

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 Andreyva 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 elicited 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.