bohia or fadn demonstrate how much creative potential can be found right on the next doorstep. The visitors can meet the people behind the labels, get to know their stories and discover new favorite things. The old Postlager, a former storage building of the Bundespost, is a historical brownstone near the Augsburg Plärrer, the fairground. The hall is the perfect, brightly sunlit frame for ambling around, being surprised and eager to find something nice. There will also be street food, drinks and music that make for a relaxed event.
kunst-designmarkt.at

Natural Felt and Feltmaking for Nature

For the occasion of the 30-year anniversary of the «Haus der Natur (House of Nature)» in Beuron, Baden-Württemberg, a notable open-air exhibit was curated: Together with the initiative «Beuron Felt», the nature reserve Upper Danube called for feltmakers to implement the historical railway station and its surroundings with felted objects relevant to the site. On June 21st, the festive opening took place within the frame of the jubilee events. The show will be open until November 26, 2026.

From numerous applications, the jury selected 15 objects, of which 14 finally were chosen to perform. They are distributed around the House of Nature and invite the visitors to explore the premises from a new perspective.

Almost all objects were made from local wool, which symbolizes in itself nature, landscape, sustainability and the overall relationship between human beings and their environment. Many installations play with issues like wind, weather and the vegetation in a conscious way – natural decay and waning are parts of the artistic concept. The objects were supposed to enter into a dialogue with their environment and to help change the perception of the premises in a poetic, sensual way.

☞ For many years now, the Haus der Natur, accommodated in the former Beuron railway station has been an important factor for educational efforts regarding nature and environment in the nature preserve Upper Danube. At the same time, it has been deeply involved in the co-operation with the initiative «Beuron Felt» which promotes local wool and felt art for 25 years.

A Festive Opening

Eleven of the chosen felt artists were present for the opening ceremony. After the address of welcome by Bernd Schneck, manager of the nature preserve Upper Danube e.V., the district administrator Stefan Bär, chair of the nature park association called the exhibit an enriching factor for the Danube valley. He was clearly impressed by the creativity and artisanal quality of the objects on show.

☞ As a small compensation, the felt artists were each given the exhibition catalogue and a rose. Then, symbolically, a felted ribbon was cut through as the official start of the show. A tour was hosted to see the objects in their natural surroundings. A communal felting project – a big jubilee carpet – encouraged active participation until a thunderstorm ended the festivity.

Homage to Local Wool

The exhibit was accompanied by a high-quality catalogue documenting each object. It can be downloaded free of charge under naturpark-obere-donau.de. The visitors can choose their favorite object. The first three will be honored with a small award. The exhibit draws attention to the close relationship regarding sheep keeping, wool and environmental preserve. For centuries, flocks have populated the region's juniper heaths and calcareous low-nutrient meadows, thus playing a decisive role in the preservation of this singular cultured landscape. By using local wool, the felt artists take up this tradition

and show impressively how much design potential lies in this often-underrated natural material. Precisely because the objects are left to the wear and tear of wind and weather, they will undergo a transformation. This perishability is a conscious part of the project. The catalogue photographs freeze the objects in a certain moment in time, enhancing once more the close connection of felt art, nature and landscape which transcends the moment.

DIANA PYTER

Further Information

The initiative Beuron Felt, founded in 2003, seeks to provide fair prices for wool for the shepherds in the conservation area. This agrarian, man-made landscape should be preserved and an ancient craft promoted – which in turn supports finding alternative means of subsistence in the rural areas. The product range in the small shop of the Initiative Beuron Felt in the House of Nature offers hand-felted wearables such as slippers, hats, scarves, cushions, bags and all kinds of gifts. The Initiative also offer courses and seminars.

naturpark-obere-donau.de
hausdernatur-oberedonau.de

PAGES 12-13

«Verbindungen (Connections)» – a Textile Search for Clues

The different so-called «challenges» to which the Filznetzwerk invites, continue to make creative ideas visible, to discover new perspectives and to enter into personal exchange. The present tender offer around the theme «Connections» has amply shown how differently this motif can be interpreted in felt design.

The subject «Connections» triggered the members' enthusiastic response. Many contributions were handed in and published in the Filznetzwerk blog. The deliberately open theme left a lot of space for one's own interpretations, mirrored in the variety of the art objects displayed.

Materials Enter Into a Dialogue

Some objects deal with actual, material connections. Raw wool meets processed wool, old embroidery yarns meet with modern materials, plant fibers are felted in and other, quite different textile techniques enter into an exciting dialogue. Some works combine micro-macramé, silk or unusual materials, like the nets wherein oranges are sold. Other contributions demonstrate how waste fabrics, objets trouvés or natural materials can be made into new textile objects. Not only the materials are important, but also the accompanying thoughts and experiences.

Connections Between People and Memories

Some art objects tell of memories, travels or personal paths through life. Others deal with community, origin or ponder how people actually connect. Even delicate orchid blossoms, clothed in felt, turn into a symbol of the time, patience and care required.

☞ Also, the connections in the shape of different creative expressions became visible and opened new ways for design and projects. The «Challenges» plainly show the variety of felt as a means of artistic expression. The sent-in objects prove how differently people perceive the matter in question, how their ideas of possible connections influence their thinking, feeling and creative work. This may very well be one of the strong points of feltmaking: To create relationships between materials, thoughts and people.

☞ A glimpse into the future deals with the further development of these creative communal efforts. In the fall, there will be a new invitation, themed this time «Federleicht (Light as a Feather)». As the name suggests, the participants are invited to create delicate structures, soft transitions and to celebrate the art of reduction. The Filznetzwerk continues to be on the move – and with it the fresh ideas that come up once people connect their thoughts and hands.

INA BIRKE

Further Information

The Filznetzwerk e.V. extends invitations to various «challenges» on a regular basis, where free interpretations of certain themes are realized in felt. The participants take a photograph of the result, describe the ideas and their realization and send it to the

Filznetzwerk e.V. The photographed objects are published on the homepage and Instagram without a rating. To take part is the main concern. Please find the current «challenges» under the heading «Aktuelles» at filznetzwerk.de

PAGES 14-15

Heavy Fabrics – Strong Women

Some garments are more than just textiles – they store memories. Especially traditional costumes tell of origin, tradition and the different ways of life of the persons wearing them. The exhibit «Schwerer Stoff. Frauen – Trachten – Lebensgeschichten (Heavy Fabrics. Women – Traditional Costumes – Life Stories)» which is presented at the Berlin Museum of European Cultures shows how closely interwoven fabrics and fate can be.

When she was nine years old, Elisabeth Weiss got her first sewed festive garment. Proudly, she poses for a photograph. She is deliberately trying to hide the many uncomfortable underskirts, stiff with starch and knotted around the belly. Now she belongs to the other well-to-do farm girls attending church on Sundays, donned in shining artificial silk. This marks the beginning of her youth which is supposed to end in a marriage befitting her status. But things didn't work out that way. In 1947, her family was dispossessed in the course of the communist land reform. One year later, her family and many others are driven out of Hungary. In Germany, Elisabeth is no longer a rich farmer's daughter but just a fugitive. She marries a childhood friend whose family also has lost everything they owned. The young couple still feels very much connected to their initial homeland Hungary. When the Hungarian Germans meet to preserve their traditions, at the so-called 'swallow dances', Elisabeth wears her old Sunday best. Apart from those occasions, the garments stay in the wardrobe – it is too painful a reminder of a world lost forever.

~ This is one of 20 life stories from the exhibit «Schwerer Stoff. Frauen – Trachten – Lebensgeschichten», shown in the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin. The exhibit describes the memories of Danube-Swabian women when they

talk about clothes, or, more precisely, their «Gewand», how it was called when still worn regularly, or their «traditional costume» which is the current name for it, since the garments have turned into mere memorabilia. These stories were told and documented when the women – many of them very old – donated their traditional finery to the Donaueschinger Zentralmuseum in Ulm.

Tradition and a New Beginning

«Donauschwaben (Danube Swabians)» are the descendants of about 500.000 Germans that emigrated to South East Europe in the 18th and 19th century along the Danube. They lived in Hungary, Romania and former Yugoslavia in multiethnic surroundings which greatly influenced their culture. After World War II, they were under general suspicion as Germans to have collaborated with the National Socialists. They had to flee or were driven out of their homes, many died during the flight or in detention centers. A part of them remained in the socialistic post-war states, the rest was dispersed all over the world.

~ In the exhibit, 20 garment ensembles – worn between 1880 and the 1980ies – invite the visitors to enter into female realms of life. What do women do with their clothes, what does clothing make of them? Often, not only literally, it is a heavy matter. Most contemporary witnesses have suffered societal constraints and exclusion. They had to flee and experienced violence and death. All those experiences cannot be separated from the garments they were barely able to rescue. But they ended up preserving traditions, often by using their textile skills. The exhibit ends with the life story of Katharina Märck who came from Hungary to Germany at the age of 15. In the course of her integration, she turned the wide Gewand skirts she had brought along into fashionable new clothes – amongst others in a dirndl for her new homeland, Bavaria.

HENRIKE HAMPE

Further Information

The exhibit «Schwerer Stoff» will be shown at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin until March 29th 2027. It is open on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, it is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. smb.museum

PAGES 16-17

Sharper than a needle – Textile Machinery as Musical Instruments

On June 3rd 2026, the music performance «Sharper Than a Needle» returned to the again sold-out Therese-Giehse-Halle of the Munich Kammerspiele. Around the same time, their live record was released under the label Rheinschallplatten.

«Sharper Than a Needle» shows that textile machinery can be a lot more than mere production tools. They turn into media of encounter, memory and collective efforts. The performance combines textile practices, sound art, media history and societal issues to an accurate composition, the single sequences of which seem to be organically interwoven. Especially at times when the zeitgeist strives for unambiguousness, it leaves room for complexity, objection and productive relations. The fact that the Therese-Giese Hall was sold out for the second time plainly speaks for the lively interest in this production.

~ The ensemble «Dressed in Sound», which is behind the musical performance, plays entirely live - with textile machines such as sewing or knitting machines, tools, fabrics, haberdashery and physical movements. The handling of different materials, friction and resistance result in surprising realms of sound turned into music and melody.

Spinning Wheel Music

Klaus Erika Dietl works with a specially outfitted and developed spinning wheel. Physical effort is crucial to his project. The unit boosts movement and power acoustically without ever producing something marketable. Work becomes both visible and audible, entirely beyond any logic of efficiency

~ Simultaneously, Dietl points out some historical relations with his spinning wheel projector. The mechanics of early textile machinery are connected to the development of film apparel. The Maltese Cross that interrupts the filming, thus actually bringing it to mind in the first place, refers to a central principle of the event: Breaks do not mean abrupt endings but conditions of perception – much like a sewing machine connecting pieces of fabric.

Stephanie Müller's bio laboratory consists of a pedaled sewing machine with greenhouse, workshop and sound installation. Textiles, organic samplings and acoustic processes merge into an open system. It views production independent of results as a continuous process. In one crucial scene, she is wearing a costume of hand-made ceramic sound sticks. Minimal movement fills the room with sounds while the sewing machine choir enters the stage via the auditorium.

Wheelchair Choreography

Stefan Wischniewski works with a sculptural system of sewing work baskets, scissors and textile tools. The whole installation is an intermediary between object and rhythm apparel. Karen Modreis' knitting machine is a standardized counterpart. During her performance a new, seemingly endless fabric is made which becomes part of the stage itself.

☞ The event's themes can be grasped best in Sema Schäffer's dance. Hers is a choreography which sets off her wheelchair as a performative instrument. To the rhythm given by the sewing machine choir, she dances with great energy before she turns the whole situation into a fragile endeavor. With each turning around, her costume becomes unraveled, transformed and prepared for different use.

☞ A strong visual counterpoint is the scene where Licia Lumen, donned in a woven dress designed by Müller, seems to grow out of a wall, while members of the sewing machine choir made a collective piece out of waste fabric.

☞ Sharper Than a Needle is an impressive reflection about connection, transformation and working together and shows, how new forms of community may arise from breaks, ruptures and interruptions.

STELLA EMILIE ZAPF

Further Information

The ensemble «Dressed in Sound – Sharper Than a Needle» has been exploring the sound possibilities of textile machinery and tools. A finished product is never in the limelight, only the working process itself – its sounds, movements and rhythms turn into a basis of musical compositions.

hoelle.media/en/13.html

PAGES 18-20

When Felt Sets Out on a Journey

What happens if a felted object is not made by one person alone but by many busy hands? What kinds of ideas develop if an object travels through many hands and is continually interpreted differently? The «Filzlichs», a group of eight feltmakers have taken on such an experiment. The results were surprising changes, imaginative enhancements and a project that promoted the exchange and co-operation in a special way. Below, the Filzlichs tell us about their travelling felt project.

We call ourselves the Filzlichs and we meet digitally every six weeks. After graduation from the Felting Academy, we didn't want to lose contact. Online, we can bridge the distance between Switzerland, Austria, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine Westphalia. During each meeting, we plan and make new felt objects and talk shop in general. We always use 10 g of wool, not more and not less, and we decide on a theme or subject. In the past, we tackled themes like rust, found objects, upcycling, springtime, animals, Nuno or blossoms.

☞ Our communal aim is exchange, not perfection. It is all about trying out something new, to learn from each other and find inspiration. Our motto is «Playing with Guardrails».

A New Experiment Begins

Again, there were the newspaper clippings and online info about performances of the International Feltmakers that kindled our interest in a new theme: «Travelling Felt» - this time without any limits for materials or quantity. The idea was highly motivating and we were eager to get into action. Our sense of belonging was strengthened. It was also refreshing to step out of well-trodden patterns and to start a communal project.

☞ Each feltmaker sends her own piece to the next group member, all at the same date. The next party can develop the workpiece according to her personal taste for one month. Afterwards it is sent to the next group member, again on a fixed date. So, there are always 8 workpieces on the road.

☞ The treatment is entirely individual and off limits: It may be cut, glued,

sewed, embroidered or enhanced with other materials – and of course there is always felting. This process is repeated over a period of four months until each group member gets her original back. For practical reasons, we settled on two circuits.

What Was Done During Travelling

We have taken photos of the original, the intermediate steps and the finished products. We would like to invite you to watch these processes. When we unpacked the last delivery together, we were very curious and touched by the surprising changes and fanciful result.

Circuit A

- ☞ «From Crown to Housing»
- ☞ «From Surface with Cells to Collar»
- ☞ «From Checkered Doily to a Small Bag with Latch»
- ☞ «From a Blossom to a Water Lily with Frog and Dragonfly»

Circuit B

- ☞ «From Surface to Owl»
- ☞ «From Hollow Body to a Trump Deprived of Power»
- ☞ «From a Ring to the Lair of a Sloth»
- ☞ «From a Hollow Ring with Holes to a Candleholder Mounted on a Piece of Driftwood»

Maybe our venture can serve as an inspiration for you. In any case, we had a lot of fun with it and learned to be playfully inspired. A beautiful experience and one we will most certainly repeat in the future.

THE FILZLICHS

About the «Filzlichs»

Driven by the wish to stay in contact after graduating from the felting academy, the called «Filzlich» group was founded. Its members come from Switzerland, Austria, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine Westphalia: Christina Mußbacher, Ulrike Stengele, Judith Dössegger, Helga Cordes, Elisabeth Kaltdorf, Birgit Wiedecke, Kirsten Breker and Angela Teuchert.

The Whole Versatility of Feltmaking

With a wide product range, participatory events and many possibilities for exchange, the Filznetzwerk e.V. presented itself at the fair «Allgäuer Nadelstiche (Allgäu Needle Stitches)» in Oberstdorf. The aim was to promote the felting craft by introducing it to a larger public and to get people interested in the association's work.

On April 11th and 12th 2026, the fair «Allgäuer Nadelstiche» took place in the Eissporthalle (Ice Rink) in Oberstdorf. The Filznetzwerk e.V. is always looking for new members and to demonstrate the many possibilities to use felt. To take part in a fair was deemed a suitable way to introduce the association's work. Christine Rusch and Kerstin Waizenegger went to Oberstdorf, taking along a wide array of produce, info material concerning the Filznetzwerk e.V. and about providers of materials.

~ The generous booth offered enough room to show the astounding scope of the felting craft. From small felted blossoms, felted fruit and vegetables, finger- and hand puppets to bags, scarves, baskets, containers, sitting furs and cushions – the objects on show are living proof of the many different ways felt can be used. This came as a surprise for many visitors. The booth made the many felting techniques visible: Wet- and dry felting, nono felting and knitting felt wool were on display. Especially the knitting felt wool was in demand, since it represents a first step to wet-felting for interested parties. The visitors were allowed to touch the different kinds of felt with their diverse surface structures.

~ At a separate table, Kerstin Waizenegger showed the visitors how to felt small pendants in needle-felt technique or to wet-felt blossoms. This offer was eagerly accepted and led to many animated conversations, also about the courses in the Oberrot Felting School at the Wollknoll company and where to procure wool and accessories. The two days of the fair were characterized by many intense personal encounters. The discussions reached far beyond information about the craft or trade, but the underlying, great interest in the felting craft was always tangible. Some remembered fondly their own felting days and vowed to take it up again. For

the Filznetzwerk, the fair was a valuable occasion to raise the general awareness for the craft. Membership was encouraged to intensify contacts, meetings and of course, enthusiasm. Maybe we can find other feltmakers who would like to present the felting craft on fairs and markets, introducing the association and its goals. Such events are a perfect opportunity to talk to people of all ages, to motivate them and a younger clientele and maybe to win them over for an active membership at the Filznetzwerk e.V.

KERSTIN WAIZENEGGER

Further Information

The goal of the Filznetzwerk e.V. is to lend visibility to the felting craft, to pass on knowledge and skills and to connect people. Events like the presentation during the fair «Allgäuer Nadelstiche» make for interesting contacts and kindle a deserved interest in this ancient textile art.

filznetzwerk.de

PAGES 22-23

In Memoriam Claudia Blickling

With great sadness, the felters' scene says farewell to Claudia Blickling who passed away on February 1st 2026 after a long illness. She was only 48 years old. Many feltmakers, wool enthusiasts and life companions knew Claudia via her work on the Kornrade farm, where she held positions as tutor, lecturer, artist and organizer.

For many years Claudia Blickling was a shining light in the felters' scene, due to her creativity, her open-mindedness and stirring enthusiasm for working with wool. Whoever met her does not only remember her expertise but even more so her cordiality, power and her great gift of bringing people together.

~ Claudia Blickling, née Müller, was born in Reichenbach in the Vogtland on November 15th 1977. She trained as a retail saleswoman in a blueprinting business. Then she studied sociology at the Technical University in Dresden and graduated with a sociologist diploma. Living together with her husband Ingo

Blickling and her three children, she devoted herself with all her heart to her many interests and projects.

~ For many years, felt was a crucial part of her life. Her artistic focus lay on three-dimensional felt surface designs and the combination of wool with other fibers and materials. She developed a unique signature that combined great artisanal skills and a love for experiments. Her objects were shown in many exhibits and made her reputation beyond felters' circles. Equally important for her was to pass on her knowledge and skills. During workshops, courses and lectures she taught many interested adults and children and turned them into enthusiastic felters. She also worked as an external teacher in training institutions for nursery teachers. To all these parties she lent high standards of design and high-quality produce.

Bringing People Together

Claudia Blickling is fondly remembered by the Filznetzwerk especially through her organizing of the Felters' Encounter in Bad Schandau in 2019. With great endeavor and tireless commitment, she was the driving force behind this event which is remembered by many participants until today. Without her initiative, energy, talent for organizing this event would hardly have taken place.

~ She also engaged in the venture «Zündstoffe Materialvermittlung Dresden» as one of the founding members and together with her husband she worked in the areas of counselling and coaching. ~ With Claudia Blickling the felters' scene loses a committed artist, and inspiring teacher and a warm-hearted person. She continues to live on in her art; in the many projects she accompanied and most in the memory of people who had the pleasure of meeting her in person. Friends described Claudia in a farewell poem as a supportive soul, who led people through heavy weather with her courage, warmth and emotional awareness.

~ Our sincere condolences go to her husband Ingo, her children, her family and friends.

~ Claudia Blickling will be sorely missed. Her art, ideas and the many encounters she made possible will live on, though – as precious memories of a special person who greatly enriched the felting world.

FILZFUN EDITORIAL OFFICE

To Feel the Invisible

For the German-Swiss felt artist Eveline Carcaterra, felt is far more than a craft, it is a medium of human dignity. She transforms wool fibers in haptic, emotional realms, making the invisible visible and the inexpressible understandable. Her art objects invite you to share the bigger questions in life: Perishability, change and what remains.

In 2003, Eveline Carcaterra's path towards this special artistic expression began in Trin, a Rhaeto-Romanic mountain village in Graubünden, her chosen home. After years of experimenting, a course held by Inge Bauer in 2012 ignited an incredible fascination for wet-felting. Her professional career started with a training as hotel manager in Bavaria. Her work led her to Switzerland, where she got to know her husband and where her two children were raised.

During her training as a felt designer at the Oberrot Felting School she received first offers to take part in exhibitions and to host courses. In 2017 she decided to continue as a freelancer and founded «Carcatteras Filzunikate (Unique Felt Objects)». At first, her produce was mainly functional objects for everyday use. At the same time, she took courses herself to continually build her expertise and reputation, which led to her unmistakable signature. The connection to nature plays a central part. Eveline Carcaterra processes high-quality wool from a neighboring farm, amongst others Suffolk-, Cheviot-, Engadiner- and Heidschnucken wool. In a local family venture the wool is cleaned and carded, afterwards the artist dyes the wool herself with acid colors.

What began at the kitchen table turned into an ever-increasing artistic commitment. First, she installed a workshop in her cellar. During the lockdown in 2020 a long dream of hers came true: a communal studio in a renovated barn with an inspiring atmosphere.

Fugacity in Focus

Personal experiences with death and sad farewells led Eveline Carcaterra to focus on the fugacity of life. She took a training course for taking care of people at the end of their lives and volunteered as a companion for senior citizens, all of which

opened new perspectives. «Life is wonder – and it will end eventually», she says. Her dealings with transience enriched and deepened her own life. She also studied the different cultural aspects concerning death in Italy, Germany and Switzerland.

During the preparation of her exhibit «vergänglich, lebendig (transcient, alive)» in the castle park Pansevitz on the island Rügen in 2019, she realized how deeply she was influenced by her pondering of existential problems. Her art work «Tgei reasta- was bleibt? (What remains?)», mounted on the outer wall of her studio, is remindful of that. Another important station on her artistic path was her meeting with Maria Friese in 2024. She took a tutorial in Creative Mentoring and discovered a new felting dimension: By combining creative techniques, your self-perception can be strengthened and inner processes can be changed more easily. This decidedly changed her way of working.

Dignity is a central and recurrent theme of her art and course offers. In a society with all its outward leanings, she would like to provide realms that make real encounters possible – with oneself to begin with, bringing freedom, clarity and a zest for life. «We humans have all knowledge and wisdom – but to become manifest, to be felt and heard, you need space and quiet.»

Awe and Humbleness

Whether she designs a felted shroud for the last journey or accompanying people who felt their own urn – the crucial factors always are awe and humbleness. Wool gives off warmth, protection and a sense of being taken care of, and in processing it undergoes a transition as well. «Art speaks to the soul and makes the invisible felt. Especially in times of change this is a healing aspect», Carcaterra says. Her focus, though, is not dying, but living. In her art, Eveline Carcaterra likes to play with the opposites light and shadow. These are expressed in contrasting colors, structures and materials. Many of her art objects are finished with elaborate embroidery that are, for her, a symbol for wholeness and refinement.

She is firmly rooted in Bavaria and Graubünden and this shows in her artistic ways, as well as in her attitude towards nature and her meeting people. There is continual development; these days she is working on a mixed-media project concerning fugacity which combines watercolor, felt and short poems. Her

goal is to inspire people, to prepare them unobtrusively for their own end of life. Feltmaking influenced her deeply. She found one thing especially valuable: The most precious things in life come when you are prepared to distance yourself from your fixed ideas. Felting is no different.

LARA PYTER

Personal Information

Online or on site – Eveline Carcaterra conveys her subject matter in different art forms. Available online is, amongst others, the video tutorial «Yin und Yang – Licht und Schatten (Light and Shadow)». On September 19th she invites interested parties to the studio 33 in Trin (Switzerland) to her course «Vom Werden und Vergehen – Herbst: Ernte – Loslassen (From Becoming to Passing – Fall: Harvest – Letting Go)»
post@carcatteras.ch
carcatteras.ch
landhand.ch

PAGES 30-33

Tutorial: Inspiring Fossils

During a trip through France, Inge Visser discovered fascinating fossils in an unassuming heap of stones. From her fascination for the traces of bygone geological eras, she was inspired to make a felted chalk rock with an ammonite. Here is a step-by-step instruction:

Material

- Approx. 25 g cream-white carded fleece
- Approx. 5 g light-brown carded fleece
- 1 g grey carded fleece
- Big Clover felting mat
- Clover felting needle set with 3 needles
- Strong or middle-strong felting needle
- Fine felting needle
- A wooden handle for the needles
- Pins

Source of Inspiration

This felted rock carrying an ammonite fossil is inspired by stones that I found during a trip to France. Nature is my most important source of artistic inspiration.

Rather unexpectedly, I met a fossil expert who showed me some stone heaps near a forest. With a hammer and beginner's luck I found many fossils, which kindles my sense of adventure and interest in the remains of long bygone centuries that I can hold in my hands.

- 1 Roll up the wool to achieve an oval shape.
- 2 Fix the ends with the Clover felting needle.
- 3 Now stitch around the «stone» to make it stable.
- 4 Put some of the light-brown wool onto the felting mat and form it into a circle.
- 5 Continue to put the needle into the circle to start the felting process.
- 6 Tear the circle at a width of approx. 2 cm, this will be the end part of the ammonite.
- 7 The other torn part should be folded backwards.
- 8 Now distribute a small amount of grey wool over the stone.
- 9 Felt on the wool with pins.
- 10 Distribute some light-brown wool across the stone, it may overlap the grey wool.
- 11 Felt on the light-brown wool with pins as well.
- 12 Check whether the chalkstone pattern is right. Add more wool if desired.
- 13 Turn the stone around and pin some grey and light-brown wool on the backside.
- 14 Put the middle-strong needle in the wooden handle.
- 15 Stick the needle in to the middle along the spiral ammonite form.
- 16 The spiral should look like that.
- 17 Finish the end part of the ammonite on the stone.

18 Now furrows are pinned into the ammonite shape. These should be wider on the outside and narrower on the inside. Follow the spiral form.

19 Now put the needle aslant into the stone directly below the ammonite to enhance its form.

20 Form some straight edges into the stone with your hands and felt them tight, so that the stone resembles a true chalk rock.

21 Now it can be used as a home decoration or a gift.

INSTRUCTIONS: INGE VISSER

Personal Information

For the Dutch felt artist Inge Visser, wool and other natural fibers are the media of her artistic expression. She makes art objects and applied felt art for the interior, amongst others tapestries and acoustic wall panels. She mixes traditional techniques like wet- and needle felting with natural dyes. Each of her works is a homage to nature, her most precious source of inspiration. She loves to work outside where her ideas can roam freely. In her studio in the Dutch city Breukelen she hosts workshops and works as well, while she organizes creative holidays in the French Ardennes. wolleguru.de, wolgoeroe.nl laineguru.be, chemindelaine.fr inge@wolgoeroe.nl [@wolgoeroe](https://www.instagram.com/wolgoeroe)

PAGE 34-37

Felted Images for Small Explorers

A couple of years ago, Elena Weitmann wouldn't have dreamt that feltmaking would change her life. Today, the 26-year-old lady from Balzheim in Swabia spends many hours with a ball of wool and a felting needle. Her colorful wool images and her self-developed seasonal circle are in high demand. Everything started in early 2016 – with an idea of her mother.

Together with her two daughters, aged three and five, Elena Weitmann lives in a cozy, aged house near Ulm, between

the Swabian Alb and the Alpine Upland. With a wink, she calls herself a «eco-Waldorf mom». Natural materials play an important part in her everyday life. Her children wear clothes made from wool, silk or Cashmere; their toys are mostly made of wood and old furniture has more charm for her than modern, bland interior styles. After graduation, she became a mother. She worked in sales and in the Legoland Toy Park. After the separation from the kids' father, times were hard and she had to plan her life anew. «From one minute to the other, I sat there alone with my two little mice», she remembers. 2025 became a year of turmoil and change. Only feltmaking brought new perspectives to her life.

Her Mother Led the Way

Elena Weitman discovered feltmaking through her mother, who had started to felt in the winter of 2024. She encouraged her daughter early this year to try it out. Elena was instantly taken. «I am a creative person anyway, and I had always loved art», she says. What initially started as a hobby became a real passion within soon. Today she felts six to seven hours a day. Since March 2026, she has been working on changing into freelance – with the goal to be able to make a living off her creative work. «I just want to be flexible and present for my daughters. That's why I am working towards my dream.»

Precise Lines and Strong Colors

Most of her work is needle-felted. Her wool images are characterized by clear forms, exact lines and a jolly color range, all suitable for children. Landscapes, however, are mostly wet-felted before she enhances the details with the felting needle. Her direct and spontaneous way of working is typical for her. «A new idea? Where's the needle?» She hardly sketches or plans in detail. Most motifs spring directly from her imagination. Sometimes, the whole scene lies before her inner eye and she sets out to realize it. In this way, she made a large-size ABC tapestry with letters of the alphabet in the course of a single day. It was sold before the last detail was finished.

A Season's Circle Gone Viral

Elena Weitmann's seasonal circle from wool became a great success. The 45 cm wall hanging conquered Instagram in a flash and got more than 200000 reactions. Many orders were placed via Etsy. Encouraged, she developed a

DIY box, complete with materials and instructions, to make one's own seasonal circle. «I like that I can inspire other young mothers to felt.» Next to the seasonal circles, she makes fairy tale images, landscapes, wall hangings, inserts for festive rings and other decorative felt accessories for families and children.

Sustainability as an Attitude

As far as the materials used are concerned, the artist is committed to high quality and certified provenance. Wool is procured mainly from the sheep wool spinning company Höfer. The local aspect and the GOTS certificate are of special importance. In wet-felting, she prefers natural products as well, for instance by using sheep milk soap. Many working steps are done without technical support. «Here there are only felt and needle», she says with a laugh.

~ The finished items remain natural, i.e. without additional decorations. She likes beads, but since her clientele consists mostly of families with small children, the safety aspect weighs heavier.

Finding Peace and Quiet

Feltmaking for Elena Weitmann is far more than just creative way to make a living. It has become an anchor in her daily life. «By concentrating on the wool, colors and shapes, my mind gets a break», says the felt artist. Her increasing self-reliance makes her proud and hopeful. «I finally see a light at the end of the tunnel.» For her family, her goals are clear. She wants to continue to work independently and to pass on her enthusiasm for feltmaking. Everything revolves around her two daughters. «Only a happy Mom is a good one.» This sentence is more than a life philosophy. It is the drive behind her creative path – a path that has barely just begun yet took her astoundingly far already.

LARA PYTER

Personal Information

Elena Weitmann presents her objects on Instagram under the name «wolligwild». The social media serve as a gallery, shop window and exchange platform. She does not offer courses yet, but those are already in rising demand. The new DIY box is a step in the right direction. In the long run, she can imagine hosting workshops and courses herself.
wolligwild.de
[@wolligwild](https://www.instagram.com/wolligwild)

PAGES 38-41

Tutorial: Imaginative Play Mat

With this felted play mat, you can create fanciful landscapes that invite to play, discover and to tell stories. This step-by-step tutorial shows how to make this individual playful world that can be decorated later with needle-felted details.

Material

- ~ 2 big pieces of bubble foil or 2 pieces of chiffon
- ~ Big towel
- ~ Ball sprinkler or a small pot
- ~ Hot water, sheep milk soap
- ~ Grater
- ~ About 200-300g fleece wool in the desired colors (rovings are suitable, too, but I personally never use anything but fleece wool)
- ~ A bowl of water with a shot of vinegar essence

Preparing the work place

Fold the big towel and lay it out double. Put a big piece of bubble foil on top.

1 Laying out of the lower base

A total of 100-150 g white or beige wool is required, depending on the desired size of the play mat. In my example 40 x 50 cm were laid out. Approx. 60 g of white wool was used for the first layer. Tear the wool into small strands and place them one after another in a single direction. Fan the strands up so they become nice and fluffy. The wool layer should be larger than the desired measurement, since the mat is going to shrink during the wet-felting process.

2 Base, second layer

Distribute the second layer (approx. 60 g) and fan out the flakes as in step 1, but this time in the opposite direction. This is important for the layers to felt together well. The dry base should be 10 cm high, better too thick than too thin. Everything should be well covered to avoid holes during the later handling.

3 Creating Landscape Elements

Now comes the fun part: Take colored wool and tear little flakes out of it and set out to form elements of landscape. It may be a river, a green hilly

meadow, a brown field or a pink fairyland or a pond. Distribute the flakes again in the opposite direction. In this example, 80 g of wool were used. Advice: Lay out enough wool. Once the mat is moistened you can no longer add additional amounts of wool.

~ Idea for a cave in a certain landscape: First cut a small piece of bubble foil and put it on the desired place. Cover it with a generous amount of wool.

4 Take the grater and the sheep milk soap and grate some soap over the landscape part. Advice: Soak a piece of soap in hot water to get soapy water.

5 Moisten everything with the sprinkler or a small pot.

~ Advice: The wool absorbs a lot of water. Keep on watering. The water does not have to be boiling hot, but more than just lukewarm.

6 Once the workpiece is well moistened, cover the landscape part with the second piece of bubble foil or a piece of chiffon. Press everything down with care so the fanned-up wool will flatten.

7 Soap your hands well and massage the wool in circular movements (the foil stays put; you work from the outside). In case the wool below the foil is not wet enough, re-moisten where required.

8 Once the mat has felted a little, turn it around carefully (together with the lower and upper pieces of foil). Treat the workpiece from the backside as you did at the front.

9 For clean edges, those have to be folded over and felted thoroughly. Advice: Now is the right point in time to cut the cave open. Make a small cut at the entrance of the cave (approx. 5 cm), take the foil out and bring the cave into a firm shape with a lot of water and soap.

10 Now fulling can start. Roll the mat together with the foil and towel up and roll it around like a rolling pin. Advice: Count and roll equally often in each direction, otherwise the shape warps.

11 If the workpiece has felted enough, press the water out of the mat and get rid of the surplus water. Then knead it like you would a pizza dough. Foil parts are no longer needed, work directly on the mat itself with water and soap.

12 The wet-felting of the mat is now finished. You feel when it is time to stop. Don't mind parts that are not so pretty. Once the mat has dried you can dry felt those again and you can add decorations like little flowers or stones to hide blemished parts.

13 Place the play mat in a vinegar bath to neutralize soap. Take a bowl of water and a shot of vinegar essence. Then spread the mat out to dry for a whole day.

14 Again, once it is dry, you can add needle-felted details for pure decoration or to hide parts that are lacking a bit. Advice: If you want your kid to play on the backside of the mat as well, give the base another color, e.g. green or brown, to serve as a meadow or forest ground.

INSTRUCTIONS: ELENA WEITMANN

PAGES 42-47

When Wool Shows Character

Those who enter Catherine O'Leary's studio will not find a buzzing, hectic workplace, but a peaceful, quiet sanctuary. Here in Castlemaine, Australia, felt art objects are created that surpass traditional ideas of felt art. The 64-year-old artist combines drawing, textile art, feltmaking and embroidery. Her unique art objects are inspired by people close to her.

For Catherine O'Leary felt is not just a medium of expression but lifelong, creative company. She has been immersed and intrigued with the making of felt since the 1990ies and has made quite a reputation for herself internationally – as an artist, author and lecturer. Together with her partner Patrick she lives in Castlemaine, a small rural art town in a southern region of Australia. The pastoral surroundings, closeness to nature and the creative flair shape her life, as does her extended family. Especially dear to her heart are her grandchildren, whom she teaches arts and craft lessons every week. Of course, feltmaking is regularly on schedule. «They just love feltmaking», she says with a smile. ♡ Catherine O'Leary has always been a creative person as long as she can think

of. She studied Fine Art in the early 80ies, majoring in drawing. From there, she developed a great interest in textiles, clothes and handicrafts. «Being creative is food for the soul and is also a meditation process.»

Feltmaking Fascination

For more than three decades, Catherine O'Leary has been exploring the many possibilities of the felting craft. «It is amazing how versatile this medium can be presented!» Over the years, she made wall art, sculpture, clothing and accessories. She has always shown great curiosity in contemporary Bojagi, which is a traditional Korean technique of piecing together fabric scraps.

♡ For her, sometimes artistic expression can move in circles. This is what occurred in her art practice; in the last couple of years, she has come back to the fine art realm, more precisely to drawing.

Drawing Meets Felt

In recent years, Catherine O'Leary has combined her drawing skills with felt art. She experimented with drawing pen and ink on felted surfaces and discovered new forms of expression. The work turned out to be demanding. Even after the wool has been felted, it still resists the moisture of the ink and she had to vigorously work the ink into the felt surface. The overall effect was of a charcoal drawing – soft, atmospheric and surprisingly detailed. This was not the end, though. «The next step was to hand-stitch over parts of the portrait with fine wool- or cotton threads.» Her art work is a cross between drawing, textile art and sculpture.

Traces of People

Her current works are mainly portraits. Each is based on a personal relationship. Family members, friends and other company inspire her portraiture. Some of the images are life size and to make them takes several weeks. The embroidery alone can take up a month or more. Pure similarity, like on a photograph, is not important. «I always try to capture the innate nature of each individual.» The intense occupation with a face, a personality and the mutual memories make each portrait remarkable and moving. «It has been a joy working on each project because it has allowed me to spend time with each friend or loved one.»

Artist, Author and Lecturer

Felt art has changed Catherine O'Leary's life completely. She has been teaching

not only in Australia but in many other countries. Most artists, when asked, speak of future projects and great plans. This one is different: «I don't really have dreams and schemes for the future because I am enjoying the present time too much!» Maybe this is exactly the secret behind her art. Instead of looking for the next best thing, she dedicates herself to the Here and Now, with a lot of patience and attentiveness – her family, her studio and the dear people she portrays. Her works are more than textile renditions or images. They keep memories, tell stories and show how the soul of a person can shine up in wool, ink and threads.

LARA PYTER

Personal Information

Next to her felt designs and portrait art, the Australian felt artist Catherine O'Leary has published two feltmaking books. 2011 «From Felt to Fabric» came out, followed by «Felt Forward – New Technologies in Using Prefelts» in 2020. It can be ordered via her website. catherineoleary.com.au

PAGES 48-51

Wool Turns into Light

Felted lamps combine handicraft, design and light in a convincing way. Only when the light is switched on inside, some objects unfold their full effect: Hitherto unremarkable structures become visible, colors undergo a change and the surface begins to shine. Olga Kazanskaya of the Felting Academy shows how felt becomes an atmospheric design element for the interior.

I have felted lamps myself and I can still remember how surprised I was by the result. During daytime, in front of you is a felted body, a simple, unassuming object. In the evenings, however, when it lights up, it takes on a different character. Fine layers of wool, silk or viscose, openings, scales and shadows suddenly meet the spectator's eye. What used to be mere structure during daytime turns into atmosphere in the dark hours.

♡ This year, the Felting Academy has prepared a unique project around the subject 'felted light objects'. It comprises

two video tutorials concerning two very different artistic approaches. The first tutorial, called «Nautilus» hosted by Svetlana Fomina, deals with a shell-shaped lamp in maritime colors, with a rich surface and soft inner light. The second is a reworked course by Elena Talikova about felted lampshades and light sculpture. Both courses are in English with subtitles in several languages, including German. In addition, there are illustrated course materials in the shape of small e-books in five languages.

Light as a Design Element

For me, a felted lamp is the perfect merge of wool, form and light. Not only the surface is decisive, but also the way the light shines through the material. Where should the felt be thinner or thicker? Through which gaps and openings should the light fall, which scale or gill should cast a certain shadow?

~ Elena Talikova's system has a special place. Her objects stem from the idea of petal-shaped resists, each consisting of several parts. This had previously been taught by the Icelandic felt artist Anna Gunnarsdóttir. These so-called «book resists» are turned like the pages of a book during the distribution of wool layers. So, the form is spacious from the beginning – complete with petals, ribs, pouches, tubes, openings and an inside space for the light source.

~ After more than 10 years of intense feltmaking, Talikova turned to ceramics. Yet her ideas live on until today. They turned from symmetrical forms and stiffening techniques to freer objects based on an inner architecture, resists, wire fittings and a deep understanding of capacity or volume. The lampshade alone almost turns into a living being: Sea creature, seed pod, fantasy flower or coral. Openings seem like pores of light, fins like an inner skeleton.

The Nautilus Lamp

With Svetlana Formina's «Nautilus» the road to take is different. While Talikova reaches an organic form by means of construction, Fomina starts with a strongly artistic image and virtuoso surface design. The Nautilus shell already carries the idea of spiral, growth and inner space in itself. When felted, it turns into a fairytale-like inner decoration object, with its deep blue and green hues, organza, fibers, glass, stones and mother-of-pearl accents, illuminated by a soft shine.

LED Techniques

Modern LED techniques offer new possibilities for felted lamps and light objects. While classic incandescent lamps develop high temperatures and therefore can be dangerous, LED solutions provide much more freedom. Warm white lighting, low voltage chains of light, modules, strip lights or mini spots can be used in many ways. Still, it remains of utmost importance that the electrical fittings are safe, certified and approachable at any moment in time. For me, a felted light source is one of the most poetic expressions of felt. During the day it serves as a sculpture, in the evening it becomes alive with a warm, atmospheric light. It does not only decorate a room; it changes its atmosphere.

OLGA KAZANSKAYA

Further Information

The Felting Academy is an online school for contemporary felt art, which brings together independent felt artists from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Ukraine and many other members of the textile scene. It translates courses, preserves ancient techniques and develops practical instructions for felt artists worldwide. Olga Kazanskaya is one of the founding members of the Felting Academy and has been devoted to contemporary felt art, international course projects and the passing on of felting skills and expertise. felting-academy.com

PAGES 52-55

Form, Surface and Stability: How Fulling and Felting Pins Function

On first glance, they are unassuming tools. A piece of wood, carefully turned, it lies in your hand comfortably. You look at it, turn it around and finally you try it out. Some are self-explanatory. With others, sooner or later you encounter the question: What do you use it for? Ina Birke explains how different tools support the felting process and why they are used at different areas of a work piece.

~ Felting and fulling pins have a lot in common but their fields of application

are different. The support the feltmaking process and are always used when form or surface should be influenced by pressure. Fulling pins are mostly used when wool has already felted together and has to be thickened additionally. Especially with containers, bags or baskets sturdiness is a crucial issue, since a felted object should not only get the desired form but keep it lastingly. Here fulling pins are strongly recommended. Other than with the classical rolling with your hands, the power is conveyed onto the felt via the structured surface of the fulling pin, which increase the density and evenness thereof. The felt piece becomes more compact, resilient and achieves the desired stability. It uses surprisingly little additional physical power. Many feltmakers know how tired their arms and hands can get when fulling, especially with large-size projects. But you have to go slowly, as often, where felting is concerned.

Remarkably Effective

Fulling pins work surprisingly effective. Even just a couple of rolling movements account for a marked difference. Those who have felted alone with their hands or lower arms will find out soon that felt «behaves» differently where a fulling pin is used and shrinking sets in more quickly than expected.

~ Felting pins are made for different tasks and they accompany our projects for a longer period of time. They are put to use in the beginning of the felting process, in securing shapes and forms and especially for the finishing of a product. Many feltmakers know the moment when an object seems ready but isn't quite. There are areas regarding hollow bodies or containers that are difficult to reach and handle with your hands. Resists' edges, round areas or textures often need more attention. Felting pins do not only support the shaping of an object but assist in making the surface smoother, also in parts where hands cannot muster enough pressure. Often a new quality is reached in those phases. The changes are small, but they often make a big difference. Many feltmaking tools are developed from experience, observation and the wish to make certain working steps easier. Time shows which tools can be held in a proper way, where additional pressure is needed and which size is suitable for which project. It is not all about finding the one «right» tool, but

one that matches your individual way of working.

Making Working Steps Simpler

Are fulling or felting pins really necessary? The answer is no, but they can make the work a lot easier. Your hands get a break, some working steps are made simpler and they can help to handle surfaces, shapes and stability of objects more targeted. It may just be due to those little helpers that open up new possibilities or render familiar processes a bit more convenient.

INA BIRKE

Further Information

charlottevonliesendahl.de
filzegewandt-shop.de

PAGES 56-59

Where Sheep Conquer Hearts

If you visit the Kleinhaever farm in Issum, you immediately notice that something is different here. Between meadows, pastures and an old farm the time seems to pass more slowly. Every day's drudgery stays outside the gate. You are welcomed by curious sheep and a host who embodies her passion for animals, nature and an ancient craft with great enthusiasm.

Sandra Smeyts is 56 years old, a saleswoman, event educator and – most of all, a devoted shepherdess. Together with her husband Mario she lives on this small farm that two generations call their home. She has turned the place into a haven where animals and humans get into contact. And this is precisely what you can sense all around.

~ About 12 years ago, her personal sheep story began rather coincidentally. She first kept Angora goats but these had a little too much temperament. «The he-goat was quite aggressive and his horns didn't make it better», she remembers with a laugh. On a local animal show she discovered the Swedish Gotland sheep. «They are smaller, have beautiful, soft curls and – the best of all – no horns.» Today, the Gotland sheep are the center of the flock, plus three

Wensleydale sheep. She used to keep about 90 animals on the pastures, but now her flock counts approx. 20 animals. «After all, it being a pastime it should be fun. With 90 animals, the workload was simply too much.»

Sheep to be Touched

Encounters between humans and animals are most important on the Kleinhaever farm. The best-known event is «Sheep Cuddling», where visitors come from near and far to spend time with the animals, to feel their warmth and to become quiet and relaxed. «Those peaceful animals do the world of good to some people.»

~ Furthermore, Sheep Yoga is on offer, photo shooting with the animals, felting courses and those for making veggie sitting furs are others. Even bachelors' parties are sometimes asked for. But especially dear to Sandra's heart are visitors with health impairments. «These visits are truly special. You hardly need words. When the clients feel close to nature and the sheep, and smile happily, this is the most beautiful thing of all.» There is no mass tourism. «To each his or her own with respect to time, regardless whether we host a whole group or just two people.» The sheep live close to the farm building and are a part of the family's everyday life. Their own pastures and meadows and leased areas offer enough room. You can watch the animals from the living room window. «This is my favorite place in lambing season. I see everything from there and I can immediately run and help in case of an emergency.»

~ The birth of lambs is an annual farm highlight. The tiny sheep are not only a source of happiness for their keeper, but also for the visitors, who are allowed to take them up in their arms and to cuddle them.

James – the Famous Farm Sheep

A special darling and beloved by every member of the farm is an 8-year-old Wensleydale ram. His mother deserted him upon his birth, so Sandra took to raise him by bottle. «During the first weeks he lived in the house, wearing diapers, and later in the stable.» The problem child turned into a veritable star, whose life story was even reported on in the WDR local news.

From Wool to Sitting Fur

The beauty of the Gotland Sheep lies in their wool. Their long curls shimmer in

different grey and silver hues and give a unique structure to each pelt. Sandra does the shearing and the processing of the wool herself. Veggie Sitting furs are much sought after. Other than classical sheep pelts, they are made from the shorn wool of living animals. Next to the furs, Sandra offers carded fleece in different shades of grey – a coveted basic material for felters and spinners.

Preserving Feltmaking, Spinning and Ancient Crafts

Sandra's journey into the world of feltmaking began twelve years ago with the sheep. «I wanted to know what you can do with raw wool». Curiosity turned into passion, so today she also hosts courses. She learned spinning as well. On fairs, she demonstrates the traditional processing from raw wool to finished yarn on her hand-turned oak wood spinning wheel. «Watching the process from raw wool to the first thread and carding, spinning and twisting make many people happy.»

A Life Among Creativity and Nature

The Kleinhaever farm is brimming over with new ideas. Sheep Yoga, Cuddly Affairs, felting courses and a guest flat as of this fall show the place on the move. «My husband keeps saying that I am a little crazy with all my ideas.» But it is such creative thinking that makes the farm dear and special. Her love for nature has been there all her life. «Living in the countryside – live, love and rejoice.» This is more than just a simple motto. It describes the philosophy of Sandra Smeyt's running of the farm. Among curly Gotland sheep, curious lambs and James the Famous she shows how closely knit agriculture, love for animals and creativity can be. For the future, there is one simple wish: «To further enjoy living in the country with my husband, the children and the sheep.» You immediately believe that this wish has already come true.

DIANA PYTER

Further Information

Please find all relevant information and dates for Sheep Cuddling, sheep yoga, photo shooting, feltmaking courses and the produce offered by the sheep farm on their homepage.

kleinhaever-hof-smeyts.de
[@Gotland_schaeftchen](https://www.instagram.com/Gotland_schaeftchen)

Turkmenian Felt Carpets Patterned on Both Sides

At the beginning of the 1960s, the British art historian Mary Burkett went for a study trip to Northern Iran. In Gonbad-e Qabus she watched women who rolled half-finished felt pieces back and forth on the streets. It led to her discovering an entirely new material that kindled her interest. Then, she didn't have a clue that she would explore the art of feltmaking not only for herself, but practically for the entire rest of the world. Her book «The Art of the Feltmaker» turned into a veritable «bible» for a whole movement. With this report we would like to give her credit for her life's work.

We visited Turkmenistan for the first time in 1985, then several times until 1998. Later, in 2014 and 2016 we visited the Turkmen living in Iran. As we were able to find out during these travels, felt carpet making of the highest sort is when the rug is patterned on both sides. The more elaborate upper side with its vibrant colors is for festive days, the quainter back for every day. The change is done by the lady of the house. As everywhere in Central Asia, shoes have to be left in front of the doorstep. In socks or house slippers it makes for pleasant walking on those carpets, which are in turn spared greater wear and tear.

Masterly Carpets

Only a few people can make carpets patterned on both sides. Among the seven Turkmenian tribes, it is mainly the Jomuds with their subgroups Dschafarabaj and Atabaj, whose women master and preserve the technique. These are genuine masterpieces, as one would have called those in old Europe with her guilds. A young carpet maker had to make such a masterpiece before he was accepted in the guild. In Turkmenistan, however, the felted carpets are made by girls and women. Of course, carpets with just one patterned side are felted as well, as are horse blankets, prayer rugs and protection and blessing objects.

☞ One can find felted blankets often at antique dealers or carpet traders in the regions where Turkmen live in Northern Iran. In the small cities of the Jomudes, traders offer new and old carpets with patterns on both sides. During the Novruz

festivity in March which celebrates the beginning of the new year, we saw felted tents adorned with colorful felt blankets.

The Technique

Why is making such a bi-patterned carpet or blanket so difficult? Who has already felted objects knows that the pattern has to be laid out first onto the back side. Then comes a monochrome basic layer, which protects the pattern during moistening and fulling. If you add a pattern on the upper side, it can shift easily or change its form. We would like to introduce below some of the techniques we saw in Turkmenistan and later with the Turkmen in Iran.

☞ One of those methods is the careful rolling back and forth of the felted roll which is tied around with a rope. This is the only step where men may take part. Another feature is the moistening of the already bi-patterned felt. The roll is tightly wound up in a reed mat and then tied around. Then, hot water is poured over it. The biggest part of the water runs off, and the moist, warm wool remains. Then follow rolling, fulling and making the felt denser.

☞ There is also a variant, where every patterned layer is prepared alone and only later connected with fresh wool.

World of Patterns and Belief

Since the days of yore, the Turkmen worship two animals as their ancestors: the mountain sheep (Daggotsch), symbolized through its horn, as well as the leopard, symbolized through its spotted fur. The incantation of the leopard is an old custom that is still practiced today. You evoke the animal and symbolically receive its strength. The blue and red spotted pattern is found mainly on the back side of the carpets. Also, the side scaffold of a Turkmenian tent called «tarem» can be found on the felted blankets. It appears as a simple pattern or a structured line and protects from evil spirits, according to folk belief. Parallel running blue and red stripes are characteristic.

☞ The local name for the ram's horn is gocs-bojnozu. It is the most important basic pattern of the felt carpets, reaching back to pre-islamic times. As a symbol for the ancestors, it is one of the oldest motifs used by the Turk-speaking people. Especially with the Jomud carpets, you often see the motif of many curved horns. It serves as a basis for numerous pattern combinations. According to traditional belief, soul and power of the protecting

ancestor animal lie in its horn and fur. This is why rams' horns are often found on roofs or tent tops, again to protect the family home from the evil eye and witchery. The ram's horn is the protective spirit of the Turkmen and the ur-motif of their felted blankets.

☞ One also often finds a row of dots called aladzsa. Girls from nine to twelve are entrusted with this task. Other important motifs are the human finger as well as the sun.

End of a Friendship

In the capital Ashgabat we stopped once in front of the shop window of an art gallery. There hung an oil painting depicted the life of the locals maybe 100 years ago: a bazar at the edge of the desert with traders, buyers and travelers. The artist Hodschakulijewa Sulgun explained the many scenes to us. Sitting among many other paintings, we noted down her words: «Wonderful felt blankets of the Akhal-Telkke-tribe hang on a mud wall. Many of the traders sit in front of such blankets and offer their goods. Below, an artisan sells a hope chest. Next to it, there are mounds of pumpkins and melons from which the buyers can choose. Women offer embroidered shirts, shawls and jewelry, others sell woven sacks and ribbons. One potter sells ceramic ware, another man musical instruments. Some want to sell their chicken, others goats.»

☞ When we returned, we happily showed the developed photographs to our host Ata. Much to our surprise, he became very angry: «You have insulted me and my family! We are believing Muslims. We are not allowed to see depictions of people or animals and we must never hang them up on the walls of our houses.» This was the end of a more than 10-year-old friendship. The next day, his son saw us to the airport. Only his wife, Ogulsirin, briefly said good-bye. Almost 40 years have passed. We would love to visit Turkmenistan again. How has the country changed during those long years, and if yes, in what direction? If any of the *filzfun* readers was there in the past years we would appreciate her or his experiences.

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