

**Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union** in cooperation with **NGO Estonian National Costume** invites you to the international folk costume conference,

# LIVING FOLK COSTUME 2

organized within the framework of the annual theme Folk Costume.

The conference will take place at the Tallinn Creative Hub, on **November 9, 2025, from 10:00 to 17.00.**

The programme is complemented by special **exhibitions** and **workshops**. The conference will be held in Estonian and English, with simultaneous interpretation provided.

## Sunday, November 9

**9.30** Gathering. Introduction to the master workshops.

**10.00-11.35** **I ROOTS AND BRANCHES**

ANU RANDMAA

Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union and NGO Rahvarõivas, Board Member

AVE MATSIN

University of Tartu, Viljandi Culture Academy, Head of Heritage Technology Curriculum and Lecturer

TAINA KANGAS, Finland

Finnish Folk Costume Center, Folk Costume Advisor

**11.35-12.35** Lunch and introduction to the master workshops

**12.35-14.10** **II LEAVES AND BLOSSOMS**

ANU PINK

Heritage Technologist

LINA ODELL, Sweden

Textile Artist, first recipient of the Master's Certificate in Folk Costume Tailoring in Sweden

PIRET PUPPART

Professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts, Head of the Department of Fashion Design

**14.10-15.10** Coffee break and introduction to the master workshops

**15.10-16.50** **III SEEDS AND FRUITS**

RAGNI ENGSTRØM NILSEN, Norway

Norwegian Folk Costume Institute, Curator and Archivist

LIIS LUHAMAA

University of Tartu, Textile Specialist

TIINA KULL

Estonian National Museum, Junior Researcher / University of Tartu, PhD Candidate in Ethnology

**We invite all participants to wear folk costumes or national dress at the conference.**

## FEE

The participation fee for the conference is **50€**, which also includes catering (coffee breaks and a hot lunch).

In addition to the conference program, there will be a reception at the Town Hall in the evening, featuring a presentation of regional folk costumes (evening program fee is **60€**, also including catering).

Pre-registration is required.



### **ANU RANDMAA**

Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union and NGO Estonian National Costume, board member

#### **Website “Estonian National Costumes”, National Costume Schools and Advisory Chambers**

The first international folk costume conference in Estonia took place in Tartu in 2012. A year earlier, the Ministry of Culture had launched a support program to establish the website Estonian National Costumes. Alongside the technical development of the website, sample sets of folk costumes were produced, and existing costumes were photographed across different counties. In parallel, the Estonian Folk Culture Centre initiated folk costume schools, while NGO Estonian National Costume began offering general training courses on traditional attire.

The annual themes of the Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union focused on national costumes to better highlight and support this field – Eesti-oma-kuub (“Estonian-own-coat”), Eesti-oma-ehe (“Estonian-own-jewel”). In cooperation with the Estonian National Museum, publications introducing historical objects were issued in connection with these annual themes. My presentation at that time addressed all of this.

Thirteen years have passed since the previous conference, and it is time to reconsider these topics and review the development of the field. What has happened in the meantime? Where do we stand today, and how is the field functioning today? What are the plans for the future?



### **AVE MATSIN**

Programme Director of the Estonian Native Craft Curriculum and Lecturer at the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy

#### **The Role of Higher Education in Folk Costume Studies: The Case of the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy**

For nearly 15 years, the Estonian Native Craft (BA) and Creative Applications of Cultural Heritage (MA) programmes at the University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy have provided students with the opportunity to explore the research and making of folk costumes in depth, alongside other textile techniques. Through close collaboration between students and lecturers, the approaches, understandings, and methodologies for studying these cherished garments of the Estonian people have significantly evolved. At the same time, traditional production techniques—revived and refined through research—have found new life in contemporary practice.

This presentation offers an overview of the current state of teaching, research, and development in the field of folk costumes and highlights some of the most significant outcomes.



### **PIRET PUPPART**

Professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts, Head of the Department of Fashion Design

#### **Rootwork: Tracing roots, shaping features**

In her presentation, Piret Pupart, Professor of Fashion Design at the Estonian Academy of Arts, explores thoughtful approaches to integrating heritage and tradition into contemporary fashion design — whether as a technical method or as a meaningful narrative. Learning about heritage and engaging with the past not only supports creative growth but also helps individuals reach greater clarity within themselves: finding inner balance, shaping identity, filling existential gaps, or offering an anchor in increasingly turbulent environments.

The presentation focuses on student projects developed over the years within the Estonian Academy of Arts. These works demonstrate how reconnecting with the past and rediscovering one's roots can help emerging designers find both their creative voice and a personal compass for the future.



### **TAINA KANGAS, Finland**

National Costume Centre of Finland, National Costume Consultant

#### **Introduction of the activities of the Finnish National Costume Centre, what it's tasks include, and how national costumes are assembled today**

The history of Finnish national costumes dates back 140 years to the then autonomous Russian territory of Finland, when Emperor Alexander III and his wife arrived in Lappeenranta in August 1885 for an imperial visit. The Empress was presented with a beautiful rowing boat, rowed by eight women dressed in national costumes. This date, August 5, 1885, has been named the first official appearance of Finnish national costumes.

Over the decades, several prominent national costume researchers have worked in our country and have compiled national costume models. Today we have over 400 different national costumes.

Today, the National Costume Center of Finland's responsibilities include matters related to the national costumes of the Finnish-speaking regions of our country. The Brage Costume Office, in turn, takes care of matters related to the costumes of the Swedish-speaking regions of our country. The main responsibilities of the National Costume Centre of Finland are information, education and guidance in the field, as well as exhibition activities and collection management. An important part of the task is costume revisions and the compilation of new national costume models. The concrete result of these is our unique model costume collection. The collection currently comprises over a hundred costume ensembles and is constantly growing with new costume projects.



## **ANU PINK**

Heritage Technologist

### **“IMAGE and WORD” – A Synergy that Can Lead to Small New Discoveries**

In the study of folk costumes, the most numerous sources are undoubtedly the old garments themselves, dating from a time when they were still worn in daily life. These objects give us an excellent picture of how clothing once looked — their colours, shapes, and cuts. A skilled researcher can also reconstruct the techniques and methods used in making them. And yet, something remains missing. By examining garments in isolation, we cannot know how they were worn — what pieces were combined, layered, or reserved for certain occasions. This is where “image and word” may come to our aid.

The presentation focuses on interpreting old images with the help of old texts — or perhaps, conversely, interpreting old texts through old images. It may seem surprising that even in 2025 it is still possible, as a folk costume enthusiast, to discover historical pictures and texts whose existence was previously unknown. Are such finds a matter of pure chance, or could there be a methodology that leads us to these “new old” discoveries?

The presentation will focus on five old images of Estonian men. In analysing these pictures, old texts as well as existing museum objects will be used. The result is a bundle of clues about men’s clothing that could also provide support for folk costume makers.



## **LINA ODELL**, Sweden

Textile artist and Sweden's first journeyman in folk costume tailoring

### **Folk Costume as an Art Form — Celebration or Disgrace**

Lina Odell will talk about her journey in sewing and creating folk costumes and how her way of approaching the tradition through art has broadened the way Swedes now wear traditional clothing.

Lina was born in the most folk costume-dense area in Sweden but never really understood the national costumes she was wearing. For her it was just fancy clothing, and she took the surrounding heritage for granted. When she moved to Denmark in her late teens, she discovered that she had grown up with a folklore treasure. Three years later she started to study folk costume making and since then she has continued to be fascinated by folk art and costume.

All over the world, we can currently see a new wave of interest for culture, folk art and national costumes, but unlike the last folklore wave, this time the focus has shifted from community to individual.

This raises questions about what is permitted and by whom, why certain standards are established and what their origins are. Does the risk of losing heritage come from breaking the rules, or could such challenges actually deepen public understanding? What are the potential risks — and the possible benefits.

In Sweden today, the long tradition of slöjd-boutiques has vanished with only five stores left in the whole country, and only a few of them sell materials for folk



costume sewing. Many patterns belong to folkdance groups or individuals that will not share them with the public. With the new interest in folk tradition and national costumes we see a blank space where people cannot find patterns, information or materials to make them. A few active groups have started projects to digitalise patterns but there is still a huge gap between the tradition and the creators, and it takes far too long.

How can we make information and materials more available for the public?



**LIIS LUHAMAA**

University of Tartu, Textile Specialist

### **What Were Estonian Traditional Textiles Really Dyed With?**

Estonian museums hold rich collections of ethnographic textiles. These collections primarily consist of festive clothing worn by rural people, many of which—such as striped skirts and pick-up woven belts—are cheerfully multi-coloured. Until now, the dyes used in Estonian traditional textiles have mostly been studied using written archival sources and visual observation. However, last year, chemical dye analyses were conducted for the first time on Estonian traditional costume items as part of the international project Colour4CRAFTS. These analyses yielded fascinating and sometimes unexpected results.

The presentation focuses on the analysis of red woollen yarns from ten pick-up woven belts collected from Southern Estonia. These belts, preserved in the Estonian National Museum, were selected because descriptions collected alongside them indicated that the yarns had been dyed with a plant referred to as “ninn.” In the local dialect, “ninn” could mean oregano, St. John's wort, yellow daisy, or it might have simply been a general term for a flower or plant. In addition to presenting the results of the dye analyses of the belts dyed with “ninn,” the methodology that allows for more precise identification of historical textile dyes using modern scientific techniques is also introduced.



**TIINA KULL**

Estonian National Museum, Junior Researcher  
University of Tartu, PhD student in Ethnology

### **The Trade of Callimanco Fabric on the Baltic Sea at the Turn of the 18th and 19th Centuries**

At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, striped, glossy-surfaced callimanco fabric originating from Norwich, England, spread to nearly all towns along the Baltic Sea. Although the earliest users of this fabric in Estonia remain unknown, its visual impact holds an important place in the history of our folk costume: the beginning of the striped skirt fashion is directly associated with callimanco.

The presentation traces the movement of this fabric through archival sources, customs registers, and shipping records, comparing these findings with objects preserved in museum collections in Estonia and neighbouring countries. A study

conducted in collaboration with British historian Michael Nix reveals a detailed picture of textile trade around the Baltic Sea, showing that the largest volumes of English worsted woollens moved toward St. Petersburg. Between 1760 and 1820, merchants in St. Petersburg purchased 76% of exported fabrics, while Tallinn (Reval) was the second-largest destination port, accounting for 13%. Considering that one skirt required an average of six meters of fabric, the quantities arriving via Tallinn would have been enough to make over 200,000 striped skirts. Yet only four callimanco objects from Northern Estonia have survived in museum collections. A similar—or in some cases inverse—discrepancy appears in other Baltic Sea countries, pointing to the role of re-export and smuggling in shaping the regional distribution of textiles.



**RAGNI ENGSTRØM NILSEN**, Norway  
Norwegian Institute of Bunad and Folk Costume, Curator and Archivist

### Traditional costumes in Norway – past and present

In Norway, traditional costumes are worn by people of all ages, genders, and social backgrounds. The costumes are revitalizations of pre-industrial folk dress traditions and have since the early 20th century been an integral part of family celebrations. While traditional costumes can be said to be more visible and popular than ever, there are many challenges and vulnerabilities in the field.

In December 2024, “Traditional costumes in Norway – Craftmanship and Social Practice” was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Five organizations have been working together to achieve this milestone since 2017, as a response to some of the challenges we face in preserving our living cultural heritage. Work is now underway on what steps must be taken to safeguard the use of traditional costumes.

The presentation will outline the history behind the use of traditional costumes in Norway and share insights into the situation today. The presentation will also account for the work of the Norwegian Institute for Bunad and Folk Costume, a national centre of expertise, funded by the Norwegian state. The institute carries out documentation, research, dissemination and consultancy on traditional costumes and folk dress.



Conference **Moderators** are LIINA VESKIMÄGI-ILISTE ja AVE MATSIN

#### Organizing Team:

Liina Veskimägi-Iliste  
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