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Sunrise in the Orchard

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Sunrise in the Orchard

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Knowledge about natural dyes has been gathered and explored as a form of contemporary artistic expression in the coloration of garments. Solid colors from flowers, roots, bark and leaves have been produced on yarns to create a myriad of color and have been explored in woven designs (Doty & Haar, 2014; “Wendy Weiss”, 2013). Thickened natural dyes have been used to stencil and screen print designs on textiles (Kritis & Haar, 2012; Haar, 2014), yet the artist wanted to further explore painting with thickened dyes on skeins of yarn to create gradients.

The purpose of this design was to explore natural dyes from trees on various yarns in hand woven and machine knitted textiles and to experiment with thickened dyewood colors painted onto yarn to create gradients. The shapes and color gradients found on tree bark inspired the application of dye to yarn as well as the hand woven and machine knitted patterns. This design is part of a design group with the overall purpose of exploring dyewoods.

Gradient yarns were created by dampening 12 inch long skeins of 50% wool / 50% silk fingering weight yarn, pretreated with alum, and painted using quebracho and Osage orange extracts thickened with gum tragacanth. After the dye had set for 24 hours the skeins were steamed to set the color and washed until the rinse water ran clear. Solid colored yarns were dyed using cotton, hemp, wool and silk yarns pretreated with alum and immersion dyed with quebracho, Osage orange, and logwood extracts. Weave structures were sampled on the iPad app IWeaveIt to allow for quicker exploration of woven patterns, opposed to creating physical samples on the loom which take time and valuable resources to complete. Weavings were created on a four-harness 23 inch floor loom and the bodice and skirt were draped, drafted and sewn from the hand-woven textiles.



Complimenting the bodice and skirt is a knitted cardigan, fashioned on a home knitting machine. The wool and mohair yarns were left natural or immersion dyed with Osage orange. A punch card system on the knitting machine generated a knitted pattern to represent falling leaves in an autumn orchard. Draping methods were used to create the garment patterns, which guided



decreases and increases on the knitting machine. All seams were sewn using machine or hand sewing.

The design contributes to the knowledge of thickened natural dyes for painting on yarns. The thickened dye solution started at 4.2g dyewood extract, 15ml boiling water, and 15g prepared gum tragacanth, however this was too thick. Hot water was added to create a consistency of whole milk, which improved application and absorption into the yarn skeins. Recommendations for the thickened dye solution is 4.2g dyewood extract, 15ml boiling water, and 5g prepared gum tragacanth. Since the gum tragacanth continues to thicken as it sits, additional hot water may be added. It was important to still use the gum tragacanth thickener (even thinned down greatly) since it kept the dye colors from wicking into unwanted parts of the yarn skein. The outcomes also contribute to the knowledge of colors given by trees on various types of fibers for use in handwoven garments.

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