

Kansas City Young Audiences Teacher Program Guide

Natural Dyeing

Artist: Jamie Root

Workshop Description

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**45-minute lecture/
demonstration:** Ruthanne Robertson leads students on an exploration of how natural dyes have been a part of our civilization for more than six thousand years.

Ruthanne introduces students to how dyes work, how they are used in trade, and how the search for new sources of these dyes led to the development and advancement of global exploration.

Students will examine the difference between natural dyes and chemical dyes. Ruthanne will also demonstrate the techniques used in bonding including chemical and mechanical processes.

Participants in the workshop will use ancient, exotic dyes to stain wool which will be kept by the school for a later project.

2-3 day residency: Teaching Artist Ruthanne Robertson begins with the 45-minute lecture/demonstration outlined at left.

Students will then prepare skeins, mordant yarn, and soak natural dye stuffs. The residency concludes with the participants dividing and then preparing sample skeins to be labeled.



Special Points of Interest:

During the age of the Roman Empire, Picts and Saxons, native peoples from Northern Europe, painted their skin blue with woad, a plant native to Northern Europe. Modern civilizations do the same thing with facial dyes. We call these dyes cosmetics.

Special Requirements

Residency only: A well-ventilated room; tables; a source of electricity and water nearby. The artist will bring all materials needed, including hot plates to cook dyes.

Educational Objectives and Standards

Students will:

- Work in teams to prepare chemicals and fibers for dyeing
- Explore how the quest for sources of dye helped shape the world through exploration and conquest

Science Standards:

- Understands the structure and properties of matter

Visual Arts

- Understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture

Artist Bio: Jamie Root

Growing up in a talented and creative family, Jamie was encouraged to express her artistic tendencies in paint and sculpture. She continued to explore new media while earning a Bachelors of Science in Animal Science.

Jamie's teaching career started serendipitously during an internship in the exhibits department at the Kansas City Museum. She was drafted to develop and teach history and

nature classes to preschoolers. More recently, she spent 11 years teaching life sciences in the public schools.

A single lamb purchased in 1991 for these classes began a new passion. Wool from her flock of sheep is the material of her art now. Jamie loves spinning yarn and all forms of felt. She is a member of the Fiber Guild of Greater Kansas City and a known fiber art enabler.



Jamie Root

Vocabulary

Auxiliary: the products necessary to assist dyeing

Colorless Extender: a marbling color without the color

Dye Activator: the recommended pure alkali powder for use with all reactive dyes on cotton and cellulose fibers

Mordant: a reagent, such as tannic acid, that fixes dyes to cells, tissues, textiles, or other materials

Guar Gum: an industrial gum used to thicken the burn out/devoré paste during burn out processes

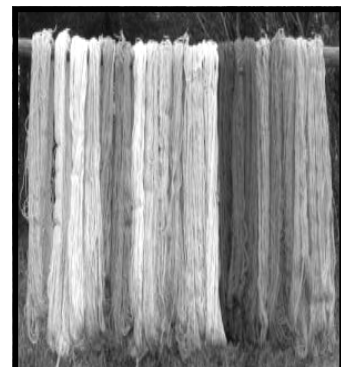
Gutta: French for "resist", which forms a barrier on the fabric to create a pattern

Skein: a length of thread or yarn wound in a loose long coil

Soda Ash: sodium carbonate; used as an alkali fixative for reactive dyes

Post-Workshop Activities

1. Study the different methods of dyeing developed by ancient, Medieval, and modern cultures. How were colors used to denote status and power?
2. Create a costume using natural dyes that you can wear or display. Create a history and ritual for the garment by wearing it during special occasions: birthdays, anniversaries, and other significant events



List of Resources

BOOKS

The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing: Traditional Recipes for Modern Use
by J.N. Liles, University of Tennessee Press; (November 1, 1990)
ISBN: 0870496700

Craft of the Dyer: Colour from Plants and Lichens by Karen Leigh Casselman
Dover Publications; 2nd Rev edition
(November 1, 1993) ISBN: 0486276066

Fabric Dyeing for Beginners
by Vimala McClure
American Quilter's Society;
(February 1, 2003) ISBN: 1574328131

Dyeing in Plastic Bags: No Mess No Fuss Just Great Colours! by Helen Deighan
Quilters Resource; (October 1, 2001)
ISBN: 0954033302