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THE FELT SENSE:
Expressive Arts Therapy and Community Art Making

THESIS

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Abstract

In "THE FELT SENSE, Expressive Arts Therapy and Community Art Making" the art of feltmaking is introduced. Evers describes how she investigated feltmaking as an appropriate art medium in expressive arts therapy and in Community Art. She used Gendlin's method of focusing as a selftherapy. This opened her up to the therapeutic possibilities of feltmaking. Her study-travels into Hungary, Türkmenistan and Georgia deepened her knowledge of felt as a traditional community art. Inspired by Paolo Knill's Community Art, she studied his choreography "The We-Song of Flowers". The International Felt Association provided an opening to exercise her new way of feltmaking by accepting her proposal to initiate and direct an international community artwork, a "Mille Fleurs" felt carpet. Additional to the thesis is a video of this event edited by Criss Esser.

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Introduction.

Once upon a time in one of those monasteries where one can hire a space for retreat or as in this case, to learn a tactile and meditative skill like feltmaking - a group of people were felting a big carpet. One of the monks was so interested that he had to witness how sheepwool, smelly and in great disorder, was washed, coloured, dried, carded into regular bats and laid down in an order on top of a reedmat. He came by every night, stood still in the doorway and looked without saying one word.

He saw how many layers of coloured wool were formed into a high and cloudy mattress, full of air. He saw how this pile was flattened down while it was "baptized" with soapy water. He saw how the women rolled the wool into a mat, how they moved the mat with their arms, how they even moved the roll with their feet. He got moved when he heard them sing and he felt sorry for himself that he could not overhear the stories they were telling to each other.

He observed how all of the loose fibres first interconnected into a web and then into a bonded fabric and how the felt carpet developed naturally. He observed how the women like the fibres became interconnected. He always had a great imagination: I see a visible and an invisible carpet, he said to himself. There is a visible felt carpet which represents the work of the community, and an invisible felt carpet which represents the meeting, the partnership and the sustainability of the women. He never thought before that feltmaking could be used as an expressive artmedium to develop a new community.

Much change and transformation had happened in front of his very eyes, until on the last evening the students unrolled the finished felt carpet and put it flat on top of the table. He could not resist to come closer. He just saw the farewell ritual, where the women were sliding their hands over the soft surface of the felt, as if blessing it with their finishing touch. Then all of a sudden he spoke: "I wish I was that felt".

This story illustrates my thesis "The felt Sense", where I will find an answer to the question if and how feltmaking as an artmedium can be used in intermodal expressive arts therapy and in community art.

The main part of the thesis consists of a personal and a practical section. I keep to a chronological order in both. This makes my personal development over the years visible and makes the practise of my deepening insights recognisable. In poetry/language the word felt provides for -sometimes humorous- metaphors. I like to play with the double meaning of the word felt while writing.

In the personal part I will give an overview on 20 years of working with felt as an artist, a writer, a tutor and a lecturer. I will explain what felt meant for my personal development. My soul unfolded itself after I met the question: Why do I make felt for more than 20 years? What does that mean? Inner

sensations? Felt sense? Does it give my life an imagenary dimension? How does that quality in terms of what I do with other people? In one way my students pushed me over a threshold by saying in their feedback that my way of teaching works as a healing. What was true to me was that I never found any medium so relaxing and vitalizing at the same time. Also I remembered that I 'played' with felt at a crucial time in my early life. Perhaps that is the main reason that felt became my appropriate art medium and still is a continuous material of investigation. I started to contemplate on and to research the different and specific qualities of felt. How a self-therapy and a new way of learning led to my change of visions and aims, which I describe theoretically and practically in the second section.

In the practical part Community Art is the main subject. I introduce my felt "masters" from Hungary, Tuerkmenistan and Georgia. Study travels gave insight in their way of feltmaking as a traditional community artform and an expression of the connection with the reality of daily life in a great variety of composition, colour and content. This can be compared with the subjects Paolo Knill chooses for his Community Art, like the We-Song of flowers, the bridge and the wheel. Traditional feltmaking corresponds with Community Art in many ways. Main difference is that felt at that time was not called art or arts, nor was it choreographed. Considering communities everchanging connections in time and space, I practised feltmaking as community art after I identified with Paolo Knill's choreography "The We-Song of Flowers" and used some of his principles while preparing this "new" direction in feltmaking: felt as Community Art. I consider the international felt project Mille Fleurs as an excersize in feltmaking as Commmunity Art (see video). Another new direction and connection I found in feltmaking is to work as a "coach on the job" and teach feltmaking to occupational therapists followed by shaping a tailored program on their workflow together with their clients.

1 PERSONAL PART.

*It is not for show that our soul
must enact its part;
it is at home, within us,
where no eyes penetrate
but our own.*

Michel Montaigne

1.1 Felt as material and felt as feelings

Felt originates from "loose, that is structurally disconnected fibres, which can be massed, mixed, consolidated and flattened into a coherent fabric structure", says Irene Emery in the Early History of Textiles. In this chapter I start to talk about my felt disconnection and reconnection with words and images. I use the word felt in its double meaning: Felt as a material of a specific nature and felt as feelings.

How a felt brush and a blackboard help to recognize my calling as a peace-seeker and prime fact of existence, how I - as Hillman says - aligned my life with it and found the common sense to realize that accidents belong to the pattern of the image, are necessary to it, and help fulfil it. (1.2 Felt disconnection and reconnection of words and images).

I continue to write about the history of a felt community, the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats"(1.3), and about why I left it, after focusing work around the felt sense, using Gendlin's self-therapy. How exploring this experience brings me into a new relationship with feltmaking and with the work I do with a group. (1.4 Exploration of the felt sense and 1.5 Focusing work around the felt sense) How felt in this sense becomes a therapeutic tool for myself and for the work I do with other people.

The last part of this chapter is about how I find other ways of learning, first at "Werkplaats Molenpad" in Amsterdam, then at the "Centrum voor Expressieve en Creatieve Therapie" in Amsterdam and subsequently at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland. The study in Expressive Arts Therapy leads to change and opens up new possibilities of feltmaking (1.6 Felt visions).

1.2 Felt disconnection and reconnection of words and images.

When did I notice the healing qualities in the feltmaking process? My first contact with felt as a therapeutic tool stems from early childhood

when I was told to not express my feelings. This was during and after the war and led to disconnection. I took my refuge and was happy with making things and played outside with soldiers' barbed wire. But what I experienced as nourishing my soul by feeding my imagination (Hillman, 1997, p.153) was sitting in front of the blackboard in the children's room and writing about how and what I felt (photocopy 1). The felt duster served as a diary that kept my heartfelt words secret.

This brush became the keeper of my soul's stuff. It took a long time before I learned to connect and to exchange feelings successfully through the spoken word in combination with other modalities. For me felt brushes are a symbol of contained and expressed memories, felt emotions and stories unseen. I had no idea then how much meaning there was in these invisible stories. "The invisible shows no facts. Nothing but invisibles lies behind all myths' strength. We live among invisibles. The task is to attend to the one that is called your soul" (Hillman, 1997, p. 95,96). Hillman calls the invisible "psychic reality" (Hillman, 1997, p.97).

Much later, during work with students at the Volksuniversiteit, it became clear to me that the meaning of the felt duster I had identified as the container of my felt world, was only one part of the story. At least as important was the obliterated blackboard, which provided a safe place and a frame to keep what wanted to come out under control. A third element and maybe the most important was the sweep of the blackboard duster which expressed the coming into action. It was all I needed: just enough space, freedom and flow to tell my stories about the war as I wanted to tell them. Once a story was written down, it was wiped out immediately. Accidentally I cleaned the board with a wet sponge before I started, like I prepared my space and myself for a ritual. I liked the blackening of the surface when the board became wet. In my memory one story was my favourite. Before I write it down I shall describe its context.

The story is a description of an image of a real event in world war II. It took place during a ten days "family-walk" from Amsterdam into the East of Holland during the famine winter of 1944. I was 4 years old. There was no milk for my baby-sister and not enough food for the rest of us. But the main reason my parents fled the city was because my father had to turn himself in to the Germans and he refused to do so. So they packed a few necessary things on top of my sister in her perambulator and some food and clothing on my pushcart and left everything else behind. The goal they had set in mind was to reach a safe place in the country-side, where my father's sister lived, my dear aunt Dicky, about 200 km north-east of Amsterdam.

I remember we stayed overnight several times with strange but kind people, who gave us food and shelter. Halfway through our trip, we were not allowed to cross a bridge, because it was occupied by the



Germans. One member of the "resistance" knew about a truck which could possibly take us to the other side of the water. This part of the journey I will never forget, and it repeatedly appeared on my blackboard. We were waiting for this truck together with some other travellers, men and women, and a few children. No one spoke a word. It was very cold and how long did we wait? It seemed a lifetime. I was frozen inside and outside. At last it came. The driver helped us to climb into the back of the truck. I can not remember how we were sitting or standing in there. What I do remember is that it was very dark inside, after the driver had closed the canvas; we were not supposed to be there. He drove off and I felt some relaxation. There was a comfort in listening to the engine. A sudden stop made us almost fall over. Outside were unfriendly sounds, men's voices and loud stamping feet.

What was going on? In no time the men who were with us, were hidden behind luggage and straw. At the time the canvas was lifted up, all the women and children stood in the front. We were almost blinded by sunlight. A man in uniform and with a gun, shouted: "Sind hier auch M'nner?" (Are there any men inside?). Some women nodded no, some shook their shoulders. Some said it loudly. I shook my head and stiffened. The soldier stood motionless. Just his eyes moved and looked from face to face very slowly. Waiting for a confession? When his eyes met mine I looked back at him and I felt a sudden strength all through me. I gave him a message with my eyes "don't you dare to touch my daddy".

After what seemed an age, he looked aside to the next person. At last he stepped back. Nodded at the driver, the curtain dropped. We kept standing still until we heard the engine and felt the truck move. What a relief. We reached the other side, were "unloaded" and continued our journey partly on our feet and partly on a "Red Cross" horsecart. As brave as I felt before, I broke down when I met my aunt who came to meet us on a bicycle. Arriving at her home I slept for days.

*In the "blackboard- version" of this history, I am the one who protected and saved the life of my father from a German soldier, who threatened him with a rifle. The truck in which I stood was high and no matter how small I was, I had to look down to see the soldier. My father was hiding in the back of the truck. This soldier tried to scare me away by pointing at me with his gun, but my eyes shot beams of light at him and I felt strong like a fire-spitting dragon. An invisible shield was protecting me and my father's shelter. He did not shoot me and I did not kill him. We stood in silence. I remember the story ended in this moment of *s e e k i n g f o r p e a c e*. I felt my place was safe, and I could move on.*

Exploring my own experience brings me into a new relationship with it. If I try to understand the life I chose for myself the way Hillman describes it, I am growing down. "Since the lots are each particular and encompass a whole style of fate, the soul must be perceiving intuitively

an image that embraces the whole of a life at once. It must be choosing that image which attracts: "This is the one I want, and it is my rightful inheritance". My soul selected the image I live. Plato's text calls this image a paradeigma, or "pattern", as translators usually say. So the "lot" is the image that is your inheritance, your soul's portion in the world order, and your place on earth, all compacted into a pattern that has been selected by your soul before you ever got here - or, better said, that is always and continually being selected by your soul, because time does not enter the equations of myth" (Hillman, 1997, p.45). "Since ancient psychology usually located the soul around or with the heart, your heart holds the image of your destiny and calls you to it" (Hillman, 1997, p.46).

Thinking of all this now and in connection with soul, this "blackboard-story" it feels as though my soul is telling me that in this life I had chosen to become a seeker for peace and/or a protector of life through imagination and that I had to learn how to communicate this. It feels like "the awakening to the original seed of the soul and hearing it speak" (Hillman, 1997, p.278). According to Hillman accidents can be seen as an authentic category of existence. "A serious accident demands answers. What does it mean, why did it happen, what does it want? Continuing reappraisals are part of the aftershock. The accident never may be integrated but may strengthen the integrity of the soul's form by adding to its perplexity, sensitivity, vulnerability and scar tissue" (Hillman, 1997, p.207).

*Art always is a method
to connect two worlds,
the visible and the invisible,
or the physical and the spiritual.*

Joseph Beuys

There is a connection between my blackboard stories and the artwork I have made over the last three years called: "empty sheets", where again my story is shown, invisible between many layers, written drawings, drawn signs covered with Nepalese paper and linoil rubbings of the floors and walls in my studio. However this time my stories do not disappear. Hanging on the wall they are monochrome relief's, silent witnesses. Hanging from the ceiling however, when the light comes through, they show their content and their contours like stained glass windows, but more like MRI photographs as they represent another serious accident when my son was diagnosed with a brain tumour and had to undergo two operations in three years time. These artworks in paper are more than a replacement for the blackboard. I opened up to the imagination, made them, and when they made sense to me, I brought them in the outer world. In transparent detail they show patterns of scar tissue.

1.3 *The history of a felt community.*

Feltmaking I learned in the late seventies, starting with a Swedish book "Tovning" by Katharina Ogren, but mostly through experimentation. I learned many old and traditional techniques from Mary Burkett OBE, MFA. She initiated and organised the exhibition "The Art of The Feltmaker" in England in 1979 and wrote the accompanying book. It is through her that interest in felt reawakened all over the world and the International Feltmakers Association was formed. For me it was the nomadic family life and felt as community-work or art that was most attractive in the feltmakers' history. So I founded the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats" a workshop for groupwork in 1982.

In the beginning we worked from the book and I made notes of every trial. Since 1984 I learned more about traditional communal feltmaking when I visited international workshops/pusztas meetings in Hungary. There I met feltmasters from the east and artists from the west for five successive years. "After the Berlin wall came down" I travelled and stayed with a traditional Türcoman feltmakers family and with feltmaking women in Omalo, Georgie (Practical Part 2.3 and 2.4). Writing about the subject helped to build an international network (Evers, 2000, p.232- 261 and addition 1).

For fifteen years I kept the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats". It became the nursery and training-ground for all my work with groups. Once a week participants met and almost every month a huge felt was made for one of them. Apart from the workshop I tutored/lectured in different countries, and I developed another sort of international community work, designed as "peace-of-felt" projects. At that time I was not conscious of my calling as peace-seeker. It felt natural and self-evident to do this, that was all.

For the International Felt Symposium in Aarhus, Denmark in 1990, as part of the program, I made a basic structure for community-feltmaking where participants and visitors could join in. This "interactive play with wool" was planned to end up as a felt carpet and presented to Michael Gorbachov, because he intended to work on peace in the world. Moreover he was the leader of the land where felt came from (photocopies 2,3,4).

Preparations were made in the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats". Wool was dyed in rainbow colours. From a thin pre-felt, oval shaped, a phrase was cut-out. The words in felt "a peace of felt makes the world into a home", formed a variation on Gorbachov's saying: "peace makes the world into a home". The activity was announced at the beginning of the symposium and people could participate for at least one hour. The carpet was felted on the day of the market. The situation made it possible for passers-by to add loose wool or form a shape on top or in between the four layers of coloured wool. Some people returned regularly to follow the transformation of wool into felt and to see

whether their own felt contribution was still visible or had disappeared under many other felt good wishes.

This kind of feltmaking worked as an opening up of the imagination and people participated spontaneously or started talking about the theme. It worked energizing and socializing. It was a pity that in the end the Russian ambassador did not appear - as he had promised - to receive the carpet on behalf of Mr. Gorbachov. The Danish organisation of the symposium tried but never found out what happened after they delivered the carpet at the embassy. Perhaps a question of politics?

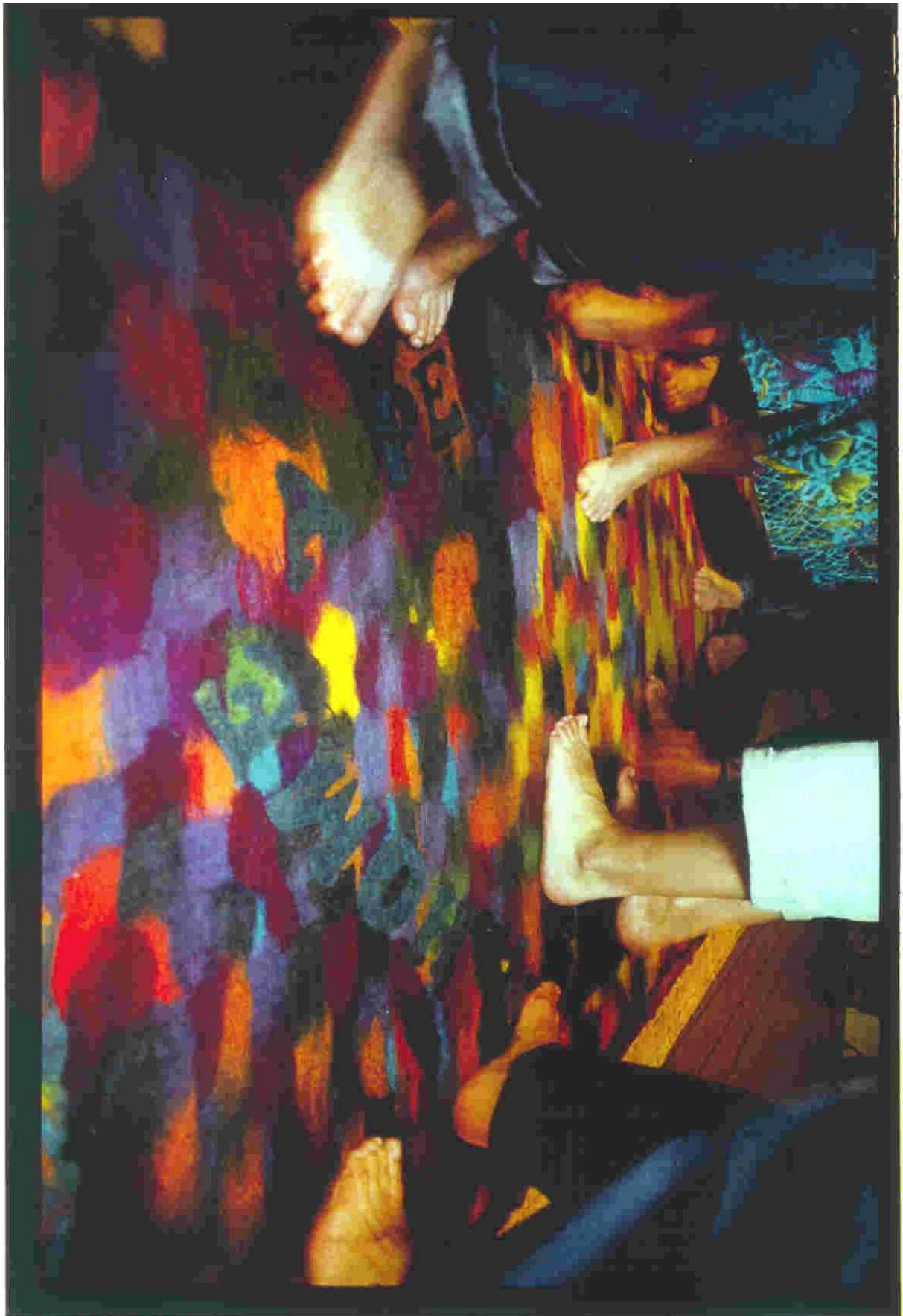
This kind of groupwork I felt attracted to. It made people spontaneously participate; it worked socializing. Complete strangers were opening woolfibres, meeting each other and interacting. It was a new way of learning to communicate through feltmaking. It asked for playful thinking leading to a more practical preparation, a specific subject, a precise scenario, a movable structure and not forgetting the exact kind of wool. So that at the time of the event, it could be guided in a relaxed atmosphere. I also learned from the Denmark experience, that to get a groupwork integrated in the symposium program - I had to visit the place and speak with the organisers beforehand.

So, one year before the Swiss Felt Symposium in 1996, which was planned to take place in Landquart and Chur, I stayed with one of the organisers, the late Leni Hunger. She showed me her work and how she made felt with blind people. This inspired me to prepare a groupwork which could be performed by blind people, a felt performance based on the senses of sound, touch and smell. It was meant to focus on the fact that felt is not only about shepherd/farmer, grass, sheep and wool but in equal amounts about attention, love and compassion.

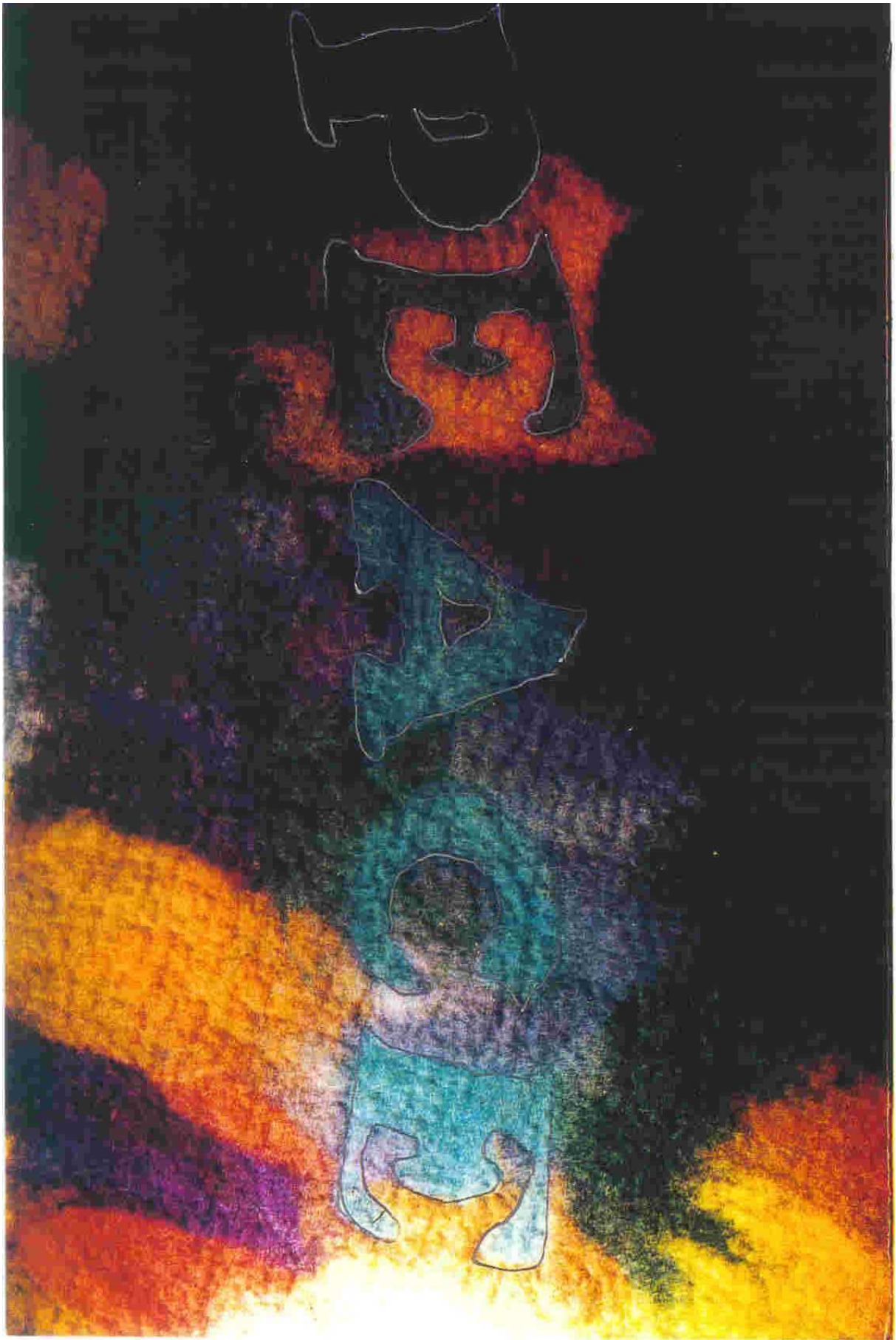
Thirty participants joined in: we started with a celebration with voices saying "Love" and "Peace" in our native language, and a shared reverence to mother earth. Further communication took place through ticking with small bamboo sticks and to felt from feeling the wool. It took place in a stone garden with two massive stone triangular fountains. It was half dark. A fresh resonance was heard like an echo, when each of 30 participants made rhythmical sounds with the sticks in her own way made felt from feeling, smell and touch. The reverence was repeated in a circle after bringing the little felts to the waterfall in a meditative act.

1.4 Exploration of the felt sense

In my own artwork from the very first felt I made, I felt a drive to deepen the concept to be able to understand why it was so important for me that I could not consider it as just one possible art-medium. This







kept me questioning. All I knew is that there is a mysterious plan in everyone's life-cycle and that my life is an ongoing education, combined with practice. Now that I understood that peace-seeking must be what I am called for, I knew even more that I needed to feel my materials intensely, to understand their quality, make them into things that are beautiful and that touch the senses. I needed to study my way of learning and in order to make my problems visible and talk and - in feltmaking also walk - my process. I felt the need to work on these findings with members of my workshop, but there was not much interest for this. No one came to the Swiss symposium and only a few showed interest in my doings there.

*Felt is like the human soul:
you cannot divide it,
it would be destroyed.*

Kaethi Hoppler-Dinkler

Although it felt like a shadow and a hard decision to make that I had to part from the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats". Without admitting it openly I had outgrown it, but could not give up my "possession/position". I considered it as mine I guess. I never could have expected that this workshop which once started as my breeding-ground would turn into a breeding-cage. But here I was, 56 years old, at the threshold of a new beginning. Dependent upon free-lance commissions, dependent upon my husband and last not least studying Expressive Arts Therapy, which I will describe underneath in Felt Visions 1.6.

What helped to find peace with my decision to leave the workshop was doing a self-therapy called "Focusing", a book by Eugene T. Gendlin. Here I learned much about a "felt sense", as an inner sensation, a tool to make a shift in the body, which provokes a change of vision.

Gendlin states that the body is an incredible fine system within nature and the cosmos. Its holistic sensing of what is pro life and what is not indicates much more than a thought or an emotion and he says that every bad feeling is potential energy towards a more right way of being if you give it space to move toward its rightness. The author based this book on a research at the University of Chicago.

Practising this theory or self-therapy I learned to strengthen my will, to listen to body-language, express these into images and materials and sometimes find the correct words for this inner sensation. First I'll describe in general how focusing works. Afterwards I'll apply this "my problem is" which I felt as a souring toothache all over my body. By focusing it was confirmed that in order to grow and develop felt as a therapeutic tool, I had to leave my workshop.

According to Gendlin focusing is not work. It is a friendly time in your body. It is listening to what comes from you, inside, not talking at yourself from the outside in. When you spent time sensing something unclear that is right there, it is meaningful about this problem and you don't know what it is, then you are focusing. It feels like waiting until the felt sense stirs and questions.

The felt sense he formulates as the body's physical sense of a problem or of some concern, or situation. It is a physical sense of meaning. To reach the felt sense you need to focus. Unlike methods that stress "getting in touch with your feelings", here is a built-in test: each focusing step, when done correctly, is marked by a physical relief, a profound release of tension, a "quite right" sensation. Focusing is a guidance to the deepest level of awareness within the body. It is on this level, unfamiliar to most people, that unresolved problems actually exist, and only on this level can they change.

Let the answer come slow is his advice and do not go deep into concerns – stand back – say: I am here and keep a little space. Wait again and see if there is more. Mostly there is. Gendlin explains "how to put yourself into a state of mind and body in which the focusing movements can take place freely. Your inner actions in this movement are much like the overt actions of artists when they start to work each morning" (Gendlin, 1981, 71-73).

A felt artist, for instance, makes sure the base he/she works on – be it a reedmat or bubble-wrap is absolutely clean, as well as he/she prepares the wool, the water-supply, the olive soap. According to Gendlin there are many different inner acts which can produce the needed positive set, or body-mind receptivity. Keep the one or ones that have meaning for yourself personally, the approach or combination of approaches that make something good happens inside you. You can pull back whenever a problem begins to get too threatening. Step into a little sheltered space where, for a time, they cannot hurt you. I like to imagine to put a felt cloak around my shoulders, maybe a shepherds' cloak. Felt protects, isolates, insulates.

Gendlin suggests to try to feel good as long as the problem is unsolved, because while you feel good, you know that everything stays as bad as you know it is. Doing so you enable yourself to handle it in a more effective and different way. In other words, he says that focusing begins with giving your body a break, a pause, in which to let it become a whole.

Focusing is structured in six movements, first: clearing a space, second: felt sense, third: handle, fourth: resonating, fifth: asking, six: receiving. While focusing it is important to avoid identification, analysis, self lectures, assumptions and deductions. I will try to focus on my fear of parting of the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats" which I could not face for a long time. Instead of facing this I seemed to spend time on cherishing the relationships, the memories of many projects we

worked on, the success we had and was reasoning why I should not leave all this.

I worked from the book as it is written as a selftherapy. I took my time to learn the six movements and to prepare the body to be more sensitive and recognize the change inside which leads to a "quite right" feeling. In the end, focusing did clarify my periodical hate/love relationship with my work in the "feltworld". I really felt I could surrender to leave "fame" behind and go in new direction. I feel I was called to seek a peaceful solution with dedication and commitment.

Once again I was convinced that I was helped to find the education I needed at this point in my life and that "The soul of each of us is given a unique guardian angel before we are born and it has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth. This soul-companion, the guardian angel guides us here; in the process of arrival however we forget all that took place and believe we come empty into this world. The guardian angel remembers what is in your image and belongs to your pattern, and therefore your guardian angel is the carrier of your destiny" (Hillman, 1997, p.8-10).

To reshape the question: What was it about the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats" that I could not just stop? When I recollect how each of us participated in her own way to serve the aims of the group, what did we aim, name, claim? There was a period of about ten years when we were developing the resurrected art and craft of feltmaking. We found our own way of "community felting", being attentive to every person who wanted to create a major work and to every aspect of the working process. We shared our knowledge and put our work on show. I invited guests/specialists of different disciplines to keep ourselves inspired.

So, what is the meaning of this stirring in my soul? I hate to sour up a good relationship with a group of people, but I don't know how to continue. Perhaps the attachment to the workshop belongs to a sort of daily invisible that I accept without thinking and receive their hardness from my attachment to them. "If we cling like barnacles to our favourite set of invisibles, then they must serve as rocks and feel as solid" (Hillman, 1997, p.96.). Hillman quotes poetic words by William Wordsworth from an essay by William James entitled "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings":

*To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
even the loose stones that cover the highway
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel
or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
lay bedded in some quickening soul, and all
that I beheld respired with inward meaning.*

One of the reasons and perhaps the main reason that I grew apart from the Haarlem workshop probably was that most of its members did not share my enthusiasm about working from soul, imagination and movement. They did not share my interest in working with the inner life, whereas I believe in a "faithful attention to the imaginal world, in re-mythologizing", as Hillman calls "this love which transforms mere images into presences, gives them living being, or rather reveals the living being which they do naturally contain" (Hillman, 1991, p.85). "Psychic contents become powers, spirits, gods. One senses their presence as did all earlier peoples who still had soul. These presences and powers are our modern counterparts of former pantheons of living beings, of animated soul parts, protective household gods, and ominous daemons. These beings were mythical in that they were part of a tale or psychic drama. The same archetypal dramas are played in us and by us, and through us for our behalf, once the imaginal aspect of our lives and of life itself is given attention. Attention is the cardinal psychological virtue. On it depends perhaps the other cardinal virtues, for there can hardly be faith nor hope nor love for anything unless it first receives attention" (Hillman, 1991, p.85).

"It is as if the heart and the left side were extending their dominion" (Hillman, 1991, p.85). This reminds me of a vision I got one night in a dream. I felt an injection with energy which struck and warmed my left side. The image was so strong that I gave it a shape with a collaged painting on handmade paper. "My myth becomes my truth; my life symbolic and allegorical. Self-forgiveness, self-acceptance, self-love; more, one finds oneself sinful but not guilty, grateful for the sins one has and not another's, loving one's lot even to the point of desire to have and to be always in this vivid inner connection with one's own individual portion" (Hillman, 1991, p.85).

1.5 *Focusing work around the felt sense*

What I needed to learn was to focus and to reshape. At first I had to learn the steps in the right direction. I did not want to take it easy. I really was eager to learn to identify and change the way my personal problems concretely exist in my body. I needed a lot of practice to learn the focusing steps of felt change, and specially in this case the first movement, clearing a space, took a long time.

What was most in the way was my impatience. I really felt I have been in the same spot for years, now I wanted something to get me out. Gendlin calls this a perfectly justified feeling, but it too must wait. One should wait a few minutes and listen to the internal self. Then ask gently from yourself what you feel deep inside. I had to make the first movement towards a wide and clear space. To arrive there involves specific questions put to my body and await for some specific response. Friendly hearing is important and no arguing and no answering. The answer should come from inside and be accepted for the moment. Then

clear the space and ask the heaviest problem that comes up “how does that feel today, your parting?”

1. First movement: clearing a space. Clearing a space for oneself means to relax and to bring the attention inside.

Gendlin: “push all your problems to one side so that there is space for you to breathe and sit in its temporary comfort. This is to find the right distance from your problems. The inner act of distancing yourself from what is troubling you but still keeping it before you. Take your time and only if you sit and feel quiet and in the right place, you ask yourself: How is my life going? What is the main thing for me right now?” (Gendlin, 1981, p.72).

How my life is going? I sense the group of people I work with for a long long time. I make a journey with them through time. First I see us dyeing fibres with natural dyes from plants. We work from 1980-1982 on an exhibition-project for the Amsterdam Hortus Botanicus, who celebrated its 300-years of existence. We decorated a glass-house with 300 ropes of handspun and hand dyed wool in red, yellow and blue. After this I feel the need to continue “community”-work with students. A group of twelve students, who liked to learn “king-size” feltmaking as a group-activity according to nomadic methods, was formed and called themselves: The “Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats”.

Most participants stayed for many years. They “travelled” with me through time and space. They served as a “mirror”. I taught them about the history of felt and made them familiar with old eurasian traditional patterning, as a ritual. In my imagination I see them right in front of me, while they are making one of the first carpets in the workshop, a modern Türcoman. I see all these big carpets, coats, blankets hanging high in a church where they were exhibited. I see the yurt (felt tent) they made for me as it stood in the “Musee du Feutre”, in Mouzon, France.

I look at their figures, their faces and I try to look into their eyes. I tell them I have a problem, but that it is not about them personally. I explain how rich and meaningful the memory of our initial concept is. It has been so special to study the way of learning to live naturally. And to make felt one of the main social subjects in a woman’s life. Other images appear, I see all of our hands together on a working table I see one of us as the feltmaster of the day, the queen of the day. How royal was this feeling of giving orders to the others and make them fulfil your wishes about what should be made and done. Before I could sink in more detail, something woke me up. Focusing means I have to distance myself. Distancing is necessary not to become overwhelmed, but still feel.

In seeking this first-movement state of tranquillity (peace), Gendlin says I will find that it helps to trust in my body. When the body is without cramp, it has the wisdom to deal with my problems. My body always tends in the direction of feeling better. It knows the direction and my body is a complex, " life-maintaining system" (Gendlin, 1981, p.76). "Under all the packages each of us carries, a different self can be discovered. You are not any of the things you have set aside. You are no content at all" (Gendlin, 1981, p.79).

I shake my head and arms and legs. This feels like emptying. I know how to clean the mind and relax the body. Gendlin mentions that many different inner acts can produce the needed positive set – or body-mind receptivity. I keep to cleaning the mind with a breathing exercise and relax all parts of my body by holding them one by one. I make an imaginary walk through my favourite mixed landscape of dunes and woodland. There I find my little sheltered space where, for a while, I can feel no hurt. I like sitting there protected and isolated by a white felt shepherds' cloak. My attention is inside. This is the state of mind in which focusing movements can take place freely.

I felt I had made a monument for my problem, a celebration. Now I experienced parting of the workshop as a whole and as a bad situation which made me feel sick in my body. How to let the body feel whole and sound if just for a minute? The inner act in the first movement of focusing is like the act of putting down a heavy burden you have been carrying. You have walked for miles with this uncomfortable bag. Now you stop, set it down and rest for a while. Only by first setting it down can you look at what's in the bag. Your body needs the rest, feel relaxed and peaceful" (Gendlin, 1981, p.74). He wants me to unload, take the problems out one by one and line them up and look at them without carrying them. I unload and put the projects, the people and all I mentioned before in a row.

2. Second movement: felt sense of the problem.

Select one personal problem to focus on. Try to find the worst problem. Do not go inside it, stand back and sense how it makes you feel in your body when you think of it as a whole just for a moment. Shut up for a change, listen and feel...be patient.

Somehow I had to make a decision whether to continue or say enough is enough, and stop this activity. I follow Gendlins' guidelines on p.54, set aside my self-lecture for the time being, try not to analyze the problem, nor try to decide where the main drive of it lies and try to get at "what does the whole thing feel like?" The feeling contains many details, just as a piece of music contains many notes. I do not need to know all these details in order to feel the workshop, the work, the stuckness, the growing apart, the fear to part. I only need to say the name of the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats". The feel of it comes without details.

What to pay attention to? What to ignore? How to set my mind so that it will be receptive to certain things happening inside but not to others? I have to try to make my mind do essentially what it does when calling up the feeling of my sense of a person. Being aware of details but not snagged on them. Attend to the single feeling, the sense of ALL THAT. Stay with it for a while, just let it be and be felt.

Before I discovered how focusing worked and that it worked for me indeed, I was just attracted and curious of this term: the felt sense. I think the term hit me as a striking metaphor for the tactile qualities of wool and the process of making felt. Focusing made me sense my problem physically and work on it psychically. I never thought of my physical felt body as being “ part of a gigantic system of here and other places, now and other times, me and other people – in fact, the whole universe. This sense of being bodily alive in a vast system is the body as it is felt from inside” (Gendlin, 1981, p.77). My body knows what is right, says Gendlin and he writes the word RIGHT in capitals. So, if my body knows how to keep my temperature in summer and in winter, in exercise or repose it must be constantly checking and adjusting and compensating its processes.

But still, my body senses this problem as quite fuzzy.

3. Third movement: finding a handle.

What is the handle of this felt sense. Let a word, a phrase, an image come up. A quality word like: tight, sticky, scary, stuck, heavy, jumpy – stay with it, till something fits right. In my case a picture comes up, an empty space, a new one I did not know before.

I may begin to find my problem changing and to feel different from what I expected before I started focusing, when it felt stuck and scary. The difference is small, subtle and puzzling as Gendlin says. Is it what I am looking for? Is it something that comes along with a body shift? I think this fear of parting is my handle, the “this is right” signal. Now I have to play hide-and-peek. My felt sense will say cold-colder-coldest and/or warm-warmer-warmest. Are there words coming from this feeling, pictures?

I can see an empty studio, very calm and peaceful in nature. I feel a small shift in my body and take a deep breath. Again it is right, it fits, I know.

4. Fourth movement: resonating handle and felt sense.

Take the word or image from the third movement (handle/quality): I got a picture of an empty space. Check it against the felt sense: stuckness, growing apart, the fear of parting. Do they click precisely into place. Are they a perfect fit? “It is right”. I feel the felt response, a deep

breath inside, some felt release. To resonate I must experience the felt sense again. I must touch it as a feeling, I feel free, the growing apart has happened, I feel an empty space and this space attracts me. Do I run ahead? I see the group continue in a small scale, a social club. They return to their uniqueness. They still make excellent felts, but no more groupwork.

When I try to make contact with the felt sense inside my body the stuckness, my growing apart, my fear of parting, I feel it matches the empty space. I feel I will move out. The sense of rightness comes from my body which is just now changing, moving, processing. To my surprise I feel released after a few minutes and a need of taking deep breathes and yawns.

I need to resonate the handle, touch it as a feeling and hear the felt response in the words: I go out and it is right. It is time to stop. I need not to be angry with them, nor blame myself. They were honest in not wanting the “mother-belt” any more. They will respect my decision. It is a new beginning. I need to move on with other groups, on a new and a looser base. In fact this new layer of existence had already started with these peace-projects during international felt symposiums. Meanwhile I studied other fibres and other felting processes than wool and worked on a book “Het Complete Papierboek”. This paid for my studying “traditional feltmaking in the community” in Ashabad, Turkmenistan, with the specialist Turkmen Ogülsierin Gurbanguliev (see practical part 2.3.1). My aims shifted while I studied feltmaking in depth, like I was spiritually inspired by the late Swiss artist Leni Hunger, who made felt with narrow-sighted and blind people. All this led to my changing goals, my shifting aims.

5. Fifth movement: asking.

What is it, about this whole problem, that makes this quality. Make sure the quality is sensed again - the empty space – a place of preparation for the new. Did I feel a big shift, an opening and a bodily release during the earlier movements? In that case I may go right to the sixth movement. There was a shift and change in the problem, when I sat quietly with the felt sense, sensing the crux and the handle/quality, the fear to part and the empty space. It was confirmed with the handle word.

While preparing a project for a church, I first suggested to felt a “mother - belt” around the inner walls of the church, which has a circular form. This could be seen symbolically as the arm of God around the community and would refer to the woven mother-belt around the yurts (gers), the portable felt dwellings of the nomads. This idea was rejected. One of the reasons was that after the exhibition, how would we divide the belt? Another excuse was that at least half of the members of the feltworkshop refused to financially take part in a church-project.

At first I tried to save the project by suggesting that we could leave the idea of making one collective work, and just felt unique pieces designed by individual members who still wanted to take part. It did not feel the right thing to do and it did not fit the original idea of protection and holding. The idea of cutting the “mother-belt” turned out to be a metaphor for cutting what had tied us together for so many years. Afterwards I can see it clearly: Felt which bound us, now had set us free. Feltmaking made me move out. The double meaning of felt led to a deepened understanding of how my feelings are moving, how they bind and release, how they can constrict or release me.

I learned a great lesson. I feel that, in the future, now I know about the felt sense I will ask directly, what it is, and start working with this unclear felt sense, or return to it from time to time, using the handle as a helper to make the felt sense vividly present right there. Ask my body what it is about this whole problem, letting answers go by, ask again. The second or the third time the felt sense may go down to it. The felt sense itself will stir, in answer, and I would trust from this stirring an answer will emerge.

The easiest way to exercise the felt sense seems to ask open questions. Gendlin says that this asking can be compared with asking a question to another person. You ask, you wait. The words and images that flow out of a feeling, by contrast, make a felt difference. These are the words and pictures which produce a body shift. This body shift always feels good! Even when what has come to light may not make the problem look any better from a rational point of view. If at first your mind is answering the questions, repeat them until the felt sense stirs.

6. Sixth movement: receiving.

Take the attitude that you are glad your body spoke to you, whatever it said. This is only one shift; it is not the last word. You only need to receive what the felt sense just now says, you do not need to believe it nor do it. You will soon deeply experience that once what comes with a shift is received, another shift will come. What your body then says will be quite different. So permit it to tell you now whatever it must say first. “Receive whatever comes with a shift in a friendly way. If you will go this step of change, there will be more change, whatever next is later” (Gendlin, 1981, p.60).

I felt I had to leave the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats" in a peaceful way. The next shift forwarded and furthered my personal question of how to sense and change my life's direction. This required that, to find more peace, I also had to leave my teaching job at the adult-educational “Volksuniversiteit Haarlem”. To activate the change of direction I had to face how I would change my work and life as an artist/ teacher towards an artist/therapist. This provides me with new questions. I liked to keep the attitude of receiving and expect many more shifts to happen. More rounds of focusing came. I felt for the answers inside my body. I

experienced that Gendlin's self-therapy seems to be invented for people like me who have problems with verbalizing and feel lost with this sometimes. I will stick to this body-sense, stop looking for words in the first place and keep sensing the quality of:

- *Treat your own inside feeling person at least as well as you would someone else (Gendlin, 1981, p.66).*
- *Reject familiar answers that come very fast (Gendlin, 1981, p.66).*
- *Wait quietly for fresh answers to come from the inside, from the bodily felt sense of whatever situation is troubling you (Gendlin, 1981, p.66).*
- *Focusing is optimistic (versus analysing). It is based on the very positive expectation and creation of change. It envisions a person as a process, capable of continual change and forward movement. "Problems are only those parts of the process that have been stopped" (Gendlin, 1981, p.67).*
- *Resolving a problem is very different from merely understanding it. A change can happen without your understanding fully why of how it has happened. Understanding is a by-product (Gendlin, 1981, p.67,68).*
- *The process is admittedly mysterious. Humans still know very little about their mind and body process (Gendlin, 1981, p. 68,69).*
- *The felt sense is how your body carries the whole problem (Gendlin 1981, p.69).*

1.6 Felt visions

Focusing helped to find a new direction in my work. Moreover by integrating my ongoing education I found a connecting bridge between work, study, doing artwork in the studio and at home. Reflecting on my lessons in life, I am grateful that my father stayed with us and became my first art-teacher, who told me all he knew about transparent layering and how important it was that you could see through. As a child I loved his way of drawing. I felt blessed to grow up with someone who loved images and their flow. Right now he is 88 years old and still working as an architect and an inspiration to me when I see him at work. He never turned to the computer, but always draws with a pencil on transparent paper. The fine-liner is his most modern tool. He was not very interested in my further education, but he showed me how to educate myself.

In my childhood he kept his drawings in big rolls in a round box. I remember how he sometimes, upon questioning, "revealed" a roll for me, opened it up. Mostly a roll consisted of 5 or 6 drawings on transparent paper in a size of about 70 x 100 cm. He attached them on top of each other on his drawing board with flat pushing-pins. The top one showed the contour of a building-to-be, the windows, the door, the roof. I had to tell him what I saw. I remember "facade" was the appropriate word to say, when I saw a door somewhere and "side-facade" when this was not the case. Then he would lift one sheet and a skeleton appeared, a map of how he thought to divide the inner space, and he spread his thought and imagination where he would put stairs or elevators. I felt he mastered his world and loved his work. This was so peaceful. He communicated through his drawing board and he still does. It is -like my blackboard - his opening into the world. He fed my beginning interest for inner worlds from the imagination.

I think this past made me look for teachers like him. At least I can see Michiel Dhont Czn., visual artist and musician who runs his "Werkplaats Molenpad" in Amsterdam and periodically taught at the "Centrum voor Expressieve en Kreatieve Therapie", was a look-alike. To be in motion is his leading theme. His courses are methods in movement (Photocopy 5). I worked through his three years program, suggested he should write a book and assisted him to start writing together with Irone Steinert, a developmental psychologist. The three of us laid the base for the structure of the book. It was meant to be written for schoolteachers and children in primary school, and for students. As a practical workbook with step-by-step illustrations and explanations it would be accessible for anyone involved with children and their development.

It took Michiel ten years to finish it. Last year the book appeared. It is called "t Tijdloze Uur" (the Timeless Hour). It consists of 22 excersizes from his own practise. In the foreword he says a child in primary school should be given a chance to learn how to use its own skills, to develop selftrust and to integrate the newly learned. Drawing, painting and working with plastic materials like clay as long as it starts from movement promotes concentration and diminishes stress is his experience. His main principle is to unite the head, the heart and the hands. It seemed that primary schools were waiting for this work. The government invested a huge amount of money to introduce it in a number of schools. The foundation "Kinderpostzegels" (Childrens' stamps) paid for an accompanying video with practical instructions.

As a preparation for the book, I interviewed a number of his students. One of these describes his method very clearly. It is a translated part of a tape-recorded interview in May 1991. The student is called Karim Engelhardt, psychiatrist and psycho-therapist and poet, in Amsterdam:

*The poet makes poems,
the painter paints,
the psychiatrist recognizes.*

Karim Engelhardt

"For me the course "movements" fits my own nature exactly. You can almost say it has something meditative. First you do these excersises with a charcoal in both hands and with closed eyes. When Chiel in a certain moment says: open your eyes and look in a distance, I am not obeying, that is much too open for me, I keep my eyes closed.

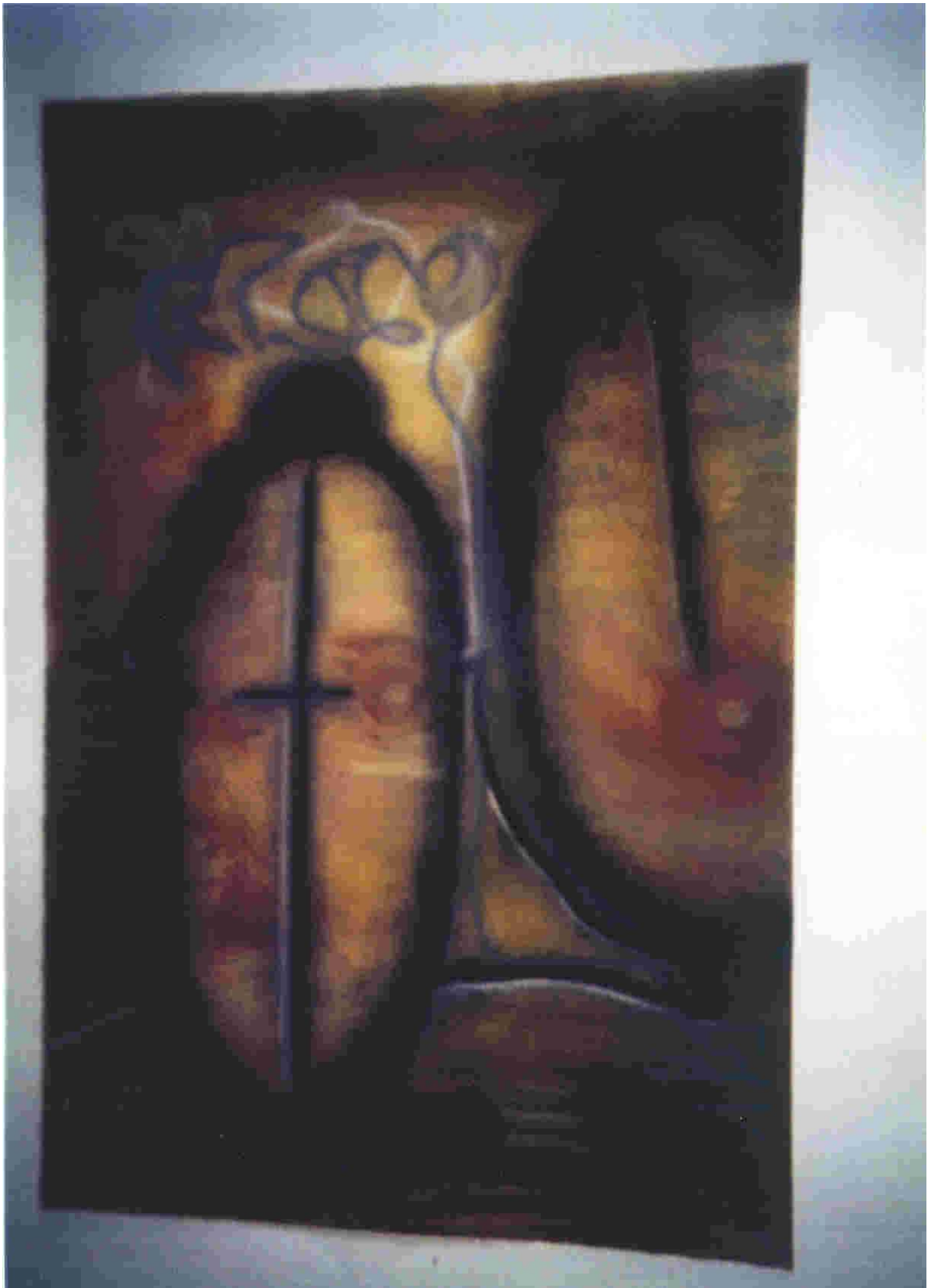
Then doing something: drawing is the quickest of course, painting is possible too, but more in phases. That stops quickly with me and I start looking at what has happened. First in great amazement and afterwards in expectation, because after I have learned something, something happens from that nowhere, from that area, something I call release or meditation. This has to do with free associations in analysis. I notice that my hands did something without my knowing and I am going to look at it. At first I do not recognize anything, but usually something starts to unfold itself.

Again it is in my nature and also it is my profession that I, in this image that emerged - just like in a dream - can see a meaning, an emotional meaning. A next step which of course belongs to the level of meditation and also to the level of therapy, is that what I see as a meaning is new on one side - discovered at the spot - and on the other side is very old, because it is the ground from where I, in that moment, or seen from a wider perspective, live. In a proper sense it is the processing of misunderstandings in the course of life. So, "Movements" for me is an inborn way of life".

This period had much influence on the artwork I did with other people and on my own art. At first I introduced the charcoal excersise as a warming up. Later I started workshops with a "moving wool" or "moving felt" excersise. As everything started from movement in Michiels workshop, he also worked with moving models. Students made huge sketches, which could be worked out later, or at home. I practised to make these sketches in soft pastel and treated them as if they were felt. I held them under a shower and afterwards rubbed them. They looked like distant histories. Drawing on wet paper made me feel free and again closer to felt. I made a series of self portraits beginning with the upper part of the model's torso, covered with an egg-shape with two crossing lines. The egg is connected with the horizon. The horizon is a non-linear widening line. (Photocopy 6).

In a later stage I made Japanese paper and felted this into a woollen background. Here felt is the medium and at the same time the support,





I figured out how feltmaking is the same as drawing and painting and how it is different. I prefer the tactile qualities of felt, the directness of the hands-on or the feet-on, the physical aspects. The link between the moving of the senses as well as the moving of the material. Perhaps it is because it was a felt brush that came to my rescue once, and helped to express myself, that I keep to felt as a material of investigation.

By the time I was finished at the "Werkplaats Molenpad", in 1993, I worked as a free-lance consultant for the "Nederlands Textiel Museum" in Tilburg. My commission was to assist Jette Clover, one of the curators, for one year to organise an International Felt Symposium and exhibition in 1994. As I had to teach a workshop as well, I took a chance to join a workshop taught by Louis van Marissing. This was the best preparation for the job I could have wished for. We worked from tearing paper into painting, writing, sharing what we saw, sharing what we felt, and continued in preparing a ritual to present to each other. After this first encounter with expressive arts therapy and intermodal use of the arts, I needed to find out more about it.

A very clear description I found in the introduction of the book "Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy", edited by Stephen K. Levine and Ellen G. Levine (Levine, 1988, p.9,10), who call expressive-arts therapy a work-in-progress, and who see the contributors of the book as "artists shaping our field together by their own individual efforts. Expressive arts therapy as a separate field of professional practice is, in fact, a comparatively recent development. Its origins can be traced back to the early 1970s when Shaun Mc Niff, Paolo Knill, Norma Canner and others founded the Expressive Therapy Program at Lesley College Graduate School in Cambridge, M.A. The philosophy of this program embraced an intermodal or interdisciplinary approach to the arts therapies, in contradistinction to the specialized arts therapy training programs then in existence. Connections were made with indigenous healing systems, such as shamanism (Mc Niff, 1981), and with contemporary philosophical developments, such as phenomenology, hermeneutics and, more recently, deconstructionism.

The Lesley College program fostered the development of a creative therapeutic community of students and faculty; Paolo Knill in particular, following the work of Anna Halprin and others, developed the principles and practice of community art-making.

Shaun McNiff adds to this in his foreword of "Minstrels of Soul", (Knill, 1995, p.13) "Expressive therapy is a discipline of soul's contagion. It comes upon us demonically through the agency of imagination, whose medicines draw from the full spectrum of soul. The work flourishes in settings which respect the taking of risks and which establish a deep sense of safety through a "participation mystique" resonating with soul's purpose and wisdom". He compares intermodal expressive therapy with the pantheon where the Greek gods and goddesses constantly cross fences to show that movement is the basis of life. So, "expressive therapy is a making of soul that never stops, and forever

takes on new forms within the invisible pantheon that holds us all"
(Knill, 1995, p.14).

Since its beginnings, the Lesley program has trained over a thousand students in the field of expressive arts therapy. Many of them have gone on to work as therapists in clinical settings and to teach in institutes and other training programs. In the late 1980s, Paolo Knill began to develop training programs in Europe and North America which were affiliated with Lesley College. Under the title of the International School of Interdisciplinary Studies (ISIS), programs were established in Switzerland, Canada, Denmark and Germany. These programs featured training in intermodal expressive arts therapy within the framework of a creative learning community.

At the same time as training institutes began to proliferate, new academic programs were also emerging. The European Graduate School, based in Switzerland, began to offer Masters degrees in expressive Arts Therapy and an advanced leadership training, the Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, leading to a PhD, in 1996. In California, the California Institute of Integral Studies began its master-level graduate training in 1996.

The "Centrum voor Expressieve en Creatieve Therapie" in Amsterdam, was an affiliated institute until it closed down in 1999.

Levine and Levine admit that most expressive arts therapists cannot claim to be specialists in every artistic discipline, but they can claim to be specialists in intermodality, that is, to be capable of grasping the junctures at which one mode of artistic expression needs to give way to, or be supplemented by, another. This sensitivity to the specific creative needs of the moment is a particular goal of training in this field, sometimes expressed by the phrase "low skill, high sensitivity" (Levine, 1988, p.11,12).

Louis van Marissing does not use many words in his teaching. In the catalogue "Kunst & Therapie" he explains the distinctions he makes between a. his way of making art b. his way of teaching workshops and c. his "doing" therapies. Talking about his art makes him feel on thin ice. "Such a conversation easily becomes too technical or too mystic, look that is all". He adds to this that radical changes in his life, influence his forms. "Shapes emerge from my hands. I have no purpose, no plan, sometimes a theme. I am breeding and slowly the tension grows and in a certain moment I find the appropriate materials. Then as if I know what I am going to do, I become effective" (Van Marissing, 1993, p.51). His objects are not an imitation of reality, nor represent something else. They are as they are. To be looked at.

In the same article (Van Marissing, 1993, p.56) he explains that, as a looker-on, he does not occupy himself with the artist. A work of art is an independent phenomenon. As an artist he does not care about the looker-on. He tries to find a track of which he does not know the destiny.

Making art does not relate to communication. When he wants to exchange with others, he teaches workshops. Things are different when art is applied to therapy. In that case the artwork has a direct relationship with the maker. In expressive therapy he observes the maker as well as the artwork.

He thinks that perhaps for him artmaking is an oasis in the noise of the big city and in the middle of a busy social life. Often it is hard work, like the rest of life. It is working till the moment something happens in front of the eyes through the hands, something that corresponds with his feeling for order. Till this very moment it has been vague. It also happens that something totally unknown takes a shape. A shape which balances on the meetingpoint between his inner and outer world.

Some workshops and therapies are of the same quality as his artwork. In that case there is no difference between the art he makes in his studio and the work he does with other people. In these moments he thinks that teaching a workshop and giving a therapy are both artistic deeds.

Louis made me conscious of the way I engage myself with people. It became clear to me there is a system behind my ongoing education. This led to periods of studying with a "master" followed by a period of reflection and withdrawal in my studio, my incubator, to experiment, to translate my new knowledge into artworks, to find a new order, and re-shape and integrate my new learning in the community-work I already do. I keep "breeding" until I feel experienced enough to bring it in the open and share it with other people. I feel the need to add quality and make what I do more all-round (intermodal). Mostly I meet the right new "master" at the right time and a new cycle starts. After I studied with Louis I would "design" a workshop where I introduce the healing and moving qualities of felt.

I called this workshop for participants of the International Felt Symposium in Tilburg in 1994: "Felt Vision". The workshop took place in the Art Academy, an ideal studio and a big space to house a group of 25 people, the instruments of Steve Clover, the percussionist and a huge amount of natural and coloured wool. The musician knows my program and we agree that he will improvise on what happens around him.

I start with a small introductory talk and demonstrate a variety of physical movements nomadic feltmakers use when they make felt. They use their bodies economically and keep the balance between the left and the right side. We talk about feltmaking as rhythmical movement, sound, voice, smell, energy, feeling, touch. During this workshop in three parts, with different structures, we will see if and how we move and if and how felt moves us.

I start with an exercise I learned from my meditation teacher. It is playful, and at the same time relaxing the body and emptying the mind. I call it "The Cat", because it reminds me of a cat who cleans itself

very precisely and with all its attention. It is about bringing attention to all parts of the body, one time by bringing the breath to them, inwards to bring new energy and outwards to get rid of old waste and one time by holding and striking all parts with the hands.

This is followed by choosing and collecting coloured wool and make a four-layered felt. The four colours are for oneself, for one's studio, one's country and for the world. Felt makes it possible to start from the back and work backwards forwards, so one can start to design the world or to start from oneself, or even to start in the middle, or make all layers apart and connect them later. Participants are experienced feltmakers, most of them are teachers and/or artists, so they can handle this multiplicity. The music is light and sounds like it is balancing the body and is freeing the mind. The felts cannot be finished, each student individually chooses a place for her/his felt close together on a gauze and we see how we look.

The different parts of the workshop are closely interlinked, each allowing the participants the experience and the expression of their individuality, while at the same time bonding them as a group, comments Criss Esser, filmmaker, developmental psychologist and also a former student of Michiel Dhont, Czn., She made a film from material a visitor recorded of the workshop. The video is an addition to this thesis. She poses that if the camera had been filming the workshop from above a continuous movement pattern of extension and contraction would be visible. Extension being synonymous with the individual working processes, when the group is scattered in the room, while the contraction reveals the moments when all individuals are drawn together by some linking element.

The second part is about creating a felt network, a dance with wool, water and soap. There is wool in the middle of the studio and a bucket with soapy water. Two or three participants walk to the centre, greet each other, take a sliver of wool, about one and a half meter, wrap this around the right or the left hand and dip it into the soapy water. When they move out, others move in etc.

The exercise is continuous, after unrolling the wet soapy sliver and start felting it between their hands, they create a dance for themselves. At a certain point the wool turns into a cord and the dancers now start to meet each other and while they meet they connect their cords and a network becomes visible. The group is connected through the wool, some people are in the middle, some at the sides, some are still finding new connections. The group dances as one body. As an ending they step out of the net and we see how we look.

Criss Esser observed that there is a progress in using felt. All the ingredients of the former parts are being condensed and intensified on an intimate and refined level. It became a 'second skin' and may be used to absorb pain or negative energies, but also to strengthen the body, even just to ornament it. Everything that has been created by a

very physical, down-to-earth process, is enriched by a universal, one may even say spiritual dimension.

The last part starts with feeling the body and finding the place where it hurts. Despite the attention to move carefully and "keeping the nose above the navel" there are aching backs, feet, legs, arms, necks. These places will be covered with wool and massaged. It goes without saying that people start to work on each other. Silence comes naturally. It is moving to feel how a massaged limb gets warm, the pain gets extracted and to see how at the same time an object emerges. These objects are attached to a copper wire, a symbol of conducting. We walk outside with the "dressed" copperwire to remove our pains with the blowing wind. We see that we move differently and talk a little about felt as scar tissue. And about how we felt about individual participation, social participation and socialization.

Ellen Levine says in her book "Tending the Fire" on being moved that play and the use of the body are essential to expressive arts therapy. These are elements, as well, in the early building blocks of creativity embedded in the mother /infant interaction. Mother and infant move in response to each other. In this inter-action, each one moves and is moved. The sense of being moved is thus essential for expressive arts therapy. Creating something aesthetically moving comes out of play and the body. Knill, Barba and Fuchs in their Book , "Minstrels of Soul" speak about the aesthetic response and aesthetic response-ability as key to the understanding of the action of expressive therapy. We have to have a sense of awe that takes our breath away as we witness artistic work that comes from the deepest aspects of the self. This could be likened to the mirroring function in the mother/infant dyad where vitality is flowing back and forth. But it is also bound up with an aesthetics that enters therapeutic work with the arts: we want to make things that are beautiful and that move us to a new emotional place.

Here she quotes "An aesthetic response refers to a distinct response, with a bodily origin, to an occurrence in the imagination, to an artistic act, or to the perception of an artwork. When the response is profound and soul-stirring, we describe it as "moving" or "breath-taking" (Atemberaubend). Our language suggests a sensory effect associated with the image, what Hillman describes as revealing itself in the quick in-breath (or inspiration) we might experience when in the presence of beauty..."(Knill, et al.1995,p.71).

In the workshop "Felt Vision" I tried to respond to the appropriate way Joseph Beuys made use of felt. He moved me to combine felt with copper and to create a mute landscape of scar tissue. I also respond to his relationship with the outer world as serving the community. The most modern artistic discipline, social sculpture, social architecture, he says, will not show itself as perfected until the last person living on earth becomes a co-creator, a sculptor or architect of the social organism. Beuys was convinced that there will be no peace in this world unless the last person has become a co-worker. He sees this

process as a preparation for Social Art. Does he mean Community Art? Everyone is an artist, is one of his sayings. And he states that art exists to educate the senses. As in painting light and dark shape the fan of colour, so it is important for the social art, to experience resistance as a challenge and to bring pronounced one-sidedness in a fruitful coherence.

According to Violet Oaklander in her book "Windows to our children" each time resistance shows itself we can know that we are not encountering a rigid boundary, but a place that has just beyond it a stretching, a growing edge. Beuys says that love can reshape evil. For me, by serving peace through playful and social artmaking and imaginative language, I hope to come to terms with my calling. I need both, words and images, on my search for insight, to understand the whole of the expression, and to contemplate and integrate the completed image.

In order to work therapeutically with artmedia like paper, paint, ink, clay, pencil, oil-crayon in therapeutic settings I was trained at Annette Brederode's "Centrum voor Creatieve en Expressieve Therapie in Amsterdam" and at the "School voor Imaginatie" in Amsterdam. If I wished I could use wool and feltmaking, pulp and papermaking if I provided for the materials myself. Textile and tactile mediums were "not done". Mostly I worked with the materials that were offered at the spot and reworked the images in my studio and/or found words with them. Bringing my own materials was distracting for others and for me. To widen my experience with movement I took lessons in Tai Chi and Sacred dance as an extra.

In 1998 I joined in the Easter Symposium of the International Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Training Centres, in Kungälv, Sweden 1998. taught by professors of the European Graduate School (EGS) in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. Their way of teaching made me feel sure that this was just what I was waiting for. As my husband promised to pay for it, I could enter the same summer. It was clear that my main interest was Community Art as it was taught by Paolo Knill, Provost of the EGS and inventor of this artform as a specific therapeutic intervention in a group setting.

In 1999 all through the year I practised and researched felt in my newly discovered way as community art. I was invited to teach/lecture at international forums and symposia in Australia April-May 1999, Finland July 1999 and Georgia (Russia) September 1999. I was free in how to treat my subjects as long as they had to do with feltmaking. During the preparations I worked with a team of specialists which included: my therapist/meditation teacher Iris Speer and Louis van Marissing as a supervisor to guide the re-view, the re-research and the re-thinking and re-shaping of my concept.

Now I have experienced personal expansion and letting go, I feel re-connected to a sense of community through the body and art-making. In

the double meaning of the word felt opened me up for my feelings and felt as a material opened up for a new way of working with it and how to build a community.

2. PRACTICAL PART.

All the intermodal theories apply to communal produced art.

Paolo Knill.

In the Practical Part I will talk about the work of Paolo Knill, whose community work is considered an art discipline in itself on the same level as painting, theatre, poetry, dance and music. I dive anew into the history of felt and re-view and re-think my study-travels into traditional and ancient felt cultures, which did not separate their arts from healing. By describing the practise of a specific choreography: the We-song of flowers, I will analyze Paolo Knill's community artwork, his way of conducting a group, or a collection of people who do not know each other very well, to eventually create an art-work together and see how it demonstrates his principles of community. His work has inspired me to initiate and direct a community felt artwork, called "Mille Fleurs" (Additional Video). This will lead to exploring the relationship between a choreographed community and a felt community. I end the practical part with a description of feltmaking as a new opening of community-building with occupational therapists and handicapped people. In the conclusion I will be answering my question whether and how feltmaking belongs to expressive arts therapy and to community-art.

2.1 Traditional Asian felt as group-cooperation.

Felt is a concentrated effort; feltmakers are connected.

I will begin to look into a distant past, the layered history of (semi)nomadic cultures where communal feltmaking comes naturally with birth and first footsteps. It is a fact that traditional feltmaking is based on survival, making products for daily life, mainly clothing and housing. "Mass production of felt has always been based on group cooperation: within a family, a neighbourhood, or a collective farm community. The annual supply of wool was processed in one or several days to obtain basic commodities, which required a concentrated effort of the whole group, supervised by one of its leading members. This makes traditional feltmakers connected with their everyday life, their stories, their familiar objects and their history" (Turnau, 1997, p.58).

Felt was magic, a piece of felt placed on a sore spot and then burned cured an illness.

The commonly used felt had a magical meaning too. Prof. Irena Turnau mentions a story from the Secret History of the Mongols, where it was a

belief that " all diseases are caused by demons, and a piece of felt, placed on a sore spot and then burned, cured any illness" (Commeaux 1972, pp.181, 277). Thin pieces of felt served as dressings or protection for painful body parts. There are ritual felts of different quality for different occasions. A just born baby was put on a "tender" felt as to make an energetic link to the world and the culture it was born in and the people it belongs to.

Felt was used in ceremonies.

In ceremonies like weddings or funerals the Asian nomads were seated on most valuable pieces of white felt. Turnau describes a miniature from 1242 where the son of Genghis Khan is buried. His coffin stood next to a yurt of white felt as a sign of humbleness in front of death (Turnau, 1997, p.8). According to Olschki the medieval minarets and pulpits in mosques were covered with black felt (Olschki, 1949, p.3). There are many iconographical sources concerning the history of feltmaking.

Travellers journals show a lack of interest in felt.

Written sources add information about popularity of felts in different countries and social groups. Traveller's journals show a lack of interest in felt. They cover topographical, meteorological, archaeological, military and economical subjects. If attention was paid to felt it sounds somehow ridiculous. Turnau mentions how Bronislaw Grabczewski expressed an opinion on Kirghiz' clothes: "made them look like carpets" (Grabczewski,1926, vol.3, p.96). Modern ethnographers obviously have put much effort into registering the manual felt products.

For Beuys felt became a continuous material of investigation.

During the second World War Joseph Beuys was shot down with his aircraft near the Black Sea. He came down near a small village and was found by tartars who saved him. They put butter on a felt - felt absorbs butter - and wrapped him in it. They kept him in it for a month, which cured him. There he got his knowledge about felt having a special kind of energy for human needs. The Red Cross which came along could not believe he had survived his injuries. Felt first came to his rescue and as a continuous material of investigation it stayed with him for the rest of his life. He became the first modern artist who studied and used felt from at least five different angles: as a plastic material, the colour of the material, the physical properties, the context and the genesis of the material, writes Kirsten-Claudia Voigt and "The context from which felt entered his work was not an arbitrary, individual one. The choice of felt implied returning to the military, war and need" (Voigt, 2000, p.43). All through his life he kept working with

organic material to find a shape that could solve the world problems. His credo was: art is therapy and everyone is an artist.

The survival of feltmaking was an opening for international network.

Mary Burkett, an art historian, travelling in 1962 in Iran, stopped her landrover to take a closer look at men who were rolling a bundle of something on a bed of leaves. It did not take her long to realize that it was felt they were making. This private encounter was the beginning of a 16-year period during which in her spare time - her job was director of Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal, England - she researched and wrote a history of felt, without an inkling the impact this work would have on a whole generation of feltmakers. Her exhibition in 1979 and the accompanying book "The Art of The Feltmaker" described and showed felts from many Middle Eastern countries as well as from Asia and Scandinavia.

In the 1970's textile artists who were exploring new aspects of fibre arts and looked for the origin of various fabrics, and the roots of fibres, became the new makers of felt. These too were private encounters, which turned out to become new beginnings. For instance artists like Mary Nagy and Istvan Vidak from Hungary began in 1984 a centre for ancient, traditional and modern feltstudies. The Szorekatenuszmuzeum in Kecskemet started to collect traditional felts and modern felts from visiting artists.

2.2 Hungary as a "New Felt Community".

As we first journey inward through the expressive arts, we tap into the unconscious and become aware of new aspects of self, thus gaining insight and empowerment. Then, by connecting to at least one other person in an empathetic and supportive environment, we learn ways to relate to the community. As we learn how to be authentic and empowered in a small community, we are then inspired to move to the larger circle. We become co-creative and collaborative, being able to access our higher purpose and powers. This connects us to the world - other cultures and nature - with compassion.

Nathalie Rogers

Nathalie Rogers said it all. I came to understand her words and connected with them ever since I visited the First International Felt Conference initiated and organised by Mary Nagy and Istvan Vidak in 1984. This exchange of knowledge and know-how between 'feltmasters', scientists and artists from East and West, was at that time and age, opened up and made felt stay as my manifold medium in the arts and a source of investigation for the rest of my life. My special interest was to develop feltmaking as a community-work which I practised already with the "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats (1.3).

Apart from Vidak and Nagy, two people at the conference made a far reaching impression. They became a permanent source of inspiration, Mary Burkett, (see 1.2 and 2.1 and Mille Fleurs Video) and Prof. David Nicolajevitsj Zsizsivili, an ethnographer from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Mary Burkett wrote in her book "The Art of the Feltmaker", that there is some evidence that the forbears of the Hungarians were responsible for bringing the art of feltmaking from Central-Asia to Europe.

Meeting the root of my felt question.

I met the root of my question whether feltmaking as a traditional communal craft also could be considered a form of community art, while looking at the film Prof. Zsizsivili showed during the conference. It was about Georgian women, family and neighbours, who made felt for a young girl who was going to be married. On that moment I realized that my journey into the ancient traditions of felt art and its makers, started to take a direction into focusing and concentrated on the socializing character of felt and felt as a sustainable way of living, that I was finding how to take elements out and apply these to life in a modern materialistic and individualistic society.

Zsizsivili was a great storyteller, he could hardly stop. He knew that from his tradition it was not polite to interrupt him. Moreover he was a walking encyclopaedia of ethnographical facts. Sharing is a main part of nomadic existence, apart from making things together one shares poetry, singing, music, dance and festive meals. Sharing is part of the communal art of traditional feltmaking in Georgia and its ancient methods.

Continuation of international felt meetings.

Felt became a vehicle of communication, understanding and integration, after the 1984 international conference in Hungary it got an extension. Partly because the conference was a success and partly because the Hungarian scholar Veronika Gervers-Molnar, who

unfortunately had died at a very young age, was honoured with it, the Ministry of Culture provided Vidak and Nagy with a sum of money to continue with international workshops where feltmasters from East and West could meet and exchange their felts.

Feltmaking as a discipline of sharing.

This was the beginning of a fast growing international felt community and East-West connection. Four years in succession, during summer, they took their invited guests, who should be experienced feltmakers with something "new" to share, to the Hungarian puszta, to imitate and share a nomadic life and live in yurts of different sizes, the smaller ones made by themselves (photocopy 7). Each year a new community was built with some of the same and some new professional feltmakers. After each summer, these feltmakers like a stone thrown into water makes wider and wider circles, spread their experiences all around the world.

Feltmaking as a non-linear education.

The life on the puszta could be compared with the life in a desert. For most feltmakers both landscapes were an unknown territory. Also the way of planning a program was done creatively. A workshop on the puszta could be planned one way and worked out another. The Westerners had to learn to be flexible, appreciate the warm-heartedness and to forget all about their well managed lives.

Workshop leaders from the East were used to be treated as honourable guests, who kept working if they were not stopped. Not being able to talk with half of the people without an interpreter made people smile more at each other. Everything was different. Like using a river as a refrigerator to keep huge watermelons cool and to use the same river as a daily bath and also as a place to wash the soap from the newly made felts. Bathing and washing felt at the same time made a creative combination, and turned out to be an artistic invention. Felt could be sculpted under water, reshaped 3D and dried in the sun.

Feltmaking is a creative act and a meeting of the world through people from other cultures.

The authors of "Minstrels of Soul" call art "a ritual which is based on the ability, skill and knowledge to engage the creative act consistently, significantly and persistently in a particular discipline. The discipline as such may also result from a creative act, defining a style or method. Art is motivated by the emotional attraction experienced in meeting the world" (Knill, 1995, p.105). Most "masters" from the East were very



willing to show from their art, to draw if they had no words and to talk about their work as long as political items were not touched. It was this felt art in a multivariety of form that bound us during long days spent on just the art of surviving beautifully; the empathy and love for each other developed through this medium we share. I came to experience feltmaking as a creative act of meeting the world in people from other cultures, to connect with them and release them. This way of feltmaking, specially the groupwork, was a process to create peaceful intimacy. These experiences too helped to shape my workshop Felt vision (see video) and opened up for the dream of founding a new workshop with multicultural aspects.

*Ogülsierin Gurbanguliev: feltmaking is her
is her visual, tactile and sensorimotoric language.*

On one of the occasional summer-meetings in Hungary, in 1986, Ogülsierin Gurbanguliev came to demonstrate for the international community of feltmakers. According to the customs of their tribe, the Achal Teke Türkmén, it was Ata, her husband, who introduced his wife and instead of her shook hands with everyone; Ogülsierin just stood still and listened. She seemed to concentrate on one hand and at the same time with a sharp look she "measured" her public. She already had been preparing wool, and we saw how she carefully divided small piles of coloured and carded wool from the pile of chaotic "raw" material.

A huge reedmat was laid down on the floor and the visitors/students were asked to sit around the working space. Ogülsierin (her name means "Sweet Sun") in her traditional long red and embroidered dress with an ochre yellow block-printed veil leaving her face uncovered, sat in front of the mat, peaceful, meditative, to bring inner and outer realities into alignment? Next to her were two balls of 1cm wide orange wool rovings. She looked concentrated and ready and waited for the public to be the same. She is aware of her mission, isn't she, I said to myself.

I could hardly believe that this is the first time that she has been out of her country, that she is not allowed to speak in public, that she gave birth to her eighth child just a few months ago. She radiates freedom when she starts expressing herself through her felting process. Without a word, like a performer on stage, she stands up, spreads her right hand from thumb to little finger, bends over, puts her hand on the mat and measures it by moving this hand so that each time the little finger replaces the thumb. Knowing the size now, she picks up the orange roving, "draws" a diagonal trellis pattern with one strand of wool and doubles the line. Her body moves as if she is in a state of total congruence. Are these lines she draws guard stripes? To guard the main border and the field? To guard her? One can see that this is the base of the pattern and that she has a general plan in mind. She sorts out different kinds of wool, loosely carded and in strong contrasting

colours like dark blue, brick-red and ochre yellow, a little bit of white and as she already showed an orange outline. Next she concentrates on putting the wool down in complex spiral patterns between the trellis, taking care that the pattern is in a mirror image all along. She invites a few people to assist her by putting small dots in alternating colours on top of the two basic lines, and so creating a minor pattern or *aladscha* (=protection). Making felt is her visual, tactile and sensorimotoric language.

While she continues, she asks someone from the audience to assist her by putting down a dark brown/grey border, about 20 cm wide around the more and more fluffy carpet, but still on the mat. After this is ready and she and the others finish the patterning, the whole reedmat is covered with natural wool. As a third layer and as a base greyish wool of a harsh quality is used. The rolling process, the actual felting and fulling (hardening), is comparable with the Georgian way. Before the rolling starts, it is Ata who writes the name of his wife, and date and place, on the back of the carpet in a woollen line-drawing. He explains that once a carpet is signed, it may never be on the floor, it has to be on the wall. The opening of the roll each time gives a surprise, first because the flattening of the wool simplifies the complicated pattern, then it is the great shrinkage which compresses the image and last because the grey hairy wool has travelled through the soft coloured wool and is covering the whole carpet with a greyish mist. Afterwards *Ogülsierin* plays on her mouth-harp and there was a festive meal. She looked relaxed.

Feltmaking is feeling creative in a group.

There was this one summer wherein a yurt was built. People were pounding the felt rolls, the walls, with their feet. Three to five people at one roll. They kept their arms around each others shoulders while they were pounding the roll with their feet. Thus moving like a harmonious body over the *puszta* they found tones and created rhythms and songs from rhythms. Each singer referred to a song of her/his own culture. Listening to this music now it sounds like the *puszta* grass is dictating it all and even takes part as an instrument. I remember one feltmaker was sitting on a chair and rolled the doorflap while he played the flute. Making felt and music as two modalities at the same time. That day felt without a beginning and without an end. Everything was finished and everything was just starting. I never felt better that "all the arts complement and interact with each other to unify play and imagination in a way that permits the celebration of our humanity" (Knill, 1995, p.23). "We are accustomed in our visually oriented society to reducing imagination to visual images alone. Because we understand the term image in a visual way, we often neglect imagination's other sensory aspects. In fact, isn't it true that humans typically imagine not only visual images, but also sounds and rhythms, movements, acts, spoken messages and moving pictures - even tastes

and tactile sensations? Imagination is the visiting place of soul, where the depth of psyche is revealed. Imagination is intermodal" (Knill, 1995, p.25).

Feltmaking from the senses.

Was feltmaking on the puszta an engagement of the senses, a real artmaking connected with imagination? Were all sensory modalities engaged during expression and perception? At the beginning there was the touch and movement of hands and fibres and special body-movements to cover the whole background (sensorimotor, tactile, visual); this was followed by a visual check-out, repair, pouring water and adding soap which had to be pressed through the wool. When the surface looked egalised and a special sound was heard on touching the wool, the material was ready for further handling (sensorimotor, auditory, visual, tactile). The rolling method of feltmaking asked for rhythmical movements of the arms and/or rhythmical pounding of the feet, while "walking" the roll over the puszta. The sound and rhythm that came from pounding feet on felt that rolled on puszta grass, invited a few voices to letting hear themselves. Some lookers-on joined in this voice-work or listened to the birth of this music (visual, sensorimotor, auditory). From time to time the roll had to be opened and the felt flattened to check the quality (visual, tactile, sensorimotor). Finally when the felt was ready the soap had to be washed out. In turns feltmakers who volunteered jumped into the river to swim with the new carpet (sensorimotor). This act was accompanied by voice-work from the riverside (auditory, visual). Afterwards the clean carpet was stretched in shape, pounded and flattened to dry (sensorimotor, tactile, visual, auditory). I realise now that this experience showed feltmaking as a theatre or a play where the public and the players are the same. It was felt from all the modalities of the imagination.

2.3 *The place of felt in the culture of Türkmenistan*

Time-release art

*There is a given amount of time we are to live on earth
-a given amount of food we are to consume-
You can't make any more works of art in your
lifetime than you are supposed to,
nor can you get to where you're supposed to go before
you are ready to be there.*

*By becoming aware of his or her inner art storehouse,
the artist can ease into a life of art, trusting
the inner time-release process.*

*By letting go of desperation and fear,
artists can produce at a steady pace,
gradually, using their stock of creativity,
generating only what is needed.*

Audrey Flack

Prof. Turnau concluded that in all the five countries of the former Soviet republics Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tuerkmenistan, Kirghizie and Tadzjikistan at least since the Middle Ages, various nomadic tribes dwelt in a portable yurt covered with thick felt. Only the ruthless Soviet rule forced them to settle down in permanent houses (Albaum, Brentjes, 1982, p.10; Bartold, 1927, p.19; Szczezepanik, 1987, p.19-58, 128).

A yurt, according to the Chinese poet Po Chue-i is:

*... just one round chamber
But it is warm and cosy
Like a wall voylok does not let frost in
Winds cannot bite it from any side
And rains make the felt stronger and stronger.
Even a snowstorm is not a threat to it
Here my heart feels better,*

Wojna 1983 149-152

A yurt is a place of wellbeing, a home made home. It encompasses "housing" and the surrounding nature. Yurt is home in a cosmic sense too, shaped as a dome the bottomline represents the circular horizon around the globe. Dorit Berger in Textilforum says yurt counts as a symbol for woman. Roof of yurt symbolizes the man, it means sky. (In the philosophy of Tai Chi, heaven is yang=male and earth is female=yin). Heaven and earth meet on top of the roof. The spokes of the roof are connected to the roofwheel; they are compared with sunrays. The roofwheel functions as sundial. Children are born in the centre of the yurt under the sky, to symbolize that at the same time a new genesis is at hand. Living in a yurt speaks to the imagination of many people.

Being surrounded by circular and soft breathing walls feels and sounds like being warm, safe and protected. Like a favourite piece of cloth. Actually a herdsman dressed in his felt cape looks like he is wearing a mini-yurt. And for sure a shepherd's sleeveless cloak is meant for shelter. Turnau comments: "These portable yurts, particularly suitable for herdsmen moving across the steppe with their sheep and cattle, were used until quite recently by the Türkmén" (Turnau, 1997, p.70).

Nomads lived in yurts since the first century B.C.. G.N.Simakov writes in the book "Along the Silkroad", about Nomads and Townspeople in Siberia and Central Asia, that in the late Middle Ages the yurt became the basic dwelling of the nomads. "It is made of a structure that could be transported, even without wagons. Two to three camels or two to

four horses could transport an average-size yurt. The yurt consists of two basic components: a wooden framework of collapsible walls, dome poles and dome cap and a cover of rectangular felt rugs. The wooden parts are bound together with ropes of hair and woven wool bands. The yurt is assembled by first setting up the door in its frame, then the circular lattice frame. The dome cap is lifted up on a long stick, and the dome poles are attached to the rim of the cap -which has holes all around it - and the top of the wall. Then the stick is removed and the central roofpiece remains supported by the dome poles.

Normally the rugs were black, but wealthy people also used white felt of high quality, especially for festivals and family celebrations. The work of setting up and dismounting the yurt was done by women. (The felt walls and roof felts were made by men). Each group of nomads developed their own characteristic type of yurt. The interior of the yurt is divided by an invisible boundary into two sections, right (male) and left (female), counted from the place of honour on the wall opposite the door. In the male section were tools, horse harness and raptors. In the female section was the kitchen. The bright patterns on the felt rugs and on the wide woven bands gave the yurt a festive air, and traditional art surrounded the people inside the dwelling as well" (Simakov, 1997, p.33).

*Türkmen traditional felts:
Felts as natural colour fields
with multi-shaded ornaments.*

Türkmenistan has a well-established tradition of modelling colourful carpets, in which complex ornaments reflect the complicated ethnic situation of the country (Dabbs, 1963; Chvyr, 1986, p.211-24). The soviet authorities did not oppose carpet-making. According to Turnau the felt production started a few weeks after the second= autumn clipping. A woman could make 5-6 carpets yearly only for the needs of her own family. Their "ketches", as these felt carpets are called, were usually composed as a natural wool colour field filled with multi-shaded ornaments, such as floral motifs, rosettes, spirals, rhomboids, reciprocal volutes and ram's horns, surrounded with a brown border. They usually measured about 110 x 215 cm and weighed about 7 kg (Dupaigne, 1978, p.7-9). The prevailing colours were maroon, brownish and all the natural hues of wool, from greyish to black; dyes were applied rarely. The carpets were very dense and resistant, with non-felting horse hair added to increase their durability. They can last up to fifty years.

2.3.1 Community-felt-art in family-life.

Deepening the question whether the making of felt can be used as community-art.

After 4 years of spending the summer in Hungary the workshops were over in 1988. It took till 1990 before the second International Felt Symposium in Denmark was organised (2.3). In the meantime I treasured my discovery, my seed, that felt served as an opening up to possibilities like peace-keeping and community-building like I had experienced in Hungary. It deepened my question as to whether feltmaking as a discipline can be used as and is a community-art. It was time for incubation. On and off I thought about a peace-project in Denmark and meanwhile I looked forward to go and study with Ogülsierin Gurbanguliev, whom I admired as a great artist and a wise woman and mother.

I felt I was her student already. But I needed an internship in her Felt Practise in Türkmenistan as well. Somehow this image settled in my mind, almost without my conscious knowing. I knew that Ogülsierin and her husband Ata belong to the Achal-teke tribe in Turkmenistan, the desert state, as it is called because the Karakoem desert takes 90 % of the land. They live in Aschabad, a young industrial town, which has been the capital of Türkmenistan since 1881. After a heavy earthquake in 1948, the city is rebuilt according to safety rules. Now the map mainly shows a rigid pattern of streets in straight lines. It happened like magic. At the end of the first year that Türkmenistan had become self-supportive, in October 1992, despite warnings of my travel agent, I flew to Moscow, stayed overnight with an ethnographer and interpreter, who telephoned with the Gurbangulievs in Aschabad. It turned out that the autumn sheepshearing was done and that they would wait for me with the feltmaking. There was a straight flight into Aschabad.

The Gurbangulievs possess an apartment in the centre, in front of the railroad and viewing the desert, but as many people of their tribe, they prefer to live in yurts, in the outskirts of the city, next to the desert and at the feet of the Kopetdag mountains. They love nomadic housing; it fits their life-style. Ata being a jeweller and a trader of jewellery, works at home and Ogülsierin needing space for her work and for their eight children.

I was very excited to be with a family and in a community where people live sustainably, where daily life is a creative ritual of making, making fire, making bread, making clothes, making jewellery, and most of all to be part of the community felt-art in family life. This experience came to play a major role in the development of my vision on felt as community-art and in my personal "creative re-shaping, re-directing and re-

connecting" process (1.6). I used her ideas while designing the Mille Fleurs Carpet (2.8+ video). I think what she did was community- art without knowing it (photocopies 8,9,10,11,12,13).

Felt carpets are expressed images of their lives at the moment they are made.

In the family yurt a few days later I sit on a floor completely covered with colourful felt carpets, all different in age and design. Like pages of a visual book which shows the family history. It is no surprise they call the designer of a carpet an "author". I know now the new mats hide their colourful appearance. I learn and see that after being walked on the "mist" slowly disappears. This feels like the essence of the original emerges in full bloom and presents itself to the maker and other witnesses. These felt carpets age about twice as fast as the people who live on them. I learn to understand that the patterns are never copied, that they are all expressions and images of their lives at the moment they are made. So all family-events are walked in, are grounded. The floor records of the changes in their life. As their guest I am part of their life, I may share their daily cycle, but I am not allowed to help with making and baking the bread in the clay-oven, nor tending the fire, nor the cooking. Next time, they say, then you come and you are part of the family and have to work. For now I may assist with feltmaking and study their other textile art, embroidery, knitting, weaving. Ogülsierin masters it all.

The artistic approach of feltmaking as a life-style and a community art.

I realise how much I admire her artistic approach. How she hung the old felts that had to be replaced behind her, so that she could not see them, while she was designing a new one. I told her I admired her art and her lifestyle and that I treasured her natural sense of community, her expressive imagery, her performance in time and space, her style and that I considered my stay as a great learning about life. I had to repeat this reason of my studying here for T.V.

It was much more than I expected, this freedom of design. So far I learned that certain families made certain patterns. And somewhere I must have thought that they had secret patterns somewhere in a cupboard or a felt bag. But there is no recipe, no preconception. So Ogülsierin really is the artist who knows how to create a space into which she invites her images.

And it was very special to make felt with her and her daughters and daughter in law (photocopy 6,7,8,9). Since I described the felting process in 2.2, when Ogülsierin was demonstrating in Hungary, I will not repeat it here. The difference between feltmaking there with

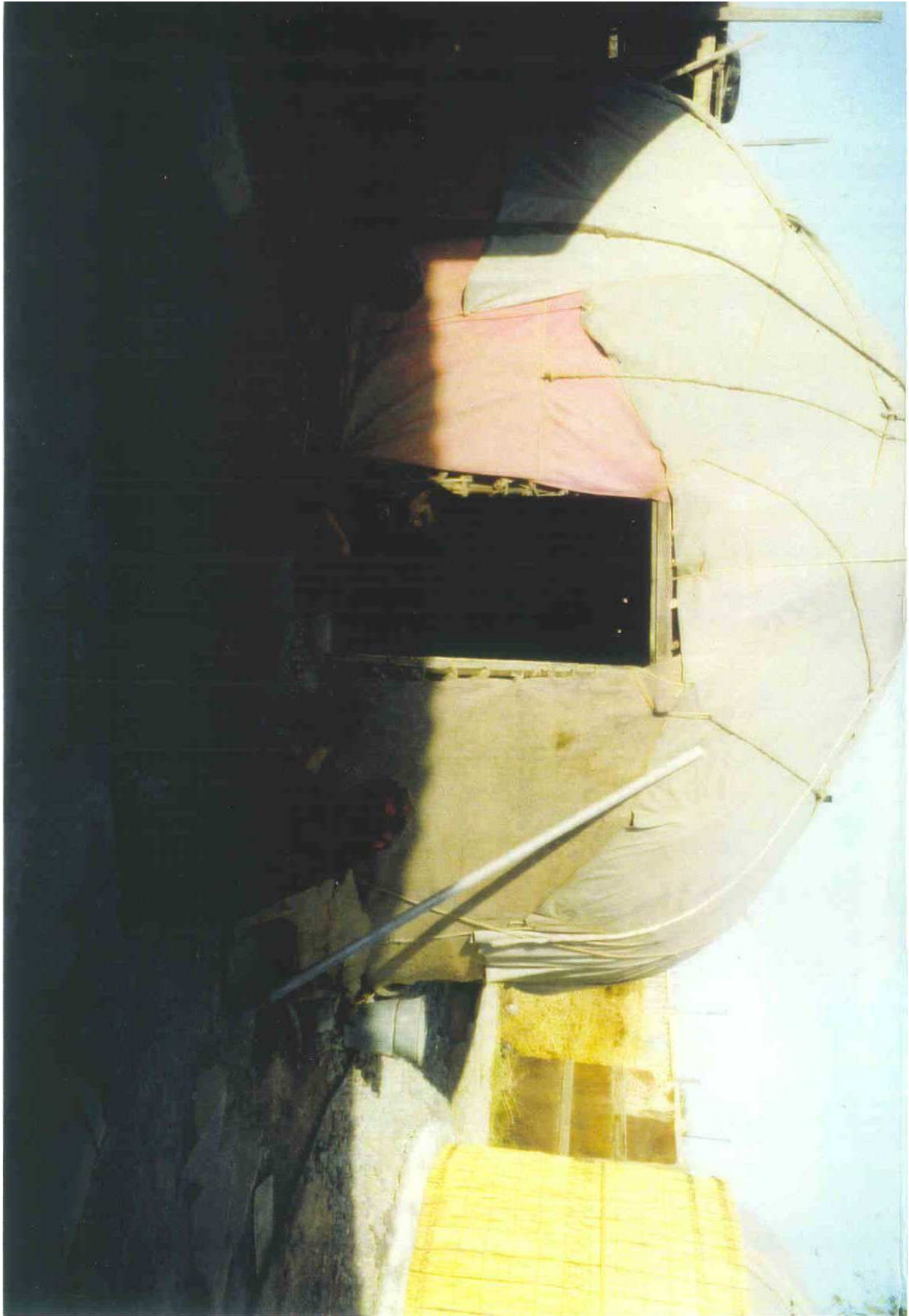
strangers and here at home is obvious from the pictures. The atmosphere in her fathers old work-yurt and storage room is intimate. I feel like a real apprentice being told what to do and what not to do. Türkman feltmaking has to be developed from learning in steps. The girls laugh at me. I loved to see her teach her daughters. Each morning after breakfast they sit together and work. Sometimes they sell their work. Ata does business for them on the market. Each of them has her own account. I told her that in future I would use her knowledge, whenever and wherever I would direct community felt art.

Felts used in rituals.

Ogülsierin showed me around, introduced me to her friends, their children, their children's parties and their felts. They all had big families and I could see from their faces and their behaviour they pitied me for having just one son. I pity that I could not talk with them about their lives. It seemed such a peaceful community. With all these children around I never heard anyone cry. Is it because they get so much attention. Is it that these felts absorb their sound? The only person I could ask was Jeren, a history student, and daughter of a professor of history. She likes to explain Türkman rituals. About the namazlik a prayer-felt in an oval shape which I saw. Every family has its own white (=holy) namazlik with its own symbol on it. Namazliks are passed on from generation to generation. They are used when a child is born, when someone dies, at someone's marriage and of course for the daily prayers.

The dead get a special felt the ayatlik, it is grey with a black border. It is left in the grave. Why? This tradition goes back to the early findings in the "frozen tombs of Pazyryk" about 2000 years ago. It is still believed that as felt is a healthy preservation for the body, it is also healthy for the soul. And the soul stays in the body till the funeral. For that reason the family meet after 3 days, after 9 days and after 40 days. This is called chudajjoli, the way of God. The day on which a person dies is a holy day. The dead are remembered at each marriage, at each birth.

Ata introduces me to Bibisara Chapizowa, who works for T.V.. Her program is about arts and crafts, her mission is to save them from extinction. Over the last year she had to plead very hard to keep her program on the air. The new government did not object to tradition dying out. For people like her it is important to keep the arts and crafts alive. Her last film was about hair and health (women traditionally wear their very long hair in two braids tied on the back). To protect the hair from sunlight and sand men and women wear small hats. Traditionally women of Ogülsierin's tribe wear this large yellow silk veil. They are free to cover their mouths or wear it just around the neck.













Bibisari was pointing out that in a dusty climate the silk veil is an object that protects from sand and so promotes health. Like Ata, she wants to teach the women to be proud of their work and to sell it.

In the next program Bibisari interviewed me about my observations. She expects me to talk about the resurrection of felt in the west. About Mary Burkett's book, which caused a resurrection in the west, about "Hungarian experiences", which helps east-west relationships, about meeting "feltmasters" like Ogülsierin. What do I think about my stay? How does it feel to make felt in the original surroundings? I talk about being moved by their movable art and being touched by the close harmony in their family life. Part of this is because of the communal feltmaking, which through my eyes is like a ritual, a transition. I re-learned that being connected with a material like felt also means being connected with other people in a process and to stay in that process till it makes sense. I experienced for the first time that sharing the feltmaking means that I feel connected with a family I hardly know. They are my imagined family.

I talk specially about how I admire her artistic approach. How she hangs the old felt that has to be replaced behind her, so that she could not see it, while she was designing the new one (photocopy 14). I say I admire their art and their lifestyle and that I treasure their natural sense of community, their expressive imagery, their performance in time and space, their style and that I consider my stay as a great learning about life. In future I will use their knowledge, whenever and wherever I teach community felt art.

Universal spiralling patterns.

I talk in the microphone about the universal symbols in their art, especially the waves (sailan) and the spiral (gotschak). It is interesting to see how the spiralling patterns embedded in the grey background of the carpets slowly disappear after being walked on for a certain time.

I talk about how magical it is for me to witness Ogülsierin when she walks on her felts, checking their images. And how she, when a pattern is losing its expression, which means that the image is walked off more than half, she knows the time has come to tell her daughters to make a new one together, a re-creation. And how she finds another proper place for the old one, may be as an undercarpet.

Mary Burkett calls the spiral perhaps the most attractive single motif in nature to have aroused interest in early man in his search for a purely visual art form. Apart from felt, the spiral can be seen in shells from the simple snail to the more exotic forms of the sea and in the growth of plants and leaves. It can be seen in the spiral processes of wind, water, cloud and many other natural forces. The word "volute" comes from Latin (meaning "rolled"); "volute" in French means "snail shell". The volute spiral which very soon leads to complex spiral patterns and as they occur so frequently in the history of felt it may be worth spending

some time considering them. In almost every prehistoric culture the spiral as a single structure appeared as a decorative motif. Its frequent occurrence on stone images, rocks, pottery and even upon the body extended from certain tribes of Australian aborigines, to Central America, the steppe lands of Central Asia and to the British Isles. Double spirals were carved by Megalithic man. This latter is most familiar as the Yin Yang sign of the Far East (tai chi).

In the spiral the early mystic discovered his symbol of eternity; it is certainly the most ancient symbol for this. Thus it ordered mans wanderings both before and after death in time and space. This two-dimensional version of the spiral, symbolic of the spherical vortex is first evident perhaps in ancient dance - the God Siva - Sufi mystics - the dervishes - all related it in their movements, emulating the order of the cosmos. It was of great importance as the underlying principle of cosmic relationships themselves.

The natural cycles of the yearly movement of the earth in relation to the sun form macrocosmic spirals in time. The spiral contained the unifying principle of controlling the great opposing forces of differing polarities. Man himself has always understood that he is dominated by the forces of opposing solar and lunar currents - the forces of expansion and contraction - symbolized by wings and serpents (Purce, 1974). In classical times certain ritualistic methods of spiral circumambulation were used in order to sanctify the ground in city construction. It is worth considering that there might be a link between the ritual custom and the simple spiral forms used in the design of the floor coverings of nomads' tents. After all they had to exist in the wide open spaces of Asian deserts and would have needed all the mystic protection they could achieve.

Apart from the spiral in Türkman feltmaking, the spiral is often used felted or in felts as a means of stitching or quilting in order to strengthen the material. Could the origin of the spiral motif on felt have derived from its utilitarian purposes? Sir Aurel Stein found a fragment in Niya where red spirals had been cut out and applied on to a yellowish ground. W.Meister in a reasoned analysis of the designs found on felts at Noin Ula in Mongolia, the Tarim Basin, Bezeklik and Shosoin, shows the use and re-use of this motif over the period of 1000 years from 1st century AD.

My question is spiralling up from the desert into the high mountains of Georgia.

After my stay with Ogülsierin Gurbanguliev, my question had found an answer in so far that I considered her work as a form of traditional community art and -craft in Türkmenistan. What remained was the



question whether when and how feltmaking in Georgia also could be considered an appropriate and vital medium for community art. Also my further question in how far felt as a creative medium could be used to form new communities where the focusing lies on artistic expression in daily life was still waiting for an answer.

Since the felt conference in Hungary 1984, where I had been inspired by Prof. Zsizsivili's documentary film about women in the Georgian high mountains who made a communal felt, I had tried to visit these feltmaking women and to research their felt art. Prof. Zsizsivili invited me, but it was impossible to correspond with him about it. Perhaps for political reasons? Accidentally a few years later I heard that he had died. About 12 years later, in 1996 I met one of his students, Nino Kipshidze, an art historian and a textile artist, who lives in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, at the International Feltsymposium in Switzerland (1.3).

In her article about feltmaking in Georgia, which she wrote in the Newsletter of the North American Feltmakers Network, (NAFN, 1997, issue 21), Nino Kipshidze stated that feltmaking is still imbued with the character of sacred ritual. I got the feeling that she wrote this for me. "When the student is ready, the master appears", is a Sufi wisdom. And it came to me at the moment that I was about to leave my "Haarlemse Viltwerkplaats", the felt sense had opened me up for new beginnings (1.3). It was my wish to deepen my knowledge about felt and this seemed a new chance to learn from her about the ritual aspects of making felt together.

Felts were "choreographed" and directed.

What was so special about the Georgian women who participated in wool preparation and the felting process was not only that one of them was the designer, who on her own, laid down the pattern, while the other women assisted in rolling the felt. I understood that the leader was like an art director, to compare with a "choreographer". The Georgians called her an 'author' and the pattern she laid down was her own individually expressed, textile text. Nino said the designer was called 'dedo' which meant 'mother' and that this process of laying out the design was accompanied by music meant to inspire the artist to create. At that time I did not know the term aesthetic response.

Traditional feltmaking was a story about marital life in a community.

Collaborating and co-creating felts inspired me to re-think and re-search feltmaking as an expressive art medium while making use of its intermodality. For instance when a carpet was felted for a young bride, the girl was invited to witness the process. The women sang songs for her about marital life during the communal rolling. According to Nino Kipshidze, during felting, men were not permitted to be present, which was meant to give more freedom to the women and to preserve their

ritual. Like her "master of felt", Prof.Zsizsisvili, she called the process of felting an exciting ceremony that was accompanied by stories, jokes, songs, poems and finally a dinner. This imaginative way of felting was artmaking, play and ritual. I took my chance and together with an invited group of artists, museum-directors and publishers I made a journey into the Caucasus in September 1999. Fifteen years after I met Prof.Zsizsisvili, his student Nino Kipshidze made this dream come true: I stayed with the feltmasters from Georgia.

2.4 *Felting in the Georgian mountains*

The clouds are thoughts of the mountains

Georgian saying

Tusheti is one of the mountain regions of Georgia. It is located on the northeastern border of Georgia, adjacent to Chechnya and Dagestan. Due to its location between Europe and Asia, from the earliest times of human habitation, Tusheti, as well as other parts of the Caucasus, has been a place of passage. Because of these geographical reasons and other historical ones, the life of the Tushetians has been a constant struggle for self preservation and liberty. Tamara Gelashvili, artist and teacher at the Georgian State Technical University in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, calls the highlands of the Caucasus "lost worlds".

A mountain village, like Omalo in Tusheti, is a small community. The women make felt together, but they are not family related. They did not choose felt as an artform. Sheepwool and the invention of felting came as a rescue for the inhabitants. It became THE appropriate artmedium. Since the bronze age women are connected through their felting, (and other textile artforms like spinning, plant dyeing, knitting and weaving).

Felt is "eternal material".

Mountain people live according to the law of the mountains. During summer people bring their sheep to summer pastures and work on their land. In winter the women spend much time together making felt carpets and clothes. In the evening they sing, make music and tell each other epic stories. They believe this protects them from evil forces and would bring them good luck. Their sheep were considered symbols of fertility. Felt was made for coverings on the beds, on the chairs, the floors and on the walls. But not only to decorate the house (photocopy 15). They made felt clothes and shoes and they felt cradles for their babies. Helena Selinzsova, ethnographer at the Leningrad University Museum calls felt the "eternal material". In the Museum about 500 of the most ancient and precious felts are consolidated.



Felt was a traditional community artform.

Felt was everywhere. Even when someone had died, the dead body was wrapped in felt. People hoped after being wrapped in felt they recovered to a new life which was connected with energy. Every family kept these felts which were mostly white in colour. The horse of that person got a new saddle-blanket, a chabraque. A horse, after its owner had died, was kept free from work during a whole year. After that both horse and felt were presented to a member of the family or a close friend. Shepherds walked through the mountains in cloaks that looked like portable tents. A shepherds cloak could stand on itself. With nice weather it served as a good bed, it absorbed humidity, and sweat, it kept the rain out and the body in it kept its temperature. Helena pointed out that feltmaking had existed since cattle breeding and that it has been a communal 'thing' ever since.

A startingpoint for new communities.

*These feltmakers created and still create a playground where individuals within a community enrich their lives. Over the ages their "social sculpture" (J.Beuy's) has been built. This "left-over" of a traditional community artform in Georgia, may serve as a re-view and a re-thinking to re-create a startingpoint for initiating new communities as is suggested by the authors of in *Minstrels of Soul*: "more attention is paid to artmaking in and of itself and to developing an acute aesthetic awareness of the impact of our activity on ourselves and others". (Knill, 1995, p.11).*

Feltmaking engages sensory modalities.

The process of feltmaking in Georgia demonstrates how feltmakers communicate, perhaps without the intention, without having heard of crystallization theory and intermodal techniques. They show how they communicate through a variety of modalities of imagination, visual images, posture and movement, sound, silence, rhythm, words and actions. This is much like my experience in Hungary. The Georgians themselves considered feltmaking as a community art, as the 'art of the people'. Feltmaking in Georgia is also a ritual process, a medium for painting, sculpture, poetry, performance traditionally engaging sensory modalities like visual, sensorimotor, tactile, auditory, verbal during expression and perception (Knill, 1995, p.44).

Some symbols are repetitive, meaning timeless regeneration.

Tushetians make their felts in sunny weather. Their finished felts are to be seen on the grass or hanging on balconies to dry. The designs that are used come from many sources: parents, relatives or abstracts from imagination and feeling. There are several kinds of schematized motifs

that are simultaneously symbolic legacies of an earlier pagan culture and of early Christianity. Symbols have their fundamental meaning: Three circles inside each other symbolize the moon, one circle or two circles inside each other symbolize an eye or a snowflake, the depiction of the sun is lines whirling out from a centre. There are different crosses; two straight or wavy lines mean paths in the mountains, plants, or the tree of life. Some symbols are used repetitively, meaning timeless regeneration. The mood to be conveyed by symbols or colours may also depend on the purpose of the felt; floor coverings for children may be lighter and more joyful. Other felts may also be meant to be specifically expressive.

Feltnakers follow images that arrive with the making.

A great difference with the Türkmén can be seen here in colouring and in simplicity of composition. Like the Türkmén the Georgians do not work from examples, but follow the image that arrives with the making. The ornamental symbols as a complete composition in the Tushetian felt carpets are clear and definitive. Each piece has its own logic with its own compositional order. While based on tradition, each nabadi -as a felt carpet is called- is a new creation, a new composition of colours and emotion. Colours are varied and ancient designs enriched with unique images and expression. Kipshidze states that "common felt features are not a traditional iconography, but concept of composition, balance between whole and detail, sense of harmony and colour, and monumental of character".

The process of feltnaking is considered a cosmic perception of nature.

Kipshidze continues: "This seems natural because mountain dwellers live separated from the world outside the mountains. In their felt carpets this isolation is reflected. Isolation also influences their way of thinking and their perception of the environment. For a better understanding of the Tushetian nabadi one has to take into account their specific cosmic perception of nature. Living in this mountainous landscape in the Caucasus for numerous generations, they feel the transparency of the air and the nearness of the stars and the moon. Their felt patterns and their folk poetry are full of symbols and metaphors like The clouds are thoughts of the mountains and Wrap my shoulders in a nightlike cloak" (NAFN, 1997, issue 21).

Georgian felts are a unification of art and craft.

According to the memories of old Tushetians, the most ancient nabadi were felted with undyed wool. These monochromatic felts seem to be more sophisticated artifacts. Because of this simplicity in colouring, they have a monumental quality. The naive and natural features of primitive art, the generalization of images and the monumentality

intuitively predicts and connects those images to modern art. Kipshidze is not surprised that some contemporary Georgian artists are now fascinated by the modern look of those ancient nabadi's.

Tushetian felt is community art, and ' the art of the people'.

Vakhtang Kokiashvili, a monumental artist has collected old felts since the end of the 1960's. He presents a catalogue of the year 1972 with pictures of his collection and those of two others. Only one artist-feltmaker is called by name: Tengiz Japaridze. The other artists stay anonymous. The comment is in Cyrillic, and in Russian lettering. Only one A4 describes the meaning of felt: "Felt is the art of the people" (photocopies 16,17).

Tushetian felts are a reflection on the reality of daily life; they are a unification of art and craft.

He too points out that in the composition of a Georgian nabadi reality is reflected, the world of animals and plants and all things are connected in nomadic lifestyle. Being famous for his own monumental art, he got a chance to travel and exhibit in Paris. He feels very attracted to the work of Miro, who is also inspired by the art of the people. When more information became available about western modern art he realised how valuable Georgian art was, how energetic, strong and emotional these nabadis were. He is moved by seeing the likeness of Georgian signs with those in American expressionism without any exchange of ideas. He thinks that the nabadi surpasses the decorative, and that it unites art and craft.

Tengiz Japaridze, an intermodal pioneering artist.

One of the main artists in Georgia who was highly inspired by the feltmaking mountaineers, is Tengiz Japaridze. He is also the pioneering artist who about 35 years ago went to the mountains to walk and visit the feltmakers. Intrigued by their art he asked them to teach their methods to him. As a painter and a teacher at the State Art Academy in Tblisi he was interested whether he could paint with wool. An interaction developed where at first the mountaineers transformed his paintings into felt and Tengiz made paintings of their felts. Over the years Tengiz became a master of felt paintings. His Academy did not appreciate his art at first and did not want him to teach this to art-students. So he founded a new department which was called "Artistic Textile Decoration". After his feltpaintings, portraits, nudes, animals and abstracts were exhibited all over the world and his work had been bought by many museums, feltmaking became a serious subject for art research at the Academy. He received the title "honoured painter of Georgie" and became a "State Premium Laureate Professor". He still inspires many Georgian artists.

An international feltsymposium in Georgia.

Feltmaking seems to be disappearing in Georgia. Recent generations change values, lifestyle and lose cultural traditions. Social and economic problems do the rest. After countless generations seasonally migrated with their flocks under the Soviet dominance, the Tushetians were forced to take permanent residence on the plains. Consequently many of their villages in the mountains were abandoned. Is feltmaking dying out?

Not if Nino Kipshidze can help it. She organized an international felt symposium in September 1999 where she invited artists and tutors to exchange their experience, their knowledge with the teachers and students of the Art Academy in Tblisi and to study with the "felting community" in Omalo. She dreams of founding an intercultural art centre on top of a mountain in Omalo, a small village in mountainous Tusheti, one of these places where people live according to the law of the mountains.

Felt is an ecologically
Clean and breathing material.

"They preserve felt as an ecologically clean and 'breathing' material which functions as insulation against cold and sound. Hence a study-travel to Omalo. I quote from Mary Burkett's diary, which was published in Echoes, the magazine of the International Felt association: "The trip was breathtaking. We drove east by coach to Telavi, the main town in Eastern Georgia, and from there were spirited up into the mountains in a smart Russian helicopter flown by Shevardnadze's pilot, cousin to Manana, our hostess in the mountain huts. We flew over the washed away marks below on the mountain sides which had been roads. They had been ravaged by storm and the repairs already washed away, yet again. We flew, what seemed inches above knife-like edges of fir clad mountains, only to look down into the cavern of the next valley.

Apart from the dangerous trip, Georgian felting was fascinating, as it was demonstrated by four women: Eliko Chagaidze, the oldest woman in the group and 'felt master' who gave all the orders to everyone. Her helpers were Nazo Guzarouli, a retired accountant from Tblisi, who returned to her home in the mountains and Tciala Idoidzeand, a young woman whose husband has put together a small museum of Tushetian life in Omalo. Tciala is one of the people who is trying to help keep the traditions alive. Annato Abshianitzky helped with the feltmaking and gave technical advise. It went without saying that because of the washed away mountain roads the Dagestani and the Chechnian feltmasters could not come. The Chechnian war was much on our minds as the Russians had dropped grenades here by mistake just a week ago".





5 27

Tushetians are very conscious of the "bodywork".

The process and technique of felting in Tusheti are very similar to those used in Turkey or other parts of the Caucasus. It is different from the Türkmen feltmaking. I think the Tushetians were very conscious of the bodywork. Maybe it was their age that made them conscious and change position every few minutes. The sheep are shorn by the men in late spring and after shearing the wool is washed in cold running water, dried in the sun and carded. Nino Kipshidze knows that in the earliest examples still preserved, the artisans used the natural colours of undyed wool. These colours were ivory and varying shades of brown from a dark brown which was almost black, to light brown.

Black is earth related, whereas the sky is seen as divinity and as the energy of life is white. It is not sure when dying of wool became popular. But according to N.Tsagareli in a catalogue on Georgian felts: "the mountaineers were strict in the choice of colour. The main tone is deep black and then comes red, green and yellow"... "The wool which will be used for the decorative motif is carded again and rolled into thick string by rolling the wool against the feltmakers thigh".

Georgian feltmaking, a timeless therapy
of love and attention? Or description of a ritual?

The feltmasters converted a classroom in the local school into a feltstudio, creating a huge empty space on the floor. Four huge bags with carded wool in natural colours stood in a corner. A piano and some chairs for special guests was the only furniture. Eliko took the lead, discussed her ideas with the others, who helped her to take apart white wool for the background and grey wool for the decoration. Putting the grey wool on a piece of old canvas on the floor did not take long. They took a size of about 1.60 x 2.60cm. The wool was already carded in batts. After two layers were laid down, they pressed the wool down with sticks and checked it for unevenness. Thin places that showed up then were filled in.

Composition is not broken up by new ideas; these are brought
into the detail, and so the traditional style is preserved and developed.

The designs (photocopies 18,19,20) were laid in an order. First came a borderline which was a hands width away from the edge and about 5 cm wide. This framework they call the diadem or crown. Inside a long chain was laid of the same width. The chain can be related to the ancient circular symbol, eye of God for protection. It also can be explained in a vertical direction, as the chain that connects sky and earth. Helena says there is an ancient myth in which the hero climbs the chain and goes to heaven. Also the chain is explained as a sign of a serpent which protects from evil inside the house. The eye symbol also protects from evil. Eye on the felt keeps the people from evil from outside the house. So the whole universe is in this felt. On both sides of

the chain they put three crosses and two horseshoes. They are free to choose what they think is an appropriate symbol and motifs and also have a free choice of where to place these on the surface.

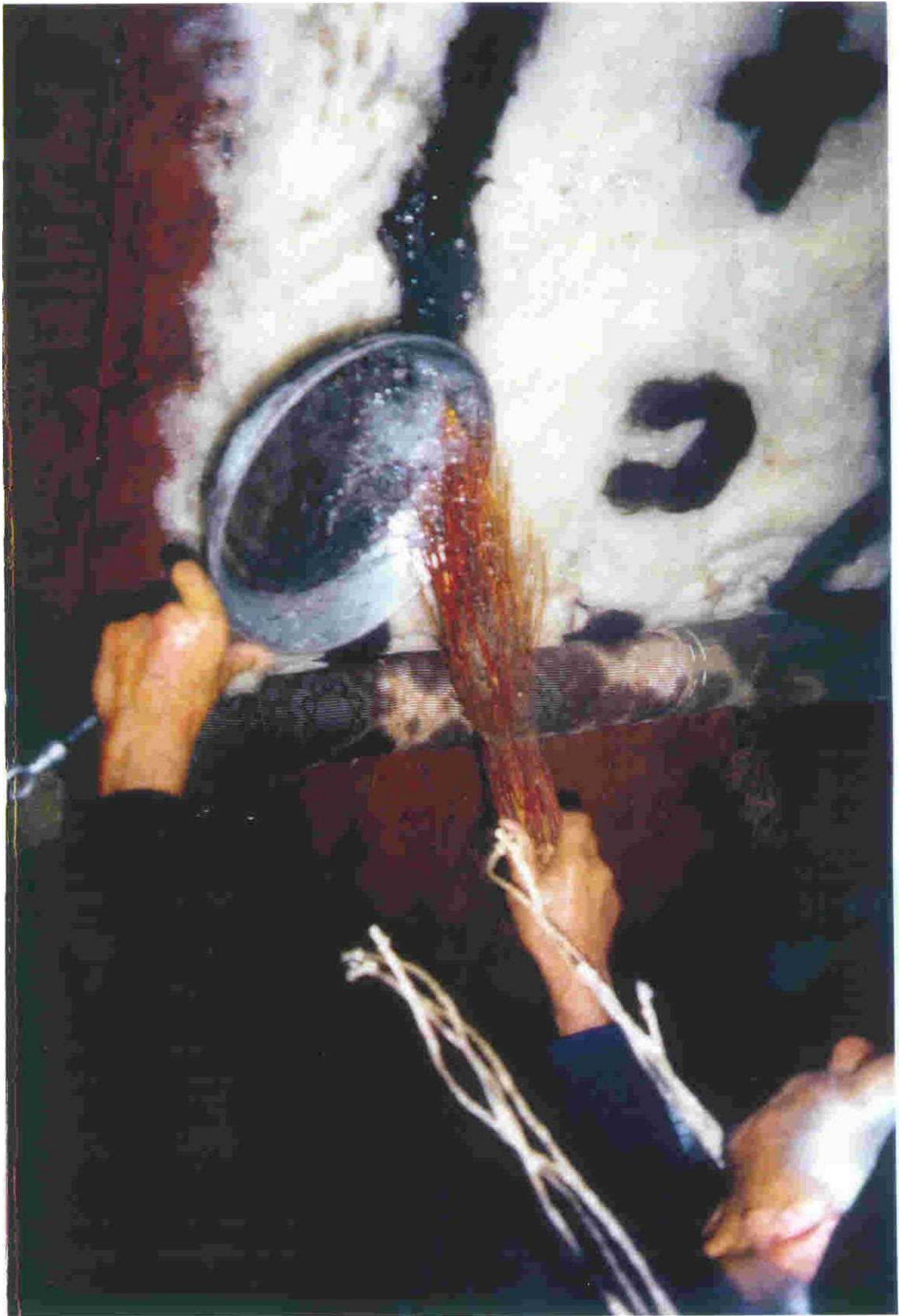
Before the women began to felt, everyone in the room had to kneel down to ask for a blessing, a "good felt". Then the first 30 cm of the wool was sprinkled with hot water and the felt was rolled in together with its backing cloth, then the second 30 cm. They followed the same process till the end. The sprinkler was a brush made of fanshaped willow sticks. When everything was wet, they put the roll on the knee high table, tied it up with cords, rolled it with the forearms for one minute. This morning the rolling was done seven times. When the felt was opened, unrolled and the design adjusted for the first and the second time, a bar of soap was rubbed in areas where the fleece was too fluffy or the motif was not holding down. It was rerolled from the other end, together with the backing cloth. These rolling periods vary from 5-10 minutes. For the third time the felt was opened, closed, tied seven times and rerolled but the backing cloth went just over the ends. The fourth rolling was done in the opposite direction. For the fifth time the roll was opened and then it was rerolled without the backing cloth for 10 minutes. The eighth roll was "just to make it pretty".

Mostly they roll seven times. For this last time they rolled the felt sideways, instead of from the length direction, and they rotated it back and forth on itself with no backing cloth. Then the felt was rolled up and hung vertically to drain for an hour or so. After drying the edges were cut and the quality was examined. It was good but they decided that it would be rolled again the next day, seven times. Some of the feltmakers call this felt a tecka, and give the name nabadi to worn felt, or saddle-blankets, but others say all felt is called nabadi". The finished piece is "judged" by weight, "the thicker and firmer, the better".

Expressive Felt Art in connection with the reality of daily life.

Like the Türkmen tradition the Georgian traditional felts show an expression of the connection with the reality of daily life in a great variety of composition, colour and content. Patterns and designs are always in movement; patterns and designs are never repeated.







3 *What is community.*

Before taking my question into consideration, I would like to know more about the meaning of community. There is a subtle tension between the autonomous individual that can and could only become autonomous together with others and the claims of communities on the dedication and cooperation of individuals, says Prof.Dr.Cees Schuyt of Leiden University in his lecture for readers of the "Groene Amsterdammer" in April 2000, which I tape-recorded and translated. It sounds like a spiralling movement, the unifying principle as described above. I make a quick drawing about this "subtle tension", with two hands, in each one a charcoal. Left and right draw together a double spiral. From time to time my hands clash when they cross over and meet. In feltmaking I need my hands to communicate while I pull out the wool to draw, no matter what. The Türkmen felt symbol of two half spirals meeting in a dedicated relationship in primary colours on a cooperative base is another explanation of the same.

"All communities and all forms of connection are constantly changing. Connections pass. Just in the succession of connections lies the power of society", is the thesis of Cees Schuyt. A strong connection means simultaneously a great separation. Social cohesion seems to diminish and at the same time care is taken that no one is excluded from the national community. These are two sides of the same coin: who is in, is not out.

It is impossible to belong to - as Schuyt says - the community of those who have nothing in common. Community is generated not per se by affective connections or by rational calculations but by doing something together, or undergoing something together intensively, or undertaking something together intensively. A communal experience, a connection can lose its power. Schuyt gives an example of the disappointed universitarian community in the 1960's, which was incapable of giving a new and modern content to old identifying symbols. This, according to Schuyt, led to individualism and secularism. The universitarian community from then on was called management.

Communities fall apart out of disappointment. Disappointment is often processed into new communities. One could say that the individualism of the 1980's and the 1990's also could be characterized as a period of the I. Individualism has become a possibility just by a collective improvement of education and because of the collective improvement of ethics and the individual equality between men and women. The mass in the 1990's is a new and ingenious phenomenon. Everyone is him/herself but everyone imitates the other. So a mass-individualisation belongs to a new form of consumptious mass-capitalism. Custom-made - yes- but with hundred of thousands at once all over the world. Less connected to moral, social and geographical borders.

Mass-individualism leads to the question whether one can speak of a community here - or perhaps one can speak of communal experiences,

followed by the question which experiences are communal so that one can speak of a new community? Schuyt's suggestion for an answer is to carefully note the 'sound and colour' or the language of the new community and to discover that the world of the 1990's - the world of the young ones - has become different. More different than the 'makers' of this world in the 1960's and the 1970's thought possible. Speaking of a difference, for instance the virtual community has no face to face contacts. People who have never seen or heard each other exchange messages daily. There is a free entry on the internet unless one protects an internet-community of one's own. This protected internet-community distinguishes itself from the virtual community where everyone may enter. Schuyt does not answer questions about identity and identification. They will find an answer in the future.

The International Felt Association can be considered a new community where one identifies oneself with the art and craft of feltmaking. It is a socializing and integrating "We-work" , an undertaking of studying, doing and making of something together intensively. Feltmakers and - artists multifariously give a new content to old identifying symbols. Feltmaking with and within a community leads to a sharing of a materialized meditation, movement, action, ritual in time and space. Right now I feel ready to look into the work of Paolo Knill, into what is the Art of the community, how creative processes of distancing, change and transformation can be performed. How felt fits in.

3.1 Community Art.

*"The beauty of community
is the we-song of the flowers"*

Paolo Knill

In her thesis on Paolo Knill's Community Art, presented in May 1998, Cordula Münchmeier defines Community art as a specific form of therapeutic intervention in a group setting: Within the training of intermodal art therapists, community art is now considered as a discipline in itself on the same level as painting, theatre, poetry, dance and music. Specific for Community Art is an invitation to the individual to serve the art work of the community, to nourish it by being her- or himself and integrating her and his own colours and not to disappear in a mass phenomenon of being, doing, thinking uniformly. The diversity and multiplicity creates the richness of a community.

I am grateful to have had a chance to read her work and quote from it. Especially helpful to me is that she taped, and converted into writing while translating from English into German language, three Community-Art frames which Paolo Knill directed at the European Graduate School in Leuk Switzerland. One of them is called the "We-Song of flowers". Because flowers are the theme I worked with in an international feltmaking project in England 2000, called "Mille Fleurs",

I have chosen this choreography in order to compare it with Community Felt Art in 2.8 and to answer my question positively.

Paolo Knill, the provost of the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland is the inventor of Community Art and intermodal expressive therapy, "the discipline which is a practice of a sacred presence, a making of soul that never stops, and forever takes on new forms within the invisible pantheon that holds us all" Shaun McNiff in the foreword to Minstrels of Soul (Knill, 1995, p.14).

*Community art is about the work with shared images.
Images leave a space for the individual to open up and to shape.*

Community Art is about the work with shared images, to let them speak without taking them literally. It feeds the imagination, provides a common ground and a frame for the image to incubate and to develop. The image becomes 'facilitator'. A commonly known image - like an archetype - leaves a space for the individual to open up and shape it individually, either together with others, or in a cluster, or alone; in every case it helps to create the world. This is imaginal thinking, without reduction and interpretation, it speaks for itself. Images are fed and strengthened and interrelated by poems, philosophical thoughts and sayings.

According to Paolo Knill, community art wants to foster the "we-expression" and not to focus on the individual process, through imagination and play in using the arts in a kind of "daily ritual". Community art is the work of an "Ensemble" that aims to overcome the "I-oriented" thinking and acting in creating a "we-work". Community art uses all the performance arts: dance, music, singing, acting, play and poetry to explore different themes through images and metaphors that originate in the actual concerns of a group, to experience them on a deeper level with all body senses, and so to create – as a synthesis of all the arts – a 'Gesamtkunstwerk', or 'social sculpture' as Joseph Beuys would call it.

Community Art; the structure of the method.

The structure of Community Art has a method; through the artistic qualities of the choreographer and the heightened sensibility of the actors the work comes to life. I chose the structure of the we-song of flowers and I will describe this methodical work step by step, specifically and precisely. To see how Paolo managed to get a group or collection of people, who don't know each other very well to eventually create an artwork together. Paolo Knill underlines the working character of his Community Art in a didactical and methodical construction. The choreography is structured in three or four acts: the first act is grounding, the individually preparing of the body, the attuning of the body to focus senses and sensitivity, to be ready for the

arriving image. This takes until a common beat is found; the second act is the Exploration of the theme f.i. the opening and closing of flowers etc.; the third act is about shaping and framing the meeting which results in the Work. Sometimes the Work appears in a fourth act of combined and playful action. Cordula Münchmeijer describes the different acts which I translate and overlap.

1. The first act is the grounding.

Grounding is a basic element as in Community Art the body is the tool and the medium to "Gestalt". All movements by the physical law of gravity come back to the ground, the common ground, that receives and let go. Grounding is the individual dance with the floor and the process of consciousness. Grounding is meant to bring a person physically as well as in the imagination "on the ground", the place, where in a certain frame, "Spiel-Raum" can be explored as wide as possible. The eyes stay open, not to focus too strongly on the inner process, but to stimulate the opening up and attending to the whole. This is a work with the senses and from the senses. To reach the best contact with the ground, it is better not to wear shoes. Münchmeijer sketches a basic line of grounding, which I combine with my own experience.

People are connected through the soles of their feet and the floor.

Participants have to choose a place as a point to stand on. The feet are in a small spread until they feel comfortable. Eyes are closed for a moment. Relaxation and concentration is on the soles of the feet how they touch the ground completely. The ground is the most intimate dancer, which cannot be lost and to which one always returns. Eyes are opened and the surrounding image shows people who are all connected through the soles of their feet and the floor. Standing does not mean to stand still, slightly bended knees make the body move. When all parts of the body are loosened, the pulsing of the blood in the fingers will be noticed. The breathing movement goes deep inside. Breathing as a physiologic process should not be hold back. It comes naturally and gives a freeing and opening energy.

Finding a rhythmical stamp according to the pulse.

The common pulse as a basic structure and ordering principle.

The common pulse. After grounding and centering a common beat, a metric rhythm will be found as a basic structure and an ordering principle. A drum provides support and enlarges freedom in the improvisation as it is a stable frame. If for some reason there is no need for a group pulse, a rainpipe or a sanddrum can be used. Paolo Knill directs the community and continues to attend to the soft movements of the body, makes people put their weight from one leg to the other,

which grows into lifting the feet and finding a rhythmical stamp according to the pulse. All this should happen naturally and not "creatively".

2. The second act is the exploration of the theme.

The phase of exploring the theme, individually and/or with a partner, or a small group. This is another possibility of exploring reality, meeting, exchange of experiences, finding new connections, understandings. For instance when "meeting" is explored one could explore to meet with the material, to meet with visual images and imaginative art, to meet with the space, to meet with others, to meet one's opposite, because in the art I meet myself.

Distancing from literal reality leads to find the essence of the arts.

Also distancing from one's literal reality, leads to finding the essence of the art, to experience to be part of the whole whatever happens, to understand imaginal, artistic, poetic reality. It is meant to explore and experience the uniqueness which lies in every meeting. But "it is in the degree of opening to each other in communal engagement versus aloneness that makes the difference, as the world coming forth will always be also hidden and concealed. We call that experiential effect the 'effective reality'" (Knill, 1999, p.41) The act in which the theme is explored asks for playing with the changeable and the makeable, with material, movements, imaginal elements, sound, melody.

3. The third act; the definite frame stays secure.

The real work is done in the last act: The framing, the Gesamtkunstwerk, the social statue, the art of the moment. The choreographer, art-director needs to know the intermodal language of imagination to put the dance, movement, sound and music into work. The work stays in motion and in creation. The end is unpredictable. It might not even work. The choreographer takes care that the definite frame stays secure so that things can happen which want to happen without expanding. The work is spontaneous and one-of-a-kind. It will never be the same. Underneath I will describe the "we-song of flowers" as it was choreographed by Paolo Knill, on July 27th 1997 in Leuk, Switzerland. I will describe it specifically, using Cordula Münnchmeyer's example.

3.2 *Imaginative introduction to the "We-Song of Flowers"*

As an introduction to the actual community artwork, apart from Paolo Knill several other professors, Majken Jacobi, Stephen Levine and Daria Halprin exchange ideas about flowerfields as the beauty of the community, how one can experience them and how one can work from them. Stephen Levine talks about how a meadow with flowers is something wonderful and even, when some flowers stay alone, they are part of the meadow. The we-song does not mean that everyone stands at the same spot and sings the same song, and that everyone, like a clock, says the same thing. The meaning of the meadow is, that we sometimes stand together and some times stand alone, that we are different and at the same time part of a whole.

The chaotic order of a flowerfield.

Paolo talks about an image he has about a poppy field, which he once saw in Denmark. How he at first glance saw flowers widely spread in a chaotic order and afterwards discovered more order and a new order of the flowers. He states that with every new look an image changes. One time he saw their red colour, red in different shades, another time he saw the solitary flowers, how they related to each other. He saw clusters and bridges from one cluster to another, like small stepping stones. The image of a Swiss meadows is different. Different kinds of wild flowers, with different colours, different moments in time for flowers to open, to close and to seed. Some flowers invite to be picked, to be braided into a flower-crown and winded around the head. The chaotic order in both fields mentioned is the same.

How to distance and shape a flower in a landscape.

The Community artwork starts with picking up an image, in this case a flower. This image should not be taken too literally. Participants have to realise that they are not a real flower in a real meadow, but a dancer in an abstract landscape. It is necessary to distance or to abstract oneself from the literal experience. Choreography means to shape within a space. Dance as an art of remembering is a sort of dynamic architecture. Questions arise like: where am I, do I go forward or backward, do I go up or do I go down, and how do I relate to the dancer next to me and to the border of the landscape. The first theme of abstraction is the architecture of the choreography, to distance from the literal image and move into the physical experience of the landscape. The second theme of abstraction is to keep the seemingly chaotic, but wonderfully ordered meadow in mind. There is a flower, growing individually, which opens itself and closes, to become a seed, or - in accordance with nature - breathes with the day, with the evening, with the night wherein she opens and closes herself. This is the shaping of the flower in a landscape. This moving and being moved, in the dancing world, is called kinetics.

Opening and closing are a physical experience and an expression of a transformed movement.

According to Daria Halprin kinetics is the experience of the inner space in relation to the surrounding atmosphere and space. Here kinetics is about opening and closing of the flower, just as a physical experience, and as an expression of a transformed movement. As a start one has to become conscious of how this opening and closing movement leads to an inner thinking of any opening and closing and then bring it back to become conscious of the surrounding space, the physical as well as the human space, where people see each other in their landscape of opening and closing.

Ordering the landscape in time and space.

Paolo Knill wants to order the landscape not only in a spatial sense, because in that case, the ordering is just the landscape, the container. It will be ordered as well in time; everyone moves in a certain time-frame. So the choreography of the "we-song of flowers" is structured in space as well as in three lengths of time. During the first part, the grounding, the body will be prepared to become a tool for the dance, to be able to shape the dance with body and movement, not to be the dance. The strength needed for the dance comes from the ground. Paolo speaks as a physicist who knows.

Explanation of grounding, exploring, and entering the image.

Paolo Knill and Daria Halprin explain the three practical phases of the we-song and dance beforehand. The first phase, the grounding, is meant to perceive the breathing and to perceive the feet and to bring them into a relationship. Daria calls this tuning the body, like an instrument. The second phase is meant to explore the opening and closing and seeding individually and to improvise growing a new plant and to become a new flower. It is about becoming. It also is about playing with the body, imagining openings and closings into a dance.

In the second phase one is not expected to look into the relationship with the space. This part will not be accompanied with words, just music. The third phase is meant to enter the image, the community-image of the meadow, a meadow with opening and closing flowers, and with lonely deteriorating flowers and to see how this landscape will be shaped as a meadow with an order of its own.

In the third part body and movement will be explored in relationship to each other, in clusters, or solo. It is meant to be spontaneous and perhaps it will become a bit chaotic. Daria asks whether all this is understood and Paolo says that he prefers to understand the question

and then to answer it. He asks whether everyone is ready just to understand the question, because each time when one looks into it, there is something which one necessarily does not understand. He hopes that someone can follow his feelings and the thread of human thought. He tries to understand and to order, without using new ordering windows. A few questions he puts are:

- 1. Is a classical ballet, the strength of its order, beautiful?*
- 2. Why should the world be so well ordered to be beautiful?*

He is ready to see what can arise from chaos, but he likes to start the dance from order, which permits a little experience of the chaotic opening and closing. So the first part of the dance will end in an order, a circle. This allows experience of the beauty of a chaotic opening and closing. Students are invited to stand in a circle, as in a folk dance. The circle being the only possible way to see the eyes of everyone.

The shaping in space of the "WE-Song of flowers".

After this introductory work with images, Paolo invites students of ITS 1 to shape the inner circle, students of ITS 2 the middle circle and everybody else to shape the outer circle. The phase of grounding ends up with the whole group being one flower with three rows of petals. The circle is not geometric, the shape makes it possible for but everyone to see each others eyes. Paolo Knill talks the group into relaxing the arms, to closing the eyes, to listening to and exploring what Miro calls reality changing energy, which ascends from the earth through the feet.

Literal reality changes into imaginal reality.

By using the senses and not the head literal reality changes into imaginal reality. This grounding is very basic, it is getting in touch with the ground, connecting oneself with this ground and trusting oneself to it as a dance-partner. Participants are asked to notice changes taking place in their bodies, after swinging it lightly. And to become conscious of their breathing. This dance with the breath is about letting the last part of the breathing out to be a resting point and after receiving it to welcome every new breath. After exploring this Paolo leads the group in the smallest possible opening, the turning of the hands. With open eyes one can see how the three flower crowns seemingly open and close, how bodies in a chaotic circle, move like flowers and like seed in the wind.

Making movements, being moved.

Alternatively students look at their smallest movements, look around, move back, quicken or slow down to see what happens. Sometimes students are asked to make a new move, to let this movement take a lead and look how it breathes, how it opens, closes, not moving the head, just the eyes. To look while the head follows the seeing and to feel what happens in the neck, and all this without losing contact with the ground. To see the community with the wide-open eyes of the dancer. Then they may permit themselves to look down and notice what happens in the neck without changing their stance and combine these small moves, to let hands and head hang down and then open them up again and again. Or to stop in a moment, in a position where one feels the greatest consciousness of this community and its three rows of petals. Whoever is ready may step forward to close the rows. Reaching a neighbour touch him/her lightly and look how this seemingly chaotic moving has its beauty.

Students have to give their hands to the second neighbour to the right and to the left, behind the back of their direct neighbours and hold them tight. Feel that calyxes and petals can hang in it. Take care of good grounding, that the weight is on both feet, and the knees are slightly bent. This time opening and closing will be at the same time and all together. While closing the head should roll first and make a wave to the others, knees are bent till one hangs in this crown of petals and moves in a relaxed sway.

"Gesamtkunstwerk", a tight frame of flowers.

During the sway Paolo Knill accompanies every movement with short lines. Pelvises rise and open, heads hang down and are kept down. Only at the end of the movement the head was allowed to be lifted and to look around. He makes the group experience this agreeable height. The same counts for the closing movement. Participants are guided very carefully through these movements. Much attention was paid to making the movements in the right order so that they could not do any physical harm. This part of the choreography was once performed with closed eyes and again with eyes open. A new geste was introduced to make a sound while coming upright and look around to see another flower. The head always comes first at the end, not to injure the back. The sound has to be made at the end of the moving down, to rise again, to look at the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' and to hang back. At the last repeat, the sound comes with the upwards move, followed by a resting point, again moving upwards with a sound, leaning back and rise again.

Shaping options, intermodal transfer.

Sound is one of the possible options to shape a community artwork. Other possibilities of shaping can be for instance: directions in dance, tonal or atonal sound, soft and loud etc. The last but not least criteria are: low skill and high sensitivity, which means sensitizing for the material and sensitizing for the shaping. Paolo Knill makes use here of his crystallization theory which means here that the image finds a way in sound. This is called an intermodal transfer from one discipline into another. What will take place is an exploration, a search, to the most effective way of imagination. The emerging work will find its most particular expression.

Paolo Knill shows his artistic mastership, which lies in his high sensitivity to find the bridges between all the modalities. In the metaphor of crystallization he states "we observe how in an environment "saturated" with artistic imagination, a small creative act "grows", much like a seed grows. Through its growth, the seed's full meaning emerges with the clarity and order of a crystal. Crystallization theory helps us to formulate how to provide optimal conditions for emerging images to disclose their meaning with the help of the arts" (Knill, 1995, p.31). Like crystals are formed around a seed which has been put in the right solution. So an artistic "seed" as the beginning of a shaping, in the right environment can form crystals as connection to another art form.

Finding specific movements of one's flower and meeting the other in the opening and closing.

In the second act the hands are loose, This phase is to find one's own individual opening and closing. This is not a repeat of the former movement, which was only an attuning of the body. This time one has to find the own specific opening and closing movements. When the music slows down and stops, the last act will start. Paolo Knill takes his place behind the piano and starts to improvise. After a while Daria Halprin says the participants could start their own movement to meet the other(s) in the opening and closing.

Finding order in being disordered.

Paolo Knill leads act three which starts with standing still and look with wide open eyes. Look at this map of individually opened and closed eyes, what will come from this cluster of a cluster. Clusters open themselves and they let beauty happen; clusters become seeds and every cluster opens and closes itself at the same time. Be conscious that opening and closing is a becoming. Go with your own poetry when you shape this artwork, an exercise to find an order in being disordered, an order which heals and becomes a work of one's own. That is the art

of poetry. Look once more at the 'Gesamtwerk' before leaving it and dance!

3.3 *Principles of Community Art.*

Community art works with images. The Community artwork "The We-song of flowers" demonstrates the principles of community art as it is an art discipline which works with shared images.

In the introduction Paolo Knill and other professors share their images of meadows and flowers and their meaning. Flowers sometimes stand alone, sometimes stand together. They demonstrate the importance to prepare themselves and their students. These flowers are not to be taken too literally. As an image they speak to the imagination and shape a common ground and frame, in which this image can germinate and develop.

The image becomes a facilitator, which makes use of a poetic language. The meadow as a common, known image - like an archetype - holds and provides a space for the individual to unfold his/her own fantasy, to shape the own individual flower. It helps building a community, creating a world while being together with others or standing alone. This "imaginal thinking" does not reduce, nor does it interpret, it is self-evident.

Distancing is the essence of the arts. Distancing provides a chance to play with these realities and to integrate them, to own them. Community art too, makes use of this strength of the art: images of the soul become expressed images. Through this artistic and playful 'Gestalt' in dance, movement, poetry or song grows an inner image of distance, which makes it possible to integrate reality.

Community art involves a meeting between individuals.

First there is the meeting with the material, the attuning of the body, then What comes first is meeting: to meet with the material, to meet with visual images and imaginative art meeting with the space, meeting the others, meeting my opposite.

How to prepare for feltmaking as community art.

As I can see from the above, a community artwork as it is directed by Paolo Knill starts with preparing the tools. What I specially like about the beginning of the "we-song" is the preparing of the mind, for instance the story of the poppies and the philosophical approach of flowers by Stephen Levine. It sounds like feltmaking with a group is more complicated. It contains attuning the body and preparing the

material wool, soap and water, which means attune the body, focus senses and sensitivity, to be ready for the arriving image.

Community art serves to bind and create a community: peace.

The crux of the matter is to support peace, says Paolo Knill. "Frieden ist nicht die Abwesenheit von Konflikten die uns verletzen oder zerstören, sondern die Fähigkeit mit Konflikten so umzugehen, dass sie uns nicht vernichten" (Peace is not the absence of conflicts which hurt or disturb, but the ability to handle them in a way, that they do not destroy us). As a feltmaker I know that the interlinking of fibres brings friction as well. What is meant here is to support peace while finding ways to live with conflicts non-destructively. Living in peace is always a dynamic situation, not a "state". Communal images or experiences of a group get stronger and more connected by relating them. The image of the meadow is a communal ground which unites. Images speak for themselves and images speak to us. Imagination and poetry provide images with a language.

According to Knill in the basic structure of a session in a community, using Community Art, four criteria are to be considered: the four E's: explanation, experiment, experience, evaluation.

The intention has to be explained, the beginning, middle and ending of a situation or an event, or a special occasion, followed by explaining and experimenting and experiencing the Art discipline, the space, the material and the people. In the social context the immune system can be strengthened through listening, cooperating, trying out new scenarios, to increase the range of play etc.

Community art makes use of literal, imaginal and effective realities.

In Community Art it is important to distinguish between different realities: the literal, the imaginal and the effective reality. Distancing oneself from the flowers in the meadow, these flowers are people dancing in a place they share.

In "Minstrels of Soul" co-authored by Knill the effective reality is seen as "Erscheinungswirklichkeit", which comes to live in the world in which we live when we meet and when we interact with things. He says that effective reality is created through being in the world. It is in fact the soul of being. It is what makes us feel. A proper hermeneutics of reality will have to disclose the effectivity of a reality as a foundation for its own understanding.

We exist in an opening (the circle) in the world, this is our effective reality. Our dreams and fantasies, our imagination and also our works of art are rooted in the imaginal reality. The material that emerges from the actual world (reality) is referred to as the literal reality.

Effective reality exists when the surrounding world of 'measurables' interrelates and is fed by our imaginative inner world. Effective reality in the artistic process reaches into imaginal reality. Likewise, the shaping of the artistic process reaches into the literal reality.

The material formed and transformed is literal and perceived; and the tools utilized are literal "real equipment". In the outcome, the imaginal acquires form, an effective reality. Animals probably experience dreams and images, and even paint, but only humans are artists; only they lend substance and imagination to material. Homo faber, like the Gods, makes space for new effective realities through creative acts. Is there not sufficient reason to hope that such creations will abide by aesthetics and that in therapy the new effective realities will radiate the beauty of well-being? It is the discipline of the arts that has traditionally upheld these qualities. Art activities enhance and ground effective reality by creating fields of distinction between realities that facilitate a vital link to effective reality".

Talking about literal, imaginal and effective realities, Gadamer's hermeneutic circle (Knill, 1995, p.59-68) growing into a spiral of understanding of what we already know and what we know comes from being able to understand. The spiral enables deeper understanding. Breaking the cycle needs to be in resonance with the emergent where things speak to us within distinct realms.

Community Art as the work of an ensemble.

Art is Meeting. In the art I meet myself, which might seem a paradox, because I am I and not my opposite, but through the artwork I create an opposite out of myself. I meet that what is different from me and is distinctive.

The "we-song of flowers" shows that community art is a "getting to work" in a special way. People in different art forms work together on a "Gesamtkunstwerk", the We-song of Flowers". In this case the community artwork comes to life through the vision of Paolo Knill, the choreographer in a play of interaction with the community. Paolo Knill is the choreographer and the director and the artist who puts things into scenes, he is the one who invites the co-workers to co-operate in this special media exceeding "meeting of the arts". Music, dance, theatre, singing are completely interwoven into a work. What it will look like depends strongly on the vision and interpretation of Paolo Knill who as the art director puts his stamp on the creation. Didactically this can be compared with the wool, soap and the water of the feltmaker, the needed materials. Community art is an art medium like painting and drawing, music, dance or theatre, the name of this medium is choreography. The method in community art creates the work. This comes to expression with the artistic capacities of the choreographer together with the heightened sensitivity of the actors.

It is my thesis that feltmaking can be used as community art. It opens up new ways, new possibilities.

Community art is about working with shared images, universal themes, that we all know well, in this case flowers. These flowers and the meadow become a symbol of eternal change of growth and decay- which is the seed for new growing, a symbol of permanent processes of change. Community itself is a permanent process of change. Flowers become a means of ordering reality and reflect the cosmos. It is as if I hear Nino Kipshidze talk about the historical meaning of feltmaking in Georgia (2.4). According to her feltmaking as community art is a historical fact.

Community Art and rituals.

Community art is not a shamanistic ritual, which aims the healing or freeing from angry spirits, which have taken possession of one of the members of the tribe.

Community art does not reject any element of transitionary rituals, in which one has to give up an old attitude and step over a threshold. Also in community art the unity of the tribe which is stipulated by the cultural uniformity of tribe-members is not self-evident. The We of the tribe encloses the forefathers as well as the future unborn members in a rigid and unchangeable system; the We in community art has to happen. The ritual of the tribe is fixed in details, where in Community art just the structure, the acts, and certain methodical basic elements, like grounding and finding a common pulse as well as the artistic disciplines of the choreographer are set. The progress is open here.

Community art and rituals have in common that they do not distinguish between public and players.

Community art serves to strengthen its immune system.

Instructors should watch the attitude with awareness and radiate enthusiasm about what is introduced as an improvisation. It is necessary to sense what is and is not working and to give always clear examples from experience. Make a structured inventory round, to check where people are "right now". This furthers the sense of an open agenda and makes it easier to listen. Be Simple, Specific and Particular. Stay art-based in the description as more can surface to one's attention. Learning happens through a disturbance of the system. Any system will always have problems, but systems, have a potential to "heal" themselves, re-organize themselves, like an immune system.

3.4 *An international Community Art Project "Mille Fleurs".*

Since 1998 Paolo Knill's choreography and Community Art Work with the "We-Song of Flowers" left me with a dream to integrate feltmaking as an old technique and art of the community into an unconventional approach to feltmaking as Community Art. I integrated this somehow with Paul Klee's teaching methods in painting with heart and soul. Not aware that some dreams can grow, change and transform into facts I wrote this one down. It was about making a felt carpet with a group of people, it was covered with all sorts of flowers made by different feltmakers in different countries. I mailed it to England, to the Board of the International Feltmakers Association.

*In 1999 this dream took the shape of a commission from the Association: to design and direct my dreamt up "Mille Fleurs" carpet as an international community artwork which would be presented to Mary Burkett as a token of the regard in which she is held by feltmakers world-wide. Since she initiated and organised the exhibition "The Art of the Feltmaker" in 1979 and wrote the accompanying book, interest in felt reawakened and the International Feltmakers Association was formed (see addition: *The Revival of the Art of the Feltmaker*).*

As I wrote before on p.6 and p.31, Mary Burkett rediscovered the ancient art of feltmaking many years ago while she was travelling in Iran in 1962. She saw some men rolling a bundle of something on a bed of leaves. Much to her surprise it was a felt carpet. This carpet was the beginning of her 16 years studying the art of the feltmaker in her free hours, resulting in the now famous exhibition and book in 1979. It seemed appropriate to surprise and thank her with a felt carpet.

The carpetmaking for Mary took place in April 2000. It was part of the "Festival of Felt" which was organised by the International Felt Association. With a team of 26 experienced feltmakers of 5 different countries, in four days a carpet of 2 x 3 metres was felted, using 250 prefelted flowers, sent by feltmakers from all over the world.

I look back on the event and evaluate it in a documentary video. This video "Mille Fleurs" for Mary Burkett illustrates my thesis. It shows how I make a difference between designing with the over-all vision in mind before starting and the way of going with what emerges along the way. How this influenced the artistic process and caused the communal making of this carpet to shift into Community Art. Also it shows my role as a "binding agent" which has references both to binding the fibres and binding the group or community. It shows how much trust was needed in order to de-structure and then re-structure (finding the essence and cutting into the felt). Like Ellen Levine writes: "In making anything in the arts, an act of tearing down is necessary. This is not destruction but, rather, a deconstructing where substances are transformed and something new emerges" (Levine, 1995, p.10). "A huge amount of commitment was necessary to be in this community. Finally it shows how in community work we were "condemned" to be

together and also loved each other. I will describe the story of the preparing and the making underneath.

*Felting a Mille Fleurs Carpet
as a practise in community art.*

Sheila Smith, England, Chairman of the International Feltmakers took on the responsibility for co-ordinating this ambitious project. Association letters of explanation were written and published in textile magazines in many countries, inviting feltmakers to take part in this project, which was intended to bring feltmakers and -artists together and also to make a record of how felt is used and why felt is used in the year 2000. Therefore, to participate fully in the project, feltmakers had to felt two flowers. Flower No. 1 had to be a flower in a pre-felt stage, to be felted/fulled into a floral carpet, its size not to exceed 10 cm square. Flower No. 2 was to be the contribution to the State of Felt 2000 which would become an archival record - it had to be fully felted and attached to an A-4 sized story-board with name and address and information about the maker. In January 2000 it was clear that the event would take place and I could start preparations.

While incubating I thought about Paolo Knill's Crystallization theory, how crystals are formed around a seed which has been put in the right solution (see Shaping options, p.78 and underneath). I also made use of Paul Klee's theory of the active seed: in a growing process the seed is the starting point; it is active. The stem and the leaves are the means. They are in contact with air and air is energy. The flower is passive. It is the result of the active energy. I think this thought made me ask for flowers from the felting community.

Klee paints colourfields of different shape and size, it shows his way to abstract motifs from nature. These works still call for associations with fields of flowers and plants. His lines and shapes seem to move and have a refined rhythm. His style is complex and manifold. He continues reducing the difference between fore- and background. This theory on growing processes is independent of the material and counts for all material.

Klee 's philosophy reminds me of the feltartists in Georgia and Türkmenistan, but Klee poses that e v e r y artform is loaded with meaning and shows the dynamic structure of the cosmos. This counts for all kinds of energy that is called for by lines, shapes, tones and colours. He understands cosmos as the origin of existence as it is unformed, timeless and chaotic. Every shape starts with a grey dot which extends to an egg. Creation is the result of

-a a fertilization which sets this dot into motion (to compare with Türkman and Georgian art: felt, pottery, woven and knotted carpets) and

-b. an ordered cosmos, a tactile wholeness of shapes and phenomena that emerge from chaos. The ordered cosmos is that part where we as human beings have an overview and which we can contain, hold and comprehend, because it has a shape. Ordering is splitting in parts and counterparts (an extension of Türkman positive/negative designs). An artwork is a complex unity of forms and counterforms. In all nature active and passive energies react on each other and refer to each other. They are associations.

Here too I find ideas about mobility as the essence of existence. It is not about things but about the creation processes – the becoming – the genesis. Klee sees the artist as the passer-through of the mobility of existence. He makes visible the captured cosmic energy, the artwork being a cosmic but also an autobiographic document (H.Locher, Paul Klee, 1974).

Prior to our coming together I played with questions like how to schedule an artistic method that creates order, expression, communication? How to unify 250 felt expressions of love and gratitude? How to create a safe container for the making of all this? I thought of two leading principles and starting points: "equal value" and "felt from the senses". It should be a work of community art, where the workers are open-minded, accept the process, embrace the experience, serve the image, accept their role as being representatives, as being caretakers of 250 flowers, as representations of their makers.

Consciously and unconsciously I was very much inspired by the We-song choreography. I did not know the story of Paolo Knill about poppy-fields, accidentally around Isel Hall in Cockermouth where Mary Burkett lives are poppy-fields indeed in summer and fields of daffodils in spring. One part of the Mille-Fleur idea came from her surroundings. Another part was that I needed a universal symbol to express and in Holland it is a habit "to say it" with flowers on these occasions.

The real inspiration to make an exercise in Community Art of my felt project came from Paolo Knill. Like a crystal it developed and since then I developed a different way to work with felt and with people. It happened when I took part in Paolo Knill's Community art session for the first time in Sweden, in Kungälv in 1998, at the Easter Symposium of the International Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Training Centres. Right after the session I made a drawing of radiant moving energetic circles in a figure. I was moved in my heart and soul. Knill's choreography was meant to divide the larger group of participants into four coregroups. He guided the group in a choreography to choose between four different kinds of flowers and created a character for that -non-literal flower to express in movement.

Despite my written basic structure of beginning-middle-ending, of creative interventions, and a time-schedule, I left many things open. I am a binding agent, wool is a binding agent, felt is a technique which emphasises connection, coherence and release. The group will enter artistic chaos for a while, not knowing what to do, slowly starting to select, collect and create an order, considering each flower as an individual that needs attention, a name, a lifetime, a season to blossom, a context, and its final goal, to be part of the whole while showing its essence among "mille fleurs" in the carpet. The final image will emerge and mature in front of our eyes. The outcome will be a surprise for everyone.

Two months after my writing to the felt makers about process and concepts, we met and worked together in the Brewery Arts Centre, Highgate, Kendal, A centre for the arts - theatre, dance, music, cinema, literature and photography'. Two huge art rooms upstairs were reserved for the carpetmaking.

Day 1 Tuesday April 25. The day of EXUBERANCE.

The night before I spread out the 250 flowers all over the floor of one art room, just as they came out of the boxes. Next morning, in another art room, the 26 volunteers met, some of them knowing each other, some seeing each other for the first time. They introduced themselves by telling their stories about actual flowers they identified with. After that the gifts from the world, the 250 felt flowers, the working material – so far hidden in the next room - were revealed and people could walk around them, just to look, sense and inhale. After silently taking in these 'personalities' for a while, everyone could choose, adopt and pick up 8-10 flowers. With care and attention these were put into an order and felted for only a few minutes onto one layer of wool, with a choice from eight shades of green wool. The aim was to work silently and from the senses, touch, smell, taste, sound, movement, vision and especially from the felt sense, the inner sensation.

The next step was to leave individualism, to research whether felt as an art discipline lends itself to socialisation. So we walked around, met each other, gave feedback (remembering that in community art there is no judgement/criticism but witness instead - no labelling but observation, no advice giving but dialogue). Just look around and find companions in colour/shape that you feel attracted to. We ended up with four tribes, named the red-, the blue-, the yellow- and the special tribe. Each group then made a section of 0.90 x 1.60 metres. So all their adopted individual flowers were carefully separated and mingled until they found a satisfying place in another setting and on another layer of green. Each tribe brought their flowers together, prepared a background in many different shades of green wool and tried to agree upon finding some sort of order to arrange the flowers in a way that each received got the same amount of attention. To make sure the design would stay the same the flowers had to be prefelted a little. So,

each tribe worked for a while on their flower bed which served them as a mirror. That evening the whole group worked until 9 pm. The flower arrangement had taken most of our time. To look at the flowers as individuals and to find out where they would like to be in the group. In the centre, in a corner, in a cluster or in pairs. This work was a bit like bringing a chaotic order to flowers of all kinds. Taking care of the felted flower was to take care of the makers, who trusted us. It was a day full of interaction, colour and much learning about the "equal value" of each flower and of each other. The flower beds showed different energy caused by the different colours. These flowers made the four tribes distinguish themselves in a colourful meaning. We left the prefelts on the table.

Day 2 Wednesday April 26. The day of ESSENCE.

Everyone was aware of the fact that colour determines vitality. However the greens in the background balance the primary colours and outline each flower. Nature's logic. It is amazing how many differences the flowers show, now they are placed in green space - their individuality is emphasised (photocopy 21) the essence of each flower had to be found and for this reason window mounts, 10 cm x 10cm were cut out from paper. Before the scissors came into action there was a "rite de passage", a farewell to the adopted flowers and the existing sections. "Equal value" again presented itself in the evaluation process, and after a few hours of high concentration each tribe had a collection of essences of flowers in the size of 10 cm squares. A green 'sheet' with square holes now existed on their tables, a positive/negative.

At this point the "negative" prefelts were removed and all tables were put together to form a surface large enough for the whole carpet to be laid on. As a base for the carpet each group brought in turn their great green negative and put it on the table. The layers slightly overlapped each other. This created an irregular and very surprising background. The back of the work seemed to create a life of its own. That was more than was expected. "We trust you and you trust us", was a remark from a team member that I shall never forget. However, the flowers needed more. They needed a layer of dry green wool as a final support.

As a guideline, two cotton cords were laid crosswise on top of the fresh green layer, from corner to corner. They divided the big rectangle in four triangles. After this the moment had come to invoke the main image while an attitude of patience was asked for, and openness to surprise. The learning part here was the humility in awaiting and attending to images. Also each tribe had to arrange their flowers on white sheets on the floor from light to dark. One white flower was put in the centre where the supporting cords cross. Then, from each corner in turn the groups brought their gifts to the carpet, 4 or 8 flowers from their corners, putting them into place in the north, the south, the east and the west part of the carpet. The only guideline was that we worked

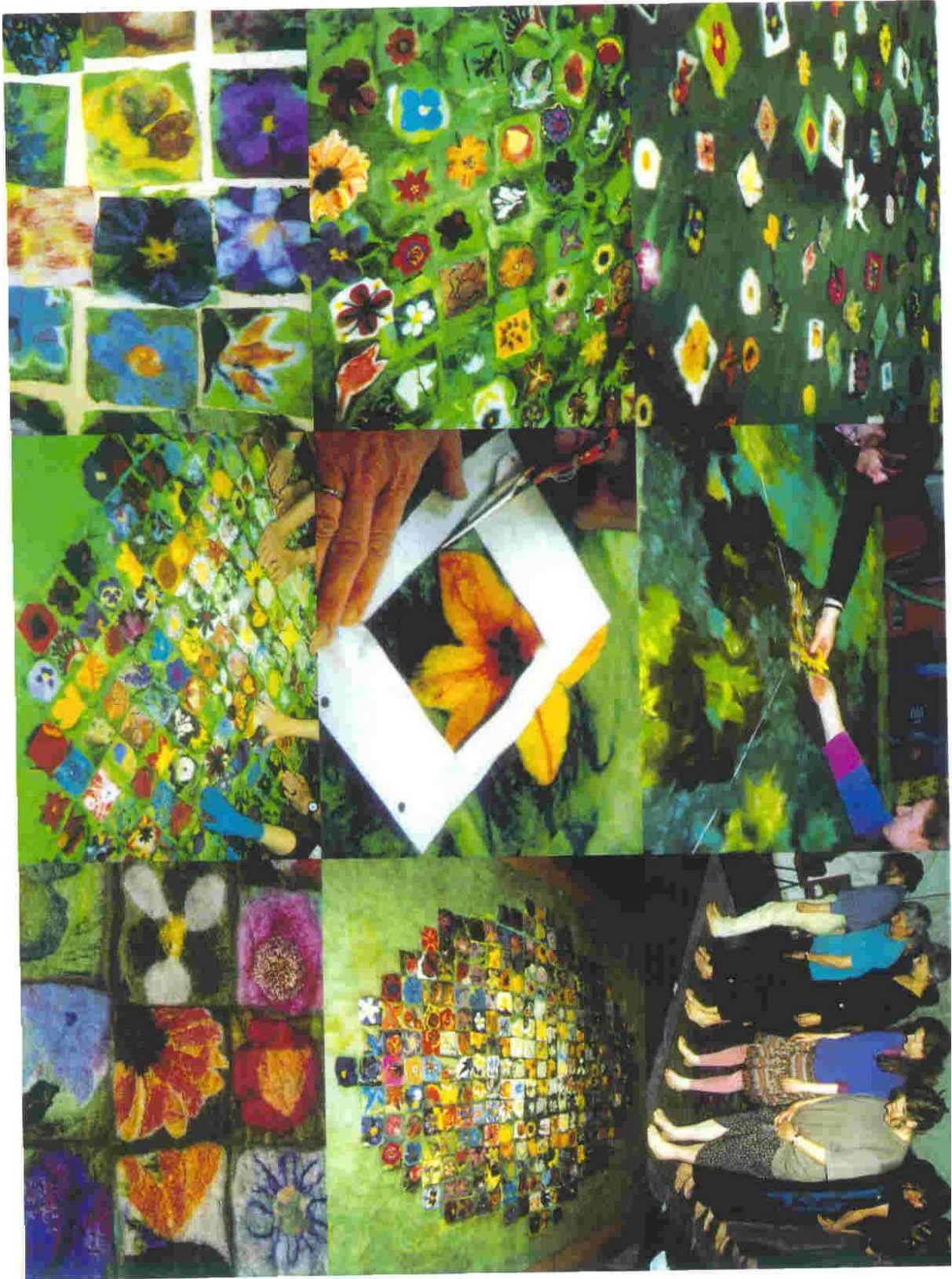
from light into dark; during this process the image slowly grew from the centre. Trust and discipline worked hand in hand here. Time to rest.

But not for long. From now on it was hands-on (photocopy 22). And a new time of learning to find the right body movement and the right attitude towards the group members, to find the rhythm according to the pulse and the energy that comes through moving hands, massage with warm soapy water and through helping to turn the carpet over and back. Plenty of sound, touch, smell and body-movement reflected the individual and the communal experience, rather than the visual image. What happened to the group through this movement and activity was that at first almost everyone was excited that we had finished the stages of formlessness, goodbye loose flowers, goodbye nurseries, goodbye colour-fields. Farewell, it was time to re-view, re-make, re-order and that we - it felt like at last - could start the real felting movement and action. We had to start anew and stand still at this point to realize that we had finished the exploring part and that we had to "attune" anew to cooperate in another way and frame the final shaping.

To get an even quality in a big carpet, we could not stay in the same spot, but had to move over to the next spot almost every ten minutes. This way "our carpet" should be touched by all hands in an even amount of movement and pressure. I took time to learn each others way of feltmaking. After that we agreed upon a forwards/backwards movement with the hands and to be sure to bend the knees while moving. It felt like this was the moment the group was waiting for. It was a happy excitement that helped the community building. We had shared a heartfelt adventure so far and were ready for the next part. After a few hours the carpet was strong enough to be removed from the tables. It was laid on a base on top of the floor and left overnight.

Day 3 Thursday April 27. The day of STAMINA and COURAGE.

This was the day to serve the visual image and the physical appearance of the carpet with careful attention to weak spots. That meant felting by hand, no rolling because the relief could be damaged. So far we had helped the image to emerge, today it needed to develop and mature. During long hours of disciplined felting and fulling there were moments of reflection, and I realised that the making of the felt over the days was one big metaphor for the building of the team. Whatever I think about the felt is what I think about its makers. Both the felt and team had made some interesting shifts, crossing borders between craft and art and back. When through the rhythmical repetition of hands and feet the wool fibres were connecting, and the carpet reached coherence, we did too. The carpet started to reflect our communion, our shared activity in this shared space in a friendly atmosphere. The carpet transformed into a safe container for 250 felt stories from around the world. It had become a story book. MAGIC had happened, another creation myth came into existence.





*Day 4 Friday April 28 The day of
COMMITMENT and unconditional surrender.*

The team behaved like one living carpet while walking many kilometres on the front and back of the carpet - sometimes all over it in the form of a curling snake, but most of the time from side to side in rows of four or five. So much active meditation in concentrated walking, toe by toe, in very small steps for a few hours. Looking up, looking down, arms over shoulders, arms hanging down relaxed, sinking in, from time to time energised with Shaman King's world music. All this happened despite visitors coming in, photographers all around, and Border TV - and rehearsing with Elizabeth Adams for the presentation. It is hard to describe this sisterhood. The team was so excited about the positive/negative design in the back that sketches and pictures were made from favourite details, which eventually may lead into another project. It felt like a present from the carpet to the makers.

Day 5, Saturday April 29 The day of the PRESENTATION.

The ceremony took place in a special building called the Beehive. Just before the presentation the team performed a spoken tribute to Mary Burkett in front of the audience. The sentences spoken were lines taken from the 250 story-boards, 42 written statements that expressed and gave an overall impression, and answered questions of why, and how people love feltmaking. During the handing over the team appeared with the carpet carried on their heads and their hands. Trumpet music by Tortelini accompanied their walk which came to a halt in front of Mary Burkett. Then the team perfectly held the carpet at an angle for the public to see - and it was laid on the floor as a loving gift from sisters to a sister. After the ceremony the team stayed for a while with the carpet to wish it a happy new life and say goodbye with drumming on the carpet crescendo (photocopies 23, 24, 25).

Crystallizing documentary video

"In the metaphor of crystallization we observe how in an environment 'saturated' with artistic imagination, a small creative act 'grows', much like a seed grows. Through its growth, the seed's full meaning emerges with the clarity and order of a crystal. Crystallization theory helps us to formulate how to provide optimal conditions for emerging images to disclose their meanings with the help of their arts" (Knill, 1995, p.31). The video shows the specifics of feltmaking as a tactile, poetic language and an art discipline, like painting, drawing, sculpture with a variety of sensory and communication modalities. Visual, sensorimotor and tactile senses are engaged during expression as well as perception (Knill, 1995, p.44). They interlink with the verbal representation.

The 'Mille Fleurs' felt project was videotaped for 8 hours by Elizabeth Adams from Toronto, Canada, an artist participating in the project. Criss Esser, developmental psychologist and filmmaker in Amsterdam, Holland made a 20 minutes documentary film out of the video-material including the time to interview me about connecting the different parts of the process. Together we had to find a way to show the 'Mille Fleurs' art process imaginative, particular and precise from incubation till realisation, presentation and release. Where I had to cut into the felts to find essentials, she had to cut into the tape while being attentive to keep all the steps: relaxation, rooting, opening up, individual nursing, moving into a small group and the cooperation of all. The film shows the different dynamics in the group before the expressive arts process was accepted and trust and equanimity were found. The group became a community. Dialoguing with images in the video using the stop-button, helps to evolve this newly felt custom-made community work.

Observations:

*While re-viewing the video I considered my role as art director comparable with the choreographer in Community Art. I checked the 'signposts' as they are called in *The Creative Connection* (Rogers, 1993, p.223), to see whether I reached the new direction of feltmaking I aimed for:*

a- Right in the beginning I hoped to manage to use felt in a wider context through my teaching and to connect with the arts and with the participants to stimulate and accompany developmental processes. Like developing awareness about who, what and how we were. An example of this was the introductory round with storytelling about the flower(s) they identified with as an introductory grounding. I felt a loving affection on a personal level and for the work we did. I felt at least we found the essential meaning of the flowers.

b-Did I create awareness for the unsuspected, the still invisible capacities and slumbering possibilities? Trust in the human potential was a main item. Participants were not used to working with each other, and most of them were not used to groupwork. For at least half of the group it was strange to let an image emerge. Meeting insecurity and disbelief played a role on the day of ESSENCE. They accepted my guidance however, I trusted them and they responded with trusting me and the process.

c-How was the relationship between participants? In the beginning I had to help some participants who needed to protect their individual space. This was specially so in the moment of preparing the colourfields. One group had several leaders and this had to be sorted out and changed into partnership. The relationship on the whole developed into peaceful co-operation and friendship.







d-How did it develop? Working in small tribes with different colours created different 'flower-beds'. Finding the seeds, the essence, and putting these into an order and make them integrate created new clusters. Several times I had to look for and found creative solutions. I kept a few rules like 'equal value' and no judgement, just witness. I felt the team represented integrating polarities creating wholeness. On day 3 the group became aware that disciplined felting and fulling created a feeling of wholeness. Creativity helped to override acting conform to tradition. We invented new ways of using our feet and how we could move happily with the whole group on 5 square metres. The process was deepening. Felt was felt as a communal love which embodies peace.

e- I think that felt as a medium has proved that it can be used in communities as an artform. Felt as an art discipline lends itself to socialization, there is meeting, interaction, relationship and choice of coalition. This I realised on the day of the presentation, when I was looking at the team walking in the carpet above their heads as if this was what one normally does on Saturdays.

f-I guided the participants between different realities, from the literal into the imaginal and the effective with more and more distancing. In the end we were left with an abstract landscape.

g-I structured the sessions which helped the team to become part of the effective reality in an atmosphere of safety. It was an art of learning for this community to share response in an artistic imaginative way. None of the feltmakers had heard of literal, nor imaginal or effective reality nor about the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee and they had to get used to no advice-giving, and non-judgemental behaviour. They were too skilled I told them, they developed a higher sensitivity and liked to work from different senses and lose their heads. "Drawing with soap" became an intermodal transfer.

h-Sometimes I reached the imaginal approach and enjoyed the additional benefit of truly validating the experiences and feeling of co-workers. This was the case with the blue group, who worked as if they were putting their flowers as waterlilies on a lake. They were shaping the lake, they were shaping the felt waterflowers. It is a long way to reach the reflection that assists and brings a feeling of closure to an encounter. Intermodal reflection requires training and sensitivity to sensual, perceptual and functional distinction between sensory modalities + common ground shared by the arts.

i-I think especially the part of the process, after the cutting, where I suggested the creation of a new ground for the individual flower to root and for the re-grouped flowers to find a final bed, stands as a metaphor for a therapeutic group process, where a new making begins somewhere in the middle, after changes and goodbyes, and where a group works more and more on the whole. The presentation worked as a liberation.

j-The felting process created visual images which reflected the response to the material that emerged. More than one sense was perceived. During long walking hours I stimulated simultaneous story-telling and story-making as an intermodal reflection. The two Irish feltmakers in our group start to make music and accompany stories, felting feet and body movements. Here soul came into the room.

k-The presentation is a performance, I need to resort to the framing techniques of the performing arts. This particularly counts for the literal presentation of the carpet on the last day. A meditative groupwalk to trumpet music, the felt above all heads served the image of a flying carpet.

l-I experienced this building of a team which worked on a community piece of felt art as a temporary process with a beginning- a middle- and an ending. Each individual takes the story, the memory, the reviews and the video elsewhere and may start another temporary or longer-term piece of art with another group. Those who engage know this is a prepared space we work in, a safe container, a frame in time and space. The art of meeting, learning to connect, release and letting go. It will never be the same. I agree with the thesis of Prof. Schuyt that all communities and all forms of connections are constantly changing. Connections pass. Just in the succession of connections lies the power of society.

The felt carpet will stay for a while, so that its tactile poetic (hi)story and context can be told. Within a lifetime or two, like most textile items, it will deteriorate and disconnect. For now it has a very happy owner, and a room of its own, the Feltroom, specially decorated, in Isel Hall, which is open for visitors every Monday. As in a real museum there is a name-plate at the wall with the names of the artists/ feltmakers who took part in the project. The archive of the story-boards of the 250 people who had sent their flowers is there too. The members of the team are very proud of the fact that they will be remembered.

Aesthetic response on "Mille Fleurs" by Margo Fuchs:

*It shines with its patchy net
each close to each
and yet
each piece
a glowing pearl in itself
and all together
there is a beaming constellation
greening into and from and beyond.*

4 *"Kunst en Zo" and Timpaan, creating new ground for feltmaking in a community as a creative connection with the outer world.*

"Kunst en Zo" (Art and So) is a Bureau offering non-medical services in healthcare. One of its departments organises lectures, demonstrations, workshops, and coaching to develop artprojects on behalf of caretakers and therapists working in Institutions for healthcare. During an interview, about two years ago, with Lydia Nuyens, the director, I obtained information about the latest ideas in national health-care: care should be more "custom-made". As it seems just what I wanted and needed, I agreed to organise and teach workshops. Arriving in the middle of a process of change has its advantages. Institutions are open or show at least a flexible attitude towards new occupational and creative artforms. It is my job to introduce feltmaking and papermaking and mixed media in textile and fibre art which lend themselves to socialization and friendly community-building.

Basically I teach twice a year in different places in Holland. In the case of feltmaking, this workshop consists of an introductory lecture about different possibilities of the use of wool, feltmaking and felt in different communities under different circumstances, and the methods according to expressive arts therapy. I demonstrate the low skill, high sensitivity principle and explain how felt is the same as other mediums and how it is different. Traditionally making felt engages the following senses: visual, sensorimotor, tactile and auditory. This does not mean that verbal representation as a sensory modality is missing. Feltmaking is movement and like a rhythmical dance it engages imagination, speech, sound and play.

We discuss and/or draw/paint personal ideas about community and community-building. About aloneness versus communal engagement, about meeting, sharing and withdrawal. I introduce the terms literal, imaginative and effective reality, soul-nourishment and community art by Paolo Knill. During the hands-on we work with the question how to understand ourselves and each other and how to understand the surrounding world. Participants try the felting process with one material they like and one they do not like. They find and share an aesthetic response on this first felt impression and expression. Homework is to think about the question how feltmaking can serve their own needs and their clients needs. This involves thinking about the conduciveness of felt as a modality for expression, communication and perception. Can felt be used as an intermodal artform? What they need to know more about. What about their felting skills?

Participants who are interested in introducing one of these mediums into their studio-work with clients, can "hire" me through "Kunst en Zo" for "coaching on the job". This is in the first place to meet clients and staff, to see the working-place, to learn how former experiences

can be linked to new medium(s) and to help create and structure a "custom-made" program. I love this work. It serves my wish to further feltmaking as community art and as an intermodal artform.

4.1 “Timpaan”.

The first Institute I work with is called "Timpaan". I am invited by Ellen Brouwer to "coach on the job". She is the project-worker for day-care, work and leisure time. She is one of four artists, therapists who took a workshop from "Kunst en Zo". The whole team wants to introduce feltmaking. They want to research whether it can be used as a medium for clients they call "low-level", meaning those who do not have possibilities to employ themselves.

Timpaan is a regional organisation in the south of Holland, spread over five locations: Den Bosch, Vught, Helvoirt, Haaren and Boxtel. It takes care of and offers services to people with a mental and/or physical handicap. Its vision, mission and starting-point is to take a central position in this society. Caring for clients with a handicap means that clients have rights to adding quality to their lives. Timpaan offers this additional care in daily life, work, research and in treatments. As society changes continuously, and clients are emancipated too, visions shift and starting points are more and more attuned to the wishes of the individual, the uniqueness of every human being. More than ever the needs and wishes of the client are attended, respected and taken care off. A key-word is "custom-made" innovation and creativity. Physiotherapy, therapeutic swimming and for six months feltmaking have been examples of offering special expertise. In leisure time on a regular base thematic weeks are organised. Some of the themes were Indians and Oldtimers.

According to daily activities it is the vision to start from possibilities and not from handicaps. That is why Timpaan has a wide range of daily activities. Clients might work with their hands or even teach other workers. Workers have their own responsibility and are being coached when they choose leadership. In this view Timpaan is a master/apprentice community. Clients visit each other to get ideas about each others situation in life and in work. The living-room deliberation is used to discuss these ideas. Quality care, work and occupation are not the only emphasis. Everyday life stays central. To maintain contacts, friends come along on a regular sometimes daily basis.

As people with a mental and or a physical handicap have the same rights as everybody else, clients participate in - future - developments of the organisation. There is a clients' council, in which also parents and other family-members are seated and a clients' platform. Both publish their news in the Timpaan newspaper. Clients live as much as possible in a "normal" society. This suits the goal that people with a handicap integrate in society. Timpaan helps to find adaptations to

their situation. It also is possible for clients to live on the grounds of Timpaan. Within all these different ways of living and the care around it, the starting point is, that a client is capable to look after himself. Timpaan workers stimulate clients in being independent as much as possible. The ongoing and intensive cooperation with other regional institutions like Adesse and the Binckhorst heightens the possibilities for daily activities full of sense. Timpaan has 180 volunteers who support in the daily life situations as well as in leisure time activities.

At the felt-meetings once a month, before the actual felting with clients starts, the team reports experiences over the past period. Clients in general like wool as a material to hold, they like the activity and the sharing of it. They admit the process is slow. It is important to take no more than one step at a time. After the first two meetings with workers and clients of Timpaan it becomes clear that this feltgroup can be seen as a pilot group, who considers felt a means of imagination, play and communication. I try to introduce felt as a tactile poetical language. The work will be extended and deepened. But to felt with more clients and on a regular base means that more assistants are needed. The group functions best when it works round a table in ensembles of 1 therapist with 1 or two clients.

Much improvement has been made in half a year. The work has been taken very seriously and clients work has been recorded. Everyone everytime fills in a questionnaire. There is a drawer for keeping the samples organised, protected and labelled with name and date. There is a budget for wool and other materials used. The workers improve their skills and learn how to distinguish and apply different kinds of woolstaples, processed in a special way. Clients initiate their own and personal way of felting using the material in their own special way. Samples are stored and maybe later in a big party they will be felted together into a community work.

STRUCTURE of a workshop (in general, not custom-made)

To structure sessions, start with framing as a way of how to use wool, felt and felting as an artform.

The Space. Prepare the studio with a big table in the centre. Surface of table and floor should be water-proof, or else covered with plastic. Enough chairs and/or space for wheelchairs. Warm water supply.

Materials and equipment. A choice from prepared raw wool, slivers, carded, combed, batts, naturals, colours. We started to use shaving soap as this is available from the "working-centre" in the same building, where the soap is packed in boxes by clients of a higher level. Soap is cut in small blocks, or warm soapy water in a small bowl for each, sponge or brush, apron, bubble wrap cut in size at least as wide as the workplace on the table. For communal felting a big piece of bubble

wrap - as big as the table -. Towel to dry hands before breaks or intervention, hand-cream. Other material can be threads, old clothes to recycle, "found objects" from nature to work around.

Assistance. A well-prepared space and carefully ordered art materials help to become part of the effective reality in an atmosphere of safety. As much assistance of therapists and/or volunteers as clients need. Assistants help to open up for the meeting, to ground, to opening wool fibres for the process. They do not label, nor judge or accuse the process or each other nor give advice to each other. The art of building a community is to share response in an artistic imaginative way. Let images emerge, serve them. Truly validate the experience and its expression. Give aesthetic response to the material. Clients are very good in responding with sound and movement.

Meeting. The meeting and connecting during the process serves the metaphor of felt itself being the binding agent, dictating the process of transformation and change. It makes people talk, meet, interact and communicate inside the institute and in the outside world, clients, family, friends, therapists, project-workers, volunteers and artists. Felt in process reflects interaction. Felting can be stopped at any time, the material can be frozen or just dried till another moment. This makes me aware of time keeping, to frame when an encounter has to come to an enclosure and make a "ready-round".

Report of a Working Session

Location: 't Hopveld

Time: about 45 minutes

Date: February 20th 2001

Situation: 5 clients and 4 therapists and 1 volunteer sit around one big table. They make felt in pairs. I work with John. John is 40 years old. According to Miryam, his psycho-therapist he is capable to learn new things. It is the second time he makes felt (photocopy 26).

Materials: wet sponge, bubblewrap, carded fleece and pre-felt made by someone else.

Mood: He smiles. I smile. He remembers the process, trusts my actions of sprinkling water with a sponge. He imitates them. We make eye-contact. I am moved.

Methods: I prepare bubblewrap, fleece on top, loose wool ready. I show fleece is easier to pull than combed slivers. We hold the wool together and get involved in moving it between our hands. It is like a play. I hold the wool, he pulls out. I look at him to see whether he wants to change movement or action. John uses his left hand, which is cramped.

In the beginning his pulse is turned inside. He likes to drum with his fingertips on the wet wool. He gets excited when we make rhythmical movements together while soapy water splashes between our fingertips. We keep pulling and beating. When he starts to sweep with his hand the wool loosens. He notices this and stops. We start the rhythm alternating. After this "warming up" the cramp in his hand diminishes. With a sweep he brings his right hand on the table. In the end we look at each others felts. The atmosphere is intimate.

Experience: He likes working together on the same piece, the tactile sensopathic part of the feltmaking. He is not very interested in the visual part. Takes a quick look at it.

Purpose: Next time we use the same method, but work with another client.

Observations:

- a wool, felt and feltmaking is a medium for so-called "low level" clients.*
- b feltmaking activates and relaxes at the same time.*
- c feltmaking envisions a person as a process.*



Conclusion.

Feltmaking showed me how to open up to new possibilities in life. At the European Graduate School I enjoyed the way of training where processes of the imagination connect with psychological deepening. I wrote about the necessity I felt to connect with my soul as an essential element of how I treat myself, my surroundings and my work. Wool, felt and feltmaking are the media in which I can express myself best. My soul blooms in this environment. My inner sensations, felt sense, shift into the right gear when I answer the question: Can feltmaking be used as a medium in expressive arts therapy and can feltmaking be used positively in Community Art?

Focusing on the felt sense led to reopening and reunifying events in my life which I felt intensely. The thesis work about felt, temporarily brought the making of felt to a standstill. The writing has been an absorbing journey into felt as an expressive arts therapy, as Community Art and has been a great learning experience. All the time I felt protected by the felts in my studio, my place of repose. I discovered that my felts are my art processes, they tell the stories of my life.

I found myself in a new place, where new possibilities of feltmaking emerged. I think especially of a moment during the Mille Fleurs carpetmaking just after the intervention with the cutting when I suggested the creation of a new ground for the individual flower to root and for the regrouped flowers to find a final bed. I realised this was a metaphor which could stand for a therapeutic group process, where a new making begins somewhere in the middle, after changes and goodbyes, and where the group works more and more on the whole. The presentation liberated, set us free and offered the carpet an interesting place where it would attract attention for its beauty and where it might raise interest in felt as expressive arts therapy and community art.

I became aware of how this thesis work has led me into a new direction where I developed a sensitivity to modalities of the imagination and refined my observational skills. It has strengthened my will to share the process of feltmaking with people who might benefit from tactile experiences and sensory rituals.

New directions that suggest themselves are to use felt in a wider context, to connect it with the arts and with the participants to stimulate and accompany developmental issues like expression, perception and cognition. An area I started to research and which I would like to further investigate is: By whom, where and how in this world has felt been used therapeutically and by whom, where and how is it used now? It seems the time is ripe for building an international network. I know that Prof. Dr. Heidi Helmhold from the Institute for Art and Art Theory of the "Universitat zu Koln", will start to build a new research centre which will specialise in the therapeutic applications of felt and feltmaking. Recently I have been invited to work on this project and

perhaps to prepare a conference in 2002. I would like to helping the setting up of this centre, while continuing to make art and teaching different art media at "Kunst & Zo".

Questions which come up at this moment are: How do I fully integrate expressive arts therapy and community art into my work, while being on my own? Still, feltmaking is only one art medium and expressive arts therapy is grounded in the capacity of using all the arts to respond to human suffering. I feel a need to re-organise my workshop into a multi-media workshop where students might start with feltmaking and can move into other artforms until they find their appropriate medium. I can offer drawing, painting, papermaking, working with clay, story-making, the basics of tai-chi, Japanese artforms like suminagashi, shibori, orizomegami and refer to other specialists. It is my wish that somehow in the near future another Centrum voor Expressieve en Creatieve Therapie in The Netherlands will be founded as an Affiliated Institute of the European Graduate School.

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THE REVIVAL OF ART OF THE FELTMAKER

Introduction.

The year 2000 has been chosen by the International Felt Association to commemorate that it is almost 30 years ago since Mary Burkett brought new light and life into the felt world. At first she did not even know it was felt that fascinated her when in 1962 on a trip to Iran, she stopped the car to look at people who were rolling a bundle of something on a bed of leaves. It did not take long for her to realize it was felt they were making. Recognizing the antiquity of the designs and the unusual and simple nature of the process she wondered why such an ancient art got lost. This private story was the beginning of 16 years spending spare time on research and writing a history of felt, totally unconscious of the impact this work would have on a whole generation of feltmakers in the near future. In 1971, as the Director of Abbot Hall Art Gallery in Kendal, Mary Burkett initiated and organised an exhibition of Turcoman felt and tribal art at Abbot Hall and at Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester. In 1979 at Abbot Hall her book 'The Art of the Felt Maker' came out together with an exhibition of that name. It showed felts from many Middle Eastern countries, Asia and Scandinavia. The show toured all over England. This sharing of the rich visual imagery of ancient textiles and felts worked as an eye-opener to the public. Felt speaks to the senses. It invites to be touched, to be lived in and on. Some visitors just came for the smell of it. Artists, craftsmen, students and colleges were amazed and delighted. The exhibition and the book worked as a catalyst.

The revival of the Art of The Feltmaker.

Since the late sixties, textile artists in Europe and North America were exploring all aspects of the fiber arts. Many artists were on a search for the origin of fabric. Feltmaking so far was one of the results of experimenting with its fibrous roots. The following names of pioneers, educators, artists and authors represent what others also may have achieved. In 1976 the book 'Tovning' (Felting) written by Katharina Agren was published in Scandinavia and translated into English, even into Dutch. In North America Beverly Gordon's book 'Feltmaking' came out in 1980 covering the history, contemporary art and giving step-by-step instruction for making felt. She included work of artists like Beth Beede and Joan Livingstone. The latter being a feltmaker since the late sixties. Both exhibited and lectured widely. Their work was also part of 'Felting', an exhibition in 1980 of traditional and contemporary work which took place in the American Craft Museum in New York. It is clear that along different roads various authors and organisers of exhibitions played a crucial role in the reviving of handfeltmaking and preserving its tradition. Specially 'The Art of the Felt Maker' pays attention to felt as a cultural heritage of different people, their way of living in felt, their use of ancient patterns, their sensitivity of colour, their understanding of quality materials, their know-how. Mary Burkett furthered the history of felt by travelling the world, lecturing, making new discoveries, publishing them in 'Echoes', the magazine for the international felt community. Her lectures felt the world together, from 'Mankind's First Felt Footsteps', into 'The origins of the Word Felt in different Countries, ancient and modern' into 'A look back at modern felt making with particular reference to the I.F.A.' to mention a few.

For her museumwork she got an OBE. She carries also academic titles like MA and FMA. Feltmakers gave her a title of honour MOF, meaning Mother of Felt.

Start of International Network.

To remember one of the pioneers in the history of textile art and specially felt, the late Veronica Gervers, in 1984 Istvan Vidak organised the First International Felt Conference in Keckskemet, Hungary. He brought together ethnographers, architects, textile historians and feltmakers. A collection of gers was on show in the museum garden, old felts collected by Istvan and his wife Mari Nagy dressed the walls of the Szorakatenusz Museum. Mary Burkett lectured on the history of felt, David Zsizsivili, Georgia, on traditional feltmaking by a group of women in Tusheti, Beth Beede, USA, on feltmaking in America, Bill Copperthwaite, USA and Peter Andrews, England, but working and living in Germany, on felt architecture, Edith Hollos, Hungary, on her shaman research and feltworks and Inge Evers, Holland, on felt as community art in the Haarlem Felt-and Paper Workshop. Katharina Thomas one of the first and most active felt pioneers, represented Germany.

This Conference widened the felt horizon, worked as a crossing border and started an international network. During the next four years Vidak organised international felt meetings inviting masters from the east to share their knowledge with western feltmakers as far as England, Sweden, Austria, Denmark, both Germanies, France, Austria, Nw.Zealand, Japan, and the USA. Regular participants received over these years an exclusive training and insight. The Hungarian traditional feltmaker Zoltan Mihalko first built a clay-oven before showing how to card wool with a bow and making two traditional herdsman hats in one day. The late Yevgeni Sorokin from Kirgizie lectured and gave a practicum on his book 'The Kirgiz Pattern' in 1986, Jypar Adrenalieva, an artist also from Kirgizie taught chi-mat weaving, Gregory Derwiz showed slides of his craft travels about what was then the Sovjet-Union, a yurt was built with lattice and all, Otto Farkas showed the Mongolian ways and last not least Ogulsierin Gurbanguliev from Aschabad demonstrated the Turkmen felt method and technique. Contemporary feltmakers exchanged their inventions and experiences while living the nomad life in gers 'on the great puszta.

Felt became an ongoing education and after the wall came down and borders opened, feltmakers of the early hours continued their study by traveling themselves into Turkey, Russia, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Kazachstan and Kirgizie. Some of them became welknown teachers and lecturers at the international symposia. Some others became writers on felt as well.

Associations, Newsletters, Convergence and a Felt Museum.

During the days of pioneering, feltmakers were not organised. Thanks to editors like Beatrijs Sterk in Hannover (Germany) who published the issue felt in her magazine 'Textilforum' 1982, news on the revival of felt and its makers, was spread. The English feltmakers started to organize themselves in 1984, the same year the first international meeting took place, and founded the 'Feltmakers Association' took place. The 'Art of The Feltmaker' had set of –apart from the author of it - a number of artists and teachers like Eva Kuniczak, Jenny Cowern, Bailey Curtis, Freda Walker and from the Hat Industry Bury Cooper Whitehead Ltd, Peter Walter, on a felt adventure that lead to the founding of the Feltmakers Association. Annie Sherburne, the first artist who worked with industry and fashion designers, Pippa Lewis and Victoria Brown were some of the founder members.

An exhibition of Contemporary Felt was arranged at Bury Art Gallery and Museum in March 1984. The newsletter 'Echoes' came to life in 1986. The magazine was practically single handedly produced for years by Eva Kuniczak. Over the years it got a growing number of international subscribers because of its use of geographical themes. Lene Nielsen published a magazine 'Felt Filt', with samples and all, for a couple of years.

In 1992, Pat Spark originated and edits ever since the 'North American Felters' Newsletter', which is functioning as a network in North America. The first meeting of felters was in 1978, at the Convergence in Fort Collins, Colorado. Chad Alice Hagen c.s. organized the second gathering at the '94 Convergence in Minneapolis. Pat Spark carried on this tradition at the Convergence '96 in Portland. At Convergence '98 in Atlanta informal meetings took place. The first international felt conference held in North America took place in 1994. Maggie Tcir, Layne Goldsmith, Pat Spark were among the tutors at this "Felt Exotic Conference". The second one took place in Oregon under the name "West Coast Felting Extravaganza". On the tutor's list were Karen Urbanek, Sue Puspaff, Pat Spark and Ayala Talpai.

Far away from all this in 1987 a feltmuseum 'Musee du feutre' was founded in Mouzon, France. Mr. Paul Motte, Richard Keller, Agnes Paris and Serge Chaumier brought into life a center for cultural, scientific, technical and industrial felt. It houses a permanent collection of old felts and on a yearly base artists from many different countries are invited to present their work. In England Mary Burkett became president of the English Felt Association, which was renamed in 1988 as International Feltmakers Association.

An unbroken string....

Like an unbroken string of beads, a continuous stream of learning, sharing and exchange started from then on with feltmakers organising themselves. Symposia and exhibitions took place in different European countries. To mention some: A felt conference and festival was organised by Marianne Ekert in Korros, Sweden. Also in 1990 Annette Damgaard and Lene Nielsen organized an international conference

and exhibition in Aarhus, Denmark. One year later the Dutch feltmakers Corrie Balk and Marion Jacobs started "Viltkontakt". In 1994 the International Felt Association held a conference at Hartpury House, Gloucester, to celebrate its 10th anniversary. There were talks from Elisabeth Weissensteiner, Austria on the mythological implications of textiles, Jorie Johnson brought over a group from Japan, Layne Goldsmith, USA gave a talk, also Nino Kipshidze from Georgia who spoke about the Tusheti felts and traditional methods and design from Tblisi. By then the organization had grown international. Lene Nielsen, Denmark, Katharina Thomas, Germany, Kathie Hoppler-Dinkel, Switzerland, Jenny Mackay Scotland, and Jenny Cowern, Jeanette Appleton, Stephanie Bunn and Janet Ledsham from England contributed. In Holland Jette Clover and Inge Evers as consultant later that year organized an exhibition and a conference with lectures, exhibition, workshops and sheepshearing at the the Dutch Textile Museum in Tilburg. Mary Burkett lectured on Joseph Beuys. Prof. Barbara Tietze from Germany, spoke about felt-ergonomics.

In the summer of 1994 an international felt exhibition, workshop and conference under the title 'Felt Directions' was held at Collins Gallery in Glasgow. In the summer of 1996 another International Feltmaking Symposium was hosted by Swiss feltmakers Leni Hunger, Verena Gloor and the late Helen Widder-Maeschi at Landquart near Chur. Lectures covered a wide range of subjects from dendrology, theology, psychology into chromatology. Stephanie Bunn lectured on her subject of her Ph.D. in Anthropology, focused on feltmaking in Kirgizie at the A.G.M. earlier that year. She became education officer in 1996. In 1995 'Echoes' editorial vacancy was filled by Lesley Blythe-Lord. Meike Dalal-Laurenson, known for her hats, became exhibition officer. Both of them continually upgrade the IFA's presentation. Joan Braganza organised a conference at Hartley Hall, Manchester with ten international teachers like May Jacobson from Norway with 'winged creatures' and Helene Soubeyran from France with shibori. An event of interaction was the show by 16 Scottish and 10 Irish feltmakers at the MacLaurin Art Gallery, Ayr, Schotland. This exhibition 'Felt Experience' travelled to the USA and came back to Glasgow. From may 1997 to february 1998 a travelling exhibition started of ten feltmakers representing six Scandinavian countries in an old converted Textile Mill in Herning. Australia and Nw-Zealand have made great advances in the past two decades, with much meaningful experimentation as well as the incorporation of international influences, particularly through tutors invited to the international textile Forums, organised by 'The Australian Forum for Textile Arts', also publisher of the Australian magazine 'Textile Fibre Forum'. Janet de Boer organizes the Forums since ten years. She also is the editor of the magazine. A number of felting groups exist in the various Australian states with two of the most lively being the Victorian Feltmakers and the Canberra Region Feltmakers, with active programs of exhibiting, offering workshops, and holding conferences and retreats. Ing Flint of South Australia recently began publishing a national Australian Feltmakers Newsletter as a way to enhance networking over Australia's huge distances. The Southern Hemisphere Felters Workshops were twice held in New Zealand and after that once in 1994, in Bunbury, Western Australia. More than eighty people attended, 54 from Western Australia, 17 from other states of Australia, 9 from New Zealand and one from South Africa. Historically these three Workshops were important. After that the emphasis on world class felt at the Forums has met some of the needs – as well as the state groups getting stronger.

Felt educators, nomad travellers..

The International Felt Symposium in Central Finland: 'The Wandering of the Midnight Sun' in the summer of 1999 was organised by Leena Sipila, one of the directors of the the Central Finland Arts and Craft Institute. As in many cases, Mary Burkett was asked to open it and lecture. The program reads like a book on felt and reflected the professional evolution of felt art, craft and education since 1975. Subjects reached from Mongolian Horse felt with Tuula Nikulainen, Felt Wandering with Marjo Tuhkanen, Earth, Art and Felt with Cari Caven, photography on Felt with Silja Puranen, four Finnish tutors. Mari Nagy (Hungary) taught workshops open for the public, Katharina Thomas (Germany) and Agnes Keil lead the Music-Dance-Felt workshop: RED Working with the concept of shielding in different materials, Inge Evers (Holland), Children and Felt, a.o. making a groupwork inspired by angels from the local church, with Gunilla Paetau, (Sweden), Felt Surface Experiments with Jorie Johnson (Japan), Decorations on Felt with Patricia Spark (USA), Cloth Felt, with Alexander Pilin, (Udmurtia), who also presented a fashion-show, and Semi-Industrial Felt with Istvan Vidak (Hungary) illustrating that felt and industry are converging at the moment and used in art, fashion and interior design.

A full cycle.

The Art Of The Feltmaker since 1979 made a full cycle along the globe. By now a range from dress to fashion, 'therapeutic', functional, fine art and abstract had been produced. Felt at the moment is high fashion. Films like Star Wars make use of felt costumes. Mary Burkett's felt dream has come true. Still her book has a great role in feeding the imagination, planting seeds of interest and specially to bring its ancient history into conscience. During one generation feltmaking found its way into the curriculum of textile departments of universities, art and fashion academies. Felters in the 20th century are pioneers as well as revivers. Much new ground has been broken in the technique. Felters like nomadic teachers travel the world, pass it on to a younger generation. For some it is time to settle down. In Denmark Lene Nielsen founded the first Danish felt education at the Skals Handarbejdsskole for the first time in 1999. The aim of learning techniques, methods and materials apart from a.o. the cultural history of felt and meeting contemporary craftsmen, designers and artists was supported by a an International Mini-conference for the students and invited international and professional feltmakers in january 2000 in Denmark.

Felt has never been away from Petersburg, Russia where in 1999 felt art and craft was represented during the 4th International 'White Nights' Textile Symposium. In Tblisi took place the 2nd European Textile Network 'Caucasian Textile Route' also in 1999. In Tblisi there were lectures and exhibitions together with Georgian artists like Nino Kipshidze – who organised both events for the second time – Nino Chachkiani, T. and A.Sisauri, Maia Tsinamdzurishvili, Nino Kvavilashvili, Kethy Kavtaradze, Tamara Gelashvili, Tina Kutalia from Petersburg, born in Georgia and last not least the legendary Tengiz Japaridze who makes pictorial felts since the late sixtees. Mary Burkett, Helena Selinenkova, ethnographer from Petersburg, Jeanette Appleton on felt as fine art, Pat Spark on feltmaking in the USA, Istvan Vidak, Mary Nagy and Inge Evers lectured and/or gave workshops.

The sky is the limit.

The year 2000 is a year of commemoration. During the festival of Felt in Kendal, England, a Mille Fleurs Felt Carpet was presented to Mary Burkett, as a token of the regard in which she is held by Feltmakers worldwide. At the end of April, over four days a team of 26 experienced feltmakers from 5 different countries designed and made a felt carpet of 2 x 3 metres using 250 refelted flowers sent by feltmakers from all over the world. This millennium project, coordinated by Sheila Smith and directed by Inge Evers, also emphasises new directions in "Felt as Community Art" and "Felt from the Senses".

Feltmakers from all over the world are networking on websites, computer nomads meet in cyberspace. How much of a difference there is with the functioning of feltmakers from the old days who were rolling their bundles of something? They did not sign their work, they were holding themselves back in anonymity. Serving their communities was part of their life-style. But what has an anonymous feltmaker in the middle east, who lay down on his feltcarpet in the ger (yurt), staring through the round rooftop in common with a young felt fashion designer with a great name? The sky is their limit.

Inge Evers .