



FIELDS OF TRANSFORMATION

for the Moelis Grand Reading Room Penn Libraries
University of Pennsylvania

CLAUDY[®] JONGSTRA



Gensler

GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

DE KREAKE IN HÚNS

Located in the village of Húns in the North of the Netherlands, De Kreake is our biodynamic farm where we grow dye plants, rye, vegetables, and flowers that we turn into fresh field bouquets. At the heart of this place is Claudia Busson who inspires with her knowledge and passion for seasonal growing practices.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

INDIGO HARVEST

Community life is an integral part of daily operations at the farm. Working at De Kreeke lets people experience the cycles of nature, discover the extent of their own ability, and be an important part of a larger picture.



NATURAL DYE PROCESS

After a season of nurturing our dye plants from seed to flower, we harvest the grown crops for use in the studio. Roots, leaves, and petals all lend their distinctive pigments to our hand-dyed fibres.



WALNUT SHELL: NATURAL MORDANT

A mordant or dye fixative is a substance used to set dyes on fabrics or tissue sections by forming binding qualities with the dye which then attaches to the fabric. Walnut contains tannin which is nature's own mordant.



SELECTING THE WOOL

Selecting wool from the Drenthe Heath sheep, this moorland sheep is the oldest breed of sheep in Western Europe. Immigrants probably brought the race with them from France to The Netherlands as early as 4000 BC.





THE COLOR RANGE

Choosing the right colours and felting fibres, then carding the material thoroughly to make the fibres smooth. These comprise the starting position before the creative process of the art work can commence.



CARDING

Carding the wool removes knots, makes it even, smooth and ready for felting. At the same time it prepares the wool for blending with other fibres like mohair and silk, creating beautiful combinations and adding sheen to the wool.



PAINTING WITH COLOURED FIBRES

Layer by layer the art piece is built up. With the carefully carded and coloured wool Claudy works as a painter. A landscape slowly develops flowing from drama through poetry to soft peacefulness and generosity. With the heart as a source, through the mind, translated into imagery by the creating hands. Meditative distance and time is needed to keep the overall imagery in balance with a work of this scale.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

THE LAST LAYER

With the students from Bennington, USA, the last thin layer is applied. By intertwining this sheer gossamer layer the subtle drawing in colours will be embedded.



FELTING

After the landscape in coloured fibres has been painted, the ancient art of felting can take place. Warm water, soap and mindful manual friction make the layers intertwine and connect forever and the delicate fibres become one piece of art.

Last step in the creation is the slow and natural drying of the felt in fresh air.



MODEL MAKING

Designing the frame behind the small piece in order to hang the art work evenly and in the right position.
The scaled maquette shows the dimensions and serves to work out the construction of the woodwork in detail.



PREPARATION FOR INSTALLATION

Meeting with Unesco ICCROM partner for preventative conservation of the new art pieces.
Receiving advice and discussing the installation and the required materials for the high wall.



1:1 SCALE FOR OVERALL DESIGN

With the help of plastic sheets the studio is laying out the design in a 1:1 scale to plan together the separate felt panels in their real size. The art piece is built up by a number of felt parts which will be carefully attached to become an entire art work in the end.



SPINNING: AN ANCIENT TECHNIQUE

The origins of spinning fibres into yarn and thread are to be found in ancient times; the oldest recovered artefacts made using yarn date back to 20,000 years ago.

While spinning wool on a wheel even now is a tricky skill to master, it is much simpler than before the invention of the spinning wheel. Before using some form of spindle earliest spinning was done by rolling plant and animal fibres between palms or down a thigh, progressively adding fibres along the way.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

SPINNING TRADITION

By using skills developed over thousands of years by communities of people working together, Studio Claudy Jongstra strives to connect these ancient practices with contemporary design at the same time infusing the artwork with warmth and vitality radiating from within.



FELT TRADITION

Felt making is a longstanding tradition in many cultures, from the use of felt as a shelter in yurts through felted hats and socks made by Eurasian nomads to felted so called poodle skirts in fashion in the 1950s; felt is not specific to any singular culture or period in time.

Despite its development over time, felting has still remained a highly community based practice. In Georgia, women often felt together to make textiles for important events like weddings. During the felting process the presence of men is prohibited and there is only one woman allowed to create the overall design. This woman is referred to as the ‚Dedo‘ or ‚mother‘.





CARDING

The procedure to prepare the wool for either spinning or felting is called carding (combing the fibres). Originally the dried thistle flower (*Carduus* in Latin) with its characteristic spikes was used for this process of aligning the fibres. Nowadays carding is mostly done industrially. At Studio Claudy Jongstra this is still done by hand with the help of a manually operated rotating carding mill. The smoothly carded fibres make it possible to make beautiful colour and varied fibre combinations in the art pieces.



FELTING ART PIECES

The essence of felt making: felt is created by carefully pressing, condensing and matting fibres together with water and soap until a solid piece of fabric appears. By using slight physical force to bond the fibres rather than applying chemicals, felt is one of the most sustainable textile materials. Virtually anyone can make it and felt can be used for a myriad of purposes. The artwork is created in the studio in full awareness of honouring the historic tradition of felting.



TRANSFORMATION INTO ART

Because of its roots in nomadic culture, felt making was often seen as an ethnic and old fashioned craft. Only in recent years have felt art pieces begun to transcend this craft connected association and become a fine art form. At the same time the development of felting through the ages is highly respected in the studio and seen as essential to the contemporary art of felting.



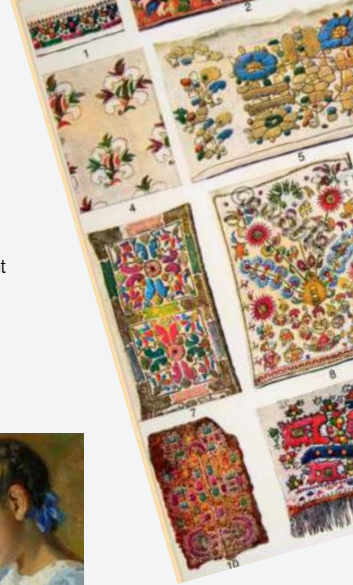
HISTORY

Embroidery is an ancient technique with which designs are applied to textiles by needle and thread - traditionally done by hand. The earliest examples of embroidery date back to 3500 BC in China. The embroidery technique soon spread to Persia, Japan, India and later to Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Also in quill work, a way of decorating in Native American tradition, starting in the 6th century CE, embroidery is combined with decoration with quills.



VARIETY

Detailed and elaborate embroidery has been the hallmark of wealth and prestige in many cultures. Embroidery work requires patience, diligence, great care and lots of practice to create the different effects, textures and quality desired. The varieties at first remained very regional, yet with Portuguese, Dutch and English traders from the 16th century onwards, designs from China, India and the Arabic world were distributed and imitated in other parts of the world. Yarn types range from silk to wool or cotton, even gold and silver thread, and are applied on woven cloth, on textiles for murals, clothing, shoes, flags or handkerchiefs as well as on leather and basketry.



EMBROIDERY AT STUDIO CLAUDY JONGSTRA

The mural for the Grand Reading Room is embroidered with hand spun and naturally dyed silk yarn. The meandering pattern is carefully stitched by hand. The river of coloured silk not only joins up the parts of the art piece, the subtle embroidery also enhances the connection between the different elements that are represented in the mural - heart, mind and the physical aspect.



EMBROIDERING IN THE MICHAEL SCHOOL

Studio Claudy Jongstra is very fortunate to be welcomed by the Michael School in Leeuwarden to work on a large scale for the Grand Reading Room mural in the Van Pelt Library. The pentagram shaped building was designed by Onix architects for this Waldorf School. Working in these light flooded spaces is very fitting for Claudy Jongstra, who besides having participated in the board of the school for many years, also made a mural for the theatre space of the school titled Labyrinth.





THE ARTIST CLAUDY JONGSTRA AND HER ENTIRE TEAM

This is Claudy Jongstra's largest art piece so far. By collaborating on 'Fields of Transformation' for Penn University an extended community is being formed and united. People from all over the world with various backgrounds are contributing and working together to make it possible. Their efforts in preparing the wool, harvesting dye-plants, the actual procedure of dyeing, carding, spinning, felting and composing the artwork is a communal process with at its heart Claudy Jongstra.

A warm thank you to all of you!

LAST FELTING, LAST STITCHING

The last few layers of woollen yarn have been placed with great care and felted in the felting studio and the last stitches have been applied further piecing the separate forms together to become the complete art work.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY



HANDS AT WORK

We estimated how many stitches were done in the large art piece for Penn. On a total of approximately 53 metres of embroidery there are probably about 9.180 stitches.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

FINAL WORK

Finally the art work Large undergoes the last adjustments, as carefully and mindfully the elements are fitted together on the floor of a large schoolroom in an old former arts and crafts school. Fortunately this architectural heritage building has been put to use again as artists and artisans have their studios there now.

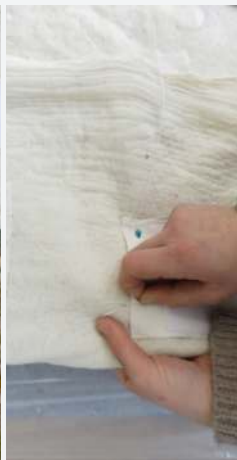


GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY



VELCRO

Attaching Velcro band to the back of the art piece in order to be able to install it later in a strong but gentle manner.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

THE BACK: THE UNSEEN HIDDEN PARTS



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

TRAVELING TO ITS DESTINATION

After a long voyage from the raw yarns and pigment plants along the road of carding, spinning, coloring, creating, felting, embroidering and stitching the impressive Fields of Transformation art piece is coming together and being prepared to travel to its destination, the Grand Reading Room in the Van Pelt Library at Penn University.



GRAND READING ROOM
VAN PELT LIBRARY

RENDERING

