

FELT LINES

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Alchemy
Our Online Exhibition
Celebrating 25 years
of the VFI

Anna Ashton
Lichen





Feltlines is the official publication of the Victorian Feltmakers Inc. Please refer any questions/suggestions about the magazine or about content (such as advertising), to the editor at vicfelteditor@gmail.com

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Contributions: We would like to encourage members who are unable to make it to our get-togethers, because of distance or other commitments, to keep in touch with us by sharing stories of their own journey in Feltmaking via Feltlines.

Feltlines provides the perfect opportunity to link members to each other's stories, inspirations and interests. Contact the editor if you have a contribution to make.

From the Presidents Pen

by Andrea Taylor



Emergence at last!

It's with great relief, that we can welcome back our members, to face to face meetings and frenzies in 2022. Of course, in keeping with government regulations, which we have learnt to live with. Myself, I am hoping we can look forward to planned events. Like so many, I would like to include travel in the near future.



During lockdown your committee has worked behind the scenes, planning Zoom meetings, speakers, our first ever on line exhibition. We have kept all members connected with the invaluable Feltlines magazine.

We thank all the members, who have contributed to these activities, to keep our wonderful club together, and moving forward.

Looking forward to a great 2022.

Felting from across the Murray

by Patricia Wyatt

Living on the Murray River this year has been very challenging. Trying to keep abreast of both State's rules and frequent border closures, has created much confusion. On a brighter side, the Albury area has not been subjected to the lengthy closures, experienced in the cities.

I have had to go to Peter Mac several times for treatment this year, and then had to isolate on my return home. I managed to survive ok, with neighbours dropping in lovely meals, flowers and yummy chocolate mousse. My last treatment is scheduled for the end of October, so hopefully I will have more energy by Christmas.

My felting this year has been limited. Currently I'm working on my "Shades of Blue" creation. My friend has suggested I finish it to wear on Melbourne Cup day.

I have felted a pair of slippers and I'm very happy with the results. I used four layers, of batts on both sides of my template. For the fifth and final layer, I made a pre felt, using up lots of my left over wool top, which I placed over the batts. Being a very thick piece of felt required quite a lot of rubbing. When it was holding together well, I wrapped it in a plastic sheet, then rolled it up in a towel, which I tied in several places. The package was then tumbled in the clothes dryer, set on cold for twenty minutes. I then reversed the slippers,

packaged it again and tumbled for another twenty minutes. The template was then ready to be taken out and the felt to be cut in half, forming the two slippers. I then placed the slippers into the moulds, which I made at the felting convergence in New Zealand six years ago. I used a trusty wooden spoon to beat the slippers into shape. Shrinkage was achieved by rinsing in hot water.

Once the slippers were completely dry, I took them to a local boot-maker. He was fascinated that the slippers didn't have a seam. He sewed suede leather soles onto the slippers. I was delighted by the excellent job he did. I will now have warm toes for many future Winters.



Obituary by Lyndon Regan

For Christina Kent

I met Christina at felting workshops and at VFI meetings. We were both committee members of the VFI. However, our friendship developed into non felting activities – we met for lunch, visited galleries, shopped, went to WOW in New Zealand and went to Tassie together for a short trip.

Christina was a very active member of VFI as Membership Coordinator. She organised the memberships, and used her caring personality, to encourage people to continue, or begin, their membership. She was always ready to help at events, such as the Lost Trades Fair and Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show. She will be remembered as a dependable team player, who was always ready to lend a hand.

With Vella, Christina and I, we established a tradition of going to Halls Gap for Grampians Texture and sharing a cabin. We met up with Marg, Jenny, Marlene and other friends for dinner. Workshops were often tiring, but we all worked hard to complete our felt projects, and often collapsed at night with a few wines. Christina extended her repertoire of felting skills with specialised workshops lead by Charity Van Der Meer, Chris Fines, Wendy Bailye, Pam Hovel and many others. She created many beautiful felt garments, using a variety of techniques. With Chris

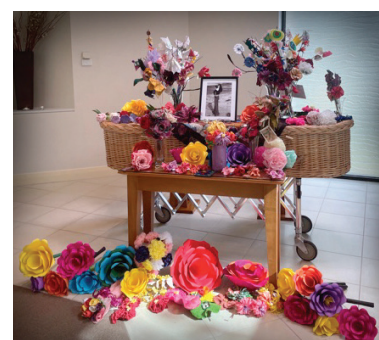
Fines she created felt portraits of her mother and of her son Aaron.

Christina's felt garments were fabulous and her love of colour was clearly evident. She hand dyed much of the silk fabric, that she used in her felting. She demonstrated a strong sense of style, and was always dressed immaculately and often in felt. In our second year at the Grampians, Christina spent a massive 2 days completing a beautiful felt dress. This resulted in us deciding that smaller felt projects, were more enjoyable for us, at the Grampians.

Recently Christina began to enjoy felting vessels, after completing workshops with Pam Hovel. She created some fabulous vases, using natural undyed fibre. Other workshops produced great felt boots, hats, many outfits, bags, sculptures and scarves. Christina lead some felt workshops herself, and she exhibited with the VFI, often selling her felt.

The felting community was important to Christina, particularly in her retirement. It provided a creative outlet and a sense of community. However, a community is only as good as its parts. Christina was a valued member of our felting community. She was humble, compassionate and caring towards others. She was a talented, creative felter, who was a wonderful felting

friend to many. Many members made tribute flowers for Christina's funeral. She was an especially valued friend of Vella, Marg, Genielle and myself. She contributed much to the VFI and she will be missed by many.



Feltmaker's Retreat by Margot Ling

El Kanah in Marysville is a wonderful setting for a retreat.

This weekend is one big felt frenzy, sharing creative times, and sharing very comfortable rooms with ensuite.

All meals are included and there is a superb room in which to felt. There are

lovely places to relax, and lovely walks in the surrounding area.

Dress is casual/comfortable.

BYO all felting equipment, and a table and risers are included. Fibre will be available for purchase.



When: Thursday 12th May to Sunday 15th May 2022.

Arriving on Thursday 3pm with a leisurely departure on Sunday after breakfast.

For now, mark your diary.

Further information and bookings will be on the website early in the New Year.

Alchemy by Sabrina Crosthwaite

Our Online Exhibition 2021

This Edition of Feltlines is celebrating our first Online Exhibition and the Organisation's Silver Anniversary.

Triggered by the Covid lock-down, and the impossibility of an exhibition, at a gallery, the committee looked for ways to keep the membership engaged, in contact and sharing their work.

I had participated in the International Feltmakers online exhibitions. I was impressed by its success, and easy process for work submission. I suggested an online exhibition could work for us. After discussion, the committee agreed an online exhibition was the way forward.

I took the brave step to say I would organize it. I was a little bit naive about the complexity and amount work. With the support of many people, and lots of communication, we succeeded.

It was a big learning curve for everyone involved. My first exhibitor phone call, proved typical of the challenges exhibitors faced, and I learned what support was usually needed. It was from Margot Ling, and my husband and I solved her problems. It is important every one has the chance to participate. Anyone with access to a smart phone and email can become an online exhibitor. Everyone who submitted work ended up in the Online in the Exhibition.

Could we improve the process? Yes! Make it simpler, clearer, less labour intensive? Yes! Could we find ways to better support the exhibitors? Yes!

I so much appreciated the assistance from my husband for his technical help and photography skills, Eva McDonald for her editing and Brigid Anderson for her web page knowledge. Remember we were all beginners. Also thank you to Andrea Taylor for final twitches to the web page.

It was wonderful to have a Zoom opening, with many exhibitors present, to discuss their work. Please see the back page for examples of the work exhibited.

Featuring Anna Ashton

My felting journey really began back in the 1980s, when my mother-in-law, a fabulous spinner and knitter, told me that I could make felt by laying out fleece, sewing it between sheets of calico, and putting it in the washing machine! Well, that was a total disaster, and quite turned me off felting for a long time! Thankfully, I did not keep the result!

So, flashing forward about 20 years, I held a PD workshop in my (then new) studio for local teachers with Suzan Redland, and I also participated. We made beads, cords and small pictures, with beautifully coloured roving, and learnt a bit about the structure of wool and how it felted. I was at least partially hooked. I went to the wool show, purchased a rainbow of wool from the Yarn Barn, and went into production of beads. I have nearly finished that first necklace!

It was a slow start. I was at that time known mostly as a potter, but also had a job as a sessional art teacher, with several local schools. I had a new medium to show them. Balls, cords and little pictures were all I knew, so that's what we made. I learnt as much as the children!

Thinking back, this is all pre google, Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram. The local library had a few books, which I had as my 'tutors' and I started to experiment with resists. Cushions were the aim, but my efforts largely resulting in lumpy seams. Scarves never excited me. Bath mats were made as Christmas presents. It was the idea of sculptural

forms that I was pursuing. I thought was easier and less fragile than clay, more colourful than steel, which I had also dabbled in.

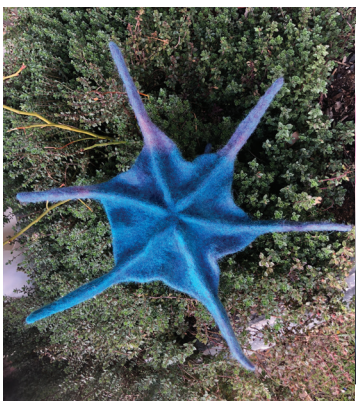
A trip to Germany in 2004 was the catalyst for further exploration. I chanced upon a small gallery, in a now forgotten town, where there was a display of stunningly beautiful felted hats, bags and scarves and jewellery. On my return, I began to seriously investigate, what workshops were available here. I discovered the VFI, and the felting convergence, about to be held in Canberra. Well, that was really the beginning of a still continuing voyage of discovery. I met some amazing Feltmakers from around the country and the world. I learnt how to work with resists and avoid lumpy seams. Thankyou Judith Shaw. I kept puddling on for another year or so, making hats and occasionally scarves, before I had my first formal class with Elizabeth Armstrong in 2007. I discovered Fibre Forums, and was seriously bitten by the bug.

My aim has been to sell enough product to feed the habit, and get me to one major workshop a year. So far, so good! I have been able to attend workshops with international tutors such as Alexander Pilin, Judit Pocs, Dagmar Binder, Pamela MacGregor, Atsuko Sasaki and Charlotte Sehmisch, right here in Victoria, as well as notable Australian Feltmakers. Since retirement I have been able to combine a 3 yearly excursion to the UK, to maintain family connections, with a felting experience

somewhere else. My husband has been happy to find things to do, while I am focussed on felt for a week. I have been able to indulge my passion with Elina Saari in Finland, Fiona Duthie in Shetland and Gladys Paulus in Holland.

Covid put on hold last year's trip so instead I have discovered Zoom experiences, with Ariane Mariane in France, Dagmar Binder in Germany and Judit Pocs in Hungary. Being face to face on the IPad, hasn't been quite the same as sharing space in the room, but does have a bit of a buzz, 'meeting' up with participants from the other side of the planet! There is also a wonderful burgeoning of online classes, from tutors here and overseas. They allow more time to complete exercises, and allow interaction in a different way between students.

Although I love a lot of the clothing that is created, I am not particularly interested in the wearable aspect of felt, other than hats, but am totally fascinated by the ability to create sculptural forms, from a pile of fluff, using little more than the addition of soapy water and elbow grease. Plastic resists are very useful too and I am in awe of those who devise the methods of using complex resists, which I so much enjoy using. I also enjoy sharing what I have learnt, sometimes tricky to be mindful, of the source of the information. Now I am looking at combinations of felt with other materials, that I have learnt to use. More voyages of discovery to be had!



Featuring Caz Rogers

I was introduced thirty years ago, to the magic of making felt. In those days, you had buckets at the each corner of the table, towels on the floor, as well, and Rainbow drifts of fibres were layed in place, by eager hands, wanting to learn how to turn fibre into fabric. It only took one lesson and I was hooked.

The tutor of one workshop then introduced us to the "Embellisher", one of three machines in the country at the time. We all had a go, some loved it and wanted their own there and then, (like me), others not so much. Well, it took about 5 years for me to get my own embellishing machines (2). I still use them for detail work and for general inspirational freedom, when I have creators blank!

Like most felters, I went through the basics, learning the difference between 'fulled and unfulled', or unfinished work, and the consequences of the latter. It's all a learning process. Some of my work went in the bin, until I realised, that if I really didn't like it, I could cut it up and put it into other work. Wearable art was another process I travelled through, learning about shaping, draping and the beauty of Nuno felting. Once I found resist felting, I found a process that resonated with me. I have researched and profiled it ever since.

I love imbuing three dimensionality into my work. Garments gave me an opportunity to see this 3D concept, but it did not fulfil my direction. The "Opportunists" artwork, allowed me to study, and conceive a model of realistic representation of natural objects. The birds were resist felted (bodies and wings), stitched and painted. When completed, they were mounted on wire armature, to perch on top of a chicken wire-based tree stump frame. Around this frame I applied lengths of hand dyed, Shibori stitched (Mokume) Amollie prefelts. At the base were more Shibori sticks and stone wrapped in overdyed Amollie prefelts. This completed a scene straight out of nature. The work was part of an exhibition of discarded fire fighting tools. My piece was a helmet,

that became the nest, at the top of the tree stump. 'The Opportunists' were a couple of birds, who took advantage of the upturned helmet, left on a hollow tree stump, to make their nest.

I keep pursuing my need to push the use of felting towards inclusions in other artworks. In 2016, I took on another 3D wire armatured practice of Polymer clay work. I had grown up in the era of fairies at the bottom of the garden, stories of little people, some benevolent others mischievous. I was thrilled and a little overwhelmed when I could create my own version of Gnomes, in particular using this new medium. While I never made dresses for dolls as a child, I found it rewarding to use felt, to give my little guys believable and endearing garments to wear. I'd found another use for my prefelts and other wool items.

My needle-felted owl was a requirement for my Diploma of Textile Arts at Box Hill. It was a lot of small motor skill work, overall pleasing, but no work I would replicate again. I have and still do use single needle application for faces, flower centres and other small areas where attention to detail is required.

I use Shibori stitching and dyeing for a lot of my work. The various processes add layers of interest, by the inclusion of colour blending, focal depth, and realism. Studying nature's complex designs in shading, linear marking and other elements, which give flowers, leaves and plants their specific design, small details can be replicated for true representation. This allows us to create our own versions of nature, that are equally beautiful and recognisable.

My felting and textile journey has a long way to go. I work with an open mind, a willingness to learn by failure, a love of fibres and colour and companionship with other felting practitioners. I hope to not only create for my own joy and satisfaction, but to pass on the skills and love of these wide processes, to all who want to learn. I hope that this art form will live on, long after I'm gone. Viva La Fibre!



Featuring Brigitte Halderman

Growing up in Switzerland, I had a carefree and loving childhood.

Our mother, a keen dressmaker, adored making our clothes and recycling many hand me downs. Our grandmother was also living with us. She was a master in mending things, and also taught me crochet and knitting.

Dad worked as a painter, and my early memories bring back the smell, the colours of pigments, and the paint preparations in his atelier.

I immigrated to Australia in 1983, and for many years worked with my husband in the hospitality industry. This was a busy, precious and rewarding time; running our own business and bringing up two children. I was always on the lookout for something creative to do, and I enrolled in evening workshops and started painting and sculpting.

Then a friend introduced me to felt making, and I discovered wool fibres. I immediately fell head over heels in love with this soft, supple, strong, fluffy gem of luxury!

In 2005 I completed a "Studio, Stitch and Textile Design" Diploma at Box Hill TAFE. This is where many new friendships

were made and I had the opportunity to network.

Since then I have attended many workshops, forums and convergences. I have been taught by national and international tutors, constantly evolving my techniques and learning new processes. The people I've met along this journey, have definitely sculpted my creative path. The work of Anita Larkin and Marjolein Dallinga are ongoing inspirations.

I have been a VFI member for 18 years, and have been teaching felt making for the last 7 years. Sharing skills is very enriching on many levels.

I do like a challenge, and believe that the most fundamental skill of the creative person, is the ability to continuously reinvent themselves, and their world. Entering competitions and exhibitions, allows me to constantly push my own parameters, and direct my work into new channels. I had hesitations about submitting my first works and self-doubt crept in. Yes, I was passionate about what I was doing, but dealing with criticism and rejections was not easy.

The beginning of a new body of work is exciting, yet excruciatingly time

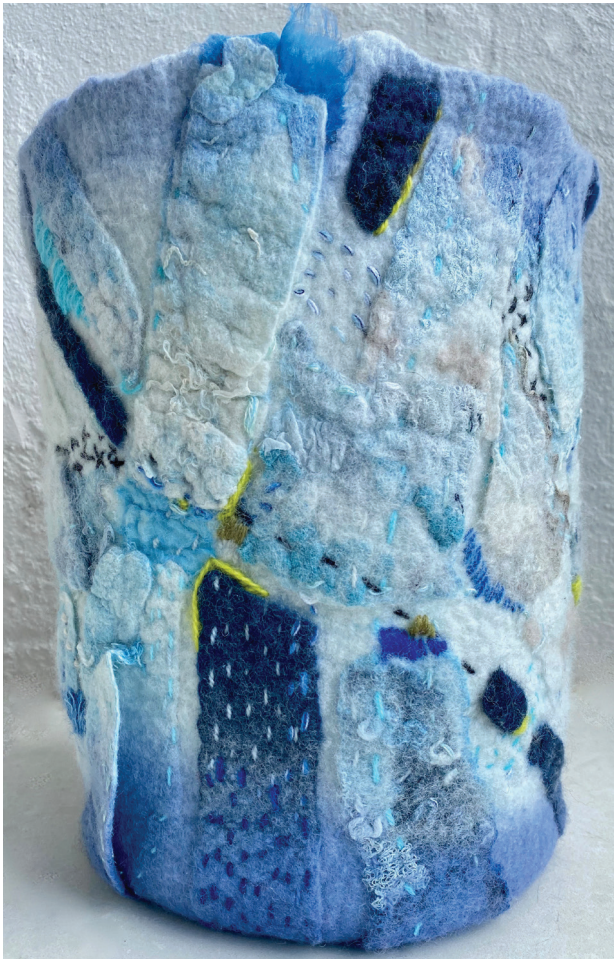
consuming. Trying to be analytical, whilst maintaining spontaneity in a design, is a constant challenge, yet it is at the heart of working with natural fibres. Inspiration comes from nature, and plants. Our body is a protein like felt, and therefore a reflection of oneself. As the inspirations flow and the project begins to emerge, persistence and a thirst for knowledge, aid this process along.

Throughout the years, my sense of curiosity and excitement, when making felt, remains undiminished. With the combination of traditional nomadic and modern felt making techniques, wool is magically transformed. ALCHEMY!

My recent work for the online exhibition ALCHEMY reflects on the topic of climate change. This work is relevant in light of the ongoing global warming crisis, which has been so profound.

Vessel 1: Black Summer: Wool, silk, fabrics and yarn, inks Techniques: Wet felting, sculpting, hand dyeing, hand stitching Dimensions: H 27cm x D 26cm

Vessel 2: Antarctica: Wool, silk, fabrics, yarn. Techniques: wet felting, sculpting, hand dyeing and hand stitching. Dimensions: H 25cm x D 21cm



Featuring Gillian Schoenborn

I have lived in Rushworth, in central Victoria for 35 years, where Len and I raised our family. I was always interested in sewing and knitting, which I learned from my mother. Living in the United States, when first married, I got into patchwork and quilting, then dressmaking for the family. Eventually my patchwork and quilting developed into a love of free motion machine embroidery and textile art. Art quilts and collage vests have been my favourites.

I had always admired felting, and when I was introduced to it by two friends, who I met by going to textiles workshops at Dookie, I was hooked. The first time I felted, was in a converted shearing shed at Tungamah, where we made a couple of basic scarves.

The first felting workshops I attended were in Daylesford at Purl's Palace, with my friend Chris Grant in 2007, with tutor Fay Cummings. We made ourselves a vest with Felbi from Fibre Fusion, a nuno felted shawl (pictured) and a knitted and felted hat. Fay was a great teacher and we enjoyed the space at Zoe's shop, which featured everything Japanese.

Jan and Sarah at Felt Wearable, were a great source of workshops, and I enjoyed learning from many great tutors including Nancy Ballesteros, Pam de Groot, Fiona Duthie and Elizabeth Armstrong. Along the way I joined Victorian Feltmakers, which led to more exposure and new friends.

I went to workshops at Koala Convention in Brisbane with Katia Mokeyeva, USA and Moy Mackay, Scotland. I then followed Katia to the Grampians Textures, where I also learned from Olga Finkel, Liz Evans, Pam Hovel and other over the years.

Attending Felting Convergence in Toowoomba in 2018 was quite an experience, meeting felters from all over the world. I learnt from them, including Maude Bath. I was inspired to do her Notan Jacket at Grampians Texture.

Over the years, Chris Grant and I get together a couple of times a year, for several days at each other's places and have our own 'felting frenzy'. We make items for sale in shops and at markets, and doing it together is very productive. We also create items for exhibitions. Naturally we share our ideas and our 'stuff'. In July 2016 I had a retrospective exhibition at the Kyabram Town Hall Gallery, of my quilts, collage vests and felting. I love doing landscapes.

When Charly McCafferty of IxChEL Yarns gave a talk at a Vic Feltmakers meeting, I was really taken by the beautiful fibres she produces and sells. Her story is unique. I bought prefelts and fibres and made quite a few scarves in various designs. One scarf was inspired by her fibres and an online course of Fiona Duthie, 'Felting over the Edge'. This scarf was exhibited in the Shepparton Textile Artists annual exhibition, and sold to someone from Wagga, who asked my permission to enter it in the Henty Field

Days Natural Fibres Fashion section. I was awarded the runner up prize. The winner was a beautiful red hat and coat. The funny twist to that story, is that the following year I shared a room at the El Kanah Retreat with a felter from Albury, Pat Meakin, who was the creator of said red hat and coat!

In March 2019, I was thrilled to take part in Fiona Duthie's Big Ink workshop at the Abbotsford Convent. I created a tunic with large collar. Following on from that I was invited by Kaiela Arts, the Aboriginal Art Gallery in Shepparton to run a workshop. It was with the Indigenous artists making a 'Possum Cloak', on which they created their own design in ink, and nuno-felted it onto the lining. The outer side was a patchwork of their own linen fabrics. This cloak was one of the garments entered into the Darwin Aboriginal Arts Fair in July that year. (pictured here at Gallery Kaiela, Shepparton).

Now during lockdowns, I have been doing a 6 module course, with Nicola Brown of Clasheen in Ireland. The remote learning course, involves felting and eco printing. There is always something new to learn and not enough time to do it all. One of the greatest things about felting is the wonderful people I have met. Felting, Fun, Friends.





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