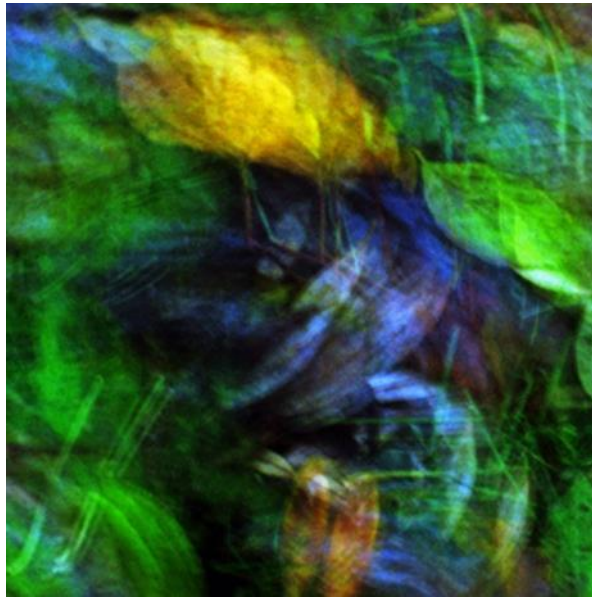


Protective-Mantle-Project - Newsletter 4 – Winter 2021

Dear participants in the Protective Mantle project,

dear interested people accompanying and supporting the Protective Mantle project,



...everything was so well planned - and then life came and threw
- like autumn leaves –
my well-meant order into the air....

The seamstress of the Protective Mantle fell ill – to such a degree that no further work on the protective coat project was possible. This was the beginning of an inner journey to facets of the Protective Mantle theme that I had not wished for. And yet, in this way, doors opened and threads of connection emerged, more beautiful and precious than I could have imagined.

Over the last few months I have been keeping a diary about the Protective Mantle Project; it became a longer journey, as you will notice from the texts; and I would like to share some of these milestones with you:

Now all the tent fabrics and Protective Mantle parts were back in my studio. My search for a suitable seamstress came to nothing. In this vacuum, I laid out the fabric of the Protective Mantle in my studio. The floor was completely covered, but there was just enough room for everything so that I could get to work laying out different pieces of the Protective Mantle. Wearing white woolly socks and walking carefully, I wandered between the Protective Mantle pieces. Like with the process of hanging pictures, I looked for a good distance and laid out the motifs in a linear fashion – arranging, rearranging them, looking for related motifs, repeating motifs, motifs that complemented each other. I became aware: the Protective Mantle theme has nothing to do with "isolation". We experience protection through interaction, in the "multifaceted you".

So the next thing I did was to put together individual protective mantle pieces - like a collage: in blocks of three or four they tell stories or show different facets of a theme - but here too I had to realise: in this form they didn't really come together; stayed an abstract concept. A deep perplexity took hold.

Saturday, 9th October 2021

I ask my husband to look at the protective mantle. Through his eyes I realised: the mantle itself must -and can - become a work of art and not be degraded to a "hanging surface".

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Later that evening: one of the images that many people associate with the "protective mantle" is Mary's cloak, under which one can shelter in distress and helplessness. Many frescoes and altarpieces tell of a special moment: that of the Annunciation. Mary hears about that she will become pregnant...something unplanned, perhaps even unwanted, will enter her life. She is often depicted as listening inwardly, with her head bowed, as in Fra Angelico's "Annunciation" from 1440 / www.kunst-meditation.it



...and she finds her "yes", her affirmation to the unplanned entering her life.

Sunday, 10th October 2021

Sashiko finds me.

"Sashiko originates from Japan and was originally a repair technique to mend tears, holes, chafed areas and other damage in garments... The patterns in Sashiko are not created at random, nor are they chosen for visual reasons alone. Instead, each pattern has traditional roots and a symbolic meaning. The meaning of the pattern embroidered on the fabric is, according to traditional understanding, supposed to be transmitted to the wearer of the garment and his everyday life." Quote from www.kunstdrucke-textildruck.de/was-ist-sashiko/

Monday, 11th October 2021

Deviating from the original Sashiko patterns, I am looking for symbols that could be suitable for the Protective Mantle. Filling sketch sheets. Probing into the wordlessness.

I find two, sometimes three overlapping circles; at their intersection I embroider small gold-coloured crosses. Seed-like. Like places on maps where a treasure is marked.

Like encounters that are light and bright.

Protective-Mantle-moments.

Tuesday, 12th October 2021

A magazine article on intuition comes to mind. Dorothee Theves writes and quotes in it:

"Intuition is far more than a vague hunch...it is the guide that carries us through difficult decisions, that reminds us at the right moment to be patient, to let go, drop, let be."

"You are only when you stop thinking..."

The mind is an attempt to know the unknown and intuition is the unknowable happening.

But the mysterious is only possible when you don't know." (Osho)

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"Intuition and observation are the sources of our knowledge. We are strangers to an observed thing as long as we do not have the corresponding intuition within us that provides us with the piece of reality that is missing in perception...It is to be taken quite literally when one says of intuition: one creeps through it into all things.... This literal crawling in, this experiencing of the whole, always succeeds when we open our heart, make it wide". (R.Steiner)

"Intuition is our ability to leave room for uncertainty and our willingness to trust the many ways we have developed to gain knowledge and insight, encompassing instinct, experience, faith and reason. The need to be sure, however, silences the intuitive voice." (Brenè Brown)

"The mystics once advised "dropping" the mind...

The unknowable embraces the miraculous, the mysterious...It feeds from our inner marvel, our surrender in the moment, from hearts as wide as the horizon. It shows us what can be when we drop our fear."

I am deeply touched - my heart pounding - to be allowed to share in these secrets of life.

Thursday, 14th October 2021

A colleague, somewhat hesitantly, hands me a text; she had read it and had the feeling that she wanted to give it to me. The title was "The Act of Surrender", written by Don Ruotolo; I read:

"...close the eyes of the soul quietly and abandon yourself to me, so that I alone may carry you to the other shore - like sleeping children in their mother's arms...".

To abandon oneself with confidence - another facet of the Protective Mantle.

Saturday, 16th October 2021

The Sashiko yarns and needles have arrived. I remove all the protective mantle pieces - which had already come together to form small units - from the protective mantle fabric and put them to one side.

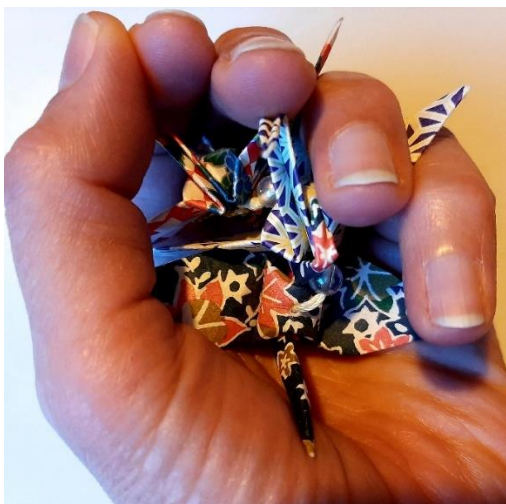
It remains to be seen whether this order will still be valid after the embroidery.

I start embroidering and the needle finds its way through the fabric....

How can I hold something without going into rigidity? I think of the suppleness of grasses and trees, but also of the airy constructions of old railway bridges. Hidden in this is the question: will everything - and not least (my) ME - collapse if I "let the edges soften"?

I remember an exercise of an origami master: she held a paper crane in her hand and said:

this is how you hold it in the West. Then she put it on the open palm and said: this is how we hold in the East.



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Sunday, 17th October 2021

I listen to music while I embroider. From the text by Karin Drucker / Morning Prayer:
"I surrender to my greatest, highest self. I will release any fear that blocks my way".

Monday, 18th October 2021

In the morning on the seat cushion again and again the word "devotion".

In the wonderful book "Islands of Silence" by Erwin Fieger, I see autumn leaves and pine needles in the water - drifting along on the current (of life). That sounds easy and seductive, but seems to me to be the antithesis of: I plan, act, create, want. I feel that after months of planning, the Protective Mantle Project has now arrived at another level. It no longer speaks (only) on a planning-intellectual level; it invites me - as well as the future visitors of the mantle - to dive into the mystery of a protective shell.

When I am in need of protection-tenderness, I surrender, I entrust myself, I let go. No simple thing.

Tuesday, 19th October 2021

I read about the medicinal plant "lady's mantle" - Alchemilla - which is part of the rose family. The plant has been used in folk medicine for centuries. The appearance of the leaves is compared to a "Wetterfleck" (a weather stain) - a Loden cape originating from the alpine region.

... stitching snail-like, following tracks...

Wednesday, 20th October 2021

What did I write at the beginning: Everything was so well planned and then life came and threw - like autumn leaves - all my well-meant order into the air.

Today I remembered the Rilke poem "You don't have to understand life" - in a slightly different form:

"You don't have to understand life, then it will be like a festival. And let it happen to you every day, just as a child lets itself be given many blossoms by each flurry of the wind. Yes, life threw my blueprints into the air - and the Protective Mantle (and I) gain depth and expanse...embroidering around the magic....

Friday, 22th October 2021

I read, "Open your grasping for things; there is no concept to understand or achieve. Open yourself to the wisdom that rises from within you. Listen deeply; listen with every cell of your body." (unknown)

I drive past a fabric shop that offers sewing lessons.

The still ongoing search for a seamstress for the Protective Mantle project is very present and not easy to bear.

Tuesday, 26th October 2021

In the past few days I read the book "My Life with the Shamans". It is based on the experiences of Corine Sombrun, a French sound technician who travels to Mongolia for her work and immerses herself deeply in the shamanic culture there. She describes a winter storm in a Mongolian tent. The wind drives under the tent tarpaulins and uncovers cloths and skins; a huge sense of "abandonment" to the elements and the snowy vastness can be felt. Where is shelter and warmth? It is a matter of going out into the storm and consolidating the protective shell again for survival.

Why does this touch me so much? The protective mantle project has the same qualities and challenges for me. Listening to the sound. Letting the sound guide me.

Wednesday, 27th October

I am allowed to think further! When I act out of the sensation "it is time" and "it finds itself and me", I do not have to hastily cast the Protective Mantle into a mould.

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Immersing myself in Corine Sombrun's shamanic journeys to Mongolia and the Amazon, vivid images of the shamanic robes emerge before my eyes. Through their design (shape, materials, special fabrication) they enhance the protective and healing properties.

Embroidering with sashiko thread on the cloak cover also opens up new ways of looking at how robes and cloaks may look.

I notice how I detach myself from the tent fabric, its colourfulness, the materiality ... how I stride into a WIDE SPACE in which the answer may be found, how the singular Protective Mantle parts find their way to the Protective Mantle.

Like a treasure chest, I hold coloured ribbons, naturally dyed yarns, fabrics, bells, perforated stones against the light in front of my inner eye. It is a matter of choosing from the abundance.

I read: "Do you remember? That moment when everything you were holding on to slipped through your hands? Do you remember what was holding you when everything fell apart? What happened after you let go of control? Who carried you through it? Do you remember the panic and the confusion, even though in your innermost being, you knew in that your wild and delicate soul was not meant to fit into such small squares?...The fear, the struggle to hold it all together!...There is no way back...eyes wide open no matter what comes. You don't know where you'll end up, but you know that not knowing is important. And so you breathe. In and out. In. And out...You breathe, skinless, ...as you remember something the birch tree told you last autumn about growing and healing. And you know in your heart of hearts that you have touched something true...Relax into the embrace of the unknown." Chameli Ardagh

"Finally, I saw that worrying had come to nothing. And gave it up. And took my old body and went out into the morning, and sang." by Mary Oliver

And then, once again, a news story finds me about a courageous woman and an exciting concept in dealing with fashion and sustainability: Nathalie Schaller, founder of the company [eyd]. A production site is located on the edge of the Black Forest; perhaps the missing piece of the puzzle - the seamstresses - can be found here?



...is pinned to my Protective Mantle folder :)

Thursday 28. October 2021

While diving into sashiko embroidery on the protective mantle, I find (or am found?) the company BeBe Bold / Europe. On their homepage I read: "We dream of the rhythm of sashiko stitching, shibori indigos and of yarn-dyed fabrics. The centuries-old techniques of Japanese textile craftsmanship are part of what drove us to create BeBe Bold, which is based both near Byron Bay in Australia and in the east of France at the foot of the Jura Mountains. We love the mishmash of our everyday lives, an Australian-French family with a love of travel and Japanese textiles."

...and they are based "at the foot of the Jura" - only about 3 hours away from here. The Japanese fabrics are gorgeous and I can now imagine a Protective Mantle in indigo blue; then in front of that the Protective Mantle parts, edged by indigo ribbons. I can now think FARther.

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At the beginning of the development of the Protective Mantle, I had "only" decided on the colours of the tent fabrics on offer. However, this decision also means: the Protective Mantle has to be sewn anew, and my embroideries were all for nothing. Maybe not quite. It could be a way...

I feel a joyful excitement; the first fabric sample order goes to France - and I let my embroidery work rest.

Friday, 29th October 2021

A studio visit from documentary filmmaker Dominik Wessely / Berlin, who is making a film about art in church spaces and heard about the Protective Mantle project in this context. He has just come from Colmar and reports on his visit to the Isenheim Altar. The altar was created by Matthias Grünewald between 1512 and 1516 as a commissioned work for the Antonite monastery in Isenheim, Alsace, a monastery dedicated to the care of the sick and infirm. Dominik Wessely draws parallels to the Protective Mantle, which will also come very close to the people.

It is a great pleasure and honour for me that he will accompany the Protective-Mantle project on film.

Monday, 1st November 2021

I read: "It is always darkest before the dawn." Thomas Fuller wrote this in 1650.

Wednesday, 3rd November 2021

I have nothing to lose and write to Nathalie Schaller from [eyd] (fair and sustainably produced fashion) and present the Protective Mantle project, with the request to forward it to one of her partners in the Black Forest. There are women working there who have experienced displacement. This would fit in wonderfully with the protective mantle project.

Also a message to BeBe Bold, the company with the wonderful Japanese fabrics.

I know I have to go to France to see and feel the fabrics. In the afternoon Yves from BeBe Bold calls from England where he is currently giving courses; we make an appointment for 18th November in Arc et Senans / France where the company is based; it's a good 3 hours by train. I am looking forward to seeing and feeling the fabrics - and I am convinced I will find the right fabric.

Friday, 5th November 2021

I buy rolls of wrapping paper to make a "pattern" for the covering of the Protective Mantle; anticipation and intense thinking, planning and discarding go hand in hand.

Sunday, 6th November 2021

Nathalie Schaller from the fashion company [eyd] has replied; she has forwarded my request to the company in Trossingen; my inner tension is great; what if this request also goes nowhere?! I read: "Breathe out ...Dwell in your heart There is nothing to do but receive..." C. Ardagh I smile ...and practise; breath by breath.

Tuesday, 16th November 2021

I'll continue to make sketches for all the Protective Mantle parts (inner tent, outer tent, side parts, straps to hold them in place) in order to calculate the approximate amount of fabric needed for France. It depends on the width of the fabric.

Anticipation to feel the Japanese fabrics as well...and quiet trepidation if there will be enough fabric in stock. In the afternoon, a call from Charlotte, a young seamstress who works for the young, innovative company in Trossingen. She tells me that refugee women and men work in the sewing workshop.

On 3rd December I will go there with the materials and we will discuss how to proceed.

I have to think of the end of the fairy tale about the Frog Prince by the Brothers Grimm: the faithful servant, out of grief (over his master's imprecation), had three iron bands put around his heart.

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When he is released, the bands break open - one after the other.
Not all the "iron bands" have been loosed from my heart yet....

Wednesday, 17th November 2021

Further calculations. Being awake. Sisyphean work.

Cut ribbons 5 cm long from wrapping paper to make the coat model for the dressmaker and seamstresses.

Tomorrow's train to Arc et Senans does not run because of strike; found an alternative route.

I read: "...and creation will give you everything you need and everything you desire. In abundance." (unknown)

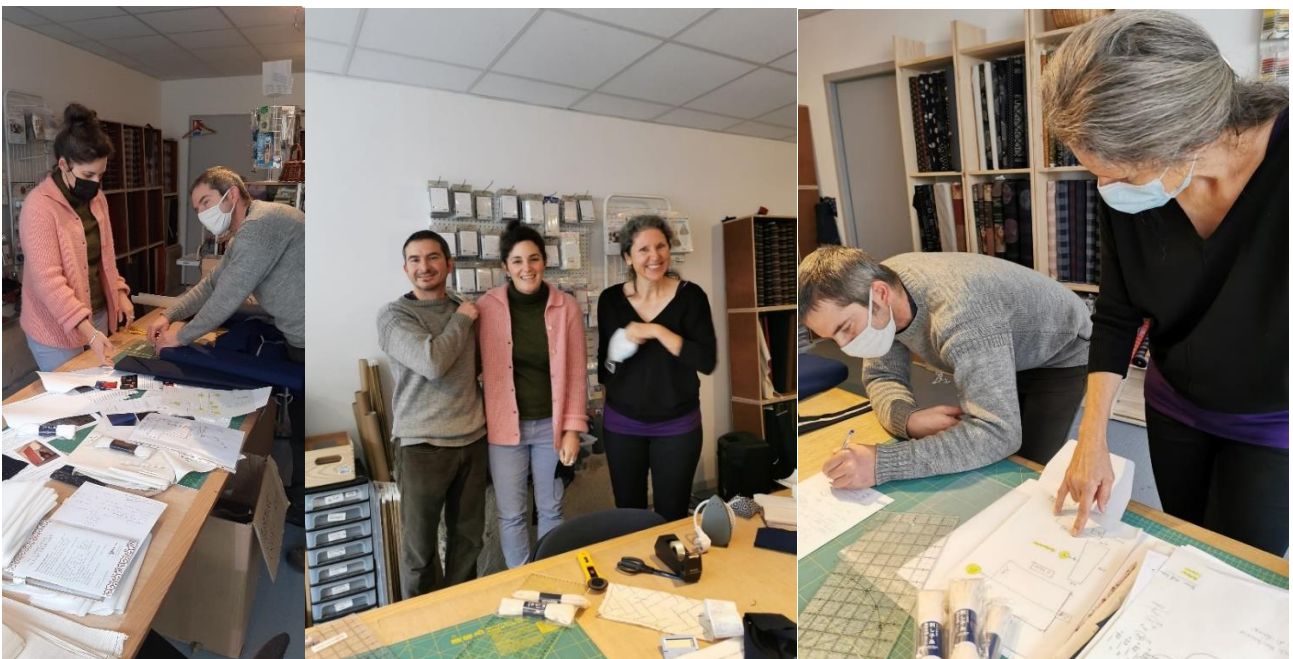
I smile and think of my business card:

abundance and fullness.

Thursday, 18th November 2021

I travel to Arc et Senans to visit BeBe Bold. There I meet Sarah and Yves, a warm-hearted Australian-French couple who run BeBe Bold with great commitment and expertise. We delve into the world of Japanese fabrics - and a special blue is found for the Protective Mantle; this fabric, which is also very appealing to the touch, is dyed in small quantities in the Azumino district.

We spend the next two and a half hours - speaking English - converting all the Protective Mantle pieces, as the Japanese fabric is narrower than European woven fabric; I am able to take three bales with me - a large fabric order to Japan is pending.



Tuesday, 23rd November 2021

I discover the very touching works of Susanna Giese; she designs printed and painted parchment bags as "fragments of the day". I read: "I place myself in your care Hope" I like that. To place myself in the "Ob-hut" (what a beautiful word, meaning "to be in the care of someone/something) of hope". Protective mantle image.

Wednesday, 24th November 2021

Reflecting during a train journey; outside everything appears enchanted:
every stalk, every leaf is covered with hoarfrost crystals.

I realise that in future there will be "discussion rooms" to accompany the Protective Mantle, where people can talk in depth about this multifaceted topic. There is so much to say and share about the Protective Mantle!

The exhibitions of the mantle will be accompanied by this possibility.

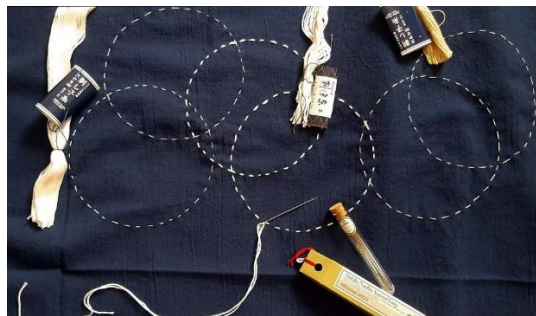
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Thursday, 25th November 2021

I meet one of the participants of the protective mantle project in the post office. We look at each other from behind our masks. She looks me deeply and seriously in the eyes - spreads her arms wide and says: "We need _such_ a big protective mantle."

Monday, 29th November 2021

Embroidery test with the three Sashiko yarns from BeBe Bold. The Sashiko needles come with a small note. I read: it refers to the long tradition of needle production in the Hiroshima region. It takes more than thirty steps before the needles leave the house. This mindfulness (and the experience associated with the making) of something as seemingly simple as a needle touches me and once again deeply opens my heart to the traditional Japanese arts.



Friday, 3rd December 2021

A meeting at a young company in Trossingen, with the boss Christine Ritzi and the seamstress Charlotte Wahl. I learn that four women and two men, who have fled their home countries, work in the embroidery workshop. One of the first orders was for blankets for the refugee camp in Moria. An intensive conversation with many technical questions about the coat design, the procedure and the time schedule - and YES - what joy: the Protective Mantle will be sewn here!

A quiet, touching moment:

during our discussion, one of the Protective Mantle pieces lies with the seamstress. Very gently - almost like in a dream - she puts her hand on top of the embroidered hand. Another Protective Mantle moment.



Days later, a sentence by Tagore finds me:

"And where the old ways end, new land spreads out with its wonders."

With grateful heart and all good wishes. Be wrapped in a protective mantle.



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