



FELT MATTERS

SPOTLIGHT ON HUNGARY

JANINE REES REGIONS 2 AND 3 - PUBLICITY OFFICER

THE FABULOUS FELT WORK OF HUNGARY WAS BROUGHT TO MY NOTICE DURING A RECENT TRIP AS PART OF A FIBRE AND FELT TOUR ORGANISED BY FLÓRA CARLILE-KOVÁCS.



The 12 day trip took us to many areas of East Hungary as well as spending time in Budapest. We toured some of the city, visiting local museums and textile exhibitions at the Museum of Applied Arts, and had the added bonus of the Shepherds' Fair at Hortobágy. There was a felt exhibition of students' and tutors' work at Hajdusoboszló, and we visited the very special School of Handicrafts at Nádudvar. We saw the unique organic farm set up by Péter Rózsa, with its main

building looking like a wooden and brick Yurt and, finally, stopped at the workshop and museum of the last of the Hungary's traditional hatmakers: sadly, Gyula Mikalkó died late last year but his widow kindly talked us through all the traditional designs of hats.

Further highlights of the trip included felt workshops with Mihály Vetró, Márta Csille, Judit Pócs and Gabriella Kovács. We were able to work in the traditional methods as well as

in the unique styles of each feltmaker. There is a huge talent and history of felt making in Hungary, and I guess the artists featured here will only be scratching the surface.

Anyone wanting to experience this tour, or others organised by Flóra, can contact her on the links listed below.

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FOLK ART CRAFT SCHOOL



The Folk Art Craft Secondary School was established in Nádudvar in 1992, with the purpose of relearning traditional knowledge (craftsmanship, natural way of life, intellectual heritage) for the generations who have forgotten it.

About 140 students have taken part in our programme annually over the past 25 years. They all join in the daily educational work, and usually demonstrate the skills they have acquired in the workshop on open days, during exhibitions or on public programmes which are visited by many people from other countries. Our purpose is to teach "heritage professions", with the students learning new ways of thinking by encouraging creative thinking and a change of attitude towards the objects and materials surrounding them, the natural environment and society. Adult students, including teachers and educators, also join in the programme and can pass their knowledge on to others later.

The ancient Hungarians made and used felt objects when they moved to Central Europe in the first millennium. The most important objects were felt tents, carpets, hats and horse blankets: these were similar to the felts made by the Central Asian nomadic cultures today.

Students study the traditional techniques for two years in our workshop. They can make modern and usable felt objects using these ancient techniques and patterns. Communal working teaches them about interdependence and working together. At one of these sessions, students and teachers together made an authentic felt tent, which is used for communal activities and special cultural programmes across Europe. Camps are organised regularly, when parts of the felt tent are repaired or preserved by former and current students.

Students learn to design and create many things from felt, e.g. toys, balls, bags, clothes,

hats, shoes, felt blankets ... under the guidance of Anikó Árvai and Mihály Vetró, both of whom possess the title of 'Young Master of Folk Art'. Reviving our traditions helps us to get back to our roots.

The teaching method of Nádudvar has shown that our values can be preserved and integrated into public education with proper collaboration. It can help the narrower and wider community to keep their identity, and also results in the collaboration of different generations.

CONTACT DETAILS

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ANIKÓ ÁRVAI



Anikó is, by profession, a feltmaker and a teacher, with additional skills as a weaver. She loves nearly all the textile making techniques and, in her opinion, feltmaking is the one which offers more creative freedom than others.



Anikó started weaving and feltmaking more than twenty years ago, and teaches both of them at the Folk Art Craft Secondary School of Nadudvar. In 2006 Anikó and her husband Mihály Vetro developed and started the high school education of felt making in Hungary. She makes mostly clothing and accessories



from felt (shoes, outer clothing, hats, bags etc) as well as other objects such as carpets, cushions and toys. Anikó also co-writes books on felting and other crafts with Mihály.

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MIHÁLY VETRÓ



Mihály is a teacher and feltmaker, with additional skills as a weaver and leatherworker. He believes that felt is a wonderful, ancient material that includes tradition, pattern and creation, and has been a researcher for more than 30 years, discovering the roots of felt in Central Asia, Anatolia, North Europe, the



Balkan region and, of course, Hungary. The results of this research are in his book 'Nemez A Teremtő Kelmé' (Felt: The Creating Fabric) printed in 2015. In 2006 he and his wife Anikó Árvai developed and started the high school education of felt making in Hungary. Using the ancient shapes and patterns, he makes felt objects still used today, including carpets,



clothing, bags, hats, shoes and toys, which are widely exhibited. Mihály has written many books on felting, tablet weaving, knotting and other textile crafts.

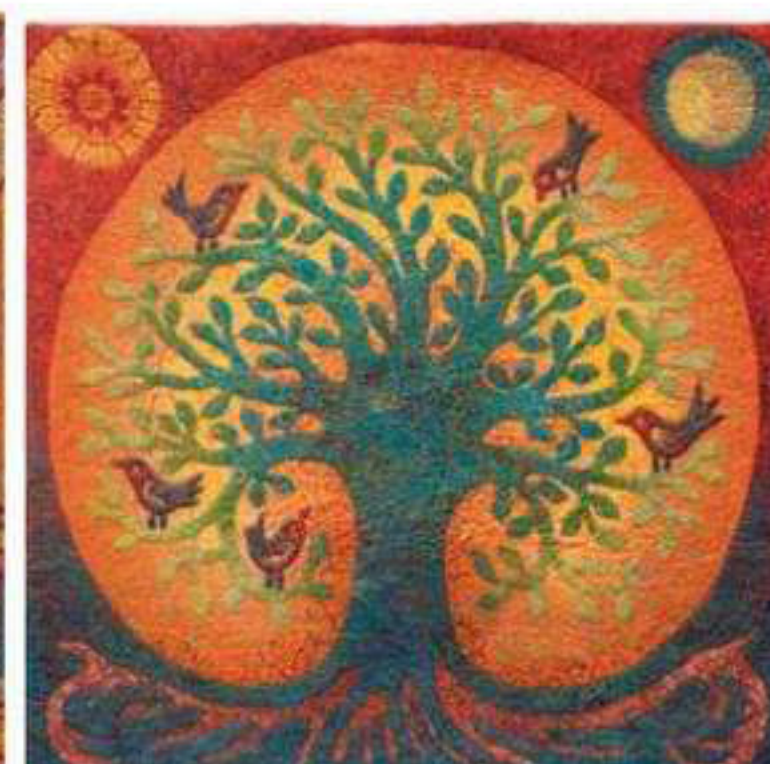
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GABRIELLA KOVÁCS



Gabriella graduated as a set and costume designer and later learnt to weave using the French carpet technique. She designed woven carpets, tapestries and wall hangings to commission. Her felt making experiences started in 1998 and she soon realised the magic of creating a strong material from soft, light fibres, and how much quicker it was than weaving. She now works as a professional textile artist in her home town of Gödöllő.

Gabriella loves the limitless creation of wonderful shapes and colours. She dyes



most of the yarn, wools and silks herself, and makes the surfaces of her work extraordinary by combining the Hungarian Racka wool with merino, adding monofilaments and silk fibres, each bringing their own character to the design. For the last ten years, she has also used spun woollen yarn to create lines, both straight and undulating, to enhance the painterly quality of her work. She incorporates inlay and mosaic techniques of felting.

Her work includes felted space and wall arts, carpets, wall hangings, wearables, home



accessories and children's toys. In recent years, she has been thinking about and working on ever larger pieces. As the size of her work expands, the tiny details and features of her art become more delicate during the felting process. With an acknowledgement to the traditional patterns and techniques, Gabriella has embedded her own ideas into her felt creations.

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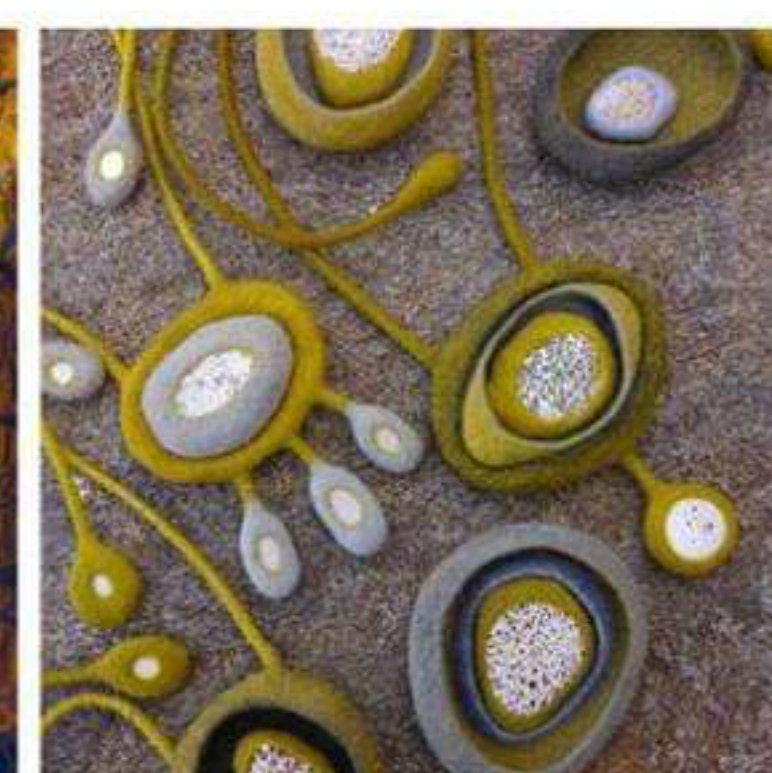
ANIKÓ BOROS



Anikó was born in 1969, and graduated as a teacher of art and visual communication. She lives in Érd, the largest city in the Pest County, Budapest metropolitan area. Since the birth of her children, Anikó has specialised in felt making, although her skills also include sewing and leatherwork.



Anikó feels that felting offers her the freedom to find new paths in the field of style and functionality. She appreciates working with natural materials as they enable her to slow down and get close to nature. Her designs follow simple and clear lines and she likes to include stones and found objects in her



work. Anikó makes scarves, necklaces, rings, bags and other accessories, and also enjoys making pieces for the home.

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