

SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

FiberLAB

by Jodi Colella

11 Miller Street, Somerville, Massachusetts, US 02143

FiberLAB is an independent study group that provides individual instruction, exposure to contemporary art, experimentation with materials and techniques, and membership in a maker community. During biweekly meetings, participants are introduced to a myriad of processes and ideas about art and craft. Members are invited to use my studio, tools and books that includes a borrowing system to enable personal discovery at home.

Students come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are professional artists and some are hobbyists who want to bring their work to the next level of concept and craft. Some are from art backgrounds, others are not, and some use FiberLAB to re-enter a lapsed art practice. All are in search of community.

I've been teaching for over 10 years. A growing number of people have asked for a format that covers a broader scope focusing on material and process rather than a particular project or technique. They are interested in my organic approach and want to be a part of it. We have become a close support group with a wide network that includes all who have been a part of past and present workshops.

The big idea behind FiberLAB is to encourage risk taking, expand your knowledge base and facilitate creativity. Working with different mediums can be very expensive and precious, inhibiting the ability to relax and "let it all go." With access to my stash and tools, there is freedom to play, be brave and allow your instincts to guide you. We started calling it FiberLAB after a few sessions because it describes our inquisitively open and experimental approach. There are no wrong answers in the 'LAB because all efforts, even



Sample wall in the studio.



Shibori samples from an Indigo dye vat on the drying rack.



Indigo dyeing.



Students **Rochelle Zohn** and **Ellen Solari** are using vegetable matter to eco-dye.



Dye samples.



Ellen Solari Baskets (*Birch, Pictograph #3, Together Again*) 2018, hand-dyed, hand-stitched, 6" x 6", 7" x 7", 6" x 4".



Sample book (open) of multiple studies from over the past 2 years of FiberLAB.

those that end unexpectedly, are successful in advancing our knowledge and opening doors to new ideas.

The atmosphere on any given day can be chaotic, with several different activities happening at once. We trip over each other while dyeing, stamping, sewing, weaving, felting, etc. Each week there's something new happening in the background like an onion skin dye pot, or a rigid heddle loom warped with alternative materials, or a station to monoprint on fabric, or emboss velvet, or... you get the idea! I also make time to work with individuals who are seeking feedback and discussion about their next steps.

FiberLAB has become a necessary part of my own art practice. Working with this group of enthusiastic, intelligent, talented and generous artists provides me with focus and structure. It requires me to do research, procure materials and develop new ideas. It gives me the chance to learn new techniques that I've been unable to find the time for, and reminds me to question the impossible within my own work. I share my personal discoveries and participants share their own. We all gain from the openness of our practices.

At the completion of each class we see things in a more expansive light due to the collaboration. We laugh a lot. Together we share a passion and curiosity about the way things work as we dare to explore how to express ourselves.

—Jodi Colella works with a broad range of materials to create provocative, tactile works that often include public participation. She's been awarded multiple residencies and grants and has been featured in Huffpost Art & Culture and The Boston Globe, among others. jodicolella.com



Student **Leisa Healy** is arranging vegetable matter on silk to be folded and wrapped around a copper pipe or stick before being eco-dyed.



Student **Jean Masland** needle-felting onto an aluminum screen base.



Students **Laura Zimmerman, Karen Molloy, Monikah Schuschu, Amy Pett, and Ellen Solari.**