

Felt making news during corona time by Filtti board members

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Felt making during corona-time – how do I get through this

A year has gone regulating your life under the corona threats. Situations change rapidly as you live in constant stand-by stage. Changes seem to be many in all areas of life. Corona affects all activity and requires us to have a new attitude, new tools and new skills... in order to survive. Corona has made close contacts to the minimum, changed them to remote contacts and distanced those earlier remote things even further.

The lockdown in spring and precautions led to furloughs at Taito group, only the shop was open two days a week. Suddenly you had enormously free time. The gentle, warm and sweet spring weather favored us to get by in isolation from other people. The garden kept you busy, then a greenhouse appeared to our yard. Nature lured you to go outside and stroll. The furlough time passed with taking care of well-being and energy.

In spring I made the felt sculpture Disappeared and survived for the Filtti summer exhibition. The theme for my work was the disappearing nature, even though it describes also my own deep crisis with felt making. Animal figures rise and sink as groups, in black, gray or white. For the exhibition Three-dimensionality I produced another work Fire edge. It was a challenge to combine plaiting and an old, abandoned felt textile in one felt work. My work combines tradition, as the exhibition was executed in a completely new way for Filtti.

Corona summer was spent at home. All summer activities and events were cancelled, as they earlier were a relevant part of our family's summer. Your own family and home were the center of your attention. We renovated, renewed the sewage system, worked in the garden and cleared the shoreline. Summer tasks were at higher level than in years. The peaceful and voluntary summer life was relaxing and full of energy and one felt gratitude of your own remote corona bubble far away the corona that stirred the world.

In the fall the work continued normally at Taito center. I emphasized firmly to learn new handicraft techniques like plaiting, making footwear and knitwear. In my felting works I concentrated making felt booties; this was something which I had hardly made earlier. I developed felting booties to wear inside the house, this to be a product for a course at Taito center and thus the bunny booties were born.

I had a crazy thought and decided to make a new work for From wool into felt -exhibition. My aim was to develop further the plaiting technique and take advantage of materials found from felt storage. The edges left aside from coolers became a bold shape sculpture Deep roots. I was seeking strength, weight and massiveness to describe the power of felt. Corona made changes to the exhibition and brought it finally to Taito center. With this exhibition I began to realize how much work social media requires and how little time one invests into it.

One absolute benchmark each year in my felt business in annual circulation is the Arts and Craft market in Tampere – this year it was run virtually. I woke up to participate too late, but I decided to take part out of curiosity. My input was left badly short, I stumbled to lack of resources and time. Virtual fair baffled me, although the public was supposedly at full speed. Might this be an age

question? I am slightly concerned of the future of this field, especially if success depends on digital skills and handicraft are left secondary. Or is the digital skill to be compared with literacy a self-evidence for future generations and all other skills will develop on top of the basic knowledge? At least corona has demanded inexplicably much study from everyone to caper in digital world. Remote skills and tools remain in use in work life inevitably – as virtual trade fair.

Staying at home and moving in one's own circles has inspired me in archeological digs in my own storage. Partially it has been a question of a mystery of a lost felt work. From a cupboard in storage, the contents literally jammed to the floor, I found a Bear -felt work which had been lost for years. At a course arranged by Sigrid Bannier I finished a test of felt mosaic at Valentine's day by felting a small red ball of wool given by the German guests- as a memory of past international times when we had a possibility and means to travel. I place the Bear and a lingonberry – felt into frames like graphic work in order not to waste it again.

Felt making seems to be after all in me as a deep flow behind all challenging time. You can find endless possibilities to ease the stress during evasion, when I leave home to work covered by a tight face mask. Arts and crafts seem to be a general way to survive this corona maelstrom, people talk utterly about handicraft ecstasy.

Knitwear has achieved an enormous upthrust, so maybe the arts and crafts world will get excited of felt making once again. At least the Finnsheep wool seems to rise as a target of great interest, so corona crisis has also a positive impact.

Eija Pirttilahti

Felt made during Covid19

To me, as to many others this year, hiking in the nature and nature itself has become even more important, invigorating place. In insecure times the nearby nature brought long-lost constancy. Last spring ended the teaching work like against a wall – anxiety and stationary and peaceful moments abnormal from before came instead.

For the summer exhibition I made a reed-like work called In the wind. Walks on the nearby shore felt good and soothing - green grass grew in the waterline and were swinging lightly in the wind.

But the life felt in many ways heavy and at windy stage, one could not plan or predict the continuation.

During the summer we travelled to northern Finland and made a short visit to Norway, In July it was +9 degrees when we strolled in fog and drizzle on mountain paths. The nature was starkly beautiful, there were small flowers in the mountains and slopes. Everything was as microcosm shrunk together.

By fall colors became darker, I moved within colors according to the seasons.

Earlier I had felted a small white snowlike work, where two parts bend together like a book. In the wind - work the form changed into an open book and thus made a continuation to the From fall into winter -work. These two felt works have been assembled in the covers of old books. From fall into winter -work has a dyed felt as base and wool fibers felted on metal wires. Wire has been during the past years part of my works, at times hidden in the structure but in some works a part of the surface.

Mari Hämäläinen

Pearls of the miserable corona spring

As a refreshment to the miserable spring
as opposite to remote work
as a small chore to the state of emergency
as a task at home
the pearl necklace was born.

Of soft and hard
of cold and warm
of strawberry red, sunny gold and grass green
of various surfaces and vivacious colors
the pearl necklace was born.

Of felted balls, pompons and pearls
of fabric scraps and stubs of yarn
designing and composing
making by hand
the pearl necklace was born – to bring joy and light for spring days!

Tiina Kerminen

Different times

I am sure we have over five million corona stories.

In my story I had to set my dear business (small oranges) aside because all orders faded mostly in one night. I felt quite hollow. Then again hands could rest of the everyday felting and again mind was completely empty.

Little by little I allowed myself to enjoy my own time, read a book when I felt like it and stroll in the woods with the dogs. I crocheted a coat for myself and soon I will be making one for my hubby, then I started to design fair isle patters. The handcrafter's hands yearn always something to do. I taught myself to bake sourdough bread and found, that the process is similar with the first steps of felt making: in the beginning everything seems difficult ja the work spreads allover until you get to know the material and the result starts to look like what you thought it should.

I made felted covers for my notebook to log my stitches, mushroom stories and breadmaking, then I have them all in one place – secure in a woolen safe. The future is foggy but making things by hand keeps your mind bright.

Marika Halme

Nothing so bad that also something good

In the beginning of corona time the new pictures often show a colorful picture of corona virus. Unbelievably beautiful! A lovely three-dimensional form and colors like on the Caribbean ocean. Beautiful but guileful.

That beautiful guileful virus has also affected my life. I am a sole entrepreneur in a fabric shop/sewing shop. The movements of the virus strike like waves to the business, at times it quietens, at time it is close to normal trade. Anyway, the quiet periods have in its all cruelty opened doors to creativity; felt art and developing the felting. Last summer we photographed works and recently I received a message, that just those works have been selected to Schön exhibition at Handwerksforum in Hannover next summer. This is like salve to wounds, because the March exhibition in Germany has been cancelled due to corona, and also a couple of other functions. Hopefully, this will come true.

My great love is felted accessory jewellery. I have made mainly dress jewellery, but lately I have developed also jewellery for hair and wrist. Before Valentine's day my business area changed for one day to a photo studio and we photographed new jewellery on the models who had answered Face model selection. The models were ordinary people of different ages and sizes. They felt the event as a joyful experience. As a refreshing exception to the everyday of corona. Something else than staying at home. Refreshment it brought to my every day. The day was such a success that it makes you smile for a long time. There was a flow of flowers and thank you notes. A small event was great also for other entrepreneurs of this area. It gave work to makeup artists, a hairdresser and a florist.

This strange time has helped to appreciate the facts we have regarded as self-evident. To notice that the greatest happiness is found close and of the little things. Hope you may see it also?

I wish joy and light to the spring.

Mari Jalava

Feltmaking during lockdown

Now that various venues are closed and we have stayed at home most part of the time, I have sorted cupboards and gone through unfinished craft works.

I found a felted fabric made about two years ago; the silk wool I brought from Italy, when some of us Filtti members visited the Feltrosa event. The top layer is a fabric found from a flea market. When making the felt I knew that I do not have enough material, so I never finished the work.

Luckily the web courses are running, I found an idea in a clothing course. I cut and sewed the shirt and lengthen the hem about 12 centimeters with a soft fabric and stitched it with rya stitches. I added another fabric on the wrong side to make the hem sturdy. To make the hem more colorful I made green stitches with cotton-viscose-linen threads between the white merino wool yarns. I used 150 grams of yarn in total; this made the hem quite sturdy. Now I am waiting for an opportunity to wear the shirt.

Another unfinished work will be finished by the spring. A year ago, I felted and embroidered old bedroom curtains for a fabric for a coat. The fabric is synthetic, which meant that it had to be sewn into a merino pre-felt to have it properly attached. I also made designs more apparent by embroidering before the felting thus attaching the fabric more to the pre-felt. As a sample piece I made a small bag a year ago. I have still to sew the molding for buttons, a collar, a lining and a hem, then I have a new coat for this spring.

Heidi Halm

A year with corona

A year ago, corona came like from the bushes and interrupted the teaching job at community college. I had then also a felt making course in Jyväskylä and all supplies were left there when the course was interrupted. During summer I collected my supplies I received the information that I will not continue work there.

Simultaneously the yarn and gift shop has been open ja that being my day job. Fortunately, corona has not closed the shop. In spring I had to apply a pension for myself or a partial early retirement brings now basic security to the household of a entrepreneur. During summer, the business is almost normal. In July, there were more national tourists, but foreign tourists were missed because that borders were closed.

In fall the jobs as a teacher started normally in Jämsä. The weaving courses I teach increased by one and I also had a felt making course during one weekend to interested students. The popularity of macramé surprised and I had two courses. I tutored a further felt making course in handicraft school for children. Five wild buys and three more or less enthusiastic girls. Anyway, it was a nice experience.

Already in spring there was signs that corona restrictions and lack of courses made people interested in handicraft. The boom of the Icelandic knitwear grew in the fall thus making the hustle of the yarn shop increase. The yarn trade was greater at Xmas time compares to generally the gift item trade has been bigger. The felt boots were more popular items before Xmas. I knitted a second Icelandic jersey for myself during Xmas holiday.

The New Year started with new restrictions. Evening courses are still on break and courses planned for spring have been cancelled, for instance a felt making course. For smaller school children there is, at least still, a beginner felt making course planned after ski holidays.

People make the Icelandic knitwear ever more than before. The limitation of trade are the delivery problems of Icelandic wholesale. There the spinning machines work at full speed for us to get yarn in Finland. There are queries from all over Finland of missing yarn and colors. Although I do not have an online shop, I have sent yar to various areas of the country. Also knitting needles are almost finished at wholesale. Other yarn are sold also and it makes the craft teacher glad that the clientele has become clearly younger.

A small group has changed the knitting yarn to Finnish wool thus increasing the sale.

I have had much time to make felt myself, but traditionally the felt work for summer exhibition was finished in time, even a couple of weeks ahead of time.

Tiina Mäki

A year of corona

The corona year has brought big changes into my work life. At the same time the nature's role has grown to become even bigger place for recovery, as a source for energy.

The attraction of wool in life has increased: I wear merino clothes daily when wandering in nature and staying overnights. My felt making has instead become felt for tomorrow.

Leena Aaltio

Corona pandemic -frustrating, frightening, boring, depressing

Corona virus came to our lives at first distant, slowly closing. Suddenly it just took over our everyday life, A question comes to mind: What kind of world we will face after years from now. Nobody knows anything for sure....

In the beginning the extra free time was somehow easy. Then at some stage listening the new reports started to feel distressing. The yearning for people and contacts took over! We were waiting that the worse would be over by the end of the year, now we know that did not happen.

There are positive things too, like: walking outside, forest trips with the dog before the now came, handicrafts and reading books. I have started to go through the contents of cupboards, destroying waste papers and clothes you never use. For Filtti I mostly get irritated that I have not succeeded getting exhibition space in spite of applications.

I read Obama's new book – interesting. I knit socks of quality yarn my friend has hand dyed. Chat with my sons and grand kids. Correspondence with my contacts abroad. Try to keep myself positive!

The sun makes daytime longer – let us enjoy and wait for the spring to come!

Sirpa Mäntylä