

# filzfun – The English Supplement

## Issue #62

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Dear Readers,

»Wool is the material my dreams are made of«, says Katharine Thierer, a feltmaker, puppeteer and clown who we portray as of page 32. Who would not readily agree to that! This is why the material of our dreams features prominently in this issue, not to mention its immense potential which comprises such different areas as art or active animal protection.

The astounding double costume »Tangle«, featured on our spring cover, was made by the artist Marjolein Dallinga. The Dutch feltmaker lives and works in Canada and has been making, amongst other objects, costumes for the famous *Cirque du Soleil* and for movie productions.

Maike Leja Breitlauch shows us the world in a collector's cup wherein she creates small, humorous stagings of felted surroundings and miniature figures from model-building areas. But also, her ample market baskets are something to admire (as of page 36)

Animals play a very special part in this issue – not only, appropriately regarding the forthcoming season, e.g. in the new installment of our series »Sheep & Wool« where we present the noble Wensleydale and Teeswater sheep and their wool (as of page 42). We also report from two »beastly« courses: Paulien Sijtsema made life-size and otherwise true-to-life heads of sheep or highland cattle in the needle-felting technique in the *Fiberfusing studio* (page 20/21) and Margit Roehm and her students worked on baskets, bags and backpacks in animal shapes (see pages 22/23)

Not the felting of animals but felting for animals is taken up in the contributions of Martina Schmickler (as of page 54). She is an activist for wild animals in need and has initiated a practical aid for orphaned squirrel babies for whom felted dreys substitute their lost nests. Whoever wants to felt such a drey for a wildlife ward will surely profit from the detailed instructions as of page 56. That you, dear readers of the *filzfun*, are animal lovers we know from many photos of the readers' gallery: You can find some ravishing four-footed beings there. (Page 26/27). Maybe you feel like presenting your own impressions (again) there? Then mail us a photo of a summery felted object to [lesergalerie@filzfun.de](mailto:lesergalerie@filzfun.de). We are looking forward to your impressions!

For now, it remains to wish you a merry spring with many creative felting ideas and a share of wool-suffused dreams.

*Best regards,  
Your filzfun-team*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:  
[redaktion@filzfun.de](mailto:redaktion@filzfun.de)  
The summer issue will be published on  
May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019.  
Editorial deadline: March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

## European Felt Days in Felletin

For the sixth time in a row Felletin, a small French village in the Département Creuse, will be the meeting place for felt enthusiasts worldwide from April 19th to May 12th. The program of the Journées Européennes du Feutre consists of a felt art exhibit in the castle church, a fashion show and a market for felting material and felted objects as well as workshops and master courses in the education centre of Lainamac.

[www.journeesdufeutre.wixsite.com](http://www.journeesdufeutre.wixsite.com)  
[www.lainamac.fr](http://www.lainamac.fr)

## Grants for Artists in Residence

Five textile artists from different fields like for example felting, weaving, bobbin-lace making, embroidering or millinery will get the opportunity to work and present their objects in front of an audience in one of the historic houses of the Bergish Museum for Mining, Handicraft and Commerce as »artist in residence« from July 18th to 26th, 2019. The closing date for applications for this grant in the scope of the 6th Textile Outdoor Award ends on March 31st.

[www.faser-um-faser.de](http://www.faser-um-faser.de)

## Wool Meets Paper

»Wir WOLLEn PAPIER (a word play meaning We Want Paper, the German verb wollen [to desire] is equated with the word Wolle [wool]) is the motto of the second Craft-Art-Fusion-project of the Austrian group wollmodus to which international tenders are invited. Artists are called to hand in objects made from sheep wool and paper until June 16th, 2019. These will be shown in the Galerie am Park from September 21st through 29th and then in the Perchtoldsdorf Castle on November 9th and 10th.

[www.wollmodus.at/wollkunst](http://www.wollmodus.at/wollkunst)

## World Record with a Heart at the Creativa

The world's biggest »Riesenmütze« (giant hat) made from hundreds of single hats is supposed to be made during the Creativa Fair in Dortmund from March 13th through 17th, 2019. Die knitwear designer and author Sylvie Rasch asks for donations of knitted, crocheted or felted caps for the »Creativa-Weltrekord mit Herz« (World Record with a Heart) which will be passed on to a non-profit homeless shelter at a later date. Those who donate a cap will receive a voucher for a 2 Euro discount for the entry fee. The Creativa has been breaking all records every year so far as Europe's biggest creative fair for materials and techniques.

[www.weltrekord.messe-creativa.de](http://www.weltrekord.messe-creativa.de)

## Felting en Miniature

Felting on a small space or with miniature results are the themes of the workshops at the course of lectures of the Filz-Netzwerk from July 25th through August 3rd in the youth hostel in Detmold under the motto »Klitzeklein und winzelpützig« (approx. »Teensy-Weensy Tinkerings«). As objects figure, amongst others, watchbands, pearls, finger puppets or miniature busts. The lecturers are Monika Derrix, Kathrin Bauerrichter, Tanja Kahl, Petra Franke, Yvonne Zoberbier, Petra Ueberfeld, Karen Bruinsma, Heike Kojman, Beate Bossert, Anne Jansen, Ulrike Wieland and Karin Twelkemeier.

[www.filznetzwerk.de](http://www.filznetzwerk.de)

## Forum for Textile Art

The Textile Art Berlin hosts a small jubilee celebration this year: On July 15th and 16th the fair will take place for the 15th time - like in the past two years on the Phorms Campus Berlin-Mitte. The host Natalie Wolters wants to offer a forum with exhibits, sales booths and an ample workshop program of contemporary textile art. Many renowned lecturers will be there, amongst others the felt artists Sabine Reichert-Kassube, Yvonne Zoberbier, Annemie Koenen and Beate Bossert.

[www.textile-art-berlin.de](http://www.textile-art-berlin.de)

## Felt Symposium in Brandenburg

An open workshop, exhibitions, workshops and many encounters with other creative people are offered by the 9th Felt Symposium Werenzhain at the Atelierhof Werenzhain in Brandenburg from July 5th to 28th, 2019. The courses are held by Sabine Reichert-Kassube, Roswitha Baumeister and Maria Sagurna.

*Information and application: atelierhof.filzsymposium@mariasagurna.de*

## Intersections in Felt

*The third International Felt Symposium in Baku attracted people from all over the world with its wide range of lectures, exhibits, fashion shows and workshops.*

110 participants and 34 lecturers from 16 countries dealt with felt in history and in the present at the occasion of the 3rd International Felt-Symposium »Common Language of Turkic World - Patterns« in Baku, the capital of Azerbaidzhan, under the motto »Intersections in Felt«.

∞ The local carpet museum there was the ideal location for such an event. The spectacular, unusual building was designed by the Austrian architect Franz Janz in the shape of a half rolled-out carpet, similar to the 'flying carpet' we know from oriental fairy tales. In the so-called »carpet roll«, as the building is commonly called, modern and ancient carpets in weaving or knotting technique from Azerbaidzhhan and four old felted carpets from Georgia are on permanent show.

∞ Already at the entrance, major felt pieces from István Vidák, Mari Nagy and other felt artists and booths with felted clothes and accessories plus a toy yurt presented themselves as readily attuned to the symposium's subject matter.

### Emphasis on Field Lectures

Field lectures were the core of the symposium which were simultaneously translated into English and Russian for the great number of international guests. The referees lectured, amongst other subject matters, on the history of felt, felt in the tradition and its modern

characteristics, on contemporary art, on felt clothing and interior decoration, in museums' collections as well as on felt as a trendy fashion.

☞ Many lecturers, mostly from the Asian hemisphere, referred to the historical findings from the grave fields of Pazyryk in the high region of the Altai Mountains in Siberia, relics that stem from the times of 600 to 200 B.C. Felt in their reading represents one of the roots of a connecting culture of the Turk people in the vast regions of the Asiatic mountain areas and steppes.

### Workshops and Exhibit

At the same time the lectures took place students of the University of Fine Arts in Azerbaidzhan experimented with combinations of silk fabrics and wool during three workshops.

☞ In a felt exhibit 14 international artists demonstrated the wide range of expressions in felt in their various works. The symposium's highlight was a felt fashion show in the five-star hotel »Four Seasons« opposite the museum: a dazzling event to which Baku's affluent upper class had been invited. This luxurious scope, the prominent guests, the models presented and last not but least the high-class buffet were remindful of the great Haute Couture shows.

### Impressive Fashion

Six fashion designers from Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Azerbaidzhan and Turkey presented their collections. I never saw anything comparable made from felt. Each collection had its very own signature and characteristics, e.g. sometimes reduced to a single shade, straight-lined, matter-of-fact, immensely wearable – almost for everyday use, but extravagant and playful at the same time, without the loud crav- ing of effects. The contrasts were often hushed, surprisingly different materials were mixed and resulted in quite unusual combinations. All these objects seemed almost organically evolved or developed. The public was enthusiastic. Some of the guests, among them also participants of the Symposium, were literally carried away by the swinging music and danced on the catwalk.

☞ On the third day a culture program was on offer. During the city tour by bus we visited the Museum of Modern Art, one museum for historic stone findings and of course Baku's most famous building, the »Heydar Aliyev Center«, designed by the late American star architect Zaha Hadid. This huge, wave-shaped building made

of glass and white, glass fibre-reinforced concrete was built on a hill in the midst of a big free space.

☞ My personal conclusion is: The trip to the Felt Symposium to Azerbaidzhan was really worthwhile. The director of the museum and her team did a great job in putting up the program as well as with organizing everything.

MARGRET RIEDL

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## Feeling Felt

*Information und inspiration during the 3rd Viennese Felt Fest Week.*

The variety of the material could easily be grasped during the 3rd Viennese Felt Fest Week in the impressive historical premises of the Alte Schieberkammer in the 15th district. Ursula Weber-Hejtmanek was able to win exhibitors from six nations who presented felt art, clothing and objects for everyday use in perfection during these days in the sign of wool. The range ran from a needle-felted Miss Piggy over felted images in combination technique to clothes and accessories made from nuno felt.

### Sheep Breeds in Portrait

Next to the felted objects to look at or on sale a lot of valuable knowledge concerning wool and felting could be gathered. Susanne Weber has been introducing curls from different sheep breeds for several years now. She had complemented her program with still other examples which show how individual the various kinds of wool are. At the so-called »Fühlstrecke« (approx. Haptic Path) of the German Felt Network touching was explicitly invited. So the visitors were able to feel and check out for themselves the felt qualities, densities and structures presented.

### Students Felt Together

In order to introduce the next generation to a creative handling of wool, soap and water, Ursula Weber-Hejtmanek and her assistants invited school classes to felt together with them, sometimes they had to handle 45 children at once.

☞ That feltmakers have grown together in a big family across country borders. This became obvious when the exhibitors

made a cloth for their German felting comrade Alexa Haug, who had fallen seriously ill and has passed away in the meantime. During the felting process many a tear was shed.

(PM)

### 4th Viennese Felt Fest Week

Ursula Weber-Hejtmanek and her team are already puzzling over the program for the next festive occasion in the fall: 8th to bis 13th October 2019  
Alte Schieberkammer, Meiselstraße 20,  
1150 Vienna, Austria  
Contact: Ursula Weber-Hejtmanek,  
E-Mail: waam@gmx.net  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Wienerfilzfestwoche/](http://www.facebook.com/Wienerfilzfestwoche/)

PAGE 12-15

## Three Dozen Ways with Wool

*Ten years »Fit in Felt«: 36 graduates present their objects at celebration*

Each year Sonja Fritz invites the feltmakers' scene to the small village Neuhausen when the graduates of the Oberrot Felting School end their »Fit in Felt« training and show their graduation work in a big exhibit. The show is well worth seeing every time, since every time it mirrors anew the innumerable possibilities to turn wool into works of art, clothing or objects for everyday use by felting.

☞ So it was also in 2018 when 36 feltmakers finished their two- or three yearlong training. But the exhibition was special: a celebration at the occasion of the felting school's tenth birthday, where even the instructors showed their art. Sonja Fritz, the school director congratulated the graduates to their success and thanked all »that have accompanied us all these years and have prepared the way for such felt project versatility«. Her special thanks went to the instructors Lyda Rump, Beatrix Schaaf-Giesser, Beate Bossert, Kerstin Scherr, Gabriele Breuer, Heidi Greb, Ursula Eichenberger and the late Inge Bauer. »Their priceless work with the participants has had the biggest share

in the success of the students' felt work«, she said at the final ceremony.

### Unobtrusive Natural Shades

While strolling around the exhibition tents the guests could see how individual the »path in felt« had turned out for each single graduate. Many feltmakers restricted themselves to natural hues, like Cornelia Bleher, who had outfitted a sledge suitable for an ice princess with magnificent cushions and blankets in naturally coloured wool in her work »FilzImPuls«, Anne Rau-Le Lièvre showed a wedding dress in the shape of a rosebud and Esther Staudenmaier, who had designed seven different bags for different weekly occasions in elegant grey and natural white shades.

☞ Other examples for a quiet preference of grey were Claudia Fink's »Chillax-Sitzsack«(beanbag chair) with matching cushions and Jana von Janso's two rectangular pieces of furniture, off-white and grey was also Natascha Cepec's colour choice for her winter blanket made from finest fibres and embroidered in Sahiko technique. Alexandra Schmidt had processed the wood of antique beams together with mostly white wool in her dreamlike table lamps.

### Bowls as Studies in Color

Opposed to the above, Marina Krehle-Bohlemant had dealt with colours and the mixing of different shades in her graduation piece. She made several tableaus with squares in different shades as well as a very aesthetic series of small felt bowls, the colours of which were mixed by carding. This work is on the cover of the 2018 catalogue.

☞ A veritable panopticon of droll hand and finger puppets representing all kinds of meadow creatures was the idea of Daniela Dölger. Also the »fat ladies« by Tanja Kahl wallowed in merry colours as well as the very detailed felt figurines by Silvia Amacher and the dwarf girl by Nadja Weiser-Brandt. Almost photo-realistic were the two horse heads made from Merino-, Mountain Sheep- and Chubut wool with Heidschnucke manes designed by Valentina Kehl.

### Inspired by the Sea

Pernille Horth was inspired to her object»The Gnawing of the Sea« and »Beach Cows« by the ocean, whereas Melanie Mesli evoked the ghosts of the sea with her object called »Oarni« which changes its appearance depending on the light that shines upon it. Interesting

structures of marine life, such as the skeletons of sea urchins, algae and sharks' eggs were modeled in felt by Elisabeth Lindenlaub-Rosciszewski, and Susanne Schädel's three huge whale flukes attracted everybody's attention in the exhibit.

☞ Clothing and accessories, classical areas for the processing of felt had been chosen by Iris Beyer, Verena Frei, Petra Münch, Christina Ogger, Christine Schwarzkopf und Monika Willmes for their respective graduation pieces.

☞ In the meantime, the next »Fit in Felt« courses are nearing the end. On July 13th and 14th the next generation of participants will show their final works at the premises of the Oberrot Felt School.

HELENE WEINOLD

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## Textile Art without Borders

*Heidi Drahota, Anne Jansen, Johanna Spaethe and Ruth Zenger show facets of various felting techniques in Helmbrechts.*

»Grenzgängerinnen (Cross-Border Commuters)« is the title of a felt art exhibit in the textile museum in Helmbrechts. The four artists, Heidi Drahota from Nuremberg, Anne Jansen from Bamberg, Johanna Spaethe from Königstein und Ruth Zenger from Erlangen regard themselves as proper cross-border commuters. »Eight years ago, our passion for felting has brought us together over the borders of different counties«, they explain.

☞ But the four who remained of a former group of dozen feltmakers do not only overcome county borders, but also the borders limiting certain textile techniques. Each of them focus on different key aspects: next to feltmaking there is also weaving, spinning, bobbin lace-making, sewing, dyeing in combination with all kinds of materials and techniques.

### Emphasis on Felt

During an exhibit in 2016 in Forchheim that attracted 1500 visitors the artist had presented objects made in various techniques; in Helmbrechts they focalized only on felting, in order to transport this

ancient technique to modern times and to show the audience what can be achieved with the material. For this reason, they complemented their images and objects on show with additional information and put up felted squares as haptic patterns. ☞ »Our limits are changeable«, the quartet wrote for the show: »Whatever limits there are can be overcome by creativity, power, knowledge, patience and inspiration. While working, emotions are released, and also the finished objects often kindle emotions. We move between tradition and modern times, we concentrate on exciting themes and convey them into felt art.«

### Marginal Appreciation

The title »Cross-Border Commuters« evokes also different connotations, e.g. that of art as a language understood by all people, where all thoughts are limitless. »How often textile art is simply regarded as handicraft or equaled with a mere tinkering around«, they criticize. »It sounds as if it weren't worth anything in the eyes of our society, even though we work with our hands. All other art has found its justification, but textile art has not reached that yet in the public understanding.« Also, the term they chose for themselves is vaguely connected with politics – the term »border« of all sorts, after all, resounds throughout the land. The artists did not so much mean the geographical borders but rather those which separate important from unimportant things, right from false, good from bad. They state: »By the variety offered in our show we wanted to hint at the extended meanings and to open up new perspectives.«

(PM)

### The Artists

Heidi Drahota | [www.heidi-drahota.de](http://www.heidi-drahota.de)  
Anne Jansen | [www.filzgestalten.de](http://www.filzgestalten.de)  
Johanna Spaethe | [www.werkstattuertextiles.de](http://www.werkstattuertextiles.de)  
Ruth Zenger | [ruth.zenger@gmx.de](mailto:ruth.zenger@gmx.de)

## Encounters with a Bite

*Sandra Struck-Germann showed her felted portraits and other objects in the premises of a dental clinic.*

For most of the audience their visit to the dentist was an agreeable occasion for once, since it was the opening night of the exhibit called »Begegnungen« (Encounters) showing works by the felt artist Sandra Struck-Germann in the Praxisklinik Denecke in Hildesheim. ☞ The guests were enchanted by the two- or three-dimensional images and sculptures made of Merino and Mountain Sheep Wool in needle-felt technique, like for example a big doll or a green iguana. Most of the visitors were pleasantly confronted with the manifold possibilities of the medium felt for the first time.

### A Family with a Pendant for Art

Sandra Struck-Germann made many of the exhibits especially for the show in the clinic, where four times a year artists can present their work. The Denecke family is very much interested in art. They not only offer the exhibition space but they buy art objects often. So the iguana has become part of their collection in the meantime. ☞ Heike Niekau, a co-worker at the clinic and the exhibition's organizer was enthusiastic about how photo-realistic Sandra Struck-Germann's portraits come across. In her opening speech she said: »How on earth she manages the expressions of the eyes that look at you so intensely, so clearly...« The natural, sustainable material wool, according to Niekau, befits the new, bio-influenced field of dentistry practiced there.

### New Projects

Sandra Struck-Germann has been working on interesting new projects in the meantime. She will take part in the tenth run of the sculptural path at the Rur in Linnich. Together with an international group of textile artists around Juliette Eckel called TEX NET2 she prepares an exhibit for 2020. Next to that she »researches in the field of portraiture in various techniques and materials like wool, charcoal, pastels, watercolour and acrylic painting.« Her very own, special method to depict faces in wool is passed on in various courses and workshops also this year. (see box)

HELENE WEINOLD

## Felt Expressions

*A joint exhibit in the Villa Stahmer attracted a lot of interest*

A communal work fraught with symbolism could be seen at the exhibition titled »Filz als Ausdruck« (Felt as Expression) in the Villa Stahmer in Georgsmarienhütte: Anke Güttler, Barbara Steffen-Munsberg, Karin Twelkemeier, Martina Adamietz, Monika Lammers and Ulrike Wieland had felted chain links from diverse kinds of wool – a donation by the Wollknoll company – and connected them to a long chain. Regarding this chain, one of the items on show together with further objects made by the six felt artists, Susanne Schächter-Heil, the chair of the German Filz-Netzwerk, said during the opening: »It shows something quite clearly. We are not satisfied by using one kind of wool only, and nothing that can be put together or is made from wool is safe from us feltmakers. Textiles, natural materials, even stones become part of the creative process, so that many different effects can be achieved with that one and only material, which remains always the same and still greatly versatile.«

☞ »You'll be surprised what can be made of felt«, Ansgar Pohlman, the mayor of Georgsmarienhütte promised in his greeting words. He as well as the artists themselves and Susanne Schächter-Heil emphasized the commitment of the museum director Inge Becher. »There is a big difference between felt artists and hobby feltmakers«, said Schächter-Heil. »We are very pleased that Mrs. Becher has acknowledged our contributions as pure art.«

☞ The artist Karin Twelkemeier joined in: »I would like that the visitors leave the exhibit with a different understanding for felt.« A wish that seems to have come true, since the show was prolonged for another couple of weeks.

(PM)

## It's All in the Head

*Paulien Sijtsema how to make life-like animals heads are made with a felt needle.*

Whoever sees the matted heads of Scottish Highland cattle or rams' heads with their spiral horns made by the six women in Paulien Sijtsema's course will look twice, only to realize that these are not taxidermists' specimen but felted heads instead. For three days, the Dutch women have sketched and built the heads and elaborated them with lots of details in Dorie van Dijk's Fiberfusing studio of. Their teacher Paulien Sijtsema, born in 1963, comes from a creative family. Her father was a carpenter and made furniture. In her youth she had already tried out various crafts such as ceramics, wood processing and making jewelry. »I grew up surrounded by the wonderful smell of fresh wood and I helped my father in his workshop on many occasions«, she remembers. »The sheer number of things he made out of wood kindled my imagination.«

### Wool Relaxes

Needle-felting she learnt from books by the Danish felt artist Birgitte Krag Hansen. »She showed me that the possibilities are inexhaustible.« In order to make the work easier for her and her students she has developed a special felt mat complete with a tool box and pincushion, the so-called PrikPlank, which she makes and sells herself. »When sitting at a table you can put the PrikPlank on your lap and lean it slightly askew against the tabletop«, she says. »This relieves neck, shoulders and back, leads to an ergonomic working posture and makes for a good view on your workpiece.«

### Important: Close Observation

Paulien Sijtsema has needle-felted her first sheep, »Klaartje«, in 2010. She was inspired by the impressive ice bear head made by another feltmaker and further encouraged by her uncle, a professional artist, who admonished her: »If you do something, keep the whole thing in mind, mind the depth and the shade...« She followed his advice, studied innumerable photographs and bought books in order to settle on the right expression for her first felted animal head.

☞ Since then she has continued to refine her technique and passes it on during courses, where – next to the heads of

sheep or Highland cattle - also ice bear or elks' heads come into being. »I hope to enlarge this animal family even further«, the artist told us. In her courses, each student works on the same basis and still is able to render a highly individual character, much to the joy of their teacher. »I really enjoy the outcomes and the happy human faces each time!«

HELENE WEINOLD

### Hints by Paulien Sijtsema

- If you want to make an animal head collect as many photographs as possible and try to look at your preferred animal in natura - for example in a sheep pen or a zoo. Make a drawing of the animal as a preparation for the felted object.
- When you pause during needle-felting always stick the felting needles back into the mat. When they lie around unprotected you can hurt yourself badly.

### Workshops with Paulien Sijtsema

- 15.-17.3., Vrouw Wolle, 2910 Essen/Belgium, [www.vrouwwolle.be](http://www.vrouwwolle.be)
- 30./31.8., Studio Fiberfusing, 1188 Amstelveen/The Netherlands <https://www.smore.com/2dbm0-animal-head>
- 16.-18.10. Wollknoll GmbH, 74420 Oberrot-Neuhausen, [www.wollknoll.de](http://www.wollknoll.de)

### Paulien Sijtsema on the Internet

<http://wolinhout.nl>

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## Simply Beastly!

*A course with Margit Röhm: Baskets, bags and backpacks in animal shapes.*

Animal-shaped vessels or containers: The theme introduced by Margit Röhm during her course at Filzrausch in Göttingen awoke my interest immediately - but was that possibly a bit too difficult for me? I am a newcomer still who works slowly - could I manage an item like that over the course of a weekend? But then I didn't know Margit Röhm better yet. Already during the felting camp in Neuenstall her flowing movements had caught my

eye in passing only, now I was able to experience her way of working from up close.

☞ Each participant came with exact ideas in mind to Göttingen and presented their projects. Margit Röhm immediately brought the image before her inner eye - and came up simultaneously with a list of details that we had to pay attention to. The objects she had brought along herself gave us additional encouragement to design the bag, basket or backpack.

### Valuable Advice

On the first day already we learnt priceless tricks of the trade, for example double bottoms for a better shaping, stencils for the hollow heads of our animals as well as funny fastenings for the inner or outer pockets. Margit Röhm's drive and ebullient imagination turned out to be contagious. Each single explanation for a desired surface was given individually and free of charge. ☞ My sheep's had stubbornly refused to look life-like: The mouth had turned out too narrowly after the fulling and the ears resembled rather that of a dog. So we both had a good laugh and imagined an evolution to a pig or a donkey - the more whimsical it became the more I liked my object.

### Everything will be finished!

Margit Röhm told us every day again: »With me, nobody will return home with an unfinished piece!« Most participants were doubtful and raised their eyebrows in disbelief until Sunday morning came. Our instructor amiably and gently propelled us in this direction, next to answering all our questions and then some regarding technique and design. At the end, each of us left overjoyed with a finished object.

☞ The best proof for our collective enthusiasm were all the spontaneous applications for her hand puppet course in November 2019, which will again be held at Filzrausch!

VERENA MACK

### Workshops with Margit Röhm

- 27th to 29th March School Cornet and Kindergarten bag 2
- 18th to 20th September Handpuppets beastly fantastic!
- 21st to 23rd. October Theatre Images / Story Chest
- 24th October Hand puppets Wollknoll GmbH, 74420 Oberrot-Neuhausen [www.wollknoll.de](http://www.wollknoll.de)

- 8th to 10th November Handpuppets beastly fantastic! Filzrausch, 37081 Göttingen [www.filzrausch.de](http://www.filzrausch.de)

### Margit Röhm on the Internet

[www.triluna.de](http://www.triluna.de)

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## Turbo Hats

*Headgear made from Pre-Felt with Susanne Christou in Oberrot*

A hat in only two days - from preparing the stencil to actually be able to put the finished hat on? This seemed a rather ambitious aim for the less than a dozen women who had assembled for Susanne Christou's course in the Oberrot Felting School. But the instructor kept on encouraging us and practiced a perfect check and balance strategy: When trying on her hat models she freely admitted in some cases those were rather for the 'second day' and recommended a simpler project for starters. The trick for efficient working ways: Pre-felt as a basic material instead of putting out wool flake for flake.

### A Great Choice of Forms

Susanne Christou not only had a choice of hand-dyed pre-felts handy, but also a wealth of stencils for all kinds of headgear, from a cap with ear flaps to tomboyish caps to classic gentlemen's hat forms which we could copy on foils.

☞ By means of the chosen stencils the pre-felt was cut doubly with a little excess. Then we brushed the edges of the single layers up and put them around the stencil like with the classical hollow felt. Those who liked it cut ornaments out of the pre-felts to be worked in afterwards.

☞ For the stability of the edge or brim of the hat a stripe of thick pre-felt was put on the lower edge of the two layers which were then felted as usual. For pleats which were later pushed to the height of a head sometimes a whole felting table was required.

☞ Extensive fulling drew the hats near their desired size. After having been repeatedly heated by the dampening iron they were finished under Susanne Christou's skilled instructions and then put on the hat models.

### Several Projects

Already after the lunch break of the first day a small collection of finished hats dried out over the models made from wood or plastic. Some of the participants started on a second project in the afternoon, and a few had managed to make a third hat on the second course day.

☞ So, at the end a whole headgear collection could be admired – from an extravagant fascinator to everyday's hats and caps to trendy hats to be worn in the sauna.

HELENE WEINOLD

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## Mandalas from Wood and Yarn

*Passanterie buttons made in the studio of Sabine Reichert-Kassube.*

My interest in individually made buttons goes back to when I was very young. Collecting buttons, cutting them off, sewing them on, needle them up or glue them onto something, using them in paintings – been there, done that already. My flat in Berlin and the Felt Barn on the studio farm in Werenzheim house so many buttons in jars or boxes.

☞ But to make a button myself had never before entered my mind. That is, never before Sabine Reichert-Kassube invited me to get acquainted with the century-old craft of passament button-making in her studio Arachne in Berlin Friedrichshagen over the course of a weekend. I had been familiar with the lecturer Helene Weinold as the editor of the *filzfun* magazine. Now I met her in a different role, i.e. that of a passament button maker.

### Only Buttons in My Head

What an experience! For two days, twelve other women and me twisted, coiled, weaved, embroidered – I can safely say that our heads were filled with buttons to the brim: there were precise instructions concerning the basic rules and working steps, interrupted from desperate cries for help by the beginners. Yet slowly a meditative stillness came over us, only interrupted by cheers when the grasping of the rules led to a certain rhythmic process which was called »mandala-making with yarn« promised by our lecturer. We made star-shaped buttons, smooth ones, Ottobeuren and Augsburg buttons of individually coloured shades out of fine cotton yarn over wooden blanks. Each of the students knew exactly how the small works of art should be put to use for further projects. In the end, the echo was unanimous: We will stick to the buttons!

MARIA SAGURNA

PAGE 28-31

## Felt sense ... or who has invented my life?

For more than twenty years, creations were made mostly with wool. All kinds of things really: toys, scarves, dresses, and handbags but also wall hangings, sculptures and fantastic costumes. If the medium is the message, as the Canadian Marshall McLuhan stated, then what is the revelation of this material? Are we artists not all driven by the tension between the desire to communicate and the desire to hide? Inspirations came and come from so many directions – some from walks in the forest, some from books or exhibits. Then there are ideas like the seven deadly sins or dreams like the garden of delights.

### But why this wool?

Why the loving of the felt?

Why love felt making?

☞ The wool is light and feral; it comes in so many colours and characters and qualities that surprise but also give tranquillity because it feels so strangely common.

☞ It is chaotic and wild and untamed, still so close to the animal, who grows it generously several times a year.

☞ Then the craft of felting, the entangling of the fibres to a sturdy, solid sculptable material. Felted, that fluffy soft hair is caught in a material which looks like something close to animal hides, maybe even our own skin.

☞ As wool it is free and flowing but as felt, it is imprisoned by its own hair.

☞ As substance it gives us protection, warmth, insulation but its density can also invite sensations of breathlessness maybe even suffocation.

☞ The feel of wool is inviting to touch – we felters can't resist the allure of its possibilities.

☞ The laying out of the carefully combed or carded fibres. Designs with intricate patterns and forms. Fascinating colour combinations, placing the wool filaments in all kind of directions sometimes mixed with silks or other fibres. This painting, this shingling hair by hair, done with presence and attention is calming for the mind. The result is enchanting.

☞ Everything changes when we start to felt – adding the soapy water, the rubbing and rolling, the endless massaging (Ever wondered what is behind that need of caressing our material for hours, maybe every day?). Gently to start with, to give the wool time to come together and then working with more force, entangles it forever in a new form.

☞ The final hardening and shaping is intense and sometimes almost violent, especially when the final work is voluminous and heavy in weight.

☞ The intense physical labour can be very gratifying when making very large pieces – almost a »peak« experience. It can take months to prepare and it can be physically painful in the body, but getting there, is very satisfying.

☞ The aliveness of this medium makes it feel close to our skin. The fact that we make it almost solely with our hands with no tools or screens, the experience of shaping the wool only with touch into a completely unique creation is outstanding.

☞ Sometimes it feels as if the making seems to be more important than what is made. Usually the final result leaves a feeling of disappointment. But never the less, the next idea is already popping up in the mind and creating excitement for the next project.

### And the message?

What is the message of all those soft sculptural pieces?

All those creations which look like mysterious hides or creatures from the sea

or maybe enchanted forests. Some remind us of body parts, strange organisms that look like animals but at the same time like plants or mushrooms or maybe corals. ~ Do they express sensations which otherwise would stay unnoticed but want to be seen and »felt«? ~ In fact, is not all art about existential questions? Who are we? What is life? Why death? What is the intent of sexuality? Why there is illness? Why are we alienation from our body?

#### Questions we have no conclusive answers for.

Maybe Art is an attempt to handle all those questions, like science and religion try in their own particular ways. Most of the felted art pieces are expressions of the struggle with the body –they are about death and sex, sometimes quite literarily express sensations or emotions. Does this art, do these felted pieces become a way to live, a way to survive? Still every day, when waking up the first thing really calling is the wool, the studio and the next creation to felt The wool, light and malleable but modest and so versatile. Its forgiving nature is inviting, relatively inexpensive easily open to extensive experimentation The closeness of felt, almost a second skin, a friendship without a friend.

MARJOLEIN DALLINGA

#### Masterclasses with Marjolein Dallinga

1st to 5th July, 2019  
"I've got you under my skin"  
(Sculptures in Felt)  
Wollknoll GmbH,  
74420 Oberrot-Neuhausen  
www.wollknoll.de

11th to 13th July, 2019  
Form in Felt  
Studio Sawatou Fiber Artist  
(Sawatou Mouratidou), Vienna, Austria  
sawatoum@yahoo.de

15th to 17th July 2019  
Sculptural Felt  
20th to 24th July, 2019  
Wearable Art  
Atelier du Bocage, La Couech,  
Montbrun-Bocage, France  
atelierdubocage31@gmail.com

#### Marjolein Dallinga on the Internet

www.bloomfelt.com  
Instagram: bl00mfelt  
Facebook: bloomfelt  
Pinterest: Marjolein Dallinga

PAGE 32-35

## A Colourful Fairy Tale World

*Katharina Thierer works as a feltmaker, puppeteer and a clown.*

»One can dance better on three legs«, Katharina Thierer believes. That is why she has created three legs to stand and dance on. Next to being a professional feltmaker (see filzfun no. 36, 2012) she has become a puppeteer and a clown, and all three professions have »come together to form a perfect and inspiring symbiosis«, as she put it. ~ The hand puppets with their curious little faces kindle interest immediately, be it on fairs or during performances – like for example in kindergartens or old peoples' homes, as soon as Katharina Thierer starts her stories. For that purpose, she has further developed a simple technique to be able to move the heads of the puppets. As arms and hands, she uses her own fingers which are put through the openings in the tiny dresses the puppets wear.

#### A Personal Style

»You look a lot like your figurines!« Katharina Thierer hears this statement often and it makes her happy »because I always wanted to go my own way. I believe that only when you start to play around yourself with wool, unafraid to make something new you'll be able to find your personal style.« ~ No doubt about it: The former employee of an architect's office has found exactly that, for her hand and finger puppets, but also the tiny seed and snail shell dolls bear her unique signature. While felting, Katharina Thierer thinks up stories which she tells in her internet blog »Allerleirauh bittet zum Tee« (a fairy tale character that wears an animal pelt in order to hide her identity and who invites to tea here) or, recently, in small video clips on Facebook or Instagram.

#### Moveable Heads

For her puppets she uses mainly new wool fleeces. »I only wet-felt, because I like the figurines to turn out robust and suitable for childrens' hands.« She not only acts with the puppets, but also sells them under her label AllerleiRauhFilz and makes them to order, like for kindergartens. »I truly love that work«, the artist says. »It keeps bringing out new ideas. The idea with the moveable heads was consequential, since I wanted that child care workers should be able to act in puppet shows in a simple fashion.« ~ The heads are made over a hollow felt stencil, »and to my astonishment each puppet invariably develops its own character«, the felt artist states. For the hairs she mostly sews wool from Tibetan lambs onto the heads. Animal figurines, like the ubiquitous unicorn, get their manes and tails from wool curls.

#### An Elf with Pearly Eyes

For the eyes, Katharina Thierer always uses materials which enhance the character and characteristic expression of the puppet. »The seed dolls and snail shell inhabitants draw much effect from embroidered eyes. For the small elves tiny pearls are the best choice. For the eyes I like doll eyes best, but bigger pearls also come in handy here.«

#### Performances in Old People's Homes

Zuppa, a felted dog is Katharina Thierer's partner in a play she wrote herself »Wilhelmine will nicht mehr. (Wilhelmine's no longer willing), a »touching story of fear, courage and a new beginning«. She has performed it many times under the



name of FigurenTheaterLibelle. When on the road as a clown in homes for the elderly she also never forgets to take a felted figurine along. »Especially those afflicted with dementia react very positively to the puppets«, she found out. But also on craft fairs, where she is always present in her threesome role, many grown-ups readily strike up a dialogue with a puppet: »It is hard not to be taken away by my figurines' charm. Whether the visitors are old or young, man or woman, they always go away with a smile on their face.«  
That she can never make a living from feltmaking alone has become an accepted fact. She cites the Dalai Lama: »The planet does not need any more successful people. What it really needs are peacemakers, healers, people who make positive changes and lovers of all shapes and colours.« With AllerleiRauhFilz the artist creates her own private colourful fairy tale world, she says. »Wool is the stuff my dreams are made of.«

HELENE WEINOLD

#### Katharina Thierer on the Internet

www.allerleirauhfilz.com  
www.figurentheater-libelle.ch

Blog and Social Media

Blog: <http://allerleirauh-bittet-zum-tee.blogspot.com>

Facebook: Allerleirauhfilz

Instagram: @allerleirauhfilz

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## The Entire World in a Cup

*Maike Leja Breitlauch creates scenes en miniature, spacious baskets and many decorative objects.*

A pair cycles across a hilltop, dressed in summer clothes, passing meadows and woods; two skiers come down a snow-covered bluff in wedeln style, a swimmer drifts on the blue sea in a floating tire: all scenes en miniature echoing the joy of living. The snowy mountain as well as the ocean fit exactly the width of a cup, the cycling excursion that of a French coffee bowl, called a Bol.

»Maike Leja Breitlauch aptly calls her idyllic felted dioramas, complete with tiny figures from model railroad constructions, »cup worlds« and gives imaginative individual titles to the various objects. So, the cycling scene is named »Around the World With You«, the ocean swim with the floating tire »Me and the Sea« and the ski-run »A Run like Cream«.

### Tiny Stories

The initial momentum for these extraordinary works was a matter of pure chance: »I got hold of my grandmother's cup collection which was dusting away in the cupboard and decided to change its fate«, the 48-year old artist from Bremerhaven tells us. »Then I slowly developed the idea of experimenting with surface structures, the results of which were placed inside a cup. But something was missing still – so the figures were added.«

»Sometimes the starting point is the porcelain, like the red-and white-annulated saucer for »Me and the Sea« which takes up the colours of the life-belt. Yet another time, first the story comes into existence, like with »Around the World With You«. In that case the matching cup was carefully chosen.«  
»The so-called cup world project extended over time. Breitlauch rummaged around flea markets and vintage shops, friends gave her some of their own and new stories emerged, all always fitting into a single cup. A choice of her cup worlds could be seen during an exhibit in Beverstedt last fall.

### Maritime Motifs

Maike Leja Breitlauch skills are not limited to making miniature formats. In her studio FILZBLAU she makes big, sturdy market baskets with maritime or floral motifs on the bottom, spacious shopping bags, extravagant vessels, scarves and lit wall objects.  
»For more than ten years now, felting has held an important place in the life of the trained industrial sales woman and EDV data processing project counsellor. Art and creative techniques like acryl painting, drawing with india ink and modelling with clay had interested her since her school days, »but my artistic strain hovered in the background first due to my work and then due to my children.«

### Training in Oberrot

When her daughter, who is now 20 years old and the eldest of her three children, went to the Waldorf Kindergarten Maike Leja Breitlauch encountered felting. Soon

she became fascinated with the many different modes of expression offered by the material. »I wanted to learn more about the craft. 2008 I began my training at the felting school Oberrot as a felt designer«, she says. As graduation workpiece she made lit ball objects titled »Scheinbar – Sichtbar (approx. Seemingly – Visible) She has maintained contact with many of the other felt designers from her graduation year and together they are currently planning an exhibition.«  
»Since the end of her training the artist has been visiting various courses almost every year. So she has learnt about dyeing with acidic colours (with Gabriele Breuer), deepened her knowledge on her own designs (with Inge Bauer), recycled in connection with felting (at Lyda Rump's courses), designed and felted scarves and special bag forms (with the Japanese artist Rutsuko Sakata) and last but not least she worked on surface structures and stamping or printing on felt (with Ricarda ABmann).  
Her studio in Wulsdorf, a part of the city of Bremerhaven, is a former bakery. Her husband suggested the name FILZBLAU: »Since here in the North we are deeply related to water, the colour blue was never far away. I connect with it both the sky and the sea and it symbolizes freedom and everything that is free.«

### Never Short of Ideas

The artist especially likes to make round vessels, e.g. the baskets. »I enjoy it the most when I have enough time and get into the so-called 'flow', e.g. when I make a whole series of objects like the market baskets«, she explains. »I think about the design, sometimes I make sketches and start. In most cases the idea for the next basket or the next object pop up while felting. My ideas start to bubble up. This state is wonderful, but there is hardly the time to realize them all.« She notes her ideas in a small book in order to refer to them for further projects.

»For her felted objects, Maike Leja Breitlauch combines various different kinds of wool. When the felt should become really sturdy wool from the Tyrolean Mountain Sheep and fine Merino are called for. Added are, especially when nuno felting, other materials, e.g. different qualities of silk, plant fibres like coconut or ramie, curls from natural wool, fabrics and others.

»Wool strands, silk fabrics, fibres and hankies, raw wool curls and pre-felts are dyed in a preserve pot with acid colours. »Dyeing has an experimental character in

my case. I decide on the basic direction the colour should take, but because all the different materials react to dye in a different way there are many results to be reckoned with, it is difficult to really plan them.« In order to get an especially beautiful depth she sometimes mixes various kinds of wool in different colours in the carding machine.

### Solid like Pottery

The felted objects are treated manually only. The only assistance may be a palm washboard or finer timbering tools, with the help of which the felt is formed as desired. »I like to work with my hands, even if working on big objects can be very strenuous«, she says. »But I love the moment when felt turns into something as hardy as a pottery.« The finishing touches on the baskets and ball vessels are done by a razor or the kemp is singed away, so that patterns and motifs become more clearly defined.

☞ Through her work she has broadened her networking effort by contacting other artists from areas such as print graphics, photography, painting, ceramics and mask art. Since 2017 she engages in the »Kunststreiben« (approx. »Artistic Ways«) movement, a fusion movement of eleven like-minded artists.

☞ Apart from these commitments she likes to teach her skills in courses and workshops. (For an overview, please refer to the internet). In her studio baskets, cushions, storm lamps, sheaths for bed-bottles or »trivia« like blossoms or necklaces are made. I love it when everybody gets going, doing something with full, conscious attention and consequently relaxes in its aftermath. This always has been a precious moment for me.«

HELENE WEINOLD

### Maika Leja Breitlauch on the Internet

www.filzblau.de

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## Wensleydale and Teeswater – Noble Curls

### Wensleydale History

Often the name of the English sheep breeds refers to their place of origin. The Wensleydale Sheep come from the valleys of Yorkshire in northern England or, more precisely, the Wensley valley (dale means valley) The race was first documented at the end of the 1830ies. It is a result of a cross-breeding of a Dishley Leicester ram (the ancestor of today's Blue Faced Leicester) and a local longwool race called Muggs (presumably Teeswater sheep.) The most famous sheep from this first breeding, a stock character of every breed description, is the ram Bluecap.

☞ Wensleydale belong to the English longwool sheep. Compared to the old country sheep races that can be found in Germany it is a very recent breed. Only 1876 it was officially introduced as a proper race under the name »Wensleydale«.

☞ Until the 1920ies the number of the sheep breeders increased to approx. 130 registered breeding stocks. After 1930 the breeding of this race was stalled to such an extent that they were put on the list of endangered breeds by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust in 1973. From 1980 on the stock grew again slowly, but even today the Wensleydale belong to the rare and endangered sheep of Great Britain.

☞ At present in Germany approx. 300 to 400 such animals are kept, which is only an estimation. Most of these sheep are only small livestock and only a fraction of those is registered in the stock almanac.

### Description

When feltmakers hear about Wensleydale sheep they immediately think of beautiful white corkscrew locks that are their most outstanding characteristic.

☞ The biggest part of the Wensleydale stock is of white »Farbschlag« (approx. colouring, but the technical term), but there are also dark Wensleydale with many variations ranging from black over brown to grey shades. Since a breeding almanac for black Wensleydale was introduced only at the end of 1990 the dark stock is very small.

☞ This race belongs to the heaviest sheep in Great Britain. They have a broader build than other races and a strong neck. The ewes reach a weight of 90 kg, the rams up to 130 kg.

☞ Only with three years the Wensleydale are fully grown. Where they come from they are considered very sturdy. In Germany they are said to be quite demanding animals, but they still do fine in an outdoor pen. They need to be well fed, also in winter.

☞ Moreover, they need more copper elements in their nutrition than other sheep. If they lack the element the wool staples become less curly.

### Wool

Typically for English longwool sheep also the Wensleydale have beautiful, evenly wavy curls.

☞ The curls can reach a length of 25-35 cm with yearlings during their first shearing. With fully grown specimen the curls reach a length of 12 to 20 cm at a yearly shearing. If they are shorn twice the locks turn out shorter and only reach a length from 12 to 15 cm.

☞ The wool yields on record are strongly fluctuating, but it can be stated that a fleece of a yearly shearing weighs five to seven kilos. A so-called shearling fleece (of a yearling) can weigh up to seven or eight kilos. But with this race more waste wool has to be sorted out than with other breeds, since Wensleydale have wool all over their bodies save for a few patches. The fineness according to the official sources ranges from 33 to 35 micron.

### Teeswater History

Other than the Wensleydale, whose origin can be traced back minutely, all that is known of the Teeswaters' origin is that they emerged from a big sheep breed introduced by the Romans. This big breed is also the ancestor of many other longwool races, according to the English Breeders' Association, such as Lincoln, Devon, Cotswold or Leicester Longwool.

☞ The Teeswater were first registered at the beginning of the 18th century when they were exported to Tasmania,

Kind of wool	Starting weight	Starting Size	End size	Shrinking Factor
Wensleydale black	3g	20 cm × 20 cm	9 x 8,8 cm	2,2
Wensleydale black	10g	20 cm × 20 cm	12,5 x 12,5 cm	1,6
Wensleydale white	3g	20 cm × 20 cm	9,5 x 9,3 cm	2,1
Wensleydale white	10g	20 cm × 20 cm	12,5 x 12,5 cm	1,6
Teeswater	3g	20 cm × 20 cm	8,5 x 8,8 cm	2,35
Teeswater	10g	20 cm × 20 cm	12,5 x 12,5 cm	1,6

## Textile Design with Mediumprint

*Olga Kazanskaya explains the combination technique of ecoprinting and batik dyeing.*

Ecoprint, the dyeing and printing with whole plants and parts thereof has become very popular over the last years. Those who have tried it will never forget their joy facing the first plant prints on fabrics. In order to achieve special effects, the dyers use various mordants and natural extracts. This is often worthwhile: The results are unique and sometimes even look like antique etchings.

☞ Seen from the chemical aspects for defined edges and durable prints you need a high cohesiveness between fibres and dye. Tanning agents have the highest affinity towards natural fibres. In order to develop the colours, they need metal ions, e.g. iron. So graphical structures are achieved. To get a strong colour background you can use natural dyes (cochenille, madder, logwood etc.) The dyes, however, change through the adding of iron, and precisely this makes this technique so intricate.

☞ Almost ten years ago Dina Ronina and I developed a method we call Mediumprint that has often been put to use since then.

☞ Mediumprint is a combination of Ecoprinting, the contact dyeing with plants, and batik or »resist dyeing« (see filzfun no. 48, 2015) This dyeing method can vastly improve the colour palette and graphic delineation while maintaining the magic of contact dyeing.

### Exact Silhouettes

The basic principle is that the background dye does not come from the solvent (liquor) but is put on by means of a carrier (fabric or paper). In this way you get very beautiful images of leaves and other plant parts which, in this case, both serve as resist and colour source. It is important to use synthetic dyes which offer the best cohesion to the fibres: This results in a good resolution, very exact silhouettes and lines as well as durable prints. Aniline colours, with a few exceptions, are independent from iron, which means they don't darken once they have come into contact with it. For contact dyeing with mordants there are several possibilities: The plant parts can be laid in the mordant, the

an island off the Australian coast. They were named after the river Tees. The local farmers there just called them Mug Tups, and even today they go by the name of Muggs in northern England.

☞ In the 1920 they were close to extinction, until word got around that the rams can be cross-bred favourably with mountain sheep. This cross-breed is known as Masham. The most famous race that came from a cross-breeding with a Mugg ewe are the Wensleydale, for which a breeders' association was founded in 1949. The race has become very popular due to its inherent cross breeding qualities and possibilities. Still they have not left the list of endangered sheep breeds.

### Description

While the other longwool races kept their white heads, the Teeswater developed a white face with a dark nose, dark hair around the eyes and, in part, dark ears and legs. Other than the Wensleydale the Teeswater's face is hairy, but not particularly woolly, which at least was my personal impression in England.

☞ They also make for the biggest sheep: The ewes can weigh up to 90 kilos and the rams up to 120 kilos.

☞ Also, the Teeswater are supposed to be a very sturdy race, but they are dependent on good winter feeding as well. They procreate very much, the lamb quote with ewes is 200 %, which means that they often give birth to twins. This fertility moves along when they are cross-bred with other races.

### Wool

Teeswater sheep also have white curls over their whole body, but I thought they did not have the corkscrew quality which is typical for the Wensleydale. The curls have a beautiful shine and reach a length of 20 to 25 cm with a full-grown specimen. The shearing results of yearlings also show considerably longer measurements.

☞ The fibre strength is 32 to 53 micron and the fleece weights four to eight kilos.

YASMIN GROSS

### Wool and Felting Quality

The felting tests for both races are presented simultaneously here, since it has become clear that their wool shows similar characteristics and reactions.

☞ For each breed I made two felting samples of different weight. From the Wensleydale I have long black and much

shorter white wool. It can be assumed that the short wool comes from a second shearing. Unfortunately, I couldn't examine whole fleeces since Wensleydale wool is sold in single curls as a rule. Regarding the total amount one can detect different qualities in one fleece. The black Wensleydale wool has a pultruded fibre length of approx. 30 cm, the white one of approx. 17 cm. The Teeswater wool has a fibre length of about 25 cm. In any case, a felting sample each of 3 g and one with 10 g was laid on a surface of 20 x 20 cm and shrunk. The table (down, right) shows the results achieved.

☞ The most surprising result regarding the Wensleydale wool was that both qualities shrunk more or less to the same length, something I would not have expected with such differences in fibre length. It wets easily, which is due to a less resistant wool grease. Even at first glance the wool seems greasy at the cutting edges, but it is a rather oily substance, not the yellow, sticky lanoline.

☞ The same results came out with the Teeswater wool which also reacts similar to felting.

☞ It should be emphasized that the finished felts have an extraordinarily beautiful structure. Especially for see-through objects Wensleydale wool is highly suitable.

### Felting of Furs

These breeds' wool is preferably felted on in single locks due to their highly pleasant optic effects. It is not easy to put the curls onto the felt, though, since underwool is almost non-existent and the curls have to reach a certain cohesion among themselves alone. But this leads almost invariably to the fact that the locks get matted into »dreadlocks«. To strike a certain balance is called for. Still, with some diligence it is possible to felt furs of great beauty.

### Conclusion

The noble curls of Wensleydale and Teeswater are a stock item of the felters' world. They are very fine, wonderfully soft to the touch and therefore very suitable for making clothes. For dolls' hair and for decorations of all kinds they produce impressive effects. But nobility has its price!

MARGIT RÖHM

mordant can be put on directly on the fabric, which can also be prepared with it beforehand. Mordants are, amongst others, solutions of copper or iron sulfates.

### Transfer by Heat

The schematic depiction on the right shows such a process. Silk, prepared plants and the carrier material are laid out on top of each other between two layers of boil-proof, thin plastic foil, then tied up into a bundle or weighted down heavily. Then the colour is transmitted by heat, i.e. by boiling or steaming, for example in a pressure cooker.

∞ Many processes now run simultaneously: a transfer from the aniline colours from carrier to fabric and the fixing of the colours onto the fabric, an extraction of the natural components from the plants and their fixing on the fabric while being modified with iron ions at the same time.

∞ Mediumprint is especially lovely on animal fibres, such as silk or wool fabrics and on nuno felt. Should nunofelt be treated with the Mediumprint method take care that the surface is smooth. We recommend using silke gauze (e.g. Margillan silke) or chiffon as pongé for the nunofelt. For treating nuno felt we further suggest you use a thicker carrier fabric and tie the bundle extra tightly.

∞ Who wants to work with plant fibres (cotton, viscose etc.) can use Simplicol colours to make for example arresting patchwork material.

OLGA KAZANSKAYA

### Olga Kazanskaya

The biologist Olga Kazanskaya from Russia has been working as a freelance textile artist for years. In her studio in Buchen (Odenwald) she works in modern felting techniques and makes seamless felted clothing of perfect fit, interior decoration accessories as well as bags from raw wool fleeces in medieval style. She lectures in courses all over Europe and the US.  
[www.woolmasters.com](http://www.woolmasters.com)

### Masterclasses with Olga Kazanskaya

7.-9.5. Mediumprint  
10.-12.5. Dyeing and Printing with Plants  
Atelier Fiberfusing, 1188 Amstelveen/  
The Netherlands  
[www.smore.com/ywk97-felt-atelier-fiberfusing-2019](http://www.smore.com/ywk97-felt-atelier-fiberfusing-2019)

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## F for Felt and Fantasy

*Isabella Scherabon and her project »Wechselwolle« (wool in the valley of the river Wechsel) promote creativity at Austrian schools.*

For children and teenagers, the fashioning with wool and felt can represent an invitation to a very special world. Unfortunately, the European educational politics seem to increasingly treat the creative urge of small and young children as a negligible asset. Considered important are the so-called MINT subjects: mathematics, natural sciences, technical education and computer sciences. Crucial are the economic benefits, the standardized number and the programmed cycles. With such an emphasis on rational learning, often under considerable pressure, the creative potential of a whole generation is given away for free.

∞ The digital world has entered families and classrooms and has its share to fill the empty spaces that imagination so urgently needs. Independent thinking seems to atrophy further with all sorts of ready-made content and multiple-choice tests.

### Whole Areas of Expertise Get Lost

Teachers continue to deplore the fast advancing loss of the simplest craft skills, like for example holding a pair of scissors or to organize a working space or working processes. Not to mention sewing, knitting, embroidering or crocheting – this is no longer taught in the general basic training for teachers even.

Kids are curious and like to experiment, they love exciting ideas, to make fun and to tinker around. These are the best prerequisites for working with wool and natural fibres! If teachers learn to tear themselves away from the idea of a »pattern« or »template« (like the cookie cutter or Styrofoam egg) it would already be a step in the right direction to stop these mechanisms.

### Wool Inspires

If you let the pupils work with the colourful curls and fleeces in peace and let them develop their own ideas, you'll find an astonishing amount of possibilities, ways of making, so many

interesting mental leaps! Without any further prompting they work with a lot of concentration, help each other, ideas are exchanged from one working place to the next. Kids with behavioural problems show a new side to them: They can be persevering, exact, individual and self-conscious regarding their own creations. And the felting needle is always treated with a lot of respect and caution even by pre-school children.

∞ The project Wechselwolle in the eastern Alps in Lower Austria has included regional schools and kindergartens from the very beginning. Since 2015 hundreds of children and youths from 4 to 15 years have designed many stations at the two felt art hiking paths in the woods side by side with renowned textile artists. In 2018 they have made many exciting projects parallel to the exhibition »Schaf trifft Baum (Sheep Meets Tree) of the Wollmodus association.

### Project Wechselwolle

As handicraft and manual training lessons have become increasingly rare in all school types (if taught at all it is in bigger groups and shorter hours) it is left to each committed pedagogue to keep important manual handicrafts alive. The enthusiasm with which the project Wechselwolle is met by the schools clearly shows the need of outside support. The schools apply for participation, and in the different projects there are many opportunities to deal with the probably oldest craft, felting, and to learn about the different wool qualities and the required tools. Moreover, global textile marketing, the long transportation ways, animal farming not appropriate to the species, the excessive use of chemicals in the treatment and stabilization of textile fibres can be discussed in the classroom in this context. It is also possible to sensitize the students in their often-unconscious function as the main target group of advertising fashion and shopping on a grand scale. If we are willing to maintain the immense creative potential of wool and the special quality work in the international scene, we only have to look around to realize: We need new generations here – kindergartens, schools and whole families are therefore called into action! In Austria, art projects at schools can be billed to kulturkontakt Austria: They take

over half of the instructors' wages and the expenses for materials.

ISABELLA SCHERABON  
[www.wechselwolle.at](http://www.wechselwolle.at)  
[www.kulturkontakt.or.at](http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at)

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## A Lace Ace

*Peter Paul Hempel transfers bobbin lace into felt.*

Who thought that in the German feltmakers' scene there are only three men is wrong. There is a fourth one who has remained unknown in the felting world so far. Still, Peter Paul Hempel is the bedrock of the Berlin fashion scene and the German Bobbin Lace Association. His bobbin laces are highly filigree and technically demanding projects, often in the shape of fashionable accessories, made of innovative materials.

☞ Since I have known his bobbin lace making, I know I'll always stay in my infant's shoes compared to him. Yet I like to make delicately felted lace cloths that are further enhanced by filigree bobbin lace inserts.

### Encounter in Chorin

We first met during the so called Spitzenfrühling (Lace Spring) in Chorin in 2016, an exhibition around bobbin lace and its making. Hempel saw my red lace felt cloth on the bobbin sack with lace elements and was immediately taken by the possibility to combine felted objects with the art of bobbin lace making.

☞ At the Textile Art Berlin he applied for the felting course »Lace Felt« and has been attending similar events ever since. Each of his art works are worn by his wife only once and only at special occasions. For all ladies present in the course it is a great gift to hear him tell his interesting stories or sharing his extensive knowledge of the fashion and textile. Especially regarding bobbin lace-making I was able to learn a lot from him.

### Light and Dense at the Same Time

It made me kind of sad that he never seemed to be wholly satisfied with the felting results he achieved. In spring he

showed me an image of an old bobbin lace: very beautiful and delicate, with irregular linen gradients and breaks, yet very modern-seeming for what it was. This kind of lace he wanted to felt in the shape of a collar sleeve.

☞ For two days we worked intensely side by side at a temperature of 35 degrees Celsius. We began with the back part, and in contrast to the straight cut he usually preferred I could persuade Hempel to work in an asymmetric line for once. In the upper, dense part wafer-thin cotton gauze I had brought back from Kyrgyzstan was used as a carrier material for rings made from a spray of Merino wool. The lower, lighter part was laid out with wool even more sparsely. Instead of the gauze we used an effect yarn there and silk fibres to connect it all.

☞ With traditional bobbin lace-making Peter Paul Hempel would have worked on the collar for months, in the felting technique we were able to make it in two days. The principle of moving from density to lightness is clearly recognizable here. This time Hempel was very satisfied with the result. To tell the truth, his collar is more beautiful than mine. He is, after all, a true lace ace.

SABINE REICHERT-KASSUBE

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## Woolly Nests for Squirrels

*In felted dreys orphaned baby squirrels find protection in wards for wild animals. Martina Schmickler is engaged in wild animal help and gets a lot of support from the felting scene.*

I had been a wild animal protection activist already for a while when I wanted to felt a drey for baby squirrels for a protective ward. I had no experience in dry felting, so my first try failed completely.

☞ A helpful feltmaker in my neighbourhood showed me the basics of wet felting. This not only solved my drey problem but laid the groundstone for a new passion.

☞ In April 2017 I received an inquiry of

a wild animal ward for more felted dreys. In spring many animals have their young and within soon more and more orphaned or hurt baby squirrels are delivered to the ward each year. It became clear that I would need help fast in order to make several dreys for the animals.

☞ Supported by the administrators I asked around in the Facebook group Filzen-Nadelfilzen-Nassfilzen-Felt who would be willing to felt and donate a drey for animal protection purposes.

### A Wave of Support Offers

A veritable wave of support offers was the answer. Short instructions were made, addresses were exchanged, people felted together and in the wink of an eye more than twenty felted dreys in different colours, sizes, designs and variants were ready for moving in – one being more beautiful than the next. I had never dreamt of such a positive feedback.

☞ As thank you notes for their woolly pieces of art the feltmakers received photos of the dreys from the wards, complete with their furry lodgers, some of which we show on this double page. The effort clearly was worth the while.

☞ Even now many feltmakers are still in contact with wards and other protection sites and keep making dreys for the tiny foundlings, in full accordance with Bertha von Suttner's motto: »After 'loving', 'helping' is the most beautiful verb in the world.«

MARTINA SCHMICKLER

## Squirrel Drays

### What you should keep in mind:

Felted dreys are used in many wild life wards as lairs for squirrels and dormice. They serve as a home substitute for the time of the caretaking and raising the animals to the point of their release into the wild again. They should be made according to the special requirements of the animals. Here the criteria to be adhered to in every case:

- Independent from the size the dreys should be felted through and through completely to form a sturdy nest that is also suitable for climbing exercises. This further enables the workers of the wards to wash them properly after they have been abandoned.
- So that the animals are not endangered only short-fibred fleece wool should be put to use, so the animals can't strangle themselves on any longer fibres.
- The entrance hole should be positioned in the upper third part of the drey, so the band has enough room to cuddle, since squirrels are best cared for – if possible – in groups.
- Every now and then a caregiver has to count the animals, which means that the entry hole has to let a hand through to take the young ones out.
- The dreys are not equipped with a vehicle inspection sticker (TÜV certificate in Germany) but they have to be fastened absolutely securely, especially when they are put up in outdoor aviaries at greater heights. The best fastening method is a finger-thick, felted string of at least 60 cm length.

Please find a detailed and illustrated step-for-step instruction for a squirrel drey on the following pages.

Those who like the idea and want to help with felting but have no contact of their own to a wild animal ward in their vicinity should try the Facebook group Filzen–Nadelfilzen–Nassfilzen–Felt for supportive action. They publish calls for such projects and make sure that the help given reaches its proper destiny.

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## Felt Your Own Squirrel Drey

*Protective wards for wild animals like to put up felted dreys for orphaned or hurt squirrels before they are permanently released into the wild again. Such a sturdy drey can house several young squirrels with its diameter of approx. 30 cm and is suitable for the roofed area of an outdoor aviary.*

### Material

- ~ 400 g wool in fleece (e.g. Mountain Sheep, Southern German Merino, Karakul or Kap Merino wool)
- ~ 1 piece thin sound insulation foil or bubble foil for the stencil, at least 50 x 50 cm
- ~ 2 pieces of bubble foil, each at least 80 x 80 cm
- ~ Gauze
- ~ Ball or water sprinkler
- ~ Soap and Water
- ~ Pointed scissors and household scissors
- ~ A big towel or other sturdy fabrics, approx. 80 x 80 cm

### Instructions

1. Cut a round stencil with a diameter of 50 cm from the piece of foil measuring 50 x 50 cm. To draw a circle in this size, take a kitchen bowl or a round table set. You can also improvise a spring bow with a pencil and a piece of string (25 cm length). Put the cut-out stencil aside for the time being.

2. First the string to hang up the drey is felted. It has to be long enough to be able to fasten the drey safely in the aviary. You are on the safe side with a length of 60 to 80 cm and a diameter of the thickness of a thumb. From the desired fleece wool, 2 almost identically big strands (approx. 1 m) should be taken from the amount of about 30 g of fleece wool on a piece of the big bubble foil (bubbles upward). Lay a generous 10 cm over the edge of the foil. This piece has to be kept dry during the further proceedings. Put the other strand aside.

3. The remaining wool for the string should be laid out cross- and lengthwise over the strand already prepared, keep the lower, dry end in mind. The other end should peter out pointedly.

4. The last layer then is the second strand that has been laid aside. The laid-out wool (without the lower end!) is well moistened with soapy water. By means of the foil, which is rolled up, press the air out of the wool. Then the string can be decorated with coloured wool fibres if so desired.

5. Now full the string firmly and keep again in mind the lower end which has to remain dry. The string is best prepared when it hardly gives under pressure.

6. Then pick the dry end apart evenly in a circle of about 10 cm. There the string will be felted onto the drey later. Put the so-prepared string aside.

7. Now we start making the drey itself. Divide the wool in 4 parts which all should have the same weight. Per side a total of 8 layers should be made.

8. For this, the first wool portion is divided again into four parts. The first layer should be laid out fanwise from the middle and should overlap slightly.

9. The second layer is done in a circle. The third one should be processed like the first and the fourth like the second one.

10. When the fourth layer is placed, moisten everything with warm soapy water and put the second big piece of bubble foil on top. (Bubbles on top of the wool) and press the air out. Spray some water on the second foil and felt the wool on in circular movements.

11. Turn the whole thing around with the two foils. Moisten the edge and put the overlapping wool fibres tightly around the stencil's edge.

12. On the second side lay out 4 layers of wool like on the first side. The fibres should be laid out together with the first two layers only up to the reverted overlap on the other side. The following two layers should be laid out across the whole surface plus the overlap. Moisten the wool, felt it on and turn everything around again. The next 4 layers should be laid out on the first side like before, felt it anew and turn it around.

13. Now the string is put on the second side. The dry fibres,

picked out so they form a circle, should be pulled apart as far as the wet, felted part of the string allows this. Put it on the middle of the first side, moisten it and felt it on well by hand (your other hand holds the string in position). Make sure that the string is always and everywhere connected to the wool!

**14.** Now the last layers of wool should be divided onto this side. Take good care that the flatly felted-on fibres of the string should be well covered. Moisten everything and felt it until the string is strongly connected to the hollow form. So, the piece can be turned around without damaging it. Turn the piece around now. Moisten the edge again and put the overlapping wool fibres tightly around the stencil. Felt this side on really well.

**15.** When both sides are well felted on you can start with the rolling of the two foils. Press the cold water out and substitute it with hot water. Full both sides 50 times in each direction. After fulling it 50 times the work should be turned at a 90 degree angle and fullled again. Each side of the project will so be fullled 200 times. Always check in intervals whether the string holds well.

**16.** When the drey has shrunk considerably, cut a small hole (approx. 10 cm) below the string and remove the foil. Continue to full the drey and throw it later.

**17.** Keep changing the fulling direction again and again and substitute the cold with hot water.

**18.** When the working piece has reached a diameter of approx. 30 cm enlarge the hole so that a hand fits through. Felt the cutting edges again and form the drey. You can put a big balloon inside, blow it up and shape the drey accordingly.

**19.** A small piece of advice: If the fulling gets too strenuous, the hot felt can be densified further by beating it with a wooden kitchen spoon.

**20.** When the drey has reached the desired end measurements rinse it in vinegar water, stuff it with a balloon or foil and let it dry. Ready for the housewarming party!

MARTINA SCHMICKLER

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## ჭბობის Theka: Felted Carpets from Georgia

*Twenty years ago, at the occasion of an international feltmakers' meeting, Mari Nagy and István Vidák visited the Omalo village in the Georgian region Tusheti. There they made a film about the making of a felted carpet and learnt a lot of interesting facts about the local felting tradition and its inherent symbolism.*

This state in the Caucasus, Georgia, boasts of one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in the world with its gigantic mountains, fertile valleys and enchanting villages and cities. Kwemo Alwani is a small town in the region Tusheti. In the surrounding villages there are still families who use old and new felt carpets. The oldest ones which we already admired back in 1999 are patterned with plant-dyed wool.

### Camping in the Mountains

In 1984, the Georgian professor David Zizischvili reported from the international conference of felt art in Kecskemét: »The felted carpets in our region have a special name: Theka. The woven carpets, which have the same age are called Pardaga. Both types are used simultaneously.« For a night camp on the alp meadows the first move towards bedding is a thick layer of hay on the ground. Then comes a felted carpet and, as the uppermost layer, a woven one. The head rests on a wooden saddle and a shepherd's coat called Burka serves as a blanket.

### Measurements and Forms

We discovered felted carpets in three variations. Narrow ones of a width of barely a meter and 2.5 to 4 m length are put on the ground, and the women can sit on it and do their handicraft. The second group are wide but short carpets (approx 1.60 m x 1.10 m) that are often used as wall hangings. One can find them at practically every wedding held. And at last we saw several felted carpets of a length of 2 m and 1 m wide which lay hidden in the beds. When we requested to see them, one lady of the house brought out one to a balcony so we could take a photo.

### The Symbolism of the Patterns

The ethnologist Nina Kipschidze explained some of the most important motifs on the felted carpets and their respective meaning: »Three overlapping circles symbolize the moon, one or two circle the human eye. Rays running out of the circle stand for the sun. Two straight lines and two meandering ones mean a mountain path. As a religious symbol we often find the cross. These traditional motifs are often a lot older than their actual names.«

☞ The carpets are bordered all around and often optically divided in the middle by a further line. We wanted to know what this middle line meant and were told by a local source: »This line symbolizes a welded iron chain with a hook at the end. The fireplace is the centre of the house and of our life as well. Above the fire hangs a pot on a chain in which we cook. Often we work ram's horn motifs into our carpets which either show or call for affluence and material comfort.«

☞ The monochrome carpets without any motifs are called »Schawienabadi«, the colourfully decorated ones as »Tschrelnabadi«. Before the 2nd World War the motifs were still felted with plant-dyed wool and the pointed ends were cut out of pre-felts.

☞ The carpets made after World War II show white, green, blue and red motifs on a chestnut-coloured base. The wool for the patterns was dyed with chemicals even then. The carpets with the white base were patterned in the same colours and additionally in brown. Some carpets were made from chestnut-coloured wool in one half and the other from bone-white wool.

☞ The felt carpets which were made after the 1960ies for weddings were somewhat smaller than their older predecessors. They showed quaint motifs which were colourfully made on a white base.

### Felting in a Group

The farmers' wives told us that in Tusheti only the women felt the carpet in a communal effort. Because felting is hard physical labor relatives or friends are required to help. Groups of two to four felters form who are instructed by the feltmaker with the most profound experience.

☞ According to our own felting experiences, it is better to put the motifs on a mat first and then loose wool as a base on top. In Tusheti, the female feltmakers work exactly in the opposite:

They put the wool down as a base first and then place the motifs on top. Luckily, we were able to follow and to document the carpet-making from beginning to end.

### Old Customs

Felt plays an important role from birth until death in Georgia. It is further said to have healing powers. When a child was born it was lifted up first, then washed in warm salt water and put on white felt. A sick person was laid on one half

of the felt carpet and then covered with the other for protection. Spiral motifs shielded her or him from the evil eye. The deceased were immediately taken to an empty room and bedded on a felted carpet in a very dignified. After a year had passed, a special ritual was held, about some details of which we were informed by Nanuli Asikuri, the museum director of the Omalo village. The report concerns a male: »The head of the family invited the relatives, acquaintances

and friends for a meal in the memory of the deceased. After that, his knife, belt and burka are put on a low table. The female relatives bemoaned his death in candle-light. At the same time, the men were holding a riding competition in his memory.«

MARI NAGY AND ISTVÁN VIDÁK  
IN CO-OPERATION WITH TRUDI JANKER

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