

# Innovator at the loom



Ulla Feltzing discovered another way of weaving Finnweave.

TEXT: SANNA GUSTAVSSON PHOTO: BENGT ARNE IGNELL

*Ulla Feltzing was very instrumental in making Finnweave better known. Apart from weaving herself, she ran courses for many years and also made designs. Her technique for weaving Finnweave was one she evolved herself, always picking up the pattern behind the reed.*

“I love patterning. I want weaves to be patterned more often than not”, said Feltzing. Even if I make a rag rug, I have to fiddle about and put in some patterning, she added, pointing to the weaving underfoot in the kitchen: a plain weave rug in different blues, with a scattering of small midnight blue ovals.

Feltzing’s interest in patterning thrived with all the Finnweave she did. She uses traditional patterns and rearranges them her own way, as well as making up her own.

For traditional Finnweave, the pattern design is picked up alternately in front of and behind the reed. Feltzing, instead, only picks up behind the reed. Quite simply, she skips the first stage. This, in her view, means she does not have to go back and forth over the reed and risk losing the pattern. To be sure of getting the pattern right behind the shed, she counts the heddles instead of the ends.

– Of course, I first learnt the traditional way of doing Finnweave. But you do realize that indolence is the mother of invention and I wanted to do the work a bit quicker. That’s how I got here. To me it feels fine to first lean over the reed and then straighten up when I push down the weft. My back and neck have never given me any problems.

– Though when I give a course, everybody always wants to learn the traditional method, as it ought to be done.

At the age of seventeen, she did a weaving course at Bohus

Craft and sketching at the School of Design and Crafts in the evening. Finnweave was taught down the phone – a skilled weaver at Bohus Craft guided her through the steps. The following year, Feltzing got into the School of Design and Crafts and was there for five years. One of her graduation pieces was a Finnweave, 3 sections of 1.5 metres, into which she wove her own imaginary birds: “Idle Finches”. She was employed straight after graduating by the then director of Bohus Craft, Ingrid Arlenborg.

For five years she was in charge of the weavery at Bohus Craft, and made Finnweave designs executed by some of the weavers. Arlenborg was in contact with various architects, and Finnweave was popular with them.

– We furnished a lot of restaurants and public spaces, she said.

Arlenborg and she co-authored the book, *Finnväv som den vävs i Bohuslän* (Finnweave as woven in Bohus County), 1973, and it was also at Bohus Craft that Feltzing began running her courses, which she continued to do for thirty years at various venues. This was a key factor in the dissemination of Finnweave and tapestry weaving in Bohus County. After doing a course, former students would often call her to say they would really like to do a Finnweave as a gift for someone and to ask Feltzing to draw up a design.

– Quite a bit of my work was with ordinary people living in the area. They would ring and say, ‘Oh, Ulla, the cranes have come and I really want to do a Finnweave for my husband’s birthday, could you do a pattern for me?’

Feltzing incidentally prefers the term, patterned doublecloth, to Finnweave.

– I feel it is more correct. Whichever way you do it, it is still patterned doublecloth. For a simple design, you thread it up. For a more complex design, you pick it up. But it is still always a doublecloth.

FELTZING’S TEXTILE OUTPUT is huge. Working with the Finnweave specialist Astrid Larsson in Kareby, Feltzing made some 80 works for public spaces and private buyers. Collaboration with the professional weaver, Lars Boström, produced 15 Finnweaves, 110 x 220 cm in format. Her Finnweaves are in various establishments, including the Kungälv Culture Committee and Partille church hall. In addition, she has composed and made designs for about 350 differently sized pieces for private weavers. To date, she is part of the project, “Finnweave then and now – weaving double”.

She is convinced Finnweave will carry on into the future. The disadvantages of the technique, she thinks, are that it is complex and slow and that people have less and less space for looms in their homes.

– I feel for Finnweave to have a place today, we need to do more functional items. Sometimes when people see my work and catch sight of the sketch alongside, they exclaim, ‘Ooh, so you paint as well!!!’ and are more interested in the sketch than the weaving.

Feltzing looks at me, her eyes the same shade as the frozen waters outside her window:

– I think you do textiles first and foremost for textiles’ sake. For the joy of weaving. ■

Bohus Craft was set up in 1906 as a handwork association called *Konstfliten*. In 1940 the name was changed to Bohus Craft Association - *Konstfliten*. Bohus Craft aimed at providing an outlet for artist makers and craftspeople in the county to reach a wider public with their products. The organization held courses, and ran studios and shops.