

TYRIA: STANDARDS and CERTIFICATION

By Cheryl Kolander, Master Natural Dyer, Aurora Silk, since 1969

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We are here to acknowledge the resurgence of a time honored industry: the creation of colours of beauty from natural dyestuffs, and their application in the textile arts and industry.

We must set standards for quality work, and have one or several channels for certification. Standards apply not just to colours, but also to the dyes used. Standards also apply to ethical and ecological factors of operation.

In the United States there are currently no “Organic” standards for textiles. There were standards for a short period, but they were fully skewed towards certifying environmentally unsound synthetic dyes as “Organic.” Thankfully, these false standards were soon dropped. This fiasco taught us that standards and certification must be set by NGOs, and judged by natural dyers, not ignorant bureaucrats.

TYRIA is my response to this need. Founded in 1969, when I first began my professional career as a full time natural dyer in America, TYRIA is the International Guild of Professional Natural Dyers. It is named after the first historical dyer, Lydia of Tyre, mentioned in the Bible as the protectress of Paul the Apostle. The need for a certification program was evident to me even way back then. Now, 37 years later, it is imperative!

Industry self policing is always preferable to government regulation. However, real self policing is needed. An NGO (non-profit) certifying agency must be both knowledgeable and transparent. In this case, as one of the senior natural dyers in the world, there is no question as to the knowledge of the certifier. As a not-for-profit, TYRIA operates under the US Federally registered 501©3 non-profit “MAMA D.O.C.” Inc., devoted to natural health.

All students who take my professional level intensive workshops receive a certificate of completion in the Art of Permanent Colours with Natural Dyes, as well as dyeworks safety. All colours that are offered by Aurora Silk, my brand and done by me or my apprentices are certified by TYRIA as 100% Naturally Dyed. Anyone can apply to be certified by TYRIA: you send me examples of your work (to be returned) and describe to me, preferably in writing, but orally if necessary, how you dyed these colours. You sign our pledge to only use natural dyes, to observe safety in the workplace, to do the best dyework possible, to be ethical in one's business, and to make tithing donations of either time or money to a charity of one's choice.

TYRIA has created a certification emblem stating “TYRIA certified 100% Naturally Dyed Colours.” Stickers are sold to registered, certified dyers or dyeworks as a fundraiser. At this time certification costs nothing and lasts one's lifetime, as long as the TYRIA pledge is followed.

In response to artists' and designers' need to plan with Aurora Silk colours, TYRIA's system of colours fastness was devised. A number refers to fastness to light, and a letter refers to fastness to washing.

FASTNESS CODE:

LIGHT FAST

1 - extremely fast. Shows no fading in a month's exposure to direct sunlight (at 45 degree north latitude, summer sun)

2 - quite fast

3 - some liability to fade over a period of time

WASH FAST

a - extremely fast. Hand washes fine.

b - quite fast. Hand wash separately; may show some colour in wash water.

c - liable to bleed on washing; dry cleaning is recommended.

In this way, an interior designer can avoid Brazil red for window curtains, as it rates a 3b, while a sportswear designer can plan a line around Cutch brown, Sage green and Steel blue grey, all rated as 1a.

TYRIA recently framed a "Personal Impact" and "Environmental Friendliness" scale of rating. These are also called "Ecological impact" and "Health benefits" of each dye-mordant-colour.

The five star rating of colours for their environmental impact includes considerations of sustainability, soil improvement, replanting efforts, harvesting methods, as regards dyes, and dye studio or dyeworks policies such as recycling, reuse of dyebaths and mordant baths, and/or on-site waste water treatments.

Indigo dyed with a Natural Fermentation vat rates a 5*, as indigo is an excellent soil building legume, is raised without chemicals and the producing industry is small, family farm friendly. Indigo produces income for low income communities. Indigo production can be increased easily, and has been increased world wide in response to the new interest in natural colours, so Indigo dyework is completely sustainable. The dye process uses no mordants or chemicals stronger than washing soda, soda ash or wood ash. There is nothing in the natural fermentation dye process that poses a potential health threat to the dyer or his environment.

Personally friendly or Health Benefits rating is also a five star system: Those dye-colours which have the best health benefit to the wearer and which are perfectly safe for infants to chew on rate a five star. Included would be "Therapeutic Gold" colours dyed with natural yellow dyes such as Fusticwood, turmeric, Quercitron, and using no mordants. Also Indigo, dyed in a natural fermentation vat. And any non-mordanted bark or leaf dyed colours.

More information on this system and its practical application can be seen on the posters for TYRIA, for the Logwood Project and at the Aurora Silk display.

"All good medicines. All good for the planet." Remember to replant! Especially the trees.

Om Mane Padme Hum.

Saraswati: please bless us all.

Thank you for being.