

Daniel Smith Art Store demonstration:

Silk Painting Basics, by Linda Ann Vorobik

NOTE: This workshop is intended to be an introduction to working with silk dyes and silk. I am presenting the basics, but there is much more to know, and much fun to be had exploring this wonderful medium!

Step 1: Preparing the fabric

Fabric must be thoroughly washed in order to remove any compounds that might interfere with the dye molecules adhering to the fabric. After the fabric is (hand) washed, rinsed, and hung to dry, it should be carefully ironed in order to remove all wrinkles.

SUPPLIES:

1. Silks such as "haboti", "crepe", "crepe de chine", and "silk satin"
2. Mild soap, such as *Jacquard "Synthrapol"*
3. Large vessel or appropriate (non-food) sink
4. Iron and ironing board

Step 2: Placing the fabric on the frame

Next the fabric is stretched on a frame. This makes it possible to control the application of resists and dyes. The best arrangement is for the silk to not be in contact with the frame at all.

SUPPLIES:

1. Silk stretching frame or embroidery hoop
2. Pins or tacks for attaching silk to frame

Step 3: Applying resist (gutta)

*I think applying gutta is like drawing with Elmer's Glue! Heavier silks need a thicker line; breaks in the line or lines that are too thin will result in they dye(s) breaking out of the gutta "dam". The guttas can be drawn over pencil lines if you are using an opaque-colored resist, or you can "trace" with gutta by putting your stretched silk over a light box with your drawing on paper over that. **NOTE:** When you choose to try the Serti (resist, using gutta) technique of silk painting, you must be aware that applying gutta or resist lines successfully takes practice and experimentation with different products to learn which one will work best for you. This is an art form and one should not expect to have perfect results without practice. In addition, as one changes fabrics, dyes, paints, or attempts new techniques, changes in the way the resist behaves may also occur. Painting on the dyes or paints and fixing them either by steaming or heat setting are the simplest parts of the process. The real difficulty lies in the application of the gutta/resist.*

SUPPLIES:

1. I prefer water-soluble guttas, such as made by Jacquard, but these have a shelf life, and if shipped from France may be aged by the time you use them. They may keep better in the refrigerator or in the dark.
2. Light box or "under-the-counter" fluorescent light
3. Drawing or pattern plan to work from, if needed
4. Hairdryer for drying resist if you are in a hurry
5. Paper towels or rags: for cleaning up spills, etc.
6. Products such as "No-Flo"--used to stop the dye from spreading quickly

Daniel Smith Art Store demonstration, continued:

Silk Painting Basics, by Linda Ann Vorobik

Step 4: Applying dye(s) or other colors

After the resist is thoroughly dried, the dyes can be applied in much the same manner that one would paint with watercolors, however the difference is the speed with which the dyes move on the fabric! Also, dyes are usually not layered on the fabric

SUPPLIES:

1. Dyes (I like *Jacquard* water-soluble) but am trying **Dye-Na-Flow** (a free flowing, concentrated liquid color for use on any untreated fabric. Flows like a dye, and is especially good for silk painting, either the serti (resist) method using water-soluble resists, or for watercolor techniques.
2. Containers such as small yoghurt containers, for mixed or diluted dyes
3. Brushes: I prefer my old larger round watercolor brushes

Step 5: Using salt or other substances to vary the pattern of the dyes

Immediately after dyes have been painted on fabric, certain compounds, such as salt, can be used to make the dye flow in different patterns.

SUPPLIES:

1. Silk dying salt, table salt, rock salt, etc (different sizes for different effects)
2. Sugar (I have tried this but wasn't successful, yet....)
3. Alcohol (I have only tried drinking this while working....it helps used sparingly!).

Step 6: Fixing the dye(s)

After the dyes are completely dry, the dyes need to be set or fixed, so that the fabric you have painted doesn't completely fade out upon washing. I use the steam method.

SUPPLIES:

1. Steam iron
2. Stove-top steamer, home made
3. Manufactured stove top steamer (what I use)

Step 7: Preparing the dyed fabric for showing or wearing

The fabric must be washed and rinsed as in step one, to remove all excess dye(s). Once this is done, your artwork is ready for display, sale, wearing, or for a gift.

SUPPLIES:

1. See step one.