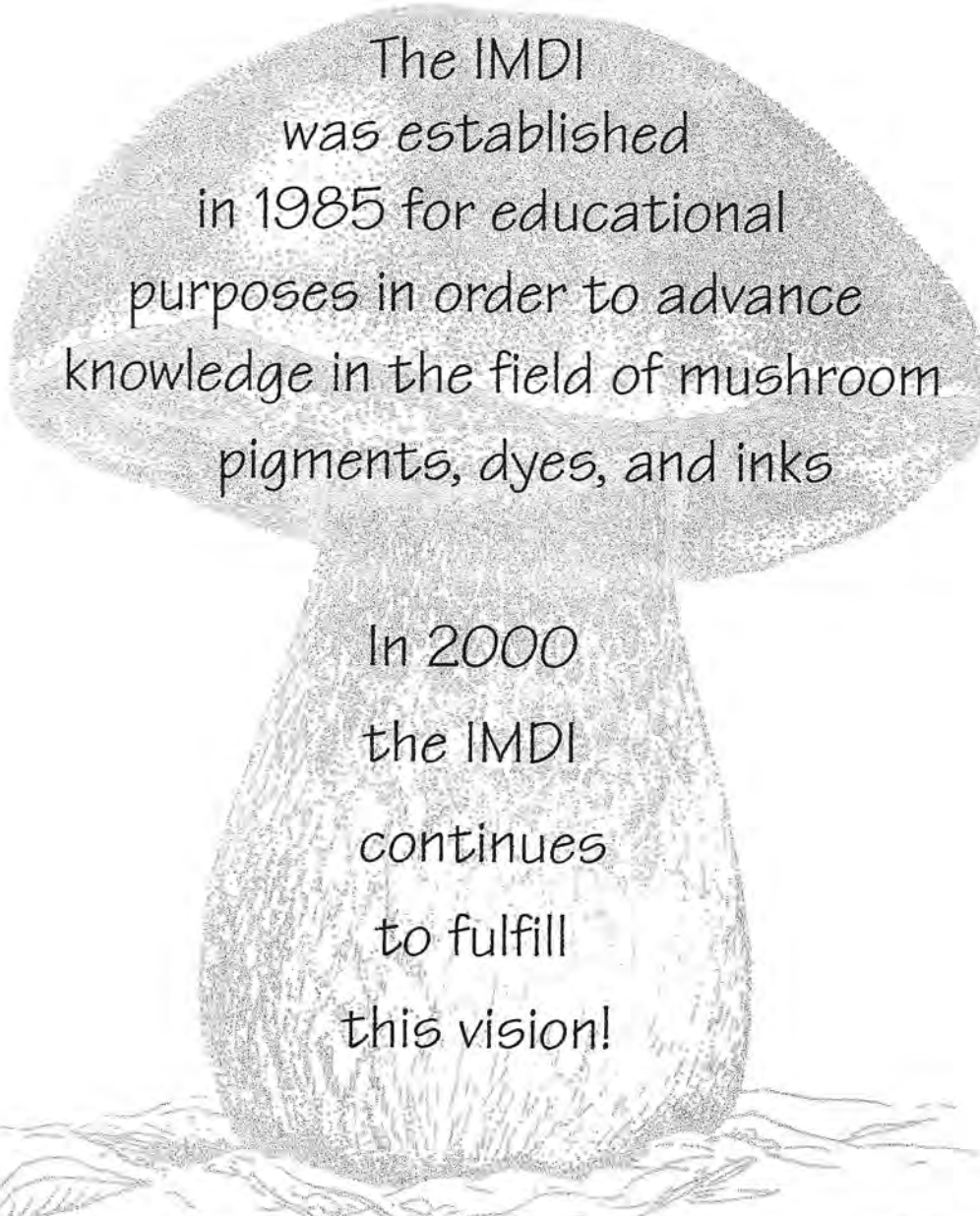


INTERNATIONAL MUSHROOM DYE-GEST

Volume 1, Issue 1

A Newsletter of the International Mushroom Dye Institute

Fall / Winter 2000



The IMDI
was established
in 1985 for educational
purposes in order to advance
knowledge in the field of mushroom
pigments, dyes, and inks

In 2000
the IMDI
continues
to fulfill
this vision!

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- INSIDE:*
- *Message from the Director*
 - *A brief history of 30 yrs of Mushroom Dyes*
 - *IFFF and the future of the Symposia*
 - *Request for your mushroom dye memories*

So, how did it all begin?

In the beginning, (1968, as near as any of us can remember), while Miriam Rice was teaching Children's Art at the Mendocino Art Center, in Mendocino, CA., she began experimenting with natural dyes to make inks for her own block printing art. During that time, she took a class called "Introduction to Mushrooms", taught by the late eminent mycologist, Dr. Harry Thiers. Shortly thereafter, always eager to combine the best possibilities of both worlds, Miriam took a clump of sulfur yellow *Naematoloma fasciculare* mushrooms, and tossed them into a dye pot with a bit of wool. Fortunately, (for all of us,) this action resulted in a clear bright lemon yellow dye and voila! "mushroom dyeing" was born!



1972 was a bumper crop year for mushrooms and Miriam experimented with everything she found. She attended all of the mushroom fairs and forays trying to identify the mushrooms she was using, while gradually building up a vast collection of labeled samples of mushroom dyed wool. Many of the weavers and dyers in the Mendocino area were caught up in her excitement, continually providing Miriam with new mushrooms for her experiments.

In 1973, weaver Jan DeVries (see article "Sometimes on a Good Day") encouraged Miriam to contact Thresh Publications in Santa Rosa (a small publisher which had done several little books on spinning, dyeing, and weaving) and show them her dye experiments. Robert and Christine Thresh encouraged her to write up her experiences and experiments. While teaching a class in textile arts at College of Redwoods in Fort Bragg, she introduced the concept of using mushrooms for natural dyes. She encouraged the weavers, by using cardboard and other simple looms, to weave entirely with Mushroom Dyed yarns. Many of these pieces were photographed and appeared in her little book.

Meanwhile, the Threshes introduced Miriam to Dorothy Beebee, who agreed to do pen/ink illustrations of the mushrooms for Miriam's book, thus beginning a long, flourishing, working relationship. Dorothy had been doing natural dyes and spinning since 1959, while working as a freelance scientific illustrator, and this was a natural combination of the best of both worlds for her too!

So, the wonderful little book, "Let's Try Mushrooms for Color" by Miriam C. Rice, was published by Thresh Publications, Santa Rosa, CA in late 1974, while Miriam continued to experiment further and teach workshops in mushroom dyeing. When she showed this new book to Sandra Metzler-Smith, the enthusiastic Curator of the Mendocino County Museum in

Willits, CA., a museum display of the book and its mushroom dyed weavings was conceived, and the exhibit "Natural Dyeing with Fungi" was opened in August 1976.

Miriam, always the curious one, had continued to discover more brilliantly hued dyes. In late 1974, while the book was literally on the presses, she discovered astonishing red, rose, burgundy, and vermilion hues emerging from a "mysterious" mushroom found growing under the Bishop pines in Mendocino. Samples of these mushrooms, (tiny remnants literally scraped out of the dye pot), were later sent to be microscopically identified in April, 1975 by Dr. Daniel Stuntz and Dr. Susan Libonati-Barnes at the University of Washington. They were identified as belonging to the genus *Cortinarius*.

Lovely purple, blue and green hues emerged from other mushrooms, - continuing to enchant and inspire weavers far and wide, and this widely expanded palette of extraordinary dye color evolved into a new book documenting the expanded research by Miriam. "Mushrooms for Color" was published in 1980 by Mad River Press, Eureka, CA.

In the Summer of 1980, the "1st International Mushroom Dyes Textile Show - FUNGI and FIBERS", was announced, co-sponsored by the Mendocino County Museum and the Mendocino Art Center Textile Apprenticeship Program. It was held from June 8 - June 20, 1980 at the Mendocino Art Center. (The exhibit had now become "international" because of a weaving contributed from Canada!

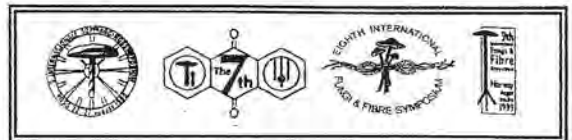
Meanwhile, Dorothy had shared her enthusiasm about the mushroom dyes with her friend from college days, Carla, and her husband Erik Sundström, sending these avid amateur mycologists a copy of Miriam's first book when it was published in 1974. This inspired them to experiment with similar mushroom species in Sweden, beginning a lively exchange of knowledge across the oceans, which continues to this day. Confirming the dye pigments of the *Dermocybe* group of *Cortinarius* in Sweden, with the similar identifications here in USA, their experiments evolved into a book about the comparable mushroom dyes of Sweden which for the sake of continuity in the mushroom dye research, Dorothy was invited to Sweden to illustrate. In 1981 "Färga med svampar", by Carla and Erik Sundström was published by ICA Bokforlag, Stockholm, Sweden. The resulting enthusiasm by the fiber art conscious Swedes in the organization, in 1983, "The 2nd International Fungus and Fiber Exhibition", hosted by Swedish fiber artists in Stockholm. Books on mushroom dyes in Norwegian and Danish soon followed.

The Sundströms suggested collaborating on a book with Miriam, as a celebration of the many lovely mushroom-dyed fiber art pieces woven, knitted, felted, embroidered and crocheted over the last 10 years of mushroom dye experiments in North America and in Scandinavia. "Skapa av Svampfärgat Garn" by Carla and Erik Sundström and Miriam C. Rice was published by ICA Bokforlag. The authors then decided jointly to invest a portion their royalties from this book into the formation of a non-profit organization for educational purposes and the promotion of mushroom dyes. Thus THE INTERNATIONAL MUSHROOM DYE INSTITUTE was established in 1985.



The IMDI was founded to encourage the use of fungal pigments; to further research on their extraction and employment; to encourage research on cultivation of dye fungi; to financially aid artists and researchers to participate in the international symposia and exhibitions. These commitments are just as urgent in 2000 as they were in 1985!

Travel awards were given to fiber artists from the USA and Sweden in 1985, 1987, 1990, and 1993 to enable them to attend International Symposia. The IMDI intends to continue this financial commitment to fiber artists in need. Continuing projects of the IMDI include compiling a history of the art of mushroom dyeing, papermaking, pigments for the painters, and the Symposia; building a library of research materials based on the work of Miriam Rice and others; and forming a bridge of communication to mushroom dyers all over the world. We need YOUR contributions as interest in Mushrooms for Color, Paper, and Pigment continues to expand throughout the international community. The IMDI looks forward to your membership and your input to help us to realize this commitment!



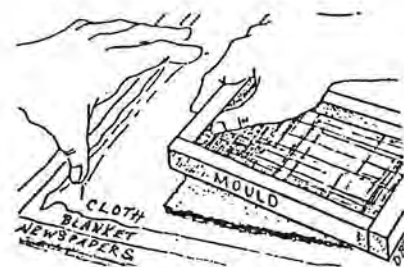
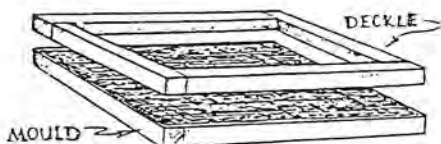
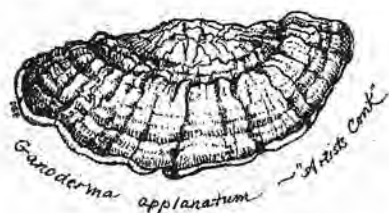
MUSHROOM DYE / PAPERMAKING EXHIBITS
(A Brief History)

- 1976 - 1st National Mushroom Dye Exhibit
"Natural Dyeing with Fungi", Willits, CA, USA
- 1980 - 1st International Mushroom Dyes Textile Show
"Fungi and Fibers", Mendocino, CA, USA
- 1982 - "2nd National Mushroom Dyed Fungi & Fibers Show", Mendocino, CA, USA
- 1983 - 2nd International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Stockholm, SWEDEN
- 1985 - 3rd International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Sorø, DENMARK
- 1988 - 4th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Mendocino, CA, USA
- 1990 - 5th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Voss, NORWAY
- 1992 - "Let's Try Polypores for Paper" exhibit,
Mendocino Art Center, CA
- 1993 - 6th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Edinburgh, SCOTLAND
- 1995 - 7th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Hännösand, SWEDEN
- 1997 - 8th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium
Saranac Lake, New York, USA
(It was here that the idea for an International Federation to oversee the Symposia was first discussed by Symposium attendees.)
- 1999 - 9th International Fungi/Fiber Symposium
Hønefoss, NORWAY

("International Federation of Fungi & Fibre" was organized at the 9th International Symposium in Norway -see Carol Lees' article)
- 2001 - 10th International Fungi & Fiber Symposium will be held in
Rovaniemi, FINLAND!

The Possibilities of Paper and Pigments

It was while she was experimenting with mushroom dyes back in the 70's, the possibility of making paper out of the fungal detritus leftover from the dyes occurred to Miriam Rice. Always a passionate advocate of Recycling, this seemed to be the natural solution for disposal of the fungal residue from the dye process. She experimented with a few mushrooms for paper, but the fever of the dye experiments prevailed over all until 1985, when she introduced the concept of paper making from fungi in Denmark at the 3rd International Fungi and Fiber Symposium. Paper making workshops were conducted in 1988 at the 4th International, in California, and again in the 1990 Symposium in Norway. Miriam published her experiments in the Winter 1991 issue of *Mushroom, the Journal*. In 1992, The exhibit of "Let's Try Polypores for Paper" caught world-wide attention and another new art form with mushrooms was officially launched!



Well, all of that lovely paper just invited painting, and in 1992, Miriam began experimenting with making watercolor paints from the mushrooms. The results of her experiments were introduced in a workshop in 1999 to the 9th International Fungi/Fiber Symposium in Honefoss, Norway and she still continues to enthusiastically experiment with all of the new possibilities in mushrooms for dyes, paper, and pigment!

The Invitation Still Stands...

Stay with, join in, and pass it on!

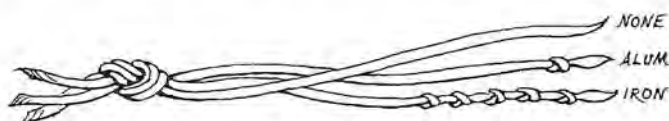
My thanks and gratitude to all contributors and their contributions to the expanding knowledge of and continuous experience with mushrooms for color and texture. The mushroom colors reveal and evoke an evermore delighted squeal of joy as the third generation discovers anew the fruits of over thirty years acquaintance with each other through the fungal kingdom.

Miriam C. Rice

*Miriam C. Rice, Director,
International Mushroom Dye Institute*

About Mordants – Then and Now...

For many years now, due to growing awareness of the toxic nature of some of the mordants we have used in the past (tin, chrome, and copper), our experimentation has shifted to the use of only ALUM and IRON mordants for dyeing. This choice is for our own safety as well as a contribution towards a less polluted biosphere. Results recorded for more than a decade, now show little need for dependence on toxic mordants in order to achieve the broad diversity of a full color spectrum including the bright reds, yellows and blues. Please join us in this effort!



THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FUNGI AND FIBRE by Carol Lee

If you missed the 1999 International Symposium of Fungi and Fibre held in Hønefoss, Norway, I'm sorry! We had such a good time, learned some new things in dealing with Fungi, met new and old friends, dyed beautifully colored yarn, silk, paper, hunted mushrooms in the forests of central Norway, and tried our hands at watercolors with mushroom pigments. The exhibits were spectacular, with major work being done with the mushrooms and fibers. I had a wonderful time and stayed on with friends and relatives for several extra weeks hunting more mushrooms to send back to the US for future use.

In Hønefoss, the group as a whole decided to have a representative elected from each country present to serve on a loosely organized "Board". This "Board" will help "guide" the planning of future Symposiums, help in choosing where they will be presented next, suggest topics for discussion at future Symposia, etc. The Delegates decided to call this "Board" the "INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FUNGI AND FIBRE". Each Delegate will be in contact with Fungi and Fiber persons in their own country, collecting suggestions to be presented at the next Symposium. Anyone having suggestions for the direction studies, or the programs which you would like to see at our Symposiums, please send them on to me to present at our "Board" Meeting. 2001 is approaching at a rapid pace.

If you have not yet started your travel account for

that year, I suggest you do so soon. We will be holding the 10th International Symposium of Fungi and Fiber in late August 2001. The date has been set as August 15 - 19th, It will be held in conjunction with the Mycological Assn. of Lapland, The Rovala Institute, and The University of Lapland, in Rovaniemi, Finland.

Rovaniemi is a very special place in the world. It is located right on the Arctic Circle, and "word" has it that the Fungi grows as big as the trees here. The first travelers arrived there about 8,000 years ago, so they are used to dealing with travelers. From Helsinki, it can be reached by Air...7 flights daily, Train, 7 trains daily, by car or bus. There is a great deal to see and do in this area, and English is supposed to be spoken/studied there. I would advise a few extra days in the area if possible. I will send on additional information as soon as it is available to me.

At the moment, we already have underway some plans for the 2003 Symposium. It will be another exciting excursion into a world far from ours, so begin to make plans for that year also. We have plans to get a Web Site up and running for the IFFF. If you have pictures/information on present or past Symposiums that you would like to share, please send them on to me and I will see that they get to the appropriate place.

Carol Lee

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BOARD MEMBERS OF THE IFFF

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Johanna Maria Burgman, Germany

Irene Hodgson, England

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A BRIDGE TO THE PAST....By Janet Hope-deVries

Sometimes, (on a very good day), one can look back on ones lifetime and recognize that some small gesture one made years ago, continues to make a difference in the world. That time for me is the day in the very early 1970's on which I introduced Miriam Rice, teacher, artist and friend, to Robert and Christine Thresh, the owners of a small publishing company in Santa Rosa, CA. In connecting Miriam's enthusiasm and handfuls of mushroom dyed yarn strands with Robert's and Christine's vision, was to see it evolve into a little book called "Let's Try Mushrooms for Color". Published by the Thresh Publications in 1974, it has indeed "mushroomed" thirty years later into something above and beyond all expectations!

It was an innocent gesture. I had been taking textile classes with Miriam at the local Junior College and truly admired how this woman viewed everything as a doorway and as material to be used creatively. It is no accident (yet she may claim otherwise) when she utilized the bounty of a mushroom gathering expedition with her knowledgeable friend Liselotte to try dyeing with a handful of rotting non-edible mushrooms. Miriam's house and kitchen was and continues to be a wonderful place where discoveries are constantly being made, and this one...that mushrooms evoke a range of colors...was one of the biggest. Don't you agree? I am just delighted that I was able to take her by the hand and contribute to the process of connecting her discoveries to the rest of the world ...it leaves us all the richer to have had Miriam in it!

OLD MEMORIES AND NEW EXPECTATIONS by Andrey von Waldenfels-Marks

My childhood was graced with autumn walks through the towering fir forests of my home country to look for edible mushrooms. It's a bit like looking for Easter eggs in the garden, if you know what I mean. Every find creates ripples of joy through the whole body and the perfect shapes of these little fruits of the forest give pleasure to an artists' eye. When I moved to California, and autumn was spreading its cool fog over the hills and through the forests, I was looking for the same mushroom experience of my childhood on the Western edge of the world. Lo! and behold, I found an announcement in the Mendocino Art Center's bulletin about a mushroom dye class given by Miriam Rice. "Yes, here it is", I exclaimed to my husband, "I told you that eventually I always get what I want,," and I signed up.

With a mind full of old memories and new expectations I joined the class of 1977. Patiently I waited for the promised foray through local woods to hunt for the elicit edible fungi. Rainy days went by and all we did was cook up dried mushrooms in little dye pots and added tiny skeins of yarns to find the color that this particular fungi might render. All this had nothing to do with me, I pondered, and was overjoyed when we went out on the third day to scan the moist and mossy grounds under pine trees to collect-what?-dye mushrooms. After hours of exhilarating

time outdoors we returned with baskets full of mushrooms but only 3 edible species, which I had not been familiar with in Germany. By that time the excitement over the dyepots was increasing. What incredible colors! So many different tones, and they changed with different mordants. My artistic being outweighed my culinary self, and I was hooked. From this class on, I experimented with mushrooms for dye.



I apprenticed to local dyer and tapestry weaver Tigerlily Jones who taught me to spin local fleece, dye it with natural dyes and to weave it all into tapestries. Scenes from the coast, which I had painted in oil, now

transformed into hand-woven wall hangings. Miriam and I became close friends, and I assist her in classes or at shows whenever she needs me. Mushrooms are a seasonal endeavor, so 3 weeks after the first rain, I take my dogs and /or children or friends to scan the forest for its new fruits. It's exhilarating for body and spirit, and results in an endless row of dye pots inside and on the balcony where the colors are obtained for the coming years.