

Ursula Westwood—Talk and demonstration on felt making - April



White merino wool being arranged on the bamboo mat.

Ursula is a very versatile artist who has worked in a wide variety of media. She began her career at Warwickshire College as a student on the Foundation Course and then took a degree in Fine Art at Brighton. Ursula chose to study sculpture but she now wishes she had joined the textile course. At Brighton she experimented with different media producing soft sculpture, work in cast resin and large constructed pieces.

Her early work was very theatrical. She showed us slides of a sculpture of a large coat with many pockets which she invited the viewer to fill so that the sculpture became a piece of performance art. Although she experimented with cast resin shapes such as hands and constructed a wonderful greenhouse with mirrors for her degree show, she always felt that textiles was her preferred medium.



Working through a cloth, rubbing the detergent and water into the wool fibres.

After college Ursula made props for film and TV and then worked at the Tate Gallery before becoming a teacher. Now she has her own business selling her felt products on line and running workshops in felt making. She makes a wide range of items from bags to jewellery, all in vibrant colours. We were all dying to know how felt making was done and Ursula did not disappoint.

The Demonstration.

Ursula began by showing us the tools we would need. Two cloths, a bamboo mat, Fairy liquid, warm water and the all important Merino wool. First she put down one of the cloths on the table and placed the bamboo mat on top. She then proceeded to shred some white wool placing the shreds on the bamboo mat in different directions. Next she placed some orange shreds on top of the background colour to make her design and covered it over with the second cloth. Fairy liquid was sprinkled over the cloth and warm water added before Ursula rubbed her hands over the cloth until she was satisfied all the fibres had



Members and guests watching the demonstration

absorbed the soapy liquid. Now she rolled up the cloths as tightly as possible to expel any surplus water and fuse the fibres together. The result when the cloths were removed was a beautiful piece of felt.

Ursula is taking part in Open Studios this year and all her felt work will be on display at 20, Campion Rd, Leamington Spa. I will certainly be visiting that venue.

Moir Lamont.