

Winterwool

*An interview with Marjolein Dallinga for Viltcontact magazine-march 2010
(translated from Dutch)*

Do you think that your interest in felting would have developed had you not come to Canada?

As a child I loved to play with bits of fabric and yarn with which I made all kinds of things. My grandmother as well as my mother did craftwork, and as a young girl I was sent to a craft school, where they made all kinds of beautiful things out of various materials. That made a big impression on me.

Later at the Arts Academy Minerva in Groningen, I studied painting and graphics arts which led to wanting more creative freedom. I introduced fabric into my drawings and paintings which became three-dimensional with folding and filling. But I always found craftwork more colourful and decorative.

Since 1989, in Canada, I began to involve quilting and embroidery in my work. I looked for small and labour intensive projects such as making day/travel books, which I would bind and fill with small drawings and paintings. Another attractive medium was papier-mâché, with which I could make strange sculptural forms and animals and then leave them to weather outside and return them to the earth with the help of the elements and wildlife. My world had become very small physically but the horizon beckoned. As soon as the children arrived, eventually three, I could not paint anymore and I returned to a child's world by making things for them. That's when I discovered felting and became immediately fascinated by the material. So now I could paint with fibre. And the physical aspects of working with felt were a good fit with our household.

Has the different environment in Canada had any influence on your feeling for form and colour?

My experiential world changed completely because nothing was self-evident anymore. Everything was new and strange like being on a journey. That sense of adventure remained but I have found a connectedness with this new world. My feeling for colour changed and that expressed itself in my drawings, clothes and living environment. The winters here are long and cold and the summers much warmer and sunnier than in Holland. The light is brighter, definitions are sharper and colours harder. We live in a forested area in the country and it is conducive to the colourful fantasyland of my work.

Has the culture of Canada-Québec influenced you? And what was the impact of working with Cirque du Soleil?

My husband is French-Canadian. As my command of French and English grew so did my interests. I discovered Amerindian art, Inuit culture and Quebec's modern art. Through teaching felting I made many contacts which led me to the Cirque du Soleil. Their atelier

in Montréal is a huge costume Walhalla. For a number of years I have been doing experimental felt work for the Cirque, combining with other materials, working with folding, three dimensional forms, relief, pleats, negative spaces and craters. It is a daily challenge which gives me a lot of pleasure. The scope of my work has grown tremendously due to having worked with Mr François Barbeau, who, as a costume designer for the Cirque du Soleil is a great coach with an extensive background in costume design and a long career in Canada and abroad. Felting is a good fit for me because I want to feel the material I work with. My hands caress it, knead and fold it.

The hands convey feelings to the material and conversely. You surrender to the material and breathe. Inside me is a dark world associated with pain which I often dream of and which wants to be expressed. I want to create the opposite of that world. Felting more than any other medium allows me to do that because of its sensuousness, its warmth and lightness. It invites me and it makes me happy doing it. I want to share that experience with others. My dream is that my enterprise Bloomfelt.com grows into a fibre atelier where I can create and produce and where there is the space and opportunity to work, share, teach and have exhibitions.

Who knows...

Marjolein Dallinga
www.bloomfelt.com
St-Sauveur (Québec)
Canada

Credits:

Text editing: Luc J. Matter

Photos: Marjolein Dallinga

www.viltcontactgroep.nl