

Reviewed by Monika Auch

Woven Skin— Shelter of Color

The name of Dutch artist **Claudy Jongstra** is synonymous with large scale felt works in public and private places. Currently Jongstra diverts the spotlight from wall panels towards topics close to her heart. A trending topic with other designers, she also broadens her oeuvre towards social practice with issues concerning nature and biodiversity.

Studio Jongstra are experts in the production and the functional use of felt as an interior design feature. Felting is one of the most accessible crafts. It is quite a feat to dress up an 82 feet (25 meters) long and 20 feet (6 meters) high curved wall, like the one in New York's **Lincoln Center**, with what is basically a combination of sheep's wool, soap and upholstery techniques. Studio Jongstra cooperates with architects, sound technicians, and interior specialists in order to work out site-specific requirements for commissions. But there is more to it than technicalities. She is proud that in another commission for the walls of **Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Cancer Hospital** in Amsterdam, patients and staff make a detour to walk along the large felt panels to experience a sense of healing and comfort.

Her work has recently expanded into the realm of social practice with a focus on sustainability. In 2000 she acquired a farm in rural Friesland where a dedicated team of family and staff work on a self-sustained production practice. Jongstra has her own flock of sheep, cultivates dye plants in a garden, and engages young, less privileged students in her daily life and work. This "Farm of the World" is the base for her latest international project, *Woven Skin—Shelter of Color*.

During an interview at her farm she presents herself as stern and eloquent. The studio is run with a sense of discipline. Jongstra is a woman on a mission for sustainability and biodiversity. She recounts a magic moment in summer, when a swarm of bees and insects was spotted hovering above the flowers. They formed a floating, humming, swirling carpet; whereas the neighboring land, polluted and barren, was void of life.

Talking about the project, she says, "In *Woven Skin*, essential elements of my mission and work come together. It is a three-dimensional art installation that signifies my wish to improve the world ecologically, socially, politically and in regards to communication and education." The installation is



Studio Jongstra, wool dyed with madder and indigo.



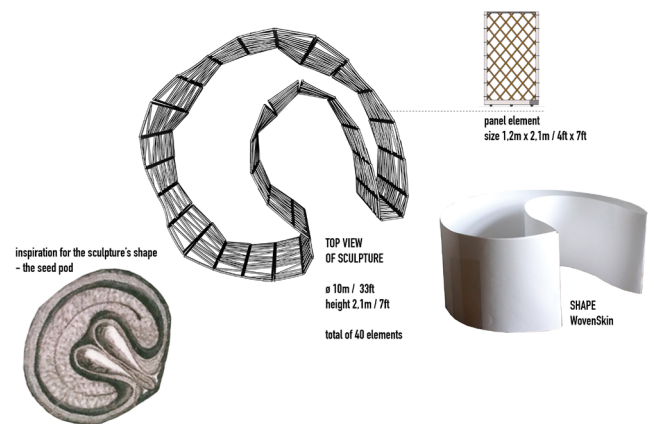
Drenthe Heath sheep.



Claudy Jongstra *Fields of Transformation* 2017, Drenthe Heath wool, silk, merino, mohair, cotton, linen, indigo, onion skin, weld, chamomile, walnut, dahlia, madder, felted, embroidered, 6' x 13', 8' x 3', 1' x 50'. Commissioned by Moelis Family for the Grand Reading Room, Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center, University Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, VS.



Claudy Jongstra working in her studio.



Impression plans of forthcoming *Woven Skin* installation.



Claudy Jongstra *Weld-Reseda Luteola* 2006, Drenthe Heath wool, Wensleydale wool, raw silk, raw linen, weld, walnut, cochineal, onion skin, felted, handmade silk, inlaid with details by Marc Mulders, 161" x 4". Commissioned by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch embassy, Berlin, Germany. Right: detail.

an alloy frame in the shape of a spiral, approximately 36 feet (11 meters) wide and 10 feet (3 meters) high, representing a seedpod. It will travel to various locations, chosen for the potential of communal interaction and political or ecological meaning. The spiral will serve as a carrier of recycled or natural materials and as a meeting point for local communities. She concludes, "My ongoing pursuit is to keep old crafts and ancient knowledge alive and to preserve them by using and sharing them, while propagating bio-diversity and conserving the immense value of people and place."

Participating venues are forthcoming. Alternatively, for up-to-date information, follow the project's social media channels:
Facebook: [claudy.jongstra](https://www.facebook.com/claudy.jongstra)
Instagram: [@claudyjongstra](https://www.instagram.com/claudyjongstra)
Twitter: [@claudy_jongstra](https://twitter.com/claudy_jongstra)

All images courtesy of Studio Jongstra.

—*Monika Auch has a background in medicine and textile design with a focus on weaving. A hybrid of science and art, she set up Weeflab in Amsterdam to investigate 'The intelligence of the hand'. weeflab.com | monikaauch.nl | stitchyourbrain.com*



Harvesting Calendula from the fields of De Kraeke, Húns.