CASE STUDY 23

Documentation and education for safeguarding in Estonia

Anu Raud is a well-known Estonian textile artist, a professor at the Tallinn Academy of Art and founding director of the Department of Agricultural Architecture and Domestic Arts and Crafts at the Viljandi Cultural Academy, part of the University of Tartu in Estonia. By mobilizing her own skills and the formal education system in Estonia, Raud has been able to make a substantial contribution to the transmission of skills for traditional knitting and weaving in Estonia.

Raud’s grandfather set up an agricultural estate, Kääriku Farm, at the end of the nineteenth century, which was later sold out of the family. In 1990 Raud bought the land back and revived the farm by establishing a folk-art workshop, museum and teaching centre there. The Heimtali Museum is housed in a former school building on the farm.

The museum contributes to awareness-raising about traditional Estonian knitting and weaving methods. It displays Raud’s collection of ethnographic textiles and is used for workshops for students and schoolchildren, thus contributing to the transmission of skills in making traditional Estonian knitted patterns. Students working with Raud research and document woven and knitted fabric patterns in museums and other collections around the country. This contributes to the Heimtali Museum’s collection of folk-art patterns. Raud and her students then use these patterns in new products, such as soft toys, as well as creating traditional gloves and socks. At a time when many people buy cheap imported clothing, and fewer children learn to knit or weave, reviving Estonian designs in new products seems to be an appropriate way of safeguarding both knitting and weaving skills and the skills to create the complex traditional patterns of the region.