

"Mushrooms and Rice"

Summary

The Mendocino Art Center will host two exhibits starting February 14th: "Felicia Rice: Changes," featuring the work of the renowned artist and activist, and "Mushrooms in Color," honoring her mother Miriam Rice's legacy and her pioneering work with mushroom dyes. Felicia Rice, who returned to Mendocino after losing her home in the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire, continues her artistic and activist pursuits, focusing on themes of nature, justice, and the power of the written word. The exhibits will showcase a diverse range of artwork, including textiles, prints, paintings, and experimental films, highlighting the enduring impact of Miriam Rice's research and Felicia's creative vision.

[Carole Brodsky](#) January 22, 2026 at 6:00 AM PST



The Mendocino Art Center will be hosting two exhibits beginning February 14th- "Felicia Rice: Changes" which will feature new and old work by the esteemed letterpress artist, and "Mushrooms in Color," an exhibit featuring artwork using mushroom dyes- in honor of MAC co-founder and Felicia's mother Miriam Rice. (Carole Brodsky — Fort Bragg Advocate-News)

One can feel her trauma, but like a few years of grieving have gone by, the

feelings are not all-encompassing. Today, almost six years out from the fire that transformed her life, Felicia Rice's art remains her crucible. The few remnants of her former life- scavenged from the fire that changed her life forever are some multi-toned ashes, now stored in a jar, and melted pieces of lead type- once part of the letterpress that was the extension of her mind, heart and self.

World-renowned artist, activist, letterpress printer, publisher, educator and caregiver Felicia Rice sits today in her new studio, near what was once her father's workshop, tucked away in Mendocino Village and a stone's throw away from the Mendocino Art Center.

Following the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire that ravaged her home and the Santa Cruz community, the kindness of 800 friends and strangers enabled Rice to move "back home" to the Mendocino house her parents lived in- putting her life back together as best one can- setting up her new letterpress, making art and engaging with a new community- both familiar and foreign.

Rice grew up in Mendocino. She graduated from Mendocino High School, and just like me, hightailed it from home at the age of 17. We both ended up in the rarified atmosphere of UC Santa Cruz, where she learned the fine art of letterpress and opened up her first studio. The childhood home she's returned to may feel like what astrologers call "a Saturn return," but Felicia has discovered that the community that dearly loved her parents also loves and respects their daughter, who unexpectedly returned to her hometown.

The Mendocino Art Center is honoring the work of Rice, her mother Miriam- one of the icons of the MAC community, and other artists- with a dual exhibit opening on February 14th. Exhibit #1: "Mushrooms and Color" honors Miriam's legacy, and will feature work by contemporary artists who use mushroom dye and pigments in their work. The exhibit is co-sponsored by the International Mushroom Dye Institute (IMDI)- an organization founded by Miriam in 1985, and which is still stewarded by Felicia.

This article is also a call for submission to artists who use mushrooms in their work and would like to be included in the show. "We have already received some incredible submissions," says Felicia. "The close date on submissions is February 1st. People are welcome to submit work they've submitted in previous years." The exhibit will feature textiles of all kinds, prints, paintings, handmade paper, sculpture and experiments using mushroom dye and pigments.

"The IMDI was founded by my mother in 1985," notes Felicia. Miriam's research is known throughout the world, and Felicia and the IMDI team continue to keep her definitive book on the subject of mushrooms and color in print to this day.

"My folks were among the first instructors at the Mendocino Art Center, and I was a summer kid taking classes there from the age of 6." She is the child of parents who had an immense impact on the Mendocino community. "I'm still coming to grips with the fact that my parents were almost like community royalty," she smiles. "They were so well-loved, and sometimes I feel a bit like an outsider-insider."

"My mother was a children's art teacher for 40 years. She was also a sculptor and a maverick, and has been celebrated for the bust of Bill Zacha she created." But the woods were calling to Miriam, and she began foraging.

"She began experimenting with mushrooms as a source of dyes. It was part of her artist's curiosity. I remember those really rainy winters when we'd just get out of the house and go." Miriam had already begun the exploration of natural dyes with her students, using onion skins, compost and veggie peelings. "One day she threw a mushroom in the boiling water, and there was this beautiful yellow." Miriam is credited for writing the first book about mushroom dyes, and for finding the full spectrum of color in mushrooms.

25 years later, the IMDI was formed by her close friends and colleagues- an international community that shares a love of mushroom dying. "This exhibit

is one of a long series of exhibits showing what people make and do with mushrooms. As an artist, my mother was not happy about using paints with aniline dyes, and she made water and oil colors from pigment extractions. Nothing went to waste. Even the leftover pulp from the dye bath was used to make paper. She wanted to see these natural dyes thrive, but it's hard to cultivate dye mushrooms commercially, and even more difficult and irresponsible to extract them from the world, because of the huge volume of mushrooms needed."

There will also be notebooks and drawings by science illustrator Dorothy Beebe, who worked closely with Miriam to help unlock the full spectrum of color from mushrooms. Dorothy recorded and illustrated the fungi Miriam explored, which culminated in her last book. Their film: "Try it and See: The Story Behind Mushroom Dyes" will be shown February 28th at 6:00. Artwork from Miriam's personal collection and work by members of the IMDI will also be displayed.

Exhibit #2 is entitled "Felicia Rice: Changes" and features a wide range of Felicia's work- drawings, prints, artists' books, and experimental film, both collaborative and solo, from the deep past to the extreme present.

In 1972, Felicia left Mendocino and made her way to UC Santa Cruz. "There was a letterpress print shop there, and we had access to all this equipment. There were cases of lead type to set by hand. I did that for 10 years, trying to understand the tools and craft while working with very fine printers, including master printer Al Moise." She started Moving Parts Press in 1977, with the goal of making beautiful books.

The '80's were an exploding time for the literary community. "Small presses made it into the publishing world. The silo of major publishers as gatekeepers for our voices had been broken down." With that, Felicia immersed herself in bringing the voices of feminists and marginalized communities into the broader conversation. She found her tribe within the Latinx community, and her decades of collaborative work with the

Chicana/Latino community is unsurpassed. Chapbooks, broadsides and poetry collections morphed into "books" that are more like accordion-esque structures, not always meant to be read front-to-back, beginning-to-end. Bold, saturated colors and combinations of printed words and images are dazzlingly evocative.

"I began to realize that I was coming into this work with an interesting background- fine books, bookmaking and fine crafts. I was not competing for space on the bookshelves." She moved away from trade publishing to focus upon her own images and fine publishing, and worked collaboratively with artists and writers as well as creating her own, personal work. "Now, I'm an editor, printer, designer and artist. I work with writers and performers."

Felicia was not averse to technology, and incorporated digital technology into her work. She ran a graphic design program in Silicon Valley and taught a Digital Media program at UCSC. "There have always been waves of technology affecting how we think. My work with lead type uses a technology from the 15th century. Today, type design, illustration and printing are all affected by tech. I made a decision to incorporate it into my work." To that end, some of Felicia's pieces are accompanied by sound. One of her more recent pieces- Heavy Lifting- is a collaboration with Mendocino County poet Theresa Whitehill and includes a film with the presentation. Felicia describes it as a "fierce work that names the darkness in the belief that the first stage of recovery from grief is acknowledgement, and that the precursor to action can be anger." This book and others can currently be viewed at Ukiah's Grace Hudson Museum as part of their current exhibition, "Mission Gráfica: Reflecting a Community in Print." This show is running until February 1st.

So much of Felicia's work reflects her passion as an activist and the importance of speaking out. Like her forbearers throughout history, she views the act of printing as a radical call to action- a response to the unjust, disjointed and angry world we inhabit. As a regular participant in the

activities of the local chapter of Indivisible, Felicia has made beautiful posters for people to carry during protests. Covid, crisis, environmental degradation, the erosion of soil and freedoms, racism, the Ukraine conflict and of course, the horrors beset upon undocumented immigrants- all these themes and more can be found in her work. It is unsettling to hold both things at once: the incredible beauty of Felicia's books and the deeply impactful subject matter that may inhabit them.

"Of course I've lost my personal archive of my work," she notes. Luckily, a large portion of her work, having been recognized by so many as compelling, beautiful, incredibly original and brilliant in concept can be found in library and museum collections throughout the world. The complete Moving Parts Press archive had a home at UC Santa Barbara before the fire took everything else.

Felicia is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, from the National Endowment for the Arts to the French Ministry of Culture. Her interview in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art is available online. She is featured in the award-winning Craft in America documentary series in the episode Visionaries.

Her solo work- some of which will be in February's show focuses on unique drawings as opposed to the multilayered, puzzle-like print editions she has become famous for. The pieces are hand-drawn, organic, exposing negative space through the use of pen and ink. Those who have not seen some of the work from Moving Parts Press will have an opportunity to see some of the artists' books, drawings, and experimental films.

Nearly all of Felicia's work contains universal themes of nature, justice, the majesty of the spoken and written word and the deft interplay of images moving through or surrounding the words on the space they inhabit together. And despite the sometimes-difficult subject matter, what Felicia's work really is, in her words, is "a celebration of our goodness and decency."

"You could say that my work is example of what my generation was able to do. Each generation seems to build its own institutions and has to create its own economy. Today's digital revolution and political changes are themselves a new version of something that has happened many times before. My work is a kind of bid for immortality," she smiles. "Moving Parts Press was a very personality-driven project, and though it won't live on, something will come from it."

The exhibit runs from February 14 to March 8, with the opening scheduled for February 14th from 5:00-7:00.

Submittals for Mushrooms for Color may be made through the IMDI online gallery at <https://www.mushroomsforcolor.com>. Questions about exhibiting may be emailed to Felicia at mushroomsforcolor@gmail.com.

For more information about Felicia, visit her Instagram, Facebook page or Moving Parts Press at <https://movingpartspress.com>. For information about the exhibit visit <https://www.mendocinoartcenter.org>.