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Eija Pirttilahti, chairwoman:

The NORTHERN LIGHT IS DECREASING

The felt exhibition of this summer is now behind. There was a lot of work on the background of the exhibition weeks, and this summer there was an excess amount of exercise. One would think that arranging a Scandinavian felt exhibition would be fluent, but there were surprising curves on the way.

Other Scandinavian countries have no organization like Filtti, which would have centrally coordinated the sending and receiving the exhibition works. Based on the experiences of this summer our association we have no difficulties to participate in exhibitions even abroad. The differences in EU brought so many complexities in Customs arrangements. Thanks to Sirpa for her being energetic and tenacious the exhibition succeeded in spite of all unexpected turns.

New felt adventures are in sight. Filtti received an invitation from St Petersburg to participate in an international felt event "New Life of Traditions". In the beginning of November we will travel to meet Russian felt makers for the felt exhibition 2018 in Jämsä. The organizers of the event in St Petersburg we have already met when they visited Jämsä last summer. For the trip the felt works will be taken in our luggage, so we do not anticipate major formalities in the exhibition arrangements.

Our association has a couple of challenging exhibitions in the future, so let us stay alert and felt new, fresh ideas for the joy of all felters.

Wishing joy to make felt

Eija

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Northern Landscape

Filtti exhibition at Kivipankki Gallery in Jämsä July 3rd – August 13th 2017

The exhibition was applied to be in the Finland 100 years independence events in good time and so it was part of the events. This caused several actions prior to the exhibition itself.

First of all felt works registered to the exhibition had to be gathered by end of May in Jämsä to the photoshoot for the exhibition catalogue. Aino Kajaniemi, a well known and distinguished textile artist from Jyväskylä, familiarized herself with felt as material, felt works and consented to our request to jury the felt works of Filtti members.

All the works chosen for the exhibition and the felt pieces from Scandinavian countries were photographed in the beginning of June at Kivipankki gallery. The challenge for the photoshoot presented the fact that we could not hang the works properly on the walls in the gallery. Our photographer Olli Levaniemi took the photos as he has done since 2008 all the photos in our photo gallery and in Filtti books.

The exhibition catalogue was edited by a graphic designer, also a felt artist and a teacher of felting and other textile fields, Filtti member Anne-Mari Ohra-aho. Her hand is also Filtti 15 -book, all Filtti exhibition invitations and posters and of course this newsletter.

The felt works were stored in Jämsä; the mantling started during the last week of June. The efficient mantling ladies Tiina Kerminen and Mari Hämäläinen were first faced with the challenge to paint the walls upstairs of the gallery. The actual mantling was started at full speed a day later from the original schedule. The energy person, Leena Aaltio joined the work then.

If all members are not aware what all is part of preparations for an exhibition, here is a list. I was responsible for sending out invitations, dividing the posters, writing the media release and making the ad for the newspaper, transporting the felt works into the gallery, making of the labels and fixing the tool box, the banderol and other supplies plus also storing all packaging materials.

Together with Tiina Mäki, we set the felt graffiti early in June in the garden of the gallery. Some of the graffiti works were already hanging from the previous summer. We added more felt strips, it was great to notice that felt keeps well. Some colors were a little faded but otherwise in good shape. Now it is a good time to mention that we need new graffiti felts for next summer, so send parcels!

From Scandinavian countries we had invited felt works from Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. We received works from 25 felt artists. The theme of the exhibition was the same for everyone. All in total there were 74 felt works in the exhibition.

In our information we urged Filtti members to use Finnsheep wool and quite a few did. From the other countries we received felt works made of Gotland sheep wool, Icelandic sheep wool and wool of several Norwegian sheep. The theme Northern landscape every artist had treated many ways. A surprise to me personally was that there were so many clothes in the exhibition.

As mentioned so many time earlier, Kivipankki gallery is truly amazing place to have a felt exhibition. The hall downstairs is a great space but has some challenges: there are two doors, seven windows, a big black grand piano and old beautiful but bulky chairs from the time when the building was a bank. These items have had to be taken into consideration when mantling an exhibition. The grand piano and the chairs cannot be moved anywhere. The upstairs of the building is already familiar to every Filtti member; there are three rooms and a hall with a bay window. Often the separate rooms serve well when various felt works are mantled. You may see photos in photo gallery on Filtti webpage how felt works have found their places. You may also find a video of the exhibition; it is on You tube and on Filtti photo gallery.

At the opening on Sunday July 3rd textile artist Aino Kajaniemi held a speech, it can be found on page 16. A Jämsä-born student Vilja Hirvelä was responsible for music. Her selection of pieces on piano surprises us every time; she was there for the third time this summer.

We had guests from other Scandinavian countries: from Norway Evelyn Refshal, from Iceland Gerður Guðmundsdóttir and from Sweden Gunilla Östbom and Monika Wernhoff. We spent a pleasant time at dinner table with them after the opening. The occasion was full of discussion and fun.

This year our exhibition lasted 6 weeks ending August 13th. We lengthen the opening time when we found out that the Finnish Local Heritage Federation had their annual meeting in Jyväskylä and they had made plans to visit Jämsä August 12th. Filtti offered a great venue for them. The visit was a highlight for the exhibition. Visitors were from all over Finland, even a few felt maker. It was a pleasure to show the exhibition to people, who were so interested in works, their material and technique.

Visitors came to the gallery as previous years, again more visitors from outside Jämsä. One would expect that the annual felt exhibition would interest more Filtti members – I base my information to the signatures in the guest book.

We had foreign visitors from England, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway and USA. Number of visitors was a slightly greater than last year when the Japanese works were exhibited.

Sirpa Mäntylä

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opening speech by textile artist Aino Kajaniemi

I have been asked, what would I be if I was not a textile artist. After pondering for a long time, I replied: a poet. I learned to express myself properly first through my pictures and later through my speech. I respect words. Words are deeds, they can create both good and bad. I also respect poets; they can say much sententiously and surprisingly. A poet from Jyväskylä, Olli-Pekka Tennilä said that poetry is such a wide concept that, it is easier for him to compare his own text with other art forms than poetry in general. Poetry today can be a performance, it can have rhythm closer to music and it is composed or it can be visual like fine art.

The unitive factor of this exhibition, felt is like poetry. Material and technique are similar but the contents of the works are from various fields. Part is design, another part is handicraft, yet another part is fine art and a small portion is even art-by-oneself.

Probably nobody has asked President Tarja Halonen what would have been her alternative profession, but I know that when young she had also considered the career of a textile artist. In the last issue of Voima (strength) magazine she is highlighting soft values: women's rights, global stability, situation of the immigrants, solidarity.

The theme of this exhibition can be understood in many various ways. It can be the landscape of mind or that of nature. It can show the unique change of seasons in the north. It could also have the soft values what President Halonen mentioned or it could have contradictions between reality and dreams.

People say, that artists are egocentric individuals. In a way, this is true. To create something new always requires the filtering through oneself and believing in oneself. When you trust yourself and work long enough, you convince other people also. It is said that successfulness of an artist is based 1/3 in talent, 1/3 in practice and 1/3 in motivation. Will is a strong factor. I believe, because the shaping of textiles, for example weaving and felt making require meditative process, within the artist forgets oneself, these can have even Zen-experience.

Like the poet Arja Tiainen has written:

The feeling emotion of a tree is not a poem.
What you see, is not a visual angle.
I pass these facts through my head.
But when the facts have gone through your heart, then it is good enough.

An artist cannot however isolate herself and concentrate only in herself. It is essential to follow the events of the world and to achieve impacts. One must know in which kind of world we are living. An art piece is a message, it has an idea, a content and a shape and it speaks of its creator but also of its environment.

Like the poet Anne Hänninen said:

Who reflects me (I am too introspective, I create my creator?)
One cannot see anything truly through, it fades away, it disappears immediately?
It escapes to withstand?
A moment is a canvas. What can capture a picture?

Who am I, a white fabric in a black moment, I see the pictures?
A shadow is cast on paper, it is a substitute.
Without words, it is cutting the edges: pictures of paper.

When one thinks of felt through history, one thinks of practical textiles; the pieces to protect humans and animals, items that belong to everyday life. One may define the basic function of a textile to protect and cover. One needs protection against climate circumstances, protection from gazes. There are other meanings to this basic function like aesthetic, rituals, psychological and social. We have wanted to make beauty, separate a festivity from everyday life, to please spirits and neighbourhood. Felt as a part of our national heritage bears always this history.

A Mexican poet Octavio Paz has pondered the subject:

The ideal of design is invisibility: functional items are more beautiful less visual they are. The opposite to artwork, which reaches us through our instinctive physical presence and to which the principle of benefit continuously collides by breaking the tradition, fantasy and even a whim to their benefit. The artwork does not conquer us simply by its usefulness. It lives in conspiracy with our senses and that is why it is so difficult to get rid of it. It is like chasing your friend to the street.

In the subsistence economy, a handicraft was the only way to produce items. Handicrafts were natural part of women's everyday chores. In Finland textile art is still women's art. A big part in this exhibition is women. Maybe the situation is changing, because the major of textile art was closed down at Aalto University and artists who exploit textile materials and techniques are makers who have gone through the traditional art education. This brings up a question, will the art world lose an essential part since the technical skill and the deeper knowledge of textile materials will remain the artists' own studies. Without refined skill the artistic talent or the individual freedom tied to the context of art, is not actualized. I predict that it will take a long time before men are conquering the textile world.

Hannele Huovi:

On a hill in moonlight
there sits an old woman
sewing.
She pushes the needle
to her breast,
pulls the thread of pain
tacks together
body and soul.

Material itself is also a message. Art is experienced by senses. We see, we hear, we smell and we feel. In addition, we experience feelings, memories of our own experiences, associations. We carry the memory of our own history, experience, of what we have read and heard. Hearing, allegiance and obedience are tied together, as view, sights and vision are tied together. Observations connected to sight we consider original and reliable but then again hearsay we doubt.

Touch is important when one approaches textile art. Touch is the human sense with most feeling emotion. We have collected experience since birth through our skin. The materials of items and human skin build a network for memories in our subconscious. Through touch we experience textiles always intimately. Felt as material signals equivocally shelter and positive feelings. Textiles always contain hope.

An art piece has always a shape. Felt as material is 3dimensional. I studied at the School of Art, Design and Architecture in the change of 1970 – 1980. Maisa Tikkanen had graduated little earlier. She hadher first solo exhibition in Helsinki and this made a great influence on me. Felt was used like any other substance in sculptures. However, the ambiance was totally different like for example when sculpture of rock or cast of iron. In that exhibition, I thought that this is something I want to focus on, communicate with world and through that also with individuals with my works; bring forward the feminine point of view and if possible comfort, understanding, even joy.

A Polish Nobel poet Wislawa Szymborska:

He came home. Said nothing.
It was clear, though, that something had gone wrong.
He lay down fully dressed.
Pulled the blanket over his head.
Tucked up his knees.
He's nearly forty, but not at the moment.
He exists just as he did inside his mother's womb,
clad in seven walls of skin, in sheltered darkness.
Tomorrow he'll give a lecture
on homeostasis in metagalactic cosmonautics.
For now, though, he has curled up and gone to sleep.

It is good for each one of us to have our own blankets, where we compose ourselves, recover ourselves, rest. Under the blanket we also make love.

I want to close my speech, with what I started with, quoting Olli-Pekka Tennilä's poem:

Now when one may start to search with even less hints,
can one say: some work is in it.
Like now it is spoken out loud, it means:
and the tracks as a rule, those you cannot any longer make mistakes
but also making promises:
everything which presents itself as silence
everything which are going show through
is
was
has been
had been
let it be
is valid
exists.

Thank you

INTAGIBEL CULTURAL HERITAGE

WIKI-inventory on these pages introduces samples on knowledge, skills and practices. It is part of Unesco convention. The pages have been made by associations and they are maintained by the National Board of Antiquities in Finland. The article of felt making has been written by Leena Sipilä and Sirpa Mäntylä.

at the moment it is only in Finnish.

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FELT IMAGE COURSE IN ITALY / Eija Pirttilahti

Feltrosa is an annual felt event in Italy. The event is organized by Eva Basile. This year felt makers from Italy and all over the world met July 4th – July 7th in Nazzano, a small town close to Rome. The program consisted of courses, workshops, exhibitions, lectures and a contest.

Last fall Sirpa Mäntylä suggested that we offer carpet course for Feltrosa. After a while we decided to offer this to Eva Basile. When thinking of the content the name was changed to nano pathering technique, which lateron was changed to felt image course. This was to be my first curse abroad. I had tutored a few foreign young students in Mänttä, Finland but going to have a course in Italy was entirely a different, more exciting matter.

I made teaching material with my trainee. She felted the sample pieces and this way familiarized herself with the technique. We photographed all stages of the work. Then we made clear instructions, which were translated into English by Sirpa. On a memory stick the material travelled to Feltrosa. To be safe I had a printed version along.

In April I was getting excited about the trip. Eeva Piesala came along to the adventure. Our luggage was jammed with material when we flew to Rome May 5th. From Fiumicino airport we travelled on a local train to Fara Sabina station. We were met by a tall man with a little Fiat which had many miles on. We raced through winding little roads in pitch black evening to Nazzano. Nazzano is about 55 kms from Rome but the trip took about two hours all together, We had an evening meal in a small restaurant by the river; we ate organic food.

Our accommodation was on a farm, in a row house in the middle of fields. we were warned of donkeys that they might be noisy in the morning. We did have an exotic wakening; the donkeys sounded wheezy and husky ado. The Italian landscape was at its best. The weather was like in Finland in June and July, verdant deep summer.

The course was held at Museo del Fiumo. The space was an extensive hall, divided between three different courses. My felt makers were in the middle between the hat makers and scarf makers. The space had light tables, water was fetched from the toilets and heated by water kettles. The space was quite basic.

I had 11 participants from Italy and one from Denmark. We looked at the photos of the instructions. The enthusiasm was great; we had 12 hours to achieve a piece of felt. I explained the photos and soon understood that we had no common language. The Italians spoke English poorly and I know no Italian at all. Via photos we got along, the instructions were partly interpreted by the participants and the rest meaning was guessed.

Every person aimed to have a 50x50 cms carpet-like felt textile which design on both sides. It was a surprise to many how much strength is required to roll a thick felt. Water was splashing so that we spread newspapers and towels to cover the museum floor. The distressed museum manager was visiting the space a couple of times and then we got more newspapers.

On Saturday evening there was a concert with medieval ballads performed by four singers and four players. The evening meal was served by the fireplace. They burnt cypress wood in the fireplace. The biggest challenge for an early night person were the late meals with conversations, the energy sources were worn out during the day.

On Sunday we continued working successfully. The atmosphere was quite easy. One lady had her husband helping her. When he was tired to needle the work, he played a cello to everyone's joy. When the works were getting finished, I heard words like *bellissima fastastica prima!* We took a photo of all participants and felts outside.

In the evening we rode with a German-Italian couple to Rome towards the airport. During the short trip we experienced genuine Italy through masses of tourists, although I would have enjoyed Colosseum and Vatican. I learnt the most important words in Italian: *lana, acqua and sapone* (wool, water and soap). When you start to make felt, these are what you need.

We introduced Finn sheep wool, interior felt and Filtti association during our trip to Feltrosa. Thanks goes to Sirpa for encouragement and translations and to Eeva for companion on the adventure.

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FELTED HEARTS

As a sideline to the felt exhibition we made felted hearts at Kivipankki.

There is a big, joyful multicolored heap and more to come!

Visitors stayed and discuss and marveled the hearts and listened to the facts of our campaign.

Some we have already donated to groups, but a major allotment is to be taken to the senior citizens' homes during the independence day.

When the Filtti exhibition was approved and listed as part of the official event catalogue, we were granted 1000 euros for the exhibition expenditure by the Regional Council of Central Finland. The final closure is to be done at the end of this year and for this I need from Filtti members as complete as possible information where in Finland the hearts have been made, about the numbers of items and where the hearts have been donated.

If you have not had time or have not remembered to make the hearts, it is not too late yet. During the next few months you have still time to felt them for this good cause.

Sirpa Mäntylä

NEW MEMBERS TO THE FILTTI BOARD

New board member Mari Hämäläinen

I am a designer and a textile teacher from Varkaus. My main job is at Soisalo college, where I teach versatile handicrafts like textile works, mosaic techniques, felt making and weaving. In addition to teaching and as counterbalance I make textile art and take part in collective exhibitions.

New vice-member for the board Maria von Bonsdorff

I am an enthusiastic felt maker from Helsinki. Mostly I am interested the various felt surfaces and forms in surfaces. I am eager to try anything new and I am captivated by the volatility of felt. One never really knows what is finally accomplished.

New vice-member for the board Heidi Halm

I am a handicraft hobby artist from Helsinki. Making handicrafts and gardening are my favourite tasks on my free time. I started making felt over 20 years ago and Filtti exhibitions have encouraged me to exhibit my felt pieces.

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Preliminary information of 2018

Exhibition during the summer 2018

The felt exhibition at Kivipankki gallery starts July 1st. We have not yet determined the length of the exhibition, but it will be at least the month of July. We have invited felt works from St Petersburg of the members of the local association. The theme of the exhibition is CLOTHES, but the name of the exhibition will be informed end October.

Filtti 20 years anniversary!

The festive exhibition will be at the Craft Museum of Finland in Jyväskylä starting December 14th 2018 and lasting until May 2019.

The name for this exhibition is Felt for Tomorrow – Filtti 20 years

During the negotiations with the museum it has been stated that modern utility items are wanted for the exhibition, at least for the most part. All the works must be made during 2018!

The precise schedule for sending the works and other information will be on Filtti website in November 2017.

We hope, that as many as possible of members take part of the exhibition. After all this is a fantastic opportunity for us to present the versatility of felt and to tell everyone, that felt is still alive,,

Sirpa Mäntylä

Back cover:

NOTE FOR EVERYONE!

Kindly visit regularly Filtti webpage , read the notices and the newsletter. It is necessary to ease the readers, members and us the board members!

Please send email especially on matters which are not explained well; we will reply to all email as soon as possible.

We do not send group email any longer, this was stopped a few years ago. Although we have noticed that regular visit to the Filtti webpage is rather infrequent for some members.

on behalf of the board Sirpa