

# filzfun – The English Supplement

## Issue #65

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Dear Readers,

for many feltmakers, the most beautiful season of the year is close: The garden has already become wintery calm, so you can felt presents for your family and friends to your heart's desire or leaf cozily through the *filzfun*. The winter also comes to the miniature world of Cheddar, Mozzarella and all the other tiny felted mice that live in Beate Felten-Leidel's flat. The writer and translator loves her little crowd, now amounting to more than sixty mice, and claims they all have special character traits. How she discovered her passion for mice and how enchantingly she furnished their small dwellings you can read (and see!) as of page 50.

Of course there is a café in Mouseville, where cookies will be baked in the coming weeks – just as it happens in the primary schools where Inga Dünkelberg-Nieman teaches (see page 47ff.) But her cookies are made of felt, so naturally, they have no calories (except maybe for moths). The pupils were enthusiastic about their Christmas feltmaking. For all of us who have left primary school already Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann offers instructions to make your own decorative goodies from wool.

Photographs of Sara Sagevik's wedding amply prove that young love can melt the severest frost (as of page 32):

The young Scandinavian got married in the snow – in a bridal state that her mother felted for her, inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale "The Snow Queen".

Editorial announcement: We would like to address a

matter that is of enormous importance for the continuity of your feltmakers' magazine. Since 2005 we were able to keep the price for the *filzfun* constant – despite the fact that all costs have steadily increased. Scale and design of the *filzfun* have developed. 15 years ago the „verFiltz Und zugenNäht“ had 36 pages. Today we present the world of felt art on 68 pages.

Also factors which we cannot influence have resulted in additional cost, e.g. the postal charges. It is our goal to make an exciting, appealing magazine in the coming years as well, but we do need your support. The price for the yearly subscription of the *filzfun* for clients abroad is 39,90 € (postal cost included) as of December 4th, 2019. With that we will be able to ensure the continuity of your magazine.

*Best wishes,  
Your filzfun team*

Your direct contact to the editorial department:

redaktion@filzfun.de

The winter issue will be published on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Editorial deadline: December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## Workshops and Exhibition at the Felting Encounter

The picturesque cloister Roggenburg in the country district Neu-Ulm will be the meeting spot for feltmakers from Germany and the neighboring countries from February 27th to March 1st 2020. The 25th German-speaking encounter bears the motto »Maskerade (Masquerade)«. As habitu  you will welcome again the felted Germany map of the Filz-Netzwerk, onto which some miniature sights from the feltmakers' home cities are added at each such meeting. (See photo)

During the four days several three-hour workshops will be on offer: Fascinators/Headpieces (Susanne Breuling), Venetian Masks (Beate Bossert), Imaginative Embroidery on Felt (Annemie Koenen) and Felted Hood/Classic-Romantic (Monika Derrix).

  Apart from that, both ambitious hobby and professional feltmakers are invited to take part in an exhibit around costumes or disguise – in the sense of full costumes, parts thereof or accessories, trimmings and guises for objects of all kinds, also those for daily use. Application ends on January 14th, 2020. The exhibits the jury decides on will be shown in a moving performance in the Roggenburg cloister on February 29th, 2020, and further in the Textilmuseum Mindelheim, in the Pfalzmuseum Forchheim and in the Museum der Schwalm in Schwalmstadt. [www.filznetzwerk.de](http://www.filznetzwerk.de)

## Monthly Feltmaking in Vienna

During the 4th Viennese Filzfestwoche the idea came up to meet on a regular basis during the year. Immediately Ursula Weber-Hejtmanek took action: As of January 9th 2020 felt enthusiasts – beginners and advanced alike – will get the opportunity to make small objects, exchange skills and ideas and to try out new techniques every second Thursday evening in the 7th Viennese Borough. *Information and registration per mail:* [ursula.weber-hejtmanek@gmx.at](mailto:ursula.weber-hejtmanek@gmx.at)

## Homage to Jane Goodall

»You are Me« is the title of the felted image, a contribution by the Viennese artist Susanne Weber to the charity event #BeJane. It is hosted by Janine Heschl (Textile Wildlife Art) in favor of the Jane-Goodall-Institute Austria. Susanne Weber was not only very pleased that her work was among the 18 chosen for the auction, an even greater reason for pride was the fact that the world-famous ethologist and primatologist Jane Goodall (85) presented her work in public. [www.textilewildlifeart.com](http://www.textilewildlifeart.com)  
[www.susifilzt.at](http://www.susifilzt.at)

## Felt at the Country Fair Manufactum

A great success for three felt artists: Objects by Gabriele Wehrmeyer, Barbara M ller and Heike Reul were chosen from 381 applications for the 29th Landesausstellung Manufactum in the Museum f r angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Arts; MAKK) in Cologne. The fall show will run for six weeks. In the category Clothing and Textiles Heike Reul presented her show piece »Drei Kleider/drei Gem lde« (Three Dresses/Three Paintings) and Barbara M ller her slipper collection  ko-Plus (Eco Plus). Gabriele Wehrmeyer's contribution was titled »inside-out«, made from concrete and felt, in the category »Sculpture« (see photo). In some other exhibits industrially made wool felt was processed. [www.staatspreis-manufactum.de](http://www.staatspreis-manufactum.de)

## Creative Protest with Knitting Graffiti

Karen Wieprich and her »combatants« want to drastically change the appearance of the town Demmin in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern with so-called textile graffiti on May 8th 2020. They are intent on setting an example for an open, solidary and ecological world. »Since 2006 neo-Nazis have been calling to take part in a historically misrepresented, misanthropic march on Liberation Day in Demmin«, she explains: »We demonstrate against that creatively and peacefully.« The biggest part of the covers for

lanterns, trees and fences – colorful scarves measuring 200 cm x 25 cm – is made at communal knitting events, but more knitted, crocheted, felted or made from bobbin-lace objects are more than welcome. Karen Wieprich: »It is important that the objects are elastic, so they fit around the destined shapes. As material you can use all colorful yarns that are no longer needed. We follow the motto: Discarded yet meaningful.« Information per mail: [karenwieprich@yahoo.de](mailto:karenwieprich@yahoo.de)  
*Further informations per mail:* [ceramiga@go4more.de](mailto:ceramiga@go4more.de)

## Thousand Expressions

*Exhibits, Workshops and a Fair at the 15th Textile Art Berlin*

The Textile Art Berlin (TAB) celebrated a small anniversary this year: For the 15th time, this international Textile Art festival took place at different school premises in Berlin, and for the third time now on the Phorms Campus in Berlin-Mitte, an international bilingual school. It is a unique location in the former AEG-Apparatewerk, a beautifully and respectfully restored historical industrial building. The Textile Art Berlin turned the 4000 square meters of halls, school rooms, hallways und yards into an interactive, huge art gallery.

### More than 100 Booths

The 15th anniversary was a milestone in the endeavor of organizer Nathalie Wolters and her team to offer an expansive forum for textile art in Berlin. More than 100 booths, 27 exhibitions, a fashion show, 29 workshops as well as the much sought-after participatory events of all kinds had been once more prepared for the textile art community.   Most visitors of the TAB are working creatively themselves in one way or another or simply admire beautiful objects. This year, they could get art objects, unique garments, many high quality materials, textile books from all over the world and working tools plus many ideas and encouragement free of charge.

  The Textile Art Berlin is under the patronage of Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Tietmeyer, director of the Museum

Europäischer Kulturen (Museum of European Cultures) (MEK) in Berlin.

☞ The 2019 motto was: »Flying Colors – Tausend Expressionen (Thousand Expressions)«. 'Flying Colors' is a nautical expression: The flags on the mast show where the ship comes from – they avow themselves to their home port. Ever since the Textile Art Berlin was first founded the flags have been flying for innovation and excellence as well as for the preservation and passing on of traditional techniques and professions. This wealth of textile art forms translates into a thousand ways and forms to express oneself.

### Felt Installation »Still Waters«

This is perfectly mirrored in the various shows. The exclusive competition for TAB-participants was titled »Orange Energie und blaue Unendlichkeit« (Orange Energy and Blue Infinity), the students of the VDA Art Faculty from Kaunas (Litauen) brought their »New Fabrics Collection« to Berlin, Yvonne Zoberbier and Sabine Reichert-Kassube showed their felt installation »Stille Wasser« (Still Waters). ☞ The much-coveted workshops with instructors from many different countries attracted a great number of interested parties. On offer were themes like »Compositions in Nuno Felt« with Adrian Salomé, »Yubinuki – Japanese Thimble Rings« with Helene Weinold, »Block Print with Wooden Stamps from India« with Nathalie Cassée and »From Ecoprint to a Unique Object« with Swaantje Holtfoth. ☞ The so-called »Mixed-Media-Mosaik«, the TAB's public project, has been running since 2017. Visitors and exhibitors are invited to submit small work pieces in the format 10 cm x 10 cm, mounted on felt. Until 2019 almost 450 small precious objects have gathered which were combined to form a big-size work of art.

### Students as Hosts

The co-operation of schooling and textile art is a fruitful project in many different ways. The pupils can see their school as a public space where they act as the hosts. In their classes they deal with textile art forms and handicrafts. Even the nursery school kids, the Phorms Minis, presented their latest objects in a show. The organizing team is already busy preparing the 16th Textile Art Berlin for the 20th and 21st of June 2020 under the motto »Creative Connection: Meet the Makers!«

☞ »In a time where most encounters with art only happen virtually our special

intention is an actual, personal encounter of the public and the »real« individuals who perform the arts in question», Natalie Wolters explains the motto. »The visitors seem thankful for such occasions, they really love to meet the craftspeople and their work face to face, to be inspired by them, to exchange ideas about creative projects. We keep hearing this and similar commentaries more and more.«

NATHALIE WOLTERS

PAGES 12-15

## Felt in All its Diversity

*The graduates of the Oberrot Felting School present their closing projects.*

All year long there is a steady pilgrim-like stream consisting of feltmakers and wool fans to Oberrot-Neuhausen wishing to take part in the many different courses offered by renowned artists and lecturers. At a weekend in the middle of summer the small village high above the valley turns into Feltdorf. Both the German and the international feltings scene meets there to see the closing exhibit implemented by the graduates, to renew old acquaintances and to make new friendships.

☞ 36 committed feltmakers received their certificate as felt designers from director Sonja Fritz and were pleased to see the many visitors of their show in the white pavilions on the felting school's rambling premises. Two or three years they had trained and prepared themselves for that day, painstakingly instructed and accompanied by their teachers Claudia Cappiello, Lyda Rump, Minka de Weerd, Beate Bossert, Kerstin Scherr, Gabriele Breuer, Heidi Greb and Ursula Eichenberger. The felting school had to bid farewell to one of its founding members and teacher for many years: Inge Bauer passed away on Sept. 5th, 2018 (see obituary in the filzfun no. 61). ☞ As in the past years this year's final show presented the whole versatility of felt for beautiful and useful things for everyday use, clothing and art objects.

### Off-White Wool

Several students worked mostly or altogether in off-white color which allowed the foregrounding or emphasis

of form and structure: Bettina Boll-Edelmann (Literary Scarecrow), Anja Brucker (Children's clothing), Yvonne Faenzi (Dress and Art Object), Martina Kazickova (Dresses), Christine Pötsch (Jewelry and Vessels), Meike Raßbach (Stream of Life), Petra Rauter-Haas (Wedding dress with Butterflies), Susanne Schwahn (Finns), Kirsten Sturm (Wall Design in Raku Optics), Ulrike Walter (Reduced Variety) und Yvonne Zoberbier (Visible).

### Subject Fairytale

Opposed to that the intricately structured felted »Steine« (Stones) by Madeleine Brünner which made it to the cover of the exhibition catalogue, show all the colors of the rainbow. Charlotte Bösch and Gabi Ertl chose fairytale themes: While Charlotte Bösch had created a completely fitted scene for a storyteller with a felt-covered armchair, a scenery with figurines and a changeable dress, Gabi Ertl presented a fairy dress inspired by flowers, beckoning the viewers: »Let imagination come back to your world!« Vera Zehnder-Ochsé's dolls with their reduced facial features as well as the »Erzählsteine« (Narrating Stones) made by Szilvia Dieszler-Schärtl with their blossoms, animals, houses or fruit kindle everybody's imaginative faculties. ☞ How fashionable and extravagant hand-felted garments can be was amply proved by Petra Sommer and Angela Spaich with their models. Claudia Kuckling had felted a classical, dress-coat-like men's jacket with matching gloves in dark berry and red wine hues. ☞ With saddle and sweat blankets for horses Jutta Osterhoff and Annette Uebach tied in with ancient felting traditions – the same goes for Uta Vater, who made her »Fliegenden Teppich« (Flying Carpet) in the Shyrdak technique. Julia Andris' felted tent looked like a modern variant of an historic yurt. ☞ Ulrike Feige's final piece was stimulated by 12 000-year-old Yantras, meditation diagrams. Similarly archaic seems Gabriele Schulze-Seyler's carpet »Im Kreis des Lebens« (In the circle of life), which was flanked by highly modern wall objects in stark color and with intricate structures. Quiet, aesthetic motifs and patterns in off-white, red, grey and black adorn the three meditation cushions and the Yoga mat made by Carola Zeiger.

☞ Maja Tallafuß-Schneider made a wood path complete with pine needles, leaves and moss and Renate Messemer's

graduation piece, an impressively structured, felted tree-stump, was also inspired by natural surroundings.

### Woven-In Pre-Felt Strips

Carola Hauser explored the design variety offered by the weaving in and out of pre-felted strips and felting it all. Under the title »Webdesign« she made flat felted surfaces tightly and covered vessels with it. »The beauty and transience of rusty materials inspired me to re-create its color range in felt«, explains Antje Lutzer her formidable material studies called »Verborgene Farbigkeit« (Hidden Coloring).

~ The sheep providing the material were subject matter of some exhibits. Heike Roth had processed the wool of her own animals into a deck chair cover and three umbrellas, Conny Philipp fashioned Haute Couture for sheep under the label »Coco Chavel«. Christine Hornung raised a monument with her felted images of stylized sheep and urged the preservation of domestic animals threatened by extinction.

### A Critical World View

Like them, other graduates also critically argued the present state of the world and the related current crises. Dagmar Hanßler, so she said, had already decided to felt the globe before the midterm of the Fit-in-Filz (Fit in Felt) education. She put this globe with reliefs and its satellite, the moon, on show. Dorothea Bensberg was remindful of the human responsibility for the planet and climate change that forces many people to flee, while the biologist Karin Coenen visualized the problem of plastic waste in a wall object.

*All graduation pieces and their makers are introduced in the catalogue that can be ordered via Wollknoll.*

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 16-19

## Vortex and Change

*Maria Friese says good-bye with a show of her objects. She is considering new challenges in the future.*

Huge fish sprung from her imagination, studies in small structures, monumental

wall hangings, intricate, three-dimensional capsules and an enticing costume that drew a lot of attention: In her summer show »In the Vortex« in the Musée du feutre in Mouzon, France, Maria Friese presented her most important felted objects of the last twelve years. Not for the first time it became obvious why she has been enjoying such a favorable reputation in the felters' world for many years and why her courses were always highly in demand.

### To the Limits

In the show of her body of work she traces her artistic path, development and transformation. »From the surface and the relief to the objects and in depth – always searching understanding, feeling and crossing and expanding my own limits as well as those of the materials involved. I realized there are none, because everything is possible.«

~ »'In the Vortex' means creating out of an impulse which is in keeping with the flow of it all«, Maria Friese explains the title of her show: »When I work I feel like I were in the middle of a kind of vortex, in a whirlwind or swirl.«

~ Working with wool and, in that context, its metamorphosis from loose fibers to a solid piece of felt the artist likes to compare to her own personal development and history. »Soft movements, forceful energy – to drive the process even further, never stopping too early, to exceed yourself, to wander on with the power of quietude and patience, to delve further on into the depth of the material. Here, where I stand today, everything flows and culminates in the year-long commitment to the material.«

### The Show as a Point of Change

Her exhibit simultaneously marks a change: Maria Friese decided to end her felting career. »As far as I am concerned, I have explored everything I ever wanted to«, she says. »After having experimented for 16 years with this transformation process, I know find it more interesting to deal with those processes in a different realm, mostly the effect of the felting process on the person performing it.« This is why she has completed a training as an art therapist. In the future she is going to consult and accompany interested parties in her project »heART transformation«.

~ Maria Friese will continue to be a member of the felting scene, however. She will pass on her experiences and skills to felt enthusiasts and give advice and assistance to feltmakers with their

own ideas and projects – for example by means of online tutorials. »This is what interests me today and gives me a lot of pleasure: to accompany others, to help them to find new ways to characterize and consolidate their style, to foster and expand their creativity«, she describes her goals.

### Creative Power

She has devised felting exercises and techniques that encourage up creative freedom also in everyday situations. »My focus, however, is less on teaching a certain technique but rather to stimulate and support the creative energy within each one of us, to help releasing it«, Maria Friese explains.

~ For her, this way is a »continuation, a logical effect« stemming from her own personal development as a feltmaker. »I am very grateful. It was feltmaking that opened up this path for me.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 20-21

## The Call of Wool and Paper

*Exhibition of the Craft-Art-Fusion-Projects 2019 in Vienna and Perchtoldsdorf*

Last year it was wood, this time it is paper: After the fulminant start of the Craft-Art-Fusion-Project of 2018, many international artists were inspired by this year's theme and followed enthusiastically and highly motivated the call of wool and paper again in 2019.

~ From the many contributions sent from here and abroad the jury finally chose 21 national and international artists and artists' assemblies with 18 most diverse art objects for the exhibition: »Wir WOLLEn Papier« (a play of words with the German verb wollen = to want and the noun Wolle, meaning wool, the gist of the matter being: We WANT wool and paper).

### Talent and Ingenuity

From the final choice, the curators' team, Barbara Füreder and Sawatou Mouratidou curated an exciting, many-sided show which narrates of the love for sheep wool, of the artists' individual styles, their technical skills and their impressive ingenuity – but above all of the incredibly

versatile ways to design around the materials sheep wool and paper.

### Artistic Exchange

For the official opening in the Galerie am Park in Vienna in September not only many exhibiting artists had travelled there from abroad to celebrate the successful joint project together with a great and interested audience. From the beginning on an exciting exchange began between the artists present themselves, but also among them and the public. One could almost picture new artistic projects hovering in the air.

∞ So, the team of CraftArtFusion and the Austrian Wollmodus Association have reached their goal in a joyous and playful way. This artists' collective long-term aim, however, is to promote networking between artists and people interested in art around the subject sheep wool, to help strengthen their creativity and to establish a respective platform.

### Art in Handicraft

The show pieces of the Project »Wir WOLLEn Papier« can be once more viewed within the scope of Kunst im Handwerk Event on November 9th and 10th 2019 in the astounding atmosphere of the Perchtoldsdorf castle.

BARBARA FÜREDER

## CraftArtFusion 2020

For all interested wool fans the organizers have already revealed the secret of the forthcoming Open Call by the CraftArtFusion. Following wood (2018) and paper (2019) the autumnal range of exhibits will be curated under the motto Wir WOLLEn Metall. (We want metal)

Deadlines for submittal and detailed calls for bids please find under [www.wollmodus.at/wollkunst/](http://www.wollmodus.at/wollkunst/) We are pleased to send catalogues of the 2019 exhibit for a donation of 7 Euros plus shipping cost. Also, the remaining catalogues of 2018 are still to be had. You can order those items per mail.

[wollkunst@wollmodus.at](mailto:wollkunst@wollmodus.at)

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## A Felting Oasis Celebrates

*Elvira Altdorf has been working and teaching in her own studio for 15 years. Her SommerWorkshopWoche (Summer Workshop Week) has become a tradition.*

Felting for a whole week, nothing but felting, felting... For 11 years now five to eight experienced felt enthusiasts have been meeting annually in Elvira Altdorf's studio in its enchanted surroundings at the Dutch border for the first week of the summer holidays. They pursue what they love best over several days. The impressive results – accompanied and assisted by the skillful, accomplished yet reserved instructor – are reversible clothing items, wall objects, carpets, cushions and meters and meters of felted fabrics bound to be sewn into jackets, coats or tops. This year, the group had a good reason for celebrating: The studio Filzdesign el.vira, a true feltmakers' oasis, has its 15th anniversary.

### Power or Wellness

At Elvira Altdorf's SummerWorkshop-Woche there are no pre-decided themes, instead each feltmaker works at her own ideas in her individual pace. Elvira Altdorf offers systematic help where it is necessary, but otherwise the participants are entirely free in the choice and handling of their own subject and the making and finishing of their respective objects. Each feltmaker works in her own rhythm, either dynamically in the »power felting mode« or rather in the relaxed area of »wellness-felting«.

∞ The first day is dedicated to the introduction of the various projects, the places are assigned, and sample patterns are made. It is very important to Elvira Altdorf that every participant should know their chosen material well beforehand. The following days really mean business, i.e. intense felting work: From 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. our thoughts revolve only around wool, fabric and felt: laying out, moistening, turning the workpiece around, new layers and at long last: moistening and rolling up! Once you have reached this stage you know: The worst is behind you! But by then usually half of the week is already over.

### Gauzy Fur Cushions

What follows is the physically demanding process of fulling. Elvira's husband, Heinz,

offers a welcome assistance. Moreover, he is the one who provides great meals for the group throughout the whole week. In this year's summer academy, a lot of different objects were made: tunics, skirts, a dress, a fabric, a stone and nine small furs to sit on. One participant performed miracles in turning yellowish raw wool into gauzy white furry cushions which look perfect on her new set of chairs.

∞ The end comes always too fast. But a next summer course is bound to take place again (see info box) and then all those projects will be finished for which there was no time left this time.

GISELA GROTEN

PAGE 23

## Strongfelt in Europe

*The accomplished American feltmaker Lisa Klakulak will teach courses at Vrouw Wolle in Belgium and at Wollknoll's in Oberrot early next year.*

Ten years ago, Lisa Klakulak came to Europe for the first time to teach international workshops at Zijdelings in the Dutch town Tilburg. The title was »Textures and Protuberances«. In the spring of 2020, she will make that trip again to teach her so-called Strongfelt technique at Vrouw Wolle in Essen, Belgium and at Wollknoll's in Oberrot. By then she will be a newly graduated Master of Fine Arts!

∞ In 2018, the renowned felt artist took an artistic leave to study sculpture at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design in Canada that will end with her master's degree early in 2020.

### Encasing Objects

»Resist-based Pendants« is the motto of her first course in Belgium in the scope of the training at the Belgian Viltacademie from May 27th to 30th 2020. »At a foundational first level we will be working in small format to explore the relation of weight of fiber and area of resist as a determinate of the size of the desired form«, explains Lisa Klakulak. Different shrinkage factors will be used to determine the shape and size of a template in order to create a high shrinkage to encase the durable objects or to designate where the felt



will protrude. The participants will learn by means of the shrinkage factor to determine the shape and size of a template to make a thin and flexible skin around it. »The math involved not only guarantees a snug fit and well-fulled felt, but a thin and flexible skin that will show off the forms' contours and /or the objects' surface and even color shows if the skin is cut into!

### Solid Clasps and Closures

The second course at Vrouw Wolle held in Belgium called »Solid Form Felting Techniques + Clasps and Closures« from 1st to 3rd June 202 will be open to the general public and will focus on the construction of basic solid forms. For those balls, cords, rings and planes the wool is laid out or stacked, rolled, folded and needled before wet-felting starts.

» This sequencing prepares the mass in an enlarged version of the desired form with an ideal amount of airspace so that the fibers can intertwine and become a well-integrated felt that won't pill. »This is important especially when considering clasps and closures, as their surface will be exposed to more abrasion than other areas of a piece of jewelry or garment«, says the instructor.

### Depth and Details

From June 8th to 12th Lisa Klakulak will teach a workshop called »Depth of Surface and Depth of Field«. She describes her intentions further: »Participants will explore how to create depth through color combinations, the application of different densities of partially felted sheets for patterning, texture resist and edging, the variables of incorporating a wide variety of fabrics for surface design and texture including entrapping objects under fabrics and between, in fabric pockets.« Free-motion embroidery will be applied to gather and compress the remaining airspace in the felt and offer finer detailing. Lisa Klakulak seeks to encourage the participants to use those admittedly time-consuming techniques as an eye-catcher in bigger felted objects: at the cuffs of a jacket, the collar of a blouse or similar tops, the clasp of a handbag, as a surprising detail on a wall hanging or a felted sculpture.

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 26-29

## Faces of the Soul

*Sandra Struck-Germann has made quite a name for herself with felted portraits and puppets.*

Sandra Struck-Germann is a true artist. Somehow this already became obvious when I first saw her house with its four colorfully painted sides and the enchanted garden.

» To be precise: Sandra Struck-Germann is a textile artist with an international reputation. Her works are shown in museums, art collections and illustrate books.

» After I have met her in person and was able to get to know her better over talks on two afternoons, I am convinced that in this house art is not only made but lived to a full extent. Art, one can say, is omnipresent and one feels surrounded by colors and joie de vivre. I could hardly tear my eyes away from the big-size felt objects hanging in her living room – her own work.

### Layers like Painting with Watercolor Painting

»Felting is incredibly many-sided. From one and the same natural material, wool, so many different things can be made. I prefer wet-felting, and my love belongs to portraying in that medium«, the 49-year old artist explains. »By painting and drawing, which I took up again two years ago, color entered into my felted portraits. It feels like painting with wool, using the material like watercolors in putting layer upon layer. These very thin layers can amount to over twenty in number. Over time I have come to dye the biggest part of the wool myself with acid dyes.

» From painting, Sandra Struck-Germann gets inspiration and adapts similar techniques for her own felted color portraits. »I particularly like Françoise Nielly's work«, she says, adding: »In my black-and-white portraits I rather work patchwork-style.« For her courses, she has succeeded to simplify the technique without flattening its power of artistic expression. This way of wet-felting should be made easier for amateurs, she thinks.

### Twenty Years as a Physics Laboratory Assistant

Whoever sees her formidable portraiture can hardly believe that Sandra Struck-Germann has not been a creative textile

designer for all her life. Fact is, she worked for over twenty years as a Physics Laboratory Assistant at the Aachen University.

» Now that I tell you all this, I am surprised myself that I have lived so long without making art«, she muses. »But even then I used to paint at times.

I loved my former professional life, especially teaching. At the university I tutored and supervised the trainees. My former teaching experiences are still helpful in my courses. This was a good time, but since I have been working as a freelancer...well, this is quite another matter, a different way of life!«

» She has always liked to paint, made pottery and worked with materials such as stone, metal and wood. »But I was always on the lookout for a special material, to which I could entrust myself like to a friend. This companion I finally found in the material wool. On the flax market in Krefeld I saw a felted puppet. I cannot explain it, but I knew at once that this was my thing. This happened 15 years ago, and I remember that I immediately started to felt a puppet after I got home.«

» In the course of the next years Sandra Struck-Germann continued to make puppets and tried out many new things, brought some ideas to perfection and discarded others. Also, the shapes underwent many changes and variations. »I tried to develop an extensive repertoire with my animal and human figurines. It also has become quite important that I dye the wool myself. This makes for an extensive, vivacious color range: lively, mottled color nuances which you cannot buy at that such a range.«

» For her puppets the artist uses different kinds of wool fleece, but also curls or raw wool. As weights she felts stones into the bodies in order to achieve a correct posture. Many of the puppets are very complex. An older specimen decorates the house and is very impressive due to the intensity of expression.

» For an exhibit dealing with climate change I have felted my personal idea of Mother Earth. She holds a human being, also made from felt, on a string. These days I like to make bird puppets.«

### Much Sought-After as a Lecturer and Teacher

In 2008 Sandra Struck-Germann opened her own felting studio in Düsseldorf but she teaches in schools and homes for the elderly on a regular basis as well.

Apart from that she is busy lecturing in museums and summer schools here and abroad.

☞ In her studio I stand admiringly in front of a beautiful small bird puppet. It was felted – hard to believe – by a twelve-year old schoolboy. The puppets that children felt, expertly instructed by Sandra Struck-Germann, are really precious. She succeeded in turning unruly kids into patient feltmakers.

☞ »The kids decide for themselves which kind of puppet they want to felt in my working classes. As a rule, they want to felt animals. Right now, unicorns and llamas are mightily en vogue, but also soccer players are occasionally chosen«, she says. (On pages 30/31 she describes how a simple ball puppet is made, a project which presents no problems for children.)

☞ But not only teaching kids, but also working with old and afflicted people, e.g. by dementia, is dear to this artist's heart. She listens and responds patiently to the elderly: often, a memory floats up and gets interwoven in the felted object: Working with the heart and the hands.

#### Award for a Portrait of Her Daughter

Sandra Struck-Germann's artistic focus, however, is portraiture. »2012 I was invited to take part in the show ,Lichtgestalten (Beings of Light)«, she reminisces. »Beings of light, enlightened beings – my children mean that to me! I decided to felt a black-and-white portrait of my daughter Alexa.« One year later she won the »Outdoor Award« for a felted portrait of her daughter Charlotte.

☞ She often talks about her art with her children, especially with her eldest daughter Anne. »In my black-and-white portraits I depicted people that are close to me and interested me both privately and professionally for many years. With my colored portraits this no longer seems to be the case, as Anne once observed. In her opinion, my colored images now deal more with people in general, with brief or fleeting encounters manifesting themselves in bright, colorful faces. Right now I am more interested in facial representations, not so much in a hidden individual personality.« Sandra Struck-Germann also makes individual portraits to order.

☞ »Portraiture as a genre is a long way from being exhausted, as far as I am concerned«, she says. »The emotions expressed in a face, the many various yet characteristic features – all these factors continue to fascinate me and

will keep me busy for many more years. This coming winter I would like to simply experiment over some months. Let's wait and see where it leads me.«

EVA-MARIA SCHULL

PAGES 30–31

## Simple Ball Puppet

*Sandra Struck-Germann's instructions of a felted ball puppet are ideal for working with children. This simple project offers the possibility for first experiences in felting and puppeteering.*

When I was nine years old I received an unforgettable Christmas present: a tom-cat puppet. Since then, the charms of such moveable figures have been entrancing me, and meanwhile I felt my own puppets. No precast standard exists as far as their making goes. Each one is unique and has to be planned and made individually.

☞ The more strings a puppet has the more subtle and natural you can move it, but the increased number also makes it more difficult to control and to play it. According to the kind of puppet and its intended, specialized movements it can have up to 30 strings, but as a rule nine to twelve strings are employed. A simple ball puppet requires only three strings, but it opens up first experiences in both making and guiding the puppet. In my courses I like to begin with this very simple variant: the moving ball.

### Material

- ☞ Wool in fleece or roving
- ☞ 1 Stone
- ☞ Water, padding for felting
- ☞ Thread, black and of considerable tensile strength (preferably twine)
- ☞ Wooden stick or branch crutch as a guiding rod
- ☞ Eye screws
- ☞ Long, pointed darning needle

### 1 Felting the Head

The ball needs a certain heaviness, so it doesn't swing uncontrollably back and forth when played. A stone is felted inside it to provide the necessary weight. The stone is felted around generously, it should neither be seen nor its initial form recognized anymore. In my children's courses we felt a simple ball head, but

of course you can always make a less unpretentious one, for example that of a chicken. The ball for the frog is cut into crosswise for a mouth and two smaller or hemispherical balls serve as eyes. The chicken depicted is felted from raw wool curls. It has tail feathers are colorful pieces of roving, the crest and larynx flap are made from pre-felt, further decorations are a yellow beak and black beads for eyes.

2 Felt the figurine as usual, then rinse it (a shot of vinegar helps to neutralize remaining soap suds), squeeze it inside a towel and let it dry.

3 A Handlebar to Move the Puppet As a handlebar or guiding rod for the puppet serves a T- or Y-formed piece of wood. I like to collect branch crutches in my garden or in the woods. But there is no reason why a heart shaped from cedar wood couldn't do the job as well – I like to use things in a new context.

### 4 Tying the Puppet

There are different ways to tie up this ball puppet and to move it:

**On one string:** It should lead across the ball's center of gravity to the guiding rod. The ball can be moved back and forth and up and down then. Exact, purposeful movements, however, cannot be achieved by that variant.

**On two strings:** Fasten one either right or left or up front or in the back and take care that the ball is perfectly balanced. Valid for both variants is the following: The handlebar can be a simple wooden stick, a bit longer than the ball's diameter, but it should be at least 8–10 cm long, so it can be hand-held well. The strings should run parallel or lead slightly to the outside in an upside direction. Balls led on two strings allow for a slightly more sophisticated play.

5 **On three strings:** One string each right and left on the side, if possible, behind the center of gravity, so that the ball leans forward and can be lifted with a third one fastened on the ball's front.

### 6 The Right Thread for Strings

For tying the puppets I recommend black thread that doesn't tear, for example twine. Nylon threads cannot be knotted well and are subject to a sudden tear, which makes them unsuitable for the purpose. Fasten the twine on the

designated places on the felted »head« first. Only then they should be tied to the guiding rod. You work from the bottom up. This hanging makes for a well-coordinated, multi-faceted play. It is the most common solution for puppets' heads. The length of the twine strings depends on how you want to employ the puppet. I prefer to play the ball puppet on a table, so a length of approx. 30 cm is enough. If it is put onto the ground next to the puppeteer, the strings have to be lengthened.

### A Makeshift Knot

For tying up I work with a temporary knot: I fasten the twine with a simple knot on the wood or on an eye screw on the cross bar. For a secure fastening, however, a second knot on top of the other is required. Regarding the second knot I don't pull the twine completely through but I leave a loop so I can adjust the height if needed, without having to cut the whole piece of twine apart. When the desired length is reached I pull the loop completely through. In that way the double knot is secure, but I additionally fix it with a drop of glue to halt its eventual becoming undone.

### 7 Storage and Transport

The best way to store your puppet is hanging it to keep the strings from mixing up. If you need to transport the puppet hold it firmly on the crossbar or guiding rod and turn the puppet's body in such a way that the strings unravel and stay more or less put. Then you put the puppet in a bag (the crossbar sticks out), knot or otherwise secure that the bag is closed and pull it shut – Ready!

SANDRA STRUCK-GERMANN

PAGES 32-35

## A Wedding Dress for the Snow Queen

*Inger Mortensen felted a beautiful wedding outfit for her daughter, with a »love glove« instead of rings.*

Light haze hovered over the snow when Sara Kathrine Mortensen came out of the woods next to her father: On skis she glided towards her astonished bridegroom: a shining Snow Queen

wearing a felted crown with pearls, a cape adorned with blue snow crystals, felted cuffs on her legs and felted mittens on her hands.

»Until then only herself and her mother Inger who made these unique bridal garments had known in which outfit she would appear at her wedding in the great outdoors. »And my bridegroom had not the slightest inkling«, Sara reminisces, still glad. While the ceremony took place, the fog lifted and the sky turned sunny and blue.

### A Glove for Two

The couple had chosen not to wear rings. In their stead, a niece of the bride brought a felted »love mitten« with the couple's initials and two openings, wherein they could hold hands.

»This 'love glove' was my mother's idea and – in our opinion – a perfect substitute for rings. My mother made my own mittens bigger in size, so I could give one to the groom, thus joining our hands in the »love glove«.

The bride's mother, Inger Mortensen, has been felting for 30 years, because she loves to »play with wool«, as she puts it. The range of her works which she gives as presents or sells privately on small fairs reaches from clothes and scarves to carpets, blankets to sleeping bags. She had felted and sewn a bridal dress also for her eldest daughter.

### Fairytale Studio

Inger Mortensen lives in Djursland, Denmark and has been creative all her life. In feltmaking she has tried out many techniques and methods. »We, her daughters, were always the people she tested them on«, Sara Mortensen remembers, gushing: »When you enter her studio you feel like in the middle of a fairytale.«

The felt artists loves nature. She hikes, rides her bike, paddles – and in all these activities the ideas for her objects come to her, and in the evenings is the time to let them materialize. »Her ideas come right from the heart«, says her daughter. »If someone comes to her with an idea for a certain project she is always prepared to take up the challenge.«

So it was also when her daughter came to her with plans for a winter wedding. »This immediately got her going strong!« Many ideas were discussed, innumerable sketches and images were sent back and forth from Denmark to Norway, where the bride lives. It took some time until they finally settled on the motto »Snow

Queen«, after the fairytale by Hans Christian Andersen. Inger Mortensen's imagination was set on fire.

### Buttons from Reindeer Antlers

The felted crown was adorned with pearls the artist had inherited from her own mother. The snow crystals for the cape she cut from blue pre-felt and felted them, together with silk, into the white cape. Her husband got busy too. He sawed toggle buttons from reindeer antlers and polished them. »The leg cuffs were spontaneously added on by hindsight«, Sara Mortensen tells us.

Inger Mortensen has passed on her feltmaking enthusiasm to a great number of school children. »As a professional primary school teacher, I taught handicraft for many years. Amongst other techniques I introduced them to feltmaking.« When her three daughters were kids, she also felted with them, and now the next generation is catching their grandmother's creative energy. Inger Mortensen's grandchildren often visit her studio and they love the handling of wool, water and soap just as much as she does.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 36-37

## With Feltmaking to a New Zest for Life

*Gabriele Hoffmann found a way out of a personal crisis through handicrafts. Now she celebrates her studio's fifth anniversary.*

Gabriele Hoffmann is a professional multi-talent: She is a feltmaker, an art therapist, a caregiver, course instructor, saleswoman and a businesswoman. Her business, the Atelierladen KunSterbunt in Bad Frankenhausen in the Kyffhäuser mountains in Thuringia, has been in existence for five years now. Initially, she had chosen an entirely different path.

For thirty years Gabriele Hoffmann worked as a professional nurse, and she loved it. But then her father fell critically ill and passed away in 2011 and her mother and grandmother increasingly needed household help and care. Her own family of four had to be taken care of, too, more or less in passing: finally,



the burden became too hard to bear. »I developed anxiety attacks, I could not sleep anymore and then I had a complete breakdown – the diagnosis was depression due to a state of exhaustion«, she remembers.

☞ During the rehabilitation period she tried out felting, having always had a soft spot for handicrafts. The breakthrough came with a felting workshop during her holidays in Zingst am Dars. »I was enthusiastic – I wanted to learn this!«

### Courses with Petra Kliem

After some efforts of her own she took courses with Petra Kliem. Kliem had restored and turned the former LPG farmstead in Kalbsrieth, where Gabriele Hoffmann had lived with her family as a child, into a holiday farm. »It was soothing to be at such a familiar place and to watch Petra Kliem feltmaking in her gentle way.«

☞ Her 50th birthday present by her family was a week-long felting holiday at Marion Ilse in the Ländlichen Heimvolkshochschule (Rural Adult Education Center) in the Donndorf cloister: »It was gigantic! After that, I simply got and stayed high on feltmaking.« During this week she made a bag, a hat, a silk scarf, shoes and drapes. She participated in further workshops by Gabriel Leithaus, Annette Quentinstoll and Edeltraut Kleinert and her enthusiasm grew with each occasion.

### The Jump to Independence

Gabriele Hoffmann ventured to step into self-employment, encouraged by her husband Otmar. »He was always supportive, although my secure income would be missed, and we still hadn't redeemed the mortgage for our house. He built me a huge felting table, 3 to 10 m, dragged around old furniture, held his nose when I came from the shepherd with smelly wool in the car and helped me washing it. But after all, I was healthy again, creative and I had a goal!« Grateful, she called her own company, founded in 2014, OtGaNiToFilz after the initials of her family members' first names.

☞ In 2016 she added her store KunSterbunt which is a part of the studio premises. Since then, feltmaking has lost nothing of its fascination: »Wool entices me to work with it, the different shades, the various kinds and innumerable experiments with fibers, silk and natural materials. It will always be interesting,

because there is no end to different developments and artistic techniques.«

### Trying Out Different Techniques

Many of those Gabriele Hoffmann has tried out already. Nuno felting, resist techniques but also really minimalistic methods. »Imagination, a pair of healthy hands, beautiful wool – this is my favorite technique«, she says. She loves best felting bigger objects such as lampshades, bags, shoes, hats, felted cornets for children's first school day, cushions and big-size apples – but always without auxiliary tools like for example orbital sanders. »I don't even need the gauze on the felted wool. I want to feel the wool, I am not interested at all in working faster and faster in order to achieve more.« When the physical strain of fulling gets too much, she will allow herself a break, but »in my case, it is never the washing machine that finishes the job.«

☞ Her models come out from one piece only, »nothing is sewed or embroidered, only scissors get into action at times«. A felting needle is only used for repairing or making details like eyes for figurines. »Needle-felting will never be my thing«, the Thuringian artist says.

☞ Nature is very important for her, providing material as well as inspiration, but also as the realm of relaxation and living: »We even have a 'wool tree' in the garden. My husband puts waste wool in the branches as nesting material for birds.«

### Workshops in Her Studio

Gabriele Hoffmann is never bored. Twice a week she teaches workshops in her studio, once a month there is a whole-day course and with her mobile workshop she is constantly visiting kindergartens, schools, homes for the elderly, adult education centers and village fairs and events. »I offer participatory courses for kids and adults on each fair«, she says. Additionally, she prepares her first exhibition that will take place in the Bad Frankenhausen castle in the winter 2020/2021.

☞ She certainly works no lesser hours than once in the hospital, but this doesn't matter at all. »My working hours often amount to 16, but for me this feels like 16 hours free time. I determine my own day – I live!«

HELENE WEINOLD

## Art Gives Wings

*Karen Betty Tobias gets inspired by texts and likes to combine textiles with her personal history in her free embroidery.*

»You are a bird, sailing smoothly over a landscape with houses, roads, gardens, trees and vegetable patches. Small structures viewed from afar and from great heights. They seem plastic, almost to be touched yet they are far away. They invite to take a closer look and to philosophize about what surrounds us.« So Karen Betty Tobias writes about her intentions in the exhibit called »Kleine Gärten« (Small Gardens), which took place this year in the Mini-Kulturverein Frechen. ☞ For more than three decades the artist from Cologne has been wandering »through the gardens of my artistic expression«, as she puts it. In doing so she has found many ways to express herself. She is convinced that: »Due to an artistic expression in material and color we can develop our own personality and emotionality.« As an art therapist and in her own art school called »Kunstschule für kreative Wege (Art School for Creative Ways)« in Köln-Weiden she shares her ideals with her clients and course participants.

### Embroidery on Felt

Already as a young girl, Karen Betty Tobias has liked to embroider. »Then, the chain stitch was my favorite to embroider floral ornaments onto jackets, coats or bags.« 25 years ago she discovered felting and today she likes to embroider on it »because it is such a fine basis, good to pin through, and I can have an eye on the later motif while I am working at it.« As threads she uses embroidery twist and sewing yarn. She especially likes hand-dyed yarns which make the image lively with their unique colorings.

☞ Collages Made from Vintage Blouses Felts dyed with in the Shibori technique, fabrics printed with monotypes or recycled fabrics are her favorite materials. »Fabrics are so close to the skin and are suitable for very personal views on art.« Often she uses vintage clothes, some of them formerly sewn by herself. »From discarded blouses or dresses made from linen, silk or cotton I cut out pieces that I use for basis material or textile collages. All these materials and colors I liked once, when I used to wear them. So they still please me and serve me well in my art and my embroidery.«

~ She sees herself in the tradition of artists like Joseph Beuys and Louise Bourgeois: »They also chose textile materials from a deeply personal, biographical motivation to turn their artistic message into social criticism.«

### Emancipation in Private Handicraft Circles

She considers the many former, private handicraft circles the cradle of feminism and emancipation. 100 or 120 years ago, embroidery was a typical, harmless occupation for women: »But there they all sat together, talked and developed ideas and self-consciousness. Protected by the seemingly harmless embroidery, knitting or sewing circles emancipation formed itself.«

~ Textile art as a means of social and political expression exists around the globe says the committed artist. She feels a change in appreciation of textile art: »Its statements assert themselves and they are taken more and more seriously. Also, the art market begins to realize that.«

~ Karen Betty Tobias embroiders with relatively few, simple stitches that possess a lot of expressive power. »From simple running or stem stitches surfaces grow. One develops out of the other, like in painting«, she explains her working ways. »Borders in felt are covered with embroidered surfaces. Lines lie across surfaces. Felted lines are enhanced by embroidered surfaces. A felted structure can be flattened by embroidering on it, on the other hand flat felts can be lifted into a three-dimensional object.«

~ For inspiration she often delves into texts of all sorts. »Sometimes I write down my own thoughts around a certain key word. Later I take out some of the words and get going with a needle and a thread. Sometimes the whole wording appears embroidered on the object.« At times Karen Betty Tobias' artistic streak is kindled by other literary works, e.g. by the anthology »Aus der Erde geboren« by the philosopher and spiritual thinker Paolo Coelho regarding the four elements, or the poem »Der Junge mit den Seifenblasen« (Boy with Soap Bubbles) by Matthias Claudius.

### Painting and Space Objects

In her »Small Gardens« show in Frechen Karen Betty Tobias combines her textile art with painting, drawings and spatial objects. »It was clearly visible that – notwithstanding which material was put

to use – all came from one hand only, that themes, colors and formal language showed a distinctive metaphorical handwriting.«

~ Whoever expected framed images or works on canvas was due for a surprise. »In Frechen I decided to just pin the felts onto the wall«, the artist describes her way of presentation. »They fall loosely, they are not pulled straight, but can move in space like living paper onto which the whole artwork was designed. The shadows they cast get mirrored on the walls.«

~ With strong colors and voluptuous forms Karen Betty Tobias determines her own artistic force and her zest for life. The spectator is simply carried away, according to the artist's motto: »Art gives wings to the soul.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 42–43

## A Tree Full of Eyes

*Pupils from the Querfurt Gymnasium felted a wall hanging and incorporated embroideries from Afghanistan.*

A tree with colorful leaves decorates the premises of the Querfurt Gymnasium, a high school, in Saxonia-Anhalt. What is very special about this wall hanging titled »Open Up Your Eyes!« that was made by 13 students between the age of 12 and 16 together with the feltmaker Catrin Beck (WunderWoll) and their art teacher Christiane Anton only becomes clear when you take a closer look. Into the colorful leaves, but also in the fish that swim in front of the tree eyes have been included – embroideries made by the Afghan women of the Guldusi Project of the German-Afghan Initiative (D.A.I. e.V.)

### Four Days of Work

Catrin Beck, who had already »painted with wool« with pupils from the school, had first heard about the competition project »Keep Your Eye on the Planet« while visiting a wool farm. The initiator of the Guldusi project, Pascale Goldenberg, had called up the contest. In the described instance, 13 embroidered eyes had served both as an inspiration and the basis of their planned joint contribution. The wall hanging was made from sheep wool, and it was realized within four days

during the school's project week in the subject artistic design.

### Traditional Feltmaking

»We felted according to the thousands of years-old nomadic tradition«, Catrin Beck reports. »It was a great joy for me to instruct these eager young people. Their creativity was astounding, and they just bubbled over with ideas around the eye motif.«

~ The wall hanging is not only meant for decorating a wall but should remind the spectators to treat the environment and its natural resources with care. Catrin Beck expounds her intentions: »We would like to sensitize the spectators to the beauty of the world around us, to make them aware of the responsibility we have towards nature, and to motivate them into some kind of direct action, of course.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGES 44–45

## Inclusion at the Felting Table

*A report from the project »Kulturelle Bildung inklusiv« (Cultural Education Inclusive).*

»Plopp« – the felted ball falls into the soapy water. Christine\* smiles to herself a little and imitates the sound, hardly audible: »Plopp!« Seemingly, she likes that best when bead felting is scheduled! Again and again she throws the bead into the bowl with soapy water, although I keep telling her that it is wet and soapy enough and should be rolled on the mat now.

~ I met Christine at a feltmaking project for disabled people at the Lebenshilfe (Life Aid) in Bamberg where I am a voluntary worker. The Offene Behindertenarbeit (Open Work with Disabled People) OBA of the Lebenshilfe organizes leisure facilities for disabled people, for example cultural projects or sports. This offer is one element of the project »Kulturelle Bildung inklusiv« which is promoted by the German organization »Aktion Mensch«. The aim of the project is to encourage a creative, imaginative co-operation between people with or without disabilities and to develop

artistic expressions and respective activities.

### Turning Fibers Into Felt

When the sheep wool is solidified with the help of warm water, soap and the movement of hands to turn into a dense piece of felt there is direct haptic contact. Feltmaking is a very sensual action, stimulating above all the tactile senses. During this process the wool undergoes a marked change in a brief period of time: The loose, airy fibers turn into a compact, tight material. Also, the movement of the hands turns different: First they are tentative and become more forceful in the process. With felting it can be sensed and seen how your own hands and physical power can bring about a complete change of material.

### Textile Dialogue

Christine is persistent. She quickly grabs the bead again – and »Plopp«! I have to laugh now myself, because our ball game has led to a competitive dialogue: »Who is faster?« In the end, somehow on the way, its result is a beautiful felted bead, with rosy nuances that turn red. Christine gladly helps to thread it on a red silk cord. And she looks so happy with her necklace of felted »pearls« she made all by herself.

~ The exchange between me and my partner is a special kind of dialogue, one without words, solely assisted by the materials involved, wool, soap and water. Also for me, the amount of creativity needed to find a way for each person to handle wool in a constructive way can be rather demanding.

### Enthusiasm for Carding

Susanna\* for example throws everything to the floor that she touches. She takes one woolen flake after another; they all end up somewhere in the room. She laughs heartily, it seems to be a lot of fun for her. But after a while it is me who doesn't think it so funny anymore.

~ How can I raise some curiosity in Susanna, so that she keeps the flakes in her hands longer? Already at the first meeting, she clearly showed that touching water or soapy foam are not for her. So, I show Susanna how raw wool is carded. Much to my surprise she finds that process really interesting! The fibers are pulled out and float in the air for a moment. Purposefully, Susanna takes a bundle of fibers between two fingers and puts it on the other brush. All of a sudden, she works constructively and is

very concentrated, silently absorbed into her task.

### Therapy Versus Art

This playful exchange when doing handicrafts together is very inspiring for me as well. I learn to see »my« materials, »my handicraft skills« with different eyes and I understand them in a new way. I consider these feltmaking actions interactive, artistic processes. And it seems valuable and worthwhile to me to let severely handicapped people participate in them. It is obvious that they notice and greatly value this special kind of freedom that is inherent in any creative act.

~ Felting can have positive effects on concentration and fine motor skills, also the feeling of one's own effectiveness is strengthened. But in my course offers such therapeutic aspects are not in the foreground. Above all I want to pass on favorable experiences with the art of feltmaking.

ANNE JANSEN

\* Names changed by the author

PAGES 46–48

## Christmas Feltmaking

*Christmas cookies from wool are made in Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann's creativity classes at different schools in Düsseldorf.*

Everybody knows that baking cookies for Christmas with children can be rather messy. At the primary schools in Düsseldorf where Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann teaches, Christmas felting can get out of hands sometimes, too. Still, the gingerbread men, butter biscuits or nut macaroons are not made from dough but from wool. To tell the truth, it can get rather messy when wet-felting is scheduled, but the ready cookies don't have a single calorie and keep for years, if stored moth-free.

### Biscuits for the Cookie Monster

The idea for this wooly Christmas action came in the summer of 2018. While substituting at a so-called »Brennpunktschule (Schools with difficult, sometimes even violent students) the children felted biscuits for the Cookie Monster with such enthusiasm that Inga

Dünkelberg-Niemann wanted to make more out of that. »In the winter of 2018 children of different schools delved into the project, which is also possible for beginners that lack encouragement in their homes«, she explains.« On the other hand, it is easy to demonstrate various techniques with these small items that exceed a beginner's level. According to the respective amount of motivation the children are often willing to make bigger versions.«

### Puff Colors for Icing

During her felting courses at different schools, the experienced teacher showed the children two basic techniques: Some »cookies« were wet-felted as patties, others were needled dry in cookie cutters and later wet-felted, if required. (See info box). »The quickest way is to felt spiral cords and to cut them into black-and-white cookies«, she says. The felted cookies are decorated with the felting needle and contrasting wool or with puff color which is heated in the oven and ends up looking like icing.

~ The students and their teacher thought of many ways to use the finished cookies: As pendants for Santa Claus sachets, key rings, as presents or decorations for the Christmas tree, star-like felted bowls or wreaths or for the construction of an entire gingerbread house.

### A Big Gingerbread House

A huge gingerbread house turned into a communal project for one entire school. For the roof big patties were felted in plastic children's plates which can also serve as drip mats. In the scope of a lantern exhibit at one school small cookies were made. »In free hours or briefly before the bell rings one can work at the cookies«, Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann reports, »an in the end almost every pupil can say: 'I took part.'« It is difficult to see how much work is required for the small gingerbread houses. »The whole house consists, technically speaking, of simple surfaces with 'cookies' glued onto them, but you can only do that with a really persevering group or as a communal project«, the teacher warns. »The flat gabled façades, however, can succeed with almost every group and will serve as decorative pendants.«

~ The two-dimensional façades as wall or Christmas tree decorations should simplify the gingerbread house project for beginners: From a felted plate the shape of the house was cut out and decorated

with glued-on felted cookies, puff colors, ribbons and a »snow-covered« gable made from felt. A valuable piece of advice from Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann: »When the 'snow' is cut out one should have the house's measurement in mind already, otherwise there will be too much waste. Many sharp scalpels are more helpful than scissors.«

~ Some kinds were not satisfied with just making cookies but worked at a Cookie Monster image or a shoulder bag for cookies.

~ No big project was ever repeated in the felting classes, says Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann, but she is positive that the children will continue felting with joy. »I am sure that one or the other sweet will turn up on our menu, pardon, timetable again.«

HELENE WEINOLD

PAGE 49

## A Coveted Paradise for Creative People

*Viola Landschoff has emigrated to Sweden and hosts workshops on her farm.*

Viola Landschoff combined her love for Sweden and her passion for wool four years ago, when she moved from Germany to Landsbro in Småland and had made a home for herself on her creative farm Hörnebo.

~ In the summer, she welcomes guests for workshops held there. Some take only a few hours, others go over a weekend or a whole week. Watercolor or acrylic painting can be subject, but also building furniture from freshly cut wood, sculpting with soapstone, concrete, mosaics or threading pearls in the Pejote technique. For many of these different courses, Viola

Landschoff was able to win experts from abroad for the teachings.

~ She considers herself a wool craftswoman, so the workshops, and especially those about wool processing by spinning, felting or dyeing are most dear to her heart. Next to daily courses she offers for everyone who would like to »bathe« in wool intensely two weeks of learning under the motto »Kreativ mit Wolle (Being Creative with Wool)«: in 2020 from June 3rd to 10th and from August 26th to September 2nd.

### Wool Makes Me Happy

»Wool makes me happy – maybe because this material has been handled, worked with and used by people for a very, very long time«, she muses. »I love to see the results achieved by the creative hands of each participant. Especially feltmaking is a most diverse technique, only comparable to pottery. Regardless whether it is needle- or wet-felting or nuno felting, every each of them and many more fascinate me greatly.« During the winter she wants to felt a collection of clothes on Sari silk with possible later courses in mind. The creative farm with its summer café should become be paradise on earth for like-minded people, where everybody can work, learn and also spend a couple of nights in the guestrooms or apartments.

### Three Alpacas

Since Easter of 2019, three cuddly alpacas live on the Hörnebo. The deal is now to process eight kilos of their soft wool for felting, dyeing, spinning, weaving and knitting. »Moët, Villi und Odin don't just make us happy with their gorgeous wool«, student Tanja Bechtel said this summer, »they also kind of caress our souls with their gentle and curious way of being.« Viola Landschoff is blogging on the Internet about her life and experiences as an immigrant. She is convinced that Alpaca hair have a great future: »Alpaca wool belongs to the most valuable natural fibers. They fare hollow, which makes for an easy and wonderfully warm wear. It is also suitable for people with allergies. And because Alpacas are so easy to handle and to keep, they will become providers of wool in increasing numbers.«

BARBARA MARTIN  
[www.wollmodus.at](http://www.wollmodus.at)

### Felting Cookies

- A simple way to make the cookies is in needle-felting technique with cookie cutters: Place wool flakes in a cutter and work it with the felting needle.
  - Waste felt (also items that have been machine-washed and came out matted) are cut into the desired form. Then needle on points or other ornaments in wool of a different color.
  - Double cookies or others can be made in the camouflage technique or in several layers. Inga Dünkelberg-Niemann explains: »You put cut-out rubber parts between the brown layer and the uppermost one. After felting you cut these parts free again with nail scissors. With such small pieces this is not always easy, sometimes you have to needle again with the inner color.«
  - Spiral rolls from several wool layers – if possible of fine Merino – in different colors can be cut into black-and-white »cookies«.
  - The »gingerbread men« are needled free-style, then wet-felted around and decorated or finished with puff color. When you »bake« them in the oven the color rises like sugar icing.
- A hint:** These »dough men« can also be needled in cutters, then wet-felting isn't required. In that case, though, they need eyes, otherwise the effect is gone.
- As a basic form for small felted cookies use the metal lid of a water bottle, and only one with a rounded edge to avoid cut fingers. Put a flake inside and fold the protruding fibers to the inside. Press the wool together, moisten it thoroughly with soapy water, hold it and press and later rub. Turn the »cookie« around in the form and continue to press and rub. When everything is well felted together you can take it out of the form and rub it firmly between your palms. For bigger cookies use the lids of pickles or jam or plastic plates as a basic form.
  - If you felt the wool in the lid of a glass around an inserted bottle cap or lid you get a dent wherein you can needle wool of a different color as »jam«.
  - For the nougat cookies we punded the felt for quite a while«, says the instructor. »A hammer might come in handy, but this could be a little dangerous.«

## In the Miniature World of Cheddar & Mozzarella

*At Beate Felten-Leidel's initiative, a passel of felted mice finds a home in a picturesque town.*

Caerphilly and Kashta, Vinny, Marco Polo, Dante and of course Cheddar and Mozzarella – they all are no taller than 13 cm and live in neat little houses in Cologne, care of Beate Felten-Leidel. The writer and translator found her love for lovingly felted mice four years ago. Since then she has been busy making a bewitching miniature world for them, with a flower shop and a witch's house, a café and a bookstore. On Facebook, Instagram and her own blog she has the mice tell stories from their lives: from Halloween preparations, new buildings and new companions, small misfortunes and great adventures. Here she introduces her passel of highly sensitive mice each with its own individual character traits.

~ I found almost all of my approx. 60, hand-felted mice from all over the world on the internet platform Etsy. The adults measure 10-13 cm, the kids and babies 3-8 cm. I needle-felt an occasional mouse myself, to be sure, but mostly I love collecting expressive, international personalities which set my imagination in motion. I am still fascinated how different the mice made by each individual feltmaker turn out to be. Unfortunately, most of these little fellows are meant as decoration only and seem to be a bit too stiff or rickety for the exciting life offered them here. Hardly one can turn its head, some tend to lose their tail and only a few have real »hands« or paws.

### Mice With A Character

For me, the most beautiful are mice with not only a character, but also with an end-to-end wire skeleton and long, pliable legs. Ideal in that respect are the early baby mice made by Mireille Booth that can assume – according to their body posture – a sad, self-conscious, happy or thoughtful expression. My own thirteen mice are also needle-felted (from mountain sheep fleece) and have a wired skeleton whereto the tail is tightly fastened. Two of them live in

the Miceum now, the »most important mouse museum north of the South Pole«, as they put it. A great honor!

### A Month-Long Journey

My love for felt mice started four years ago with two winter mice from Chile that I found on Etsy, and I gave them to myself as a Christmas present. Cheddar's and Mozzarella's trip took a whole month, but Johana Molina, who made them, gave them books and mushrooms as travelling fare. Molina also made the witch Caerphilly, the well-read Manchego and the gluttonous giant shrew Toscanello. ~ Johana Molina's brother Guillermo is also a felt artist. His specialty are owls, and this is why in Mouseville also dwell a couple of vegetarian yet mouse-oriented owls. I also like the colorful little animals Olga Keisa makes. From her is my pirate family, the small, stocky painter Inga and Chelsea, always high on cake. In the meantime, I have made friends with many feltmakers from afar, and they keep track of the lives of their »babies«.

### Stilton, the Math-Genius

Since the mice wouldn't let off, they were provided with domesticated animals. Almost all miniature animals come from Russia. Anna Ivanova even succeeded in re-building my cat Alice! With a lot of skill Ivanova makes tiny kittens, pups and birds, but also other animals, for example my piglet Rosa. It belongs to the small mathematical genius Stilton. You can see how much he likes pigs at the first peep into his room. As of late, he has been appointed Mouseland reporter writing for the local community letter, together with the annoying Mila von LubDubDub who is a great Harry Potter fan and talks a mile a minute.

~ For each mouse I search rather long for a proper name. Some years ago, I translated a book about cheeses, so I thought to give them all cheese names. Maybe my writer's brain is responsible that every time I see a mouse, I start to think up stories. All the mice have individual biographies and character traits. I particularly like the writer Marco Polo by Mariyana Ninova, the fearful Mimolette (Mireille Booth) that struggles with nightmares, the shy Nocturne (Mooseloosey) and the wizard Caerphilly. ~ Since I love Halloween, the witch's house that I have been building for weeks looks typically American. To decorate it with furniture and Fimo miniatures is great fun, there are even Halloween pumpkins with cut-out eyes. And of

course, we all celebrate Christmas: with mini-mangers that I paint on myself.

### Paper and Wood Houses

For me, those mice are truly alive. They develop and change, have emotions, feelings and dreams, families, friends, their own rooms, sometimes in comfy shoe boxes. They live in houses that I build from paper or papier mâché, wood or foamboard, the village boasts of a pumpkin house and a bookstore. The houses can be played from both sides and their fronts can be removed. I never thought it possible that I could make so many of those things myself and it still surprises me. Recently, the mice have opened a café and a flower shop. ~ For the time being, the growing fan crowd can take part in the mouse world on Facebook and Instagram, but one day I will write a book about them – in a human format and not only as a miniature stuck in a mouse-house bookshelf.

BEATE FELTEN-LEIDEL

## Ouessant – Small Breton Sheep

### History and Origin

On the small French island of Ouessant, west of Brittany, developed a very small, sturdy sheep race: the Ouessant sheep. Its origin is closely connected with the traditional animal keeping and agriculture on Ouessant. It is the relic of a culture that showed its first cracks in the 19th century and faded completely in the 20th century.

~ The actual origin of the Ouessant sheep is probably much older. Archaeologists found thousands of sheep bones during excavations that date to 750 to 450 B.C. The earliest written sources that document the existence of sheep on the island date from the 17th century.

~ The island's agricultural area was private property, but during two thirds of the years the sheep could roam and graze freely on it.

~ As from the middle of the 19th century their wool lost their importance and agricultural methods changed sharply. Until then, the white sheep were a minority, but after 1913 almost



exclusively white animals that were substantially bigger could be observed. The Ouessant race was more or less extinct.

~ But since a ferry service to the Ouessant island had been established in 1880, first tourists had brought the small sheep to the mainland and kept them as a hobby. These small hobby flocks formed the basis of the contemporary populations.

### Description

Being the smallest European sheep, the rams should measure less than 50 cm in height, the ewes under 47 cm. Still they are relatively long-legged. The narrow head is even, only the rams' heads show slight variations, as in a more outwardly curved contour. Male animals have mighty, wide horns with a single bow, similar to a Moufflon. The ewes have no horns, just sometimes small, non-ossified horn stumps. The ears are small, short and slightly raised. The upper line is straight without protruding withers, and they are wide in the beam. The wooly tail ends shortly above the ankle joint. Even if the so-called bells hanging from the neck that we know from goats are a criterion for exclusion in France, still such characteristics are relatively common indeed.

~ Ouessant sheep have a half-closed, mixed fleece with very fine underwool. As for the rams, a so-called cravat, due to a greater amount of kemp in the lower neck area, neck and the front thighs is a desired feature. Most of the Ouessant sheep are black, but there are also grey, white, brown and white, black-dotted animals. The coloring should be monochrome throughout the whole year, the cravat can be of a slightly darker color in the respective nuance.

### Wool Colors

Ouessant sheep have incredibly varying colors. It probably was black in origin. Below the most important colors and their origin are noted:

~ **Black:** The original color of this small Breton sheep was black, other colors were added in the course of breeding. The oldest written records can be found

in the mid -19th century. Black describes animals with black underwool and black body parts without wool.

~ **A light grey:** As of grey or French Grey color those animals are defined that carry a lightening gene. Other than with a bleaching out, this lighter tone shows in the underwool. This even lightening of the fibers is an original color variant and can be found with both black and brown animals.

~ **Brown:** In Brittany there are no brown sheep, the type »Noisette« describes French Grey sheep the wool of which that has bleached out early. Presumably, brown sheep came from northern France to Belgium and from there to The Netherlands. There they were crossed with Skudde, which can be traced in the animals' height and a very short, hairy tail.

~ **White:** Many publications name the crossbreeding with Arrée Sheep around 1910 as the origin of the white color variant. But there are others who attribute the color black to the original sheep of the Arrée mountains. Recent findings attest to the keeping of white sheep on Ouessant. The color could possibly go back to the white Breton Heath Sheep.

~ **Greyish white with occasional dots:** This color variation, not easy to specify exactly, was first found in The Netherlands in supplanted crossbreeding with Romanov or Finn sheep. It is not officially acknowledged in France. This nuance can be seen also on brown or black animals. Breeding processes do not persevere in that respect.

### Wool

The wool of the Ouessant sheep is a classical mix of very fine underwool, with some short kemp and long, kempy wool in some body parts, both kemp types are very soft. The wide color range makes this wool a very versatile material, even if the single fleeces turn out very small. Certain body parts show marked differences in the wool. The wool on the back is relatively short, while the hairs on the flanks are much longer. During the felting trial below it also showed that the amount of kemp hair greatly differs as well.

Area	Initial Weight	Starting Size	End Size	End Weight	Shrinking factor
Back	10 g	20 cm × 20 cm	12 cm × 12 cm	7,8 g	1,66
Back	3 g	20 cm × 20 cm	8 cm × 7,5 cm	2,2 g	2,5
Flank	10 g	20 cm × 20 cm	13 cm × 13 cm	6,7	1,5
Flank	3 g	20 cm × 20 cm	9 cm × 9,5 cm	2,1	2,1

### Felting Trials

Based on the information above the felting trials were made with 3 g each and 10 g of wool from the back and from the flank. Weighing the wool, it becomes obvious that it is very greasy to the touch, which is a decisive factor in the smaller amount, because the rest weight might vary greatly once the grease has been cleaned out. Since we settled on trials with raw wool, we have to accept this source of faults.

~ The wool offers itself to felting, each group of fibers takes part in the felting process. With the exception of the short kemp all fibers felt evenly, and you get a rather smooth piece of felt. Those trial pieces which didn't require a lot of wool showed an even rippling. It is noticeable that the wool from the back has much shorter kemp which results in a finished, rather hirsute piece of felt. Ouessant wool is comparatively soft, even the short kemp hair is not as stiff as in other races. But with this type of wool getting a really tight, hard felt is impossible.

### Conclusion

Ouessant wool is hardly suitable for everyday use. The fleeces are very small, which entails an extra amount of workload and waste as well. Its ready charm lies in the exceptional color range and therefore their formidable optics. Also, the wool is pleasantly soft and, when processed into a felted fur, it meets the cuddliest of dreams. Whoever can live with the fact that an entire fleece could probably only be made into a big seat cushion will experience great joy working with that special material.

MARGIT RÖHM

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## A Bag with Integrated Handles

*Whether as a shopping bag or a spacious bag to store knitting yarns or other handicraft materials - this bag designed by Gabriele Hoffmann can be useful everywhere. It is made mainly from mountain sheep wool; its lively structure owes itself to felted-in wool curls. Silk fibers let the bag shine like ice. Despite its size, the bag is very light, but sturdy and resilient due to a felted-in string at the upper edge.*

## Materials

- ↪ Mountain Sheep wool in fleece in blue and white 200 g each
- ↪ Wool curls in white and blue, a handful each
- ↪ Roving (e.g. Merino) in white or any other desired color, 2 x 80-100 cm
- ↪ White silk fibers
- ↪ Bubble wrap for the resist, 80 cm x 60 cm
- ↪ Scissors
- ↪ Felting accessories (a skid proof mat, gauze, water, soap, ball sprinkler, towels, a mat to toll the item in, fulling pin)

## Tutorial

**1** Cut out the stencil from bubble foil in the format 80 cm x 60 cm and round it at the lower edges.

**2** The stencil is cut higher as it would be necessary for the later height of the bag under consideration of the shrinking factor. The reason is that a felted string will be inserted into the upper edge to strengthen the handles. Because the edge over the inserted string is folded over approx. 5 cm wide you lay out the wool at the upper edge only up to the stencil's edge.

**3** For the strengthening of the handles felt two thick, solid strings of 70 cm length each from the roving (length=width of the stencil plus 5 cm on both sides) The color doesn't matter because these cords vanish inside of the bag's upper edge and remain invisible. The length of the cords corresponds with the circumference of the bag. Prepare a thick, 90-100 cm long piece of roving for each cord or string.

**4** Felt the cords from roving really tight so that they remain sturdy and won't get pressed flat during the later felting process. They should keep their roundness. The ends of the cords have to remain dry.

**5** A bamboo or raffia mat with a towel underneath helps with the rolling of the cords. Fan the dry ends up so that they can be inserted well later.

**6** For the bag: Spread a big skid proof mat, a piece of foil or gauze on your working table and put the stencil onto it. Lay out a first layer of white fleece wool with an overlap of 1 cm. If desired, cover it with gauze, moisten the wool with warm soapy water, press the air out and felt the wool cautiously across the stencil (but not on the fibers protruding from the

edge!) Dab the excess water away with a towel. Turn the work piece around.

**7** Fold the fibers protruding at the edge on the sides and the lower edge to the inside, close to the stencil's edge. Don't fold the fibers on the upper edge over. Put white fleece wool onto the empty area, wet the wool as described under step 7, press it and felt it lightly. Spare the upper edge into which the handles will be worked in.

**8** When the stencil is covered with white wool from both sides, repeat the steps 7 and 8 with blue wool: Lay out one side with an overlap, wet the wool, press it flat and felt it lightly, turn the workpiece over and fold the protruding fibers at the sides and at the lower edge over tightly, close to the rim of the stencil. **Caution:** Before turning the workpiece around press all excess water out of the wool, so the piece won't get too heavy. If the weight is too great the wool layers may tear.

**9** Fill up the free area between the folded-over edges with blue wool. Wet the wool, press the air out and felt lightly.

**10** When the first two wool layers are lightly felted, put on one of the two cords below the upper edge.

**11** On top of the cord wool fibers should overlap approx. 5 cm.

**12** Fold the overlapping wool over the felted cord downwards and smooth it out.

**13** Then put on a layer of wool with an overlap on the rest of the surface - as desired or like here in both color variants.

**14** Wet the wool, press the air out and start felting. Use more power at the edge of the cord, felt it tightly and stroke the whole surface longer but leave out the protruding fibers.

**15** Dab away the excess water and turn the workpiece around. Fold the overlapping fibers over at the edge of the stencil. Also fold the fanned-out fibers at both ends of the first cord over to this side. Lay the second cord onto the upper edge. Put on the second cord at the upper edge without overlap and put the folded-over fibers of the first cord around it. Then fold the upper edge over the cord. Fill the free space with wool. Wet it, press the water out and felt.

**16** Turn the workpiece around again. What is here the top side is the front side of the bag, which can be decorated additionally. I put on wool locks and silk fibers to imitate snow and ice.

**17** Important: All fibers used for decorating the front side should be pulled apart thoroughly before laying them out.

**18** When felting proceed slowly and with great care, without any force or pressure. Stroke the wool with the layed-out fibers gently to give the silk time to connect with the wool.

**19** Stroke slowly and carefully until the bag starts to shrink and the stencil inside starts to sort of push.

**20** Now the bag is ready for fulling: Roll it into a towel and full 20 times. Then open up the roll, turn the bag in a 90°-angle, stretch it into form, roll it back in and full another 20 times. Pay close attention to the bottom of the bag when stretching it into form. Proceed like that until the bag has been fullled evenly from both sides in all directions and the felt is absolutely tight. Check the form and sturdiness of the felt repeatedly. If necessary, full it additionally in the direction that should shrink further.

**21** Treat the bottom of the bag with the fulling pin generously to make it stable.

**22** Once the bag is fullled to perfection and the felt is solid, cut a slit below the felted-in cord on both sides of the bag. The slit should be 3-4 cm wide and a hand should narrowly fit into it. Do not cut the slit too wide so that the handles don't wear out.

**23** Rinse the finished bag and neutralize eventual remaining soap suds with a shot of vinegar in the last rinse. Then spin-dry the bag and let it dry in an upright position, after you have ensured the form once more.

GABRIELE HOFFMANN

## Ketscha ve Japandji

### *Traditional Felt Items from Azerbaijan*

We travelled to Azerbaijan four times in 2018, amongst other projects we took part in the feltmakers' symposium in Baku (see filzfun no. 63) We took up the opportunity to get to learn other parts of the country apart from the capital, for example the easternmost mountain ranges of the Caucasus, the Talis mountain region in the south and the world of the Caspian Sea in the middle. The white, snowy summits left the strongest impression.

☞ North of Baku in the direction of the Russian border there is a small town called Kuba. From there you can reach the village Sinalik, the highest one of the land at 2350 meters, only by jeep.

### Guest House and Museum

Once arrived, our local guide got us acquainted with a 63-year-old man named Hadjibala Badalov, who spoke Russian well. His guest house serves also as a private museum. The walls of his living room are decorated with beautiful, vintage things. In the dining room we admired ancient pieces of textiles, tiles, cups, caps and coins laid out on the window benches or shown in glass display cabinets. Hadjibala Badalov explained their age and origin and stated: »I am writing a book about our village history and collect the tools that are no longer in use as well as old books and magazines.« Asked about feltmaking in general, he tells us: »Like in the olden days we still keep many sheep. Many families, before our time, lived on shepherding. See, people used to wear such shepherds' coats in the past. I own one of these, they are called Japandji here.«

### Bulletproof Felt

Felt is said to have saved soldiers' lives more than 2300 years ago, Badalov recounts: »In the year 331 B.B., when Alexander the Great fought against the immensely wealthy Persian regent Dara (Darius in Greek), our people also took part in this war. During battle, the warriors were not wounded by the inimical arrows because they wore solidly fulfilled felt jackets. The historians of those days thought their invulnerability a miracle.«

☞ During an evening walk up the steep, narrow streets to the village's mosque we met 78-year-old Meliksim Oradjova, sitting on her doorstep. She talked with us regarding the felting tradition of her homeland.

### Master and Apprentice

»Felting always meant the co-operation of two men: the master and an apprentice. Hassambala and Sükür were their names then. 15 years ago Sükür died and 30 years ago Hassambala. Before World War II, 30 to 40 trade masters felted in our village only. The workshop where they processed the wool shorn in the fall was called Halatschhana, in German 'Wollschlägerhaus', which translates into 'House Where Wool Is Pounded'. The masters beat the wool with sticks and loosened it afterwards with a special bow. The ropes of the bow were rubbed with garlic to make them smoother«, Meliksim Oradjova remembers.

☞ »From finest lambs' wool the most valuable felted carpets were made. The feltmakers put the wool on a woolen blanket and sprinkled it with hot water. Then everything was rolled in the middle with a pole. Then the men put the roll at a suitable area in the garden and moved the felt packet with their feet back and forth. Because this is physically very strenuous it was always just men's work.«

### Vest and Carpet

»We used to have a felted vest«, the old woman remembers. »It was called Walschak and for men and women they were made in black or brown, for children they were occasionally white.«

☞ Meliksim Oradjova declined to show us her patterned felt carpet, called Ketscha: It was too worn already, she thought, yet described a detail: »The background of a felted carpet was mostly brown, the motifs on it white.«

### Japandji – the Shepherd's Coat

At the end of the village is the district museum. The director, Bahmen Zejnalov, is a friendly and helpful young man of about thirty. Amongst many other beautiful textile objects of the exhibit are two specimens of the shepherd's coat, which is called Japandji by the locals.

Felt is the basic material. It was made from washed wool, loosened up with sticks and mixed with many small brown curls. The surface of one of the coats shows many of those curls, it was worn buttoned-up or otherwise closed, the other one is smooth on both sides and was usually worn open.

☞ »Both coats were made in our village at the beginning of the 1960ies«, says the young man. »A coat of such quality was always made by a master himself. Women made coats like that for their own family, albeit of a lesser quality. Each coat is made from a flat piece of felt that is sewed together on the shoulder.«

»White shepherd's coats, which are more expensive, nobler simply, were hardly ever seen then«, says Bahmen Zejnalov. But the coat's color is not just a matter of personal taste or a question of money: »A black shepherd's coat absorbs sunlight stronger and so keeps the owner warm.«

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

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