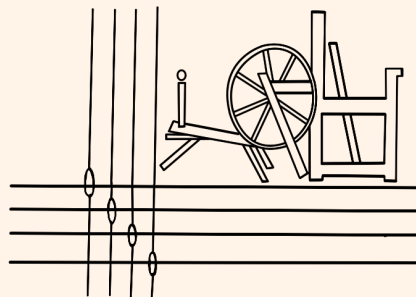


Fairbanks Weavers' and Spinners' Guild December 2023 Newsletter



2023 is almost over, and among the frenzy of holiday gift production for friends and family Fairbanks spinners and weavers still had plenty of time for a busy November and December! We had a successful bazaar at Pioneer Park, a community hat kit wind-off session, and the guild's first ever blending party, plus lots of time spent crafting and learning together as the days grew shorter and colder. Read on for more info about our activities along with articles from our members on cleaning fleece through fermentation, building a studio in a small space, and archaeological Vadmal textiles from Greenland.

Upcoming Events

All events at Davis Hall unless otherwise noted.

Weekly Open Studios

2:00-8:00 pm

Every Wednesday until Feb. 7th

We will be on break through the end of March for Ice Alaska.

Holiday Party

Wednesday December 13th

Open studio from 2:00-8:00 pm, gift exchange starts at 6:00 pm

Bring a gift for our white elephant gift exchange!

Blending Tea Party

Saturday January 6th

11:00 am - 6:00 pm

Bring fiber, carding equipment, and little cookies and sandwiches to share to make some collaborative batts and rolags!

General Meeting and Show and Tell

January 31st (Wed) 6:00-8:00 pm

Theme: "Best New Year's Resolution"

Bring your best themed project to show off to your fellow spinners and weavers!

[Follow our Facebook for info about upcoming events](#)



Send us a close-up picture of your project and we'll feature it in the header of a future newsletter.

Send us a Photo!

The header this month features handspun wool by Annika Mayer with fibers from the FSWG blending party.

Letter from the Presidents

Hello Fiber Friends,

We've had another busy couple of months for the guild. Our warping seminar and scarf weaving classes were so enjoyable, and we are looking forward to a new slate of courses after the first of the year. If you are interested in a particular topic, either as a teacher or as a student, please let us know. There are a lot of skilled crafters in the guild and Davis Hall is a great venue for a weekend class or study group. Think about sharing your skill or learning a new one!

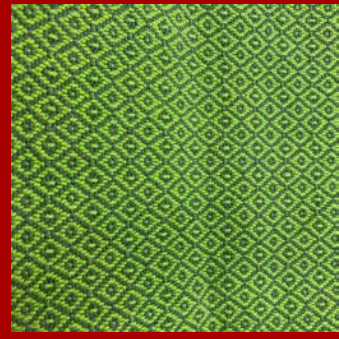
Open Studio Wednesdays will continue to be held through January and will go on hiatus during Ice Alaska in late February and early March. We really enjoy the opportunity to see what everyone is working on and to chat with folks. A particular highlight lately has been taste-testing our way through Moxie's new Fika cookbook. If you haven't tried her Swedish baking, you are really missing out! We had a great time with our fellow crafters from the Interior Knitting and Crochet Community and Calypso Farm last month as we made up hat kits for the Community Hat Project. It's great fun for a great cause.

Our recent Open Studio Blending Party was so much fun that we are going to try to do it again on an upcoming Saturday. Elizabeth suggested turning it into a tea party as well. Watch our Facebook page for details!

Thanks to everyone who donated items for our booth at the Handmade Holiday Marketplace. Annika and Clara oversaw the event and had a great time talking to the community about our guild and selling our handmade items. We appreciate everyone who gives time, money, and items to these events. It all goes toward ensuring the sustainability of the guild.

Stop by to an Open Studio soon and see what we are working on or where we've been this year in our craft adventures! It seems like every week we have a new weaver or spinner join us – it's so inspiring!

Kim and Becky



Open Studio Gallery





2023 Holiday Handmade Bazaar

Many people donated some very beautiful things to the Guild for this holiday bazaar and it was a rousing success. At the end of the day on November 25th, the booth looked quite bare and we headed home with more than \$1100 in sales. The proceeds go towards rent on our space in the Lions Club building, and to support more events and activities in 2024. To those who donated something, your generosity is deeply appreciated!

Ideas of things that would be fun to sell next year:

- Natural dying kits featuring dehydrated flowers harvested from the Penny Wakefield Dye garden.
- Other kits we could assemble for kids and adults interested in fiber crafts
- More dishtowels (they sold so fast!)
- More unique skeins of handspun yarn
- Small items made from loom ends - pouches, scrunchies, etc.



Annika and our table of wares right before the doors opened at 9:00 am.

Craft Storage in Small Spaces

by Clara Noomah

The classic crafter's dilemma: You see a gorgeous secondhand loom or merino fleece that's on sale for a very good price, and immediately start envisioning dozens of projects and hours of fun. But before you can make the purchase, a voice in the back of your mind asks: where on earth am I going to put this? And what about all the other projects I have?

This soul-searching happens even more frequently when you have limited space and storage options. Re-designing the crafting space in my small house so that I could see and use the materials I already have was my big passion project this summer. Here are some notes on my process.

Before I started, I kept some important facts about myself in mind.

- I am lucky to live in a house of crafters and crafting is social for me. If equipment is in another room away from everyone

else, I won't use it.

- If I can't see it... I might forget that it exists.

These facts meant that my crafting area had to also be my living room, and that I needed lots of open display areas so I could remember what I had on hand. It had to be fairly low profile, because it still needed to accommodate all the other activities that happen in a living room, but at the same time, I needed some big, maneuverable work surfaces, for my rigid heddle loom and sewing projects. On an aesthetic level, I wanted it to be made of wood, not metal or plastic.

All these factors led me to IKEA and their **IVAR customizable storage system**. There's a little design tool that lets you configure the pieces exactly how you want them. I went with the unfinished pine wood for everything, because it was cheaper and I could then finish it in the color I wanted. I ordered my shelves, plus a bunch of bins and baskets through an Anchorage company called **Shop + Deliver by Lulu**. They took my list and went shopping down in Washington, then barged it up to Anchorage. In total, their fees were a couple hundred dollars, plus more for shipping to Fairbanks. A pallet of flat pieces arrived about a month later and it took me another month or so to stain and seal everything with polyurethane. A friend helped me assemble it all over a long afternoon.



The living room with a small dog for scale. The drafting table with the loom is on felt pads, which lets me rotate it around for watching TV. My back also thanks me for standing up to weave.



The sewing machine hides under the pop-out table when it's not in use, and the piano bench does double-duty.

My new storage accommodates the large drafting table I use as a loom stand and fabric-cutting table. It has its own pop-out table, which is where the sewing machine now goes. The closed drawers and sliding cabinet hides all my awkward knickknacks, and the beautiful yarn gets to be out on display on shelves and hooks. There's even a hidden vertical storage bin for all my reeds! The pegboard and shelf holds little things I constantly need, like tape measures and scissors.

I am happy about how having all the yarn I want to use on display has helped Annika and I be more creative about designing projects for what we already have on hand. Since I look at my homespun skeins every day, they're often on my mind when I browse Ravelry. There's a sense of accomplishment that comes from finishing a cone of yarn, because, in my head, it means that I get to buy a new one!

Despite my desire to have everything visible, most of my fabric and a tote of "B" yarn live in another room. My goal is to go through that "hidden" storage about once a year and be pretty ruthless about what I should say goodbye to. I know that equipment and yarn can easily creep to fill every available space! The Folk School has been hosting a Yarn Swap every year, and I also keep my eyes open for other opportunities to rehome things I am not using. If you have any ideas for events the Guild could organize in that vein, let someone on the board know!



Cleaning a Fleece with the Suint Fermentation Method

Part One: The Inner Fiber Witch

By Lynn DeFilippo



It all started at one of the guild's weekly craft nights last June. I wanted to visit Becky's farm and buy some merino wool to blend with dog fur. A few days later I'm driving down Chena Hot Springs road with Moxie Pender, and we have plans to split

several fleeces, process the fiber ourselves, and spin the yarn to knit sweaters!

I've been spinning yarn for many years but haven't ever processed a raw fleece, except for one time long ago. All I remember is laborious rinsing and rinsing, and soap, and many buckets of water, resulting in a lot of wool I couldn't spin. It's been roving and batts and top pretty much ever since. Moxie's talk of this Suint Method, (which seemed perfect for us country-dwelling, water hauling crafters) and her enthusiasm sparked my inner fiber witch. Fermentation? Water saving? Smelly outdoor mess? Yes! I'm in!

We left White Fireweed Farm with 4-5 pounds each of lovely, raw merino fleece: three pounds of prime condition white and grey, the rest a second grade (slightly less clean) white and a moorit, or brown. Grandiose plans of perfectly spun sweater yarn by midwinter aside, our first task was to start the Suint Bath.



A Natural Fermentation

The Suint Method uses only water and warm temperatures to clean a raw fleece. It's fairly simple. The fleece is soaked in a tub of rainwater and kept warm, outside preferably because of the stink generated from the fermentation. Natural microbes and bacteria already present on the wool combine to make the suint. This suint is a sort of mineral salt leftover from sheep sweat that builds up. Some breeds of sheep have more suint in their fleeces than others.

When warmed up this suint ferments in the water and creates a soap that cleans the wool. It's an anaerobic process, and as it gets going other microbes and bacteria present on the

fleece join in and help consume dirt and stuff. It takes about 5 days, give or take, depending on how vigorous the fermentation, which is affected by temperature and by the type of fleece.

Moxie set up her suint baths on her large, sunny deck in the hills of the Goldstream Valley, getting all 4 of her fleeces going in separate tubs. I chose to process only the prime grey and white, just under 2 pounds each. I used 10 gallons of rain water in each plastic tote, gently submerged them in the water, covered, and waited. I checked the tubs in a day, looking, smelling, but there was no fermentation action that I could tell, and I've brewed wine, kombucha, and yogurt. I put my hand into the tote and felt the coldness of the water, especially down at the bottom where they were set on the ground. The wool is such a good insulator, and the nights and mornings are not hot. Hmmmm.... What to do?

Find out in Part 2!

In the meantime, here's an excellent link written by Blue Born Fiber I used to learn about the Suint Method Fermentation:
<https://bluebarnfiber.blogspot.com/2017/07/suint-fermentation.html>.



Historical Textiles Corner

The Herjolfsnes textiles and the vaðmal tradition

by Annika Mayer

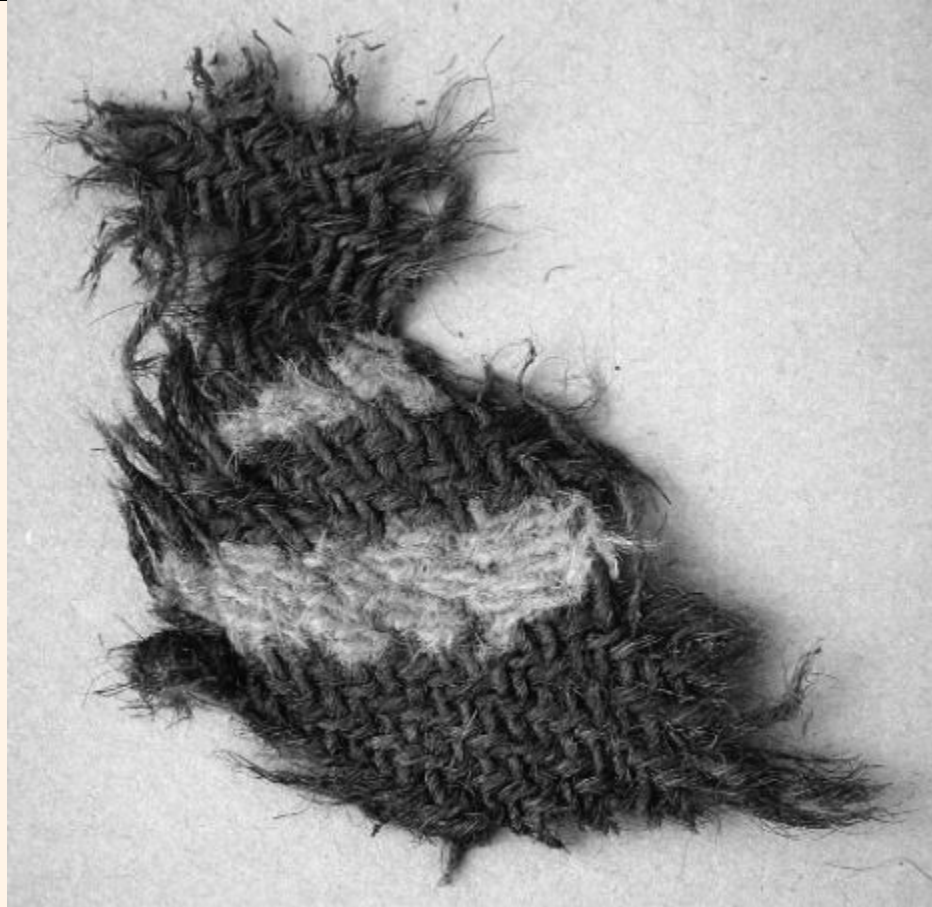


Herjolfsnes no. 39, early 14th century. Image from http://www.kostym.cz/Anglicky/1_Originaly/01_Goticke/I_01_37.htm

In the year 985, the Icelandic Book of Settlements records the sailing of Herjolf Bardsson to a fjord in Greenland. The settlement he founded there was called Herjolfsnes, and would endure for nearly 500 years in Greenland's harsh conditions before its abandonment around the end of the medieval warm period. Herjolf's deeds, however, are not the reason that this settlement is so well-known among archaeologists, historians, and fiber arts enthusiasts of all stripes today. Its fame originates from its extraordinary collection of woven textiles, excavated in 1926 under the direction of Poul Nörlund. These textiles are exceptionally abundant and well-preserved due to the cold conditions and the tradition of burying people wrapped in their clothes, which may have originated as a response to the lack of wood for coffins in Greenland.

Besides providing inspiration for historical garment reconstruction (see **Matilda LaZouche's** blog for a great example of a reconstructed Herjolfsnes gown), these clothes provide an extraordinary window into life in medieval Greenland. Despite the remoteness of the colony, people made an effort to stay

abreast of current European fashions, with liripipe hoods and finely tailored gowns. They were also thrifty and resourceful. In a 2016 study, Hayeur-Smith et al. used radiocarbon dating to determine the age of four fabric samples from one hat. One patch of fabric was at least 100 years older than the rest of the cap, demonstrating that people repaired and reused textiles over long periods of time.



Greenland goat hair vaðmal with arctic hare fiber incorporated (white stripes).

This textile is 2/2 twill, Z/S plied, 8/10 threads per cm. Image by John Lee, National Museum, Copenhagen. Caption text and figure from Østergård, E. "**The Greenlandic vaðmal**" (2005) in Northern Archaeological Textiles by Pritchard and Wild.

A close analysis of the textiles themselves shows the amazing craftsmanship of Greenlandic weavers. Much of the cloth from Herjolfsnes belongs to a category of weaving called vaðmal, a highly prized and durable fabric which was used as currency in parts of Scandinavia, Iceland, and Greenland during the medieval period. Vaðmal was generally a 2/2 twill, with the warp threads spun from longer, coarser guard hairs and the weft spun from the fluffy undercoat of the sheep. Raw fiber was spun with drop

spindles and woven on warp-weighted looms. The cloth was so valuable that there were strict regulations on thread count, width, and tightness of selvedge for any textile to be sold as vaðmal. In Greenland these textiles often incorporated alternative fibers such as goat or hare. They also tended to have more weft than warp threads, as the fluffy, soft weft fibers provided better insulation against Greenland's harsh climate. Producing enough textiles for the use of one household alone was an immense amount of work, and so it is extraordinary that Greenlandic women made enough surplus for trade while maintaining other aspects of the household from childcare to cheesemaking. Their skill was attested by the remark of a local woman in the 1920s, who reported to the archaeologist Nörlund that she had used eroding scraps of fabric from the Herjolfsnes graveyard to make children's clothes!



Interested in writing for us?

The FSWG comms team is currently looking for more contributors to our newsletter. Stories should be 300-700 words long and can feature any fiber related topic, such as a recent project, tales of fiber travel, a deep dive into a certain process or methodology, or anything else of interest to our community of fiber artists.

TO SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLE:

Please email your text to comms@fairbanksweaver.s.org along with any accompanying photographs and attributions. The deadline for articles to be included in our January/February newsletter is **February 21st, 2024.**

The Fairbanks Weavers' and Spinners' Guild is a 501-c-3 nonprofit organization founded in 1952. Our mission is to connect fiber artists across Interior Alaska and build community through practice, teaching and learning in the arts of weaving, hand spinning, and related textile arts.

The membership year goes from April 1st to March 30th of the following year. To become a member or renew your membership, please [download our membership form](#), print it out, and mail it to us.

Membership forms are also available at Guild events.

Mailing Address:

PO Box 73152

Fairbanks, AK 99707-3152

email: fairbanksweavers@gmail.com • web: <https://fairbanksweavers.org>



This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Fairbanks Weavers' and Spinners' Guild · PO Box 73152 · Fairbanks, AK 99707 · USA

