

The Mushroom Dye-Gest

#8 The Newsletter of the International Mushroom Dye Institute Winter 2004/2005

IMDI Newsletter c/o D. Beebee, (Editor), P.O. Box 428, Forestville CA 95436, USA E-mail: dbeebee@sonic.net

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



"Mushroom dyeing in Denmark and recollections from the 3rd Fungi and Fibre Symposium in Sorö, Denmark, 1985"
by Flemming Rune
(in Danish and English)



"Continental Drift" -
Arriving in Denmark, 1985
by Tigerlily Jones



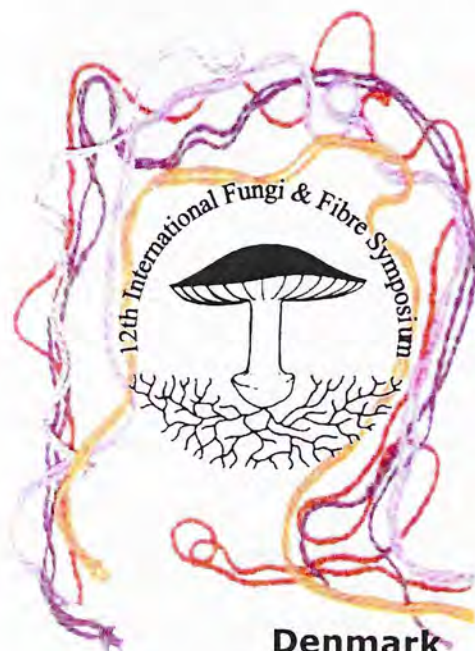
"The Dyer Cortinarius"
by Carol Lee

Remembering Sorö, Denmark - 1985 and the 3rd International Fungi & Fiber Exhibition



Kristiansminde Gl. Skovriddergård

...and now looking forward,
20 years later,
to the
12th International Fungi & Fiber Exhibition
in Haslev, Denmark - August 2005



Denmark
23-28 August 2005

<http://theochem.ki.ku.dk/~pgs/fungifibre/fungifibre.html>

Svampefarvning i Danmark – og et tilbageblik til det 3. Internationale Svampefarvnings symposium i Sorø, 1985

Af Flemming Rune,

Formand for Foreningen til Svampekundskabens Fremme

Farvning med svampe kom til Danmark i kølvandet på Miriam Rice's to bøger *Let's Try Mushrooms for Color* (1974) and *Mushrooms for Color* (1980). Garnfarvning med planter og laver er en gammel tradition i Norden, så den nye interesse for farvning med svampe slog rod og udviklede sig hurtigt i Danmark. I efteråret 1980 introducerede Merete og Poul Printz svampefarvningen i Danmark ved at teste forskellige svampe, bl.a. forskellige slørhatte, der kunne farve rødt. En lille artikel og et farvefoto i svampeforeningens tidsskrift, *Svampe*, medførte dannelsen af en aktiv svampefarvningsgruppe i foreningen, og i de flgende år blev talrige arter afprøvet i farvegryden.

Carla og Erik Sundströms farveillustrerede bog, *Färga med svampar* (1982) stimulerede yderligere interessen. Svampeforeningens daværende formand, Hjördis Hall Andersen, engagerede sig kraftigt i at prøve nye svampearter og finde nye farver, og i 1985 fik hun udgivet sin bog, *Svampefarvning*, hvori adskillige nye farvesvampe blev introduceret. Det følgende år koordinerede hun afholdelsen af det 3. Internationale Svampefarvnings symposium i Sorø.

Symposiet blev afholdt på den tidligere skovridergård Christiansminde midt i Sorø Sønderkov, mindre end to timers kørsel fra Københavns centrum. Ejendommen var af Københavns Universitet blev ombygget til en feltstation, hvor 30 studerende kunne overnatte – et ideelt sted for et svampesymposium – og akkurat stort nok til at huse symposiet dengang.

Lidt over 30 deltagere fra USA og Europa deltog i symposiet i dagene 9.-15. september 1985. En del af studenterlaboratoriet var blevet omdannet til en farvestrålende udstilling af svampefarvede sweaters, huer og andet strikketøj, farvede garnbundter og tæpper, hundreder af små farveprøver og bunker af friske farvesvampe, ikke mindst Cinnoberbladet Slørhat, som kan være meget almindelig i unge granplantager. De fleste dage eksperimenterede deltagerene med forskellige bejdsere og farvesvampe i de glimrende laboratoriefaciliteter.

Fleere imponerende billedtæpper var udstillet af Marianne Ling-Fischer fra Sverige og Tigerlily Jones fra USA og gav et indtryk af det store potentiale for

tekstilkunstnere som netop svampefarvning har pga. den uendelige mængde sarte nuancer, der kan opnås ved farvning med svampe. Selv dybblå og violette farver, der ellers kan være vanskelige at lave ved plantefarvning, dominerede i nogle billedtæpper, og arter af både Okkerporesvamp, Kødpigsvamp og Læderpigsvamp blev afprøvet for at gentage succesen.

Ved symposiet introducerede Miriam Rice papirfremstilling af svamperester fra farveprocessen. Efter at have eksperimenteret med papirfremstilling ud fra farvesvamperester gennem en årrække havde hun udviklet den grundlæggende teknik, der siden dannede grundlaget for alle de workshops om papirfremstilling, som har været afholdt på de senere svampefarvnings symposier.



Symposiet blev organiseret af en meget aktiv gruppe af danske svampefarvere, der ud over Hjördis Hall Andersen omfattede bl.a. Susanne Thorbek, Susanne Klug-Andersen, Jytte Albertsen, Eva Pabst, Ida Howalt og Lilian Andersson. De fleste er stadig i dag engageret i svampefarvning og vil deltage i afholdelsen af det 12. Internationale Svampefarvnings symposium i Haslev, 2005.

Denne gang vil deltagerantallet være firdoblet, og Christiansminde med sin hyggelige atmosfære

kan ikke længere rumme symposiet. Haslev Højskole ligger imidlertid kun 25 km fra Christiansminde, i en mindre provinsby omgivet af skove på de fleste sider. Den vil utvivlsomt kunne danne nogle perfekte rammer for, at svampefarvekunstnere fra hele verden kan mødes, udstille, udveksle erfaringer og svampefarvning og papirfremstilling, og ikke mindst have nyttige workshops i behagelige omgivelser.



Mushroom dyeing in Denmark – and recollections from the 3rd Fungi and Fibre Symposium in Sorö, Denmark, 1985

By Flemming Rune,
President of the Danish
Mycological Society

Mushroom dyeing came to Denmark in the wake of the two books by Miriam Rice, *Let's Try Mushrooms for Color* (1974) and *Mushrooms for Color*, (1980). Dyeing with plants and lichens is a time-honoured tradition in the Nordic countries, so the new interest in fungi dyes soon mushroomed in Denmark. During fall 1980 the first yarn was dyed with Danish mushrooms by Merete and Poul Printz, using e.g. species of *Cortinarius* to get beautiful red colours. A short paper and a colour photograph in the journal of the Danish Mycological Society initiated the formation of a very active mushroom dyeing group in the Society, and in the following years dozens of new mushroom species ended in the dyeing pot.

Carla and Erik Sundström's colour illustrated Swedish book, *Färga med svampar* (Dyeing with mushrooms; 1982) stimulated the interest further. The Swedish language is closely related to Danish, and it is easily understood in Denmark. The president of the Danish Mycological Society at that time, Hjördis Hall Andersen, committed herself to the new and relatively unexplored art, and in 1986 she elaborated her Danish book, *Svampefarvning* (Mushroom dyeing), introducing several new suitable species for dyeing. The previous year she coordinated the 3rd International Fungi and Fibre Symposium in Denmark.

The symposium was arranged at the former residence of a forest supervisor in the centre of the lush deciduous forests of Sorö, less than two hour's drive from central Copenhagen. The property, *Christiansminde*, was just rebuilt by the University of Copenhagen to function as a field station with accommodation for about 30 students – an ideal setting for a mushroom symposium – and just large enough for the International Fungi and Fibre Symposium in those years.

A little more than 30 participants from USA and Europe took part in the symposium during the days 9th-15th September 1985. A part of the student's lab was converted to a colourful exhibition of mushroom dyed sweaters, caps and other knitted fabrics, dyed yarn and blankets, lots of yarn samples, and piles of



Miriam C. Rice

fresh dye fungi, especially the red dyeing *Cortinarius semisanguineus*, which is quite common in young Danish plantations of Norway spruce. Most of the days the participants experimented with mordants and various dye fungi in the excellent lab facilities.

A number of impressive picture tapestries were exhibited by – among others – Marianne Ling-Fischer from Sweden and Tigerlily Jones from USA, demonstrating the potential for textile art of the innumerable, subtle differences in colour that can be obtained by mushroom dyeing.

Even shades of deep blue and purple, which are not too common in plant dyeing, prevailed in some tapestries, and specimens of *Hapalopilus*, *Sarcodon* and *Phellodon* were tested several times so repeat the success.

At the symposium Miriam Rice introduced the concept of paper making based on fungal residues from the dye process. After having experimented for a couple of years with paper making as a natural recycling solution for disposal of the fungal detritus left over from the dyes, she had developed a proper technique that formed the basis for all later papermaking workshops at the International Fungi and Fibre Symposia.

The symposium was organized by a very active group of Danish mushroom dye enthusiasts, including - apart from Hjördis Hall Andersen – e.g. Susanne Thorbek, Susanne Klug-Andersen, Jytte Albertsen, Eva Pabst, Ida Howalt and Lilian Andersson. Most of them are still involved with dyeing and will take part in arranging the 12th International Fungi and Fibre Symposium in Denmark 2005.

This time the number of participants will be quadrupled, and *Christiansminde* with its cosiness and cheerful atmosphere can no longer house the symposium. However, Haslev Højskole, the site for the 12th IFFS, is situated in a small town almost surrounded by forests only 25 km (15 miles) from *Christiansminde*. It will surely be an great place for mushroom dye fiber artists from all over the world to meet, exhibit, share new discoveries about fungi pigments and papermaking, and have fruitful workshops together in pleasant surroundings.



Tapestry by Marianne Ling-Fischer

Continental Drift

by Tigerlily Jones ©1985

It was 1985, year of the 3rd International Fungi / Fiber Symposium and Exhibition, in Sorö, Denmark. In spite of my dislike for traveling, there I was, alone outside the Copenhagen airport, trying to decide which road to take. The inn at which I had booked reservations had told me it was within walking distance. The English-speaking Dane seated next to me on the plane said the inn was easy to find, that all I had to do was go left once I exited the terminal. There were no taxis or shuttles waiting as there are in American airports. As yet unacquainted with Denmark's fantastic public transportation, I resolved to walk. But now the question lay before me: did I take the far left-hand turn or the near-left, which some might call the middle, of the three-way split? Buoyed by the guide book's claim that most Danes spoke English, I stopped a conservatively dressed passer-by and asked him for directions, trying to pronounce the inn's unfamiliar Danish name.

"Ah, Gardener's House!" he nodded. I was not even sure if that was its English translation. The inn had been a former hunting lodge. Perhaps he meant guardsman, guardian, or game warden's house, but he seemed to know where I wanted to go. I simply smiled, waiting for directions. Unfortunately, those were the only two English words he knew. Out came a barrage of unintelligible utterances. It sounded complicated, which made me feel less secure. I fumbled with my Danish/English phrase book, but he waved it aside. Pausing as he spoke, he pointed to the rolled up tapestry that I carried under one arm.

It was my reason for being in Denmark. I was an expert in handweaving scenes created from handspun, natural-dyed yarns. A friend and guiding light, Miriam Rice, had discovered how to extract a surprising rainbow of colors from various wild mushrooms that grew in our North Coast (of California) forests and had encouraged me and others to experiment with using them as dye. As it turned out, Scandinavian forests contained similar species, and Miriam's recipes for mushroom dyes became an even more popular folk art there. We had been invited to participate in a mushroom dye

symposium and exhibition. To ensure that I would attend, Miriam had craftily arranged for me to receive a small honorarium, which I was too flattered to refuse. Hoping to create a piece worthy of international exhibition, I had pushed myself to design not just a landscape, but a small nature study of Stellar jay birds flitting through fir trees in afternoon sun... Now my would-be Danish guide inspected a corner of this tapestry which was poking out from the wrapping paper that protected it.

"Good!" he exclaimed, pointing out the diagonal lines that had been painstakingly crafted by adding and dropping triangular threads in a careful order. His finger traced the triangular areas of detail which depicted golden sunbeams spreading through tree branches. "Good!"

My eyes and mouth opened wide in astonishment. Tapestry weaving is a totally obscure and under-appreciated craft. At home, I was barely recognized. Yet here, a cultured European, stopped at random on the street, instantly saw how good my tapestry was! What a coincidence! I battled down an urge to unwrap the piece on the spot and show him the whole picture. Could he tell that I was the tapestry's weaver, and not just carrying it? I put my hand to my chest to signal that it was my creation. He smiled and patted me on the shoulder, or more accurately, the long dark blonde hair which covered my shoulders. "Good!" he repeated.

Then he turned his interest to my suitcase, which I had set upon the ground. Since I seldom travel, I had borrowed it from a relative; it was a cheap, well-worn piece of luggage, and rather unattractive; a vinyl colored to look like oxblood leather, held together with a clashing, mustard-colored zipper. I had packed it to excess, and it was bulging. The Dane patted the case, spoke a few more words, then specifically pointed out the zipper, and again said, "Good!"

The previous compliments lost some of their luster. I was mystified by the attention he paid to my suitcase. Perhaps he meant it was a good strong zipper to hold in spite of so much internal pressure. I inspected it to make sure it was secure. Already the

handle had been damaged on the flight here. It could only be carried at a certain angle now, or it would slip off its ring. With my arms laden with purse, camera, tote, sweater, and tapestry, I wouldn't be able to carry everything if that zipper gave way.

Seeing my distracted concern, the man straightened up, gesturing down the street and then pointing to his forearm, chattering confidently all the while. He held his left elbow out from his body and patted his left wrist emphatically with his right hand, the same gesture I would later use to command a tame parrot to step on my wrist. It looked like he was offering to escort me to my destination. Oooo, how gallant! A Continental gentleman! I gazed at him, trying to discern his motives. If I accepted, did he expect me to invite him in? Scandinavians were reputed to be loose, although this one seemed straight-laced. I saw only a trustworthy, reassuring consideration in his eyes.

Emboldened, I nodded, gently linked my arm with his and laid my hand lightly upon his wrist, smiling like a princess at a promenade.

Instantly, his expression changed to one of embarrassment. I saw that I had correctly judged his character, but not his gesture. He removed my hand with a regretful, paternal pat. His eyes darted up and down the street, as though hoping no one had witnessed us. I picked up my suitcase. After all this information, I still didn't have a clear idea which fork in the road to take. He waved me on, and I chose the middle one. Crossing the street, I glanced back, but he was already hurrying away.

The road led through a forested park. There were no more forks. Wherever paths me, it was clear that they were joining this one, which continued to veer slightly to the left. I saw picnickers and bicyclists although I decided against testing their English. I had been walked for at least 20 minutes when a large, historic building loomed to the right, but it turned out to be government offices. I stopped to rub my neck and shoulders. It was tiring carrying all of those parcels, but I was afraid that the tension in my neck signaled more than fatigue.

The park finally ended in a quiet section of town. Around the bend, to the left, an eye-catching building clearly announced its landmark presence. Brightly painted in stop-sign yellow, with a terra cotta tile roof and matching trim, it nestled among well tended shrubs and flower beds. It could only be the "Garden House".

Pausing in front of the entrance, I set down my suitcase to flex my cramped hand. I took a double-take as I glanced at the suitcase, then back at the inn. The suitcase was dark red with yellow trim. The inn was yellow with dark red trim. On sudden impulse, I looked up the English word for Yellow in my phrase book. . . "guld", pronounced similar to good! My brain went into overdrive as I recalled my interlude with the direction giver, now able to easily translate his words: "...You can't miss it, because it is bright yellow, see just like this color here (pointing to my tapestry), this exact color, golden yellow. Yes, gold like your hair (patting my shoulder) and gold like this zipper on your suitcase. The Inn's trim is also like your suitcase, dark red. It does not matter which fork in the road you take because they both join farther up the road. Just keep to the left, and when you get there, it will be on the left, see, the left side (patting his left hand)."

What a vain idiot I must have appeared, taking his plain directions for compliments and chivalry... And I suspect, somewhere in Denmark, an elderly gentleman nurses his own version of the day a winsome babe-in-the-woods picked him out from the crowd, took his hand, and beseechingly implored him with her eyes to accompany her to the "Garden Inn".



THE DYER CORTINARIUS

© Carol Lee, 2005

In September of 2004, we were in Northern Minnesota for a much needed rest. We are always on the look out for mushrooms that might grace my dye pots. In the past years most of the *Cortinarius* mushrooms that I had found for my dye pots had been located in the Scandinavian countries. My logic tells me that similar latitudes should produce like mushrooms in like habitats. In Northern Minnesota all of the same habitats fell into place. Spruce trees, star moss, club moss, granite, and I was in business.

Mushroom hunting is as exciting to me as Easter Egg Hunting is to a small child. Luckily my Husband keeps an eye on me, as I have eyes on the ground and often find myself not knowing where I am in the forest. This year he bought me a bright orange whistle (so I can find it) and so I can blow it and he can find me.

We found five distinct colors of *Cortinarius*, and I am as yet trying to get a solid identification. The *Cortinarius sanguineus* and *C. semi-sanguineus* I have no problem with, but the others are up for grabs. All of the five were good dyers, within the ranges of reds, oranges, lavenders on my premordanted (wool) samples. On silk scarves, premordanted with alum, my colors were in the yellow, pink & orange ranges. Walking the trail, canoeing the lakes, climbing the rocks and mushrooms were everywhere. What a wonderful bonanza. My dye pots for 2005 were assured.

IN October 2004, we were in North Central Idaho and what did we find but more Corts! We had two teenage grandchildren with us on this wander, and all of our noses were close to the ground as we sought out and found more Corts. Life is good in the woods, and especially when mushrooms are to be found.

Wyoming has not been generous with the dye *Cortinarius* that I seek. I have found only one very tiny specimen in the 15 years that I have hunted here. Needless to say Minnesota and Idaho will claim much of my mushroom search in the future!



Photos
by
Carol Lee
2004

Some of the wonderful Corts. that we found in the north country. Four distinct colors for the dye pots.



The dyestuff that appeared in my dye pots over the open fire in the northwood along the lakes was nothing short of spectacular. I had taken premordanted sample bundles of wool yarn as well as silk scarves. The silk had been alum mordanted.

Carol Lee
9/2004

(All photos are from Carol Lee's upcoming book
MUSHROOM'S ARE TO DYE FOR coming out in June 2005)