

Technicolor Dreamin': The 1960's Rainbow and Beyond

Karen Moller



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When I read On the Road in 1959 in my third year of art school in Canada, my cowboy heroes transformed into Kerouac's mythical duo zigzagging their way across America. They recast the American myth, "Go west, young man; freedom is waiting for you", to "Go, young woman and forge a new identity". That book set me on my travels to San Francisco, the beatnik heartland in search of that mysterious brotherhood of creative spirits working in a forbidden underground.

My next stop was New York and

then Paris where I worked with artists Jean Tinguely, Yves Klein, Robert Filliou and met their American friends, such as John Cage, Andy Warhol and the beatnik writers, William Burroughs and Gregory Corso.

In 1962, I traveled to London where

the anti-war movement was in full swing. Even in that politically active environment, there was little to indicate that England was on the threshold of a cultural revolution. London burst forth with avant-garde art galleries, art centers, dance clubs, bookshops and the Underground newspaper IT. The young shed their dowdy post-war clothes for the multicolored petals of the emerging hippie counterculture and soon I was designing and printing my own fabrics as well as wholesaling to other boutiques, notably Kings Road and Carnaby Street, the centers of everything "in". With the fading of the hippie dream, I moved back to Paris, where I added fashion futurist to my activities. Within a few years, my firm became the major forecaster of fabric and color trends for top designers.

The quintessential hippie icon was the Rainbow. It covered

fabrics, record covers, and graphic designs. It symbolized freedom and our desire to discover life's potential, not just the pot of gold. It was a time of carefree days and unashamed utopianism. We fought for just causes, made love, and made merry while we lived on innocent dreams of being revolutionaries.

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