

Making cultural heritage

Editorial foreword

Despite the pressures of globalisation, crafts remain an important part of the cultural heritage and national identity of Estonia and other countries. This year's *Studia Vernacula* theme highlights the role of making in sustaining the cultural heritage of crafts; confirming the UNESCO's guidelines on the importance of intangible cultural heritage in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of increasing globalisation. This year's *Studia Vernacula* highlights the intangible cultural heritage of different communities as a way of promoting intercultural dialogue.

The University of Tartu, Viljandi Culture Academy (UT VCA) is dedicated to researching, presenting, and developing Estonian craft traditions. The year 2024 is a special one for Estonian crafts. Since 2019, Viljandi has held the title of UNESCO Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art and during the year 2024, Tartu is the European Capital of Culture. Viljandi Heritage Festival (October 1–5, 2024) is a part of the main programme of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024. The festival is organised by the Viljandi Culture Academy. The week-long event aims to explore how traditional cultural knowledge can contribute to finding sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges.

Cultural heritage, which includes heritage technologies, intangible cultural heritage, and other cultural practices, has helped humanity adapt and cope with various challenges over millennia. Viljandi Heritage Festival focuses on identifying the values, knowledge, skills, and practices embedded in cultural heritage that enrich the contemporary living environment and help find sustainable solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems. It encourages the discussion of tradition as a cultural process and the consideration of heritage as an environmental, cultural, social, and economic value that supports and develops society at local, national, and global levels. This issue of *Studia Vernacula*, published to coincide with the festival, highlights some examples of these milestones in the preservation and development of traditions, both in Estonia and in other parts of the world.

There is a growing academic interest in crafts and making. Acknowledgement is increasing for the importance of education at all levels in recognising the value of craft as both a skilled and intellectual activity, and its relevance for cultural understanding. UT VCA plays a crucial role in sustaining culturally significant craft designs, products, and practices in Estonia, and demonstrating their importance to a wider craft community. As a higher education institution, it is unique in the world and similar opportunities should be provided in other countries to sustain their cultural heritage and traditions.

The leading article of the journal was written by the award-winning BBC documentary filmmaker, Associate Professor **Alex Langlands** from Swansea University (UK). His article on *Putting the making in place-making: the role of traditional crafts skills and community-led conservation in the re-framing of historic environment services* highlights the multiple crises facing Europe, including energy transitions, food sovereignty, climate change, and national security threats. The article demonstrates how heritage, both tangible and intangible, is critical for resilient communities. Using the example of Wales, where government funding cuts are impacting heritage services, the article argues for a re-framing of state-led heritage delivery to align with the Wales Act (2015) on Wellbeing of Future Generations, which emphasises practical, participatory heritage. The article describes how Wales, with a population of just over three million, faces economic challenges and high levels of deprivation. The focus on industrial heritage has shaped its identity but opportunities exist to align heritage delivery with new policy goals, enhancing community engagement and conservation of heritage assets. The article highlights the mental and physical health benefits of engaging with heritage and proposes that hands-on participation is a way to support wellbeing goals.

The article *Reviving an old shade of red: dyeing with rotted alder buckthorn bark* by the team of experts on both textile dyeing and archaeology, **Liis Luhamaa**, **Riina Rammo**, and **Deb Bamford**, explores the traditional practice of dyeing woollen yarn red with alder buckthorn bark, as documented in various printed and archival Estonian sources. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the alder buckthorn bark dyeing process, highlighting both historical and contemporary sources. It includes a six-month practical experiment that tested the effects of rotting the bark, both on the ground and underground, on the resulting colours. The results show that rotten alder buckthorn bark produces a warm orange to red colour, which can be changed to violet by soaking the dyed yarns in wood ash lye. The lightfastness of these colours is consistent with typical natural dyes. These results shed light on historical Estonian dyeing techniques using rotten alder buckthorn bark, a practice dating back to the 19th century and earlier. The dyed yarns serve as valuable visual references for identifying alder-buckthorn-bark-dyed textiles in museum collections and aid in interpreting dye analysis results of historical and archaeological textiles.

In her article *Traces of callimanco in Estonia: purchased worsted striped fabrics from the late 18th to early 19th centuries*, **Tiina Kull**, a Junior Research Fellow at the Estonian National Museum, highlights Estonia's rich textile heritage, with significant museum collections. She presents a study that

examines historical callimanco fabric samples from the 18th and early 19th centuries and explores the possible links between these fabrics and Estonian folk costumes. The research analyses items in Estonian museums, focusing on connections with callimanco fabrics from Norwich, England. The study employs technological-comparative analysis to understand the characteristics and origins of the fabrics by examining the technological aspects of individual artifacts, weaving density, fabric width, yarn twists, and surface gloss. Microscopic analysis identified fibre materials, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the fabrics. Comparisons were made between stripe patterns in Estonian museum fabrics and those in foreign fabric sample books. Based on all this evidence, the research concludes that these fabrics likely came from Norwich.

Jaana Päeva, PhD and the head of the Art and Design doctoral programme at the Estonian Academy of Arts, has written an article on *Artistic development opportunities based on the reconstruction of reverse printing*. This article explores the role of artistic development and the potential for modernising techniques through the practice-based research project “Reconstruction and artistic development of historical relief print technique” at the Estonian Academy of Arts. The project aimed to faithfully recreate a unique relief printing technique used by the leather and bookbinding artist Eduard Taska in 1924 and to adapt this technique to contemporary needs and conditions. The article gives an overview of the recreated historical technique and then delves into the results and analysis of the subsequent development activities. First, it highlights the experiments with printing plate materials by introducing various experiments with different materials and methods for preparing the printing plates. Secondly, it analyses printing results by examining the outcomes of printing with several types of pattern designs. Thirdly, it provides a comparison of printing results on different materials by comparing the printing results on different types of leather and leather-like materials.

Junior Research Fellow **Lodewyk Barkhuizen** from the Institute of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu explores the expressive capacities of decay in Cabo Verde’s *Carnaval Soncent* through a case study of the ‘*Hired to Farm*’ allegorical car. *Carnaval Soncent*, held on the island of São Vicente in Cabo Verde, approximately five hundred kilometres off the west coast of Africa, features allegorical cars (known as parade floats outside of Cabo Verde) created through informal craft processes. The designers and makers of these larger-than-life artefacts embrace, and even welcome, their material decay. This paper examines the ‘Hired to Farm’ allegorical car from the 2017 *Carnaval*, demonstrating how decay facilitates the release of emotionally charged content. The study highlights the regenerative function of decay and

its role in re-creating shared experiences and community memories. It suggests that the conceptual content of an allegorical car becomes intertwined with its materiality during its creation, generating a meaningful tension that facilitates the eventual decomposition and release of its emotionally charged content. This release disentangles the content and materials, making them available once again for the re-creation of shared experiences, memories, and community bonds.

Associate Professor **Māra Urdziņa-Deruma** and University Lecturer **Lolita Šelvaha** from the University of Latvia examine *Craft teachers' graduation theses in Latvia*. Their article emphasises that cultural heritage has been an integral part of the craft curriculum since the subject was introduced into general education in Latvia. At the end of the teacher training programme, students are required to develop a final thesis which includes the selection of teaching content for a chosen theme and class. The researchers investigated how traditional culture was reflected in the students' final theses. The results revealed that traditional culture was incorporated in the students' final theses through the study of traditional techniques and the study of traditional products. In addition, traditional culture served as a source of inspiration for developing new products. The theses explored both Latvian traditional culture and the traditional cultures of other nations.

In his article *Circular economies and the regeneration of land, craft and biodiversity: cultural ecologies of connection*, Professor Emeritus **Patrick Dillon** (University of Eastern Finland and University of Exeter) examines how the concept of a circular economy revolves around self-sustaining enterprises that employ local people, produce goods and services from local resources, minimise waste and maximise internal recycling. The article recalls that, historically, farming systems in Northern and Western Europe operated within such circular economies, integrating craft practices into their operations. This approach has largely been replaced by industrialised systems characterised by monoculture, dependence on external inputs and the generation of waste alongside products, and many once-essential crafts have become obsolete. Using cultural-ecological modelling, the article argues for the regeneration of traditional farming systems, presenting them as economically viable modern alternatives to industrial agriculture. Emerging regenerative business models are linked to environmental and lifestyle concerns, including organic farming, animal welfare, localised cuisine, sustainable fashion, and traditional crafts. There is also a growth in services to meet the increasing demand for leisure, education, and heritage experiences. This approach benefits communities both culturally and environmentally, enhancing biodiversity and improving human and animal welfare by mitigating some of the negative externalities associated

with industrial agriculture. The revival of traditional crafts is encouraged, and intangible heritage is enriched. The article reminds us that regeneration requires greater community involvement in the management and regulation of the local environment. It proposes devolution that reconciles locally adapted practices with statutory governance, promoting cultural-ecological governance that reflects the synergistic coexistence of nature and culture.

We hope that you will find this journey through the various aspects of cultural-heritage-making as exciting as it has been for our editorial team. For more than ten years, I have had the privilege and pleasure of collaborating with the University of Tartu, Viljandi Culture Academy, to advance craft education and research. This ongoing collaboration includes my role as a member of the international editorial advisory board of *Studia Vernacula*. I congratulate UT VCA, Viljandi and all of Estonia for their achievements in sustaining and developing craft traditions and the cultural heritage of crafts in both national and international cooperation. This year's issue of *Studia Vernacula* offers examples from different parts of the world of the importance of making a living craft heritage.

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Invited editor-in-chief of the special issue of *Studia Vernacula*.

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