



# Birgit Kratzheller SPINDELN

A contribution to the art project 'localisations'  
for the third Saxonian-State-Garden-Show  
in Großenhain, 2002.

## HISTORY

The first mentioning of the city Großenhain was as a trading center for woad in the early middle ages. Woad was an important plant for the dyeing of wool. Since the Middle Ages resident clothier Commercial enjoyed supraregional recognition for its high quality fine wool fabrics made of local sheep wool.

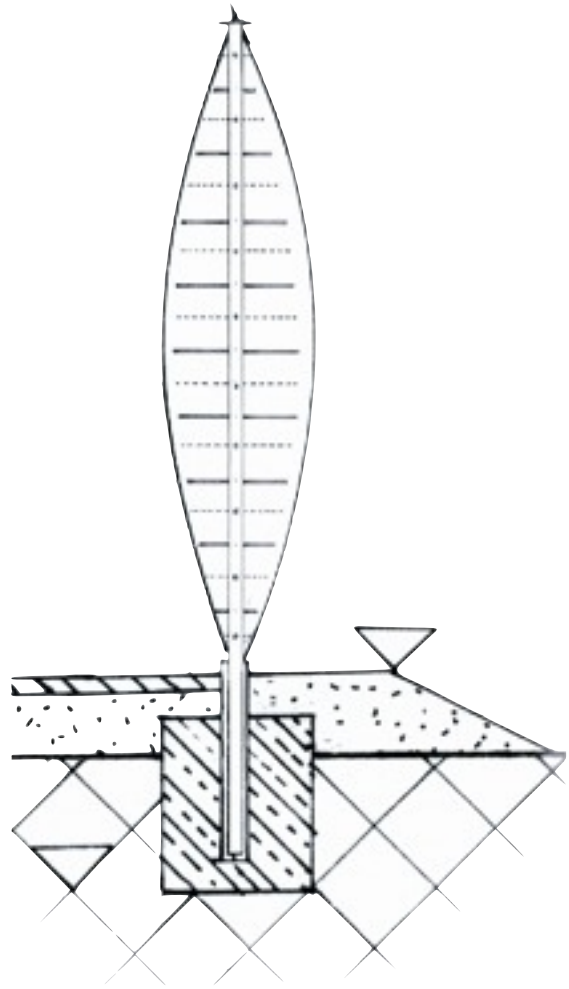
Also in GDR (German Democratic Republic) times wool was a highly valued raw material for the now machine working cloth factories. Today the wool price has dramatically fallen by subsidized wool imports and other factors. So local shepherds do not even achieve the shear rate with the sale of the wool. The result is that wool is often simply disposed as 'waste'....





## THE INSTALLATION

When you entered the premises of the garden show, you could discover it from afar: a grove of slender spindle trees ... irritating just the ivory-white color ... a huge lineup of upright seeds - in shape and color very similar to each other ...but not identical, sometimes slender, sometimes plump, sometimes dull, sometimes acute tapering. The off-white here rather yellowish, there rather iridescent to orange. The material from which these formations are made is raw wool: wool in loose tiles, as they are incurred during the shearing of sheep. They were tied with lace to form compact volumes on a supporting iron substructure.







## VISITORS REACTIONS

Cocoons with fleecy surface .  
 Involuntarily the hands grope to feel  
 the materiality: „Soft ! ... ? ... Yes ,  
 wool ! But wet!“ - fingertips rub  
 testing... „yes, oily- and ....“ the hand  
 moves up to the nose : „... with  
 intensive odor.“ The nose  
 approaches the wool - cautiously at  
 first, then more intense sniffing:  
 „ This smells like ... ? ...  
 Childhood ? ... Stable? ... Baby  
 laundry ? ... Flock of sheep ?“



The associations are probably quite  
 different, because t's in particular the  
 odors that can induce very complex  
 memory scenarios . For some people  
 it'sperhaps the first time to connect  
 wool with this smell ... for others : a  
 trigger for old memories.





## THE THIRTEENTH SPINDLE

Twelve white, slender high spindles of about 3.5 m in height, rotatably mounted, are positioned on a regularly diamond-shaped floor plan .



A bit offside -at first sight against the dark background easily overlooked - is off the grid a thirteenth spindle. As an outsider it enters into opposition to the regular formation of the white group. It is black or to describe it more precisely colorful dark and shows the entire color spectrum of "black" sheep : chestnut brown, auburn, mouse gray, anthracite to deep black with bright spots, almost magpie colors .



Strolling around the group - the black spindle sometimes visually mixes in the amount of white spindles. When approaching on the main track , the group appears as an irregular, loose association. Only from certain angles you can recognize the regular succession, the arrangement on a strict grid .



Standing there like guardians at your service: figures like giants of double human size. By counting through - 12 light and one dark - some people might also have another association : the Sleeping Beauty („Dornröschen“) fairy tale with its twelve good, wise women and the 13 wicked fairy and her fateful spindle.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Angry about not being invited to the christening celebration -the dark woman prove a curse on the princess, that she would prick herself with a spindle on her 15th birthday and die off it. The king -trying to avoid the curse- gave the order to burn all spindles in his kingdom. And for 15 years no spindles were allowed, so no wool could be spun and no fabrics could be produced in the whole kingdom.

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