

Foreword

Dear Reader,

In 2019, the Department of Estonian Native Crafts of the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy celebrates its 25th anniversary. In 1994, the curriculum of National Handicraft and Farm Design was established in Viljandi by Anu Raud, an acknowledged gobelin artist, professor of the Estonian Art Academy and passionate collector of old traditional textiles. This act marked the wonderful, yet surprising rise of the native textile tradition to the academic scene. As the young Estonian republic was reconstructing its identity and ideology after gaining independence from the Soviet regime in 1991, times were indeed favourable for all sorts of state reforms and cultural movements. Years later, the curricula of Estonian Native Construction (2005), Estonian Native Metalwork (2011) and the Native Crafts MA programme (2011) were launched at the Viljandi Culture Academy. Through those steps, the department had grown to maturity, and more serious research activity – especially a search for specific methodology – was needed.

The cornerstone was laid for craft research in the Department of Estonian Native Crafts in 2013 when the regular, peer-reviewed academic journal *Studia Vernacula* was established. Developing craft scholarship requires continual (re)definition of its scope, theoretical framework, objects, sources and methodology. In the scope of *Studia Vernacula*, we have stated:

Craft studies is an emerging field of research that is gaining recognition worldwide. Craft studies combine practical skills with theoretical knowledge of heritage craft technologies. Such practice-based approaches help researchers achieve a better understanding of the technical aspects of their objects of study.

This approach enables researchers to deal with problems first raised by the Hungarian chemist and philosopher Michael Polanyi, namely his most acknowledged argument that *we know more than we can tell*. This knowledge is seen as *tacit knowledge*: it is hidden unless we have paid attention to the elements of which it has been (often automatically) formed, and which exist notably in crafts. When manually experienced craft scholars focus on techniques and skills in their approach, they get closer to unwinding the tacit elements behind the techniques – the sophisticated combination of local materials, skills or bodily movements, tools, etc., resulting in functional objects made in a technically correct fashion.

The current publication is a special compilation of selected articles previously published in Estonian in our research journal, *Studia Vernacula*. We

believe the texts have the potential to attract the attention of an international audience. This enables us to celebrate our anniversary with colleagues from all over the world! If this special issue inspires you, and you would like to contribute to our future issues, then please do not hesitate to send us your manuscripts. By reaching out to the global community, the voices of craftsmen within their particular fields are heard more widely – which they most certainly deserve!



On behalf of the editorial board,

Kristi Jöeste