

Colour on Cloth Playday: Intro

Creating an embroidery design from scratch can be challenging. One way to make it less so is to put some colour on to the cloth before you start stitching. This play day is designed to show you several techniques to put permanent colour on to cloth, while still retaining the hand of the cloth and its stitchability. It's helpful to understand a little about the pigments, paints, dyes, inks and fabrics we will be using, and to understand some of the terms used when we discuss them. The playday should help you to make the choices about which materials and techniques will work best for what you want to create.

Dyes or Pigments? Both are used in paints and inks.

Pigments are coloured particles which are usually too big to be soluble in liquids and sit on textile fibres. Pigments can be ground natural materials (e.g. ochre, lapis lazuli) or synthetic compounds, and they are more likely to sit on a fibre than be incorporated into it.

Dyes are smaller coloured particles which are soluble in liquids and soak into textile fibres.

Paints or Inks?

Paints and inks are both composed of pigments or dyes in a carrier and/or solvent. However, paints are thicker and are usually applied with brushes and inks are thinner and usually applied with pens.

Oil paints are pigments in an oil carrier (e.g. linseed oil), requiring an oil solvent like turpentine for clean-up.

Water colour paints are pigments in a water-based carrier. They can be used on fabric and do not change the hand of the fabric.

Acrylic paints are pigments in a water-soluble acrylic carrier. However, when the water evaporates the acrylic polymerizes and forms a non-soluble plastic layer. On fabric this results in a change in the hand of the fabric. Acrylic paints can be mixed with a fabric medium to make them into a fabric paint.

Fabric paints are pigments or dyes in a water-based carrier that allows them to soak into the fabric, colouring it without changing the hand of the fabric. When fixed with heat the pigments are permanent and the fabrics can be washed.

Inks are more likely to use dyes than pigments, and can be thickened with gum arabic. Some are soluble and some (e.g. India inks) are permanent.

Fabrics

The colouring materials we are using work well with natural fabrics (cellulose or protein-based), though some of them may work with synthetic fabrics as well. The fabrics can be used dry or damp/wet. Because of the nature of fabric, many paints and inks will bleed after initial application, which can be used as part of the design.

Cellulose-based fabrics, such as cotton, linen, ramie, rayon, or Tencel, are all plant products or are made from plant products. Protein-based fabrics, such as silk and wool, are animal products. If you are not sure what a fabric you are using is made of you can do a simple burn test, using a small amount of fabric and a burn test guide.

Sources and Resources

[List of All Pigment Based Photo Inkjet Printers \(redrivercatalog.com\)](http://redrivercatalog.com)

[SETACOLOR \(gsdye.com\)](http://gsdye.com) online source for Setacolor paints (Toronto-based, and shipped quickly)

[Art Supplies, Creative Hobbies & Framing | DeSerres](http://DeSerres.com) online source for art supplies, including Inktense products, Pebeo Setacolor, and Gelli Plates

Michaels also carries Inktense products, Gelli Plates, and a variety of fabric paints

Design Decisions for House and Garden Piece

What do I want to make?

- Do I want to create a piece that focuses on my house or my garden or both?
- Do I want a view from the inside or the outside?
- Do I want to work from a photo, a sketch, or my mind's eye?
- How big a piece do I want to make?
- Do I have a piece or an artist that I am inspired by or want to emulate?

How do I want to make it?

- Do I want to create a background for the embroidery, or just embroider on plain cloth?
- What kind of fabric do I want to use?
- What colour scheme do I want to use?
- What embroidery techniques do I want to use?
- What kind of thread(s) do I want to use?

Colour on Cloth Playday: Colouring

We will be using Derwent Inktense Pencils, which are water-based pencils using pigments which create bright, permanent markings on cloth. They are more expensive than regular watercolour pencils, though they can be purchased individually from DeSerres for \$2.99 each.

Materials for Demo:

- 1 dozen Inktense Pencils (share and sharpen as needed) with the end of the pencil showing the colour.
- 2 squares of cotton fabric – one wet and one dry
- Various brushes, paper towel, and plastic pads
- Water containers for individual use, jug of fresh water, and a big container for waste water
- A Pair of Permanent Pigma Pens

Trial Runs

- Use a pigma pen to put your initials on your fabric pieces, and to add details about colours and methods you used for later reference.
- Try using the dry pencils on the wet fabric – drawing carefully, or sketching and blending with brushes.
- Try using the dry pencils on the wet fabric – and then use wet brushes to spread the markings.
- Try using the pencil dipped in water on dry or wet fabric.
- Try doing a rubbing over a stamp or stencil, on either wet or dry fabric.

Special Features

- Inktense colours are brighter when water is used.
- The initial placing on the fabric will be where the colour is the brightest.
- Bleeding can be controlled by using Aloe gel or fabric medium, which can be washed out later.
- Once the fabric is dry you can add colour over top, without changing the initial colour.
- When your fabric is dry, heat set using a dry iron.

Colour on Cloth Playday: Painting

We will be using Setacolor paints, which are a water-based paint designed for use on fabric. They produce brighter colours than regular watercolour paints, which we will also have available if you would like to try them. These paints produce a softer hand than acrylic paints used with fabric medium, because the pigments permeate the fabric rather than sitting on top. Setacolor paints are available in several forms: lighter fabric (translucent); opaque; shimmer. The colours are mixable before using, so that you can create the colour you want. However, you can do the colour mixing on the fabric to get more variations just from two colours.

Materials for Demo:

- Various colours of Light Fabric and of Opaque paints; one colour of Shimmer
- Plastic spoons for paint transfer
- Individual paint palettes/containers
- Watercolour paints
- 2 squares of cotton fabric – one wet and one dry
- Various brushes, paper towels, and smooth white tiles
- Individual water containers, jug of fresh water, and a b for waste water
- A Permanent Pigma Pen (please share)
- Disposable nitrile gloves

Trial Runs

- Use a pigma pen to put your initials on your fabric pieces, and to add details about colours and methods you used for later reference.
- Put your dry fabric over the white tile to give a smooth backing. Start with two colours of either Light Fabric or Opaque, mixing them 1:1 with water, and then painting on the dry fabric, sketching and blending as you wish. Repeat with wet fabric.
- Try creating different effects with different brushes e.g. holding down the brush on wet fabric will increase the bleeding which can create interesting edges.
- Try out the watercolours for comparison.
- When your fabric is dry use a dry iron to heat set the paint.

Special Features

- You can create a single print (monoprint) either by using a fresh cloth to cover your painting or onto paint that has seeped through to the tile.
- The light fabric colours can be used for sunprinting. Place opaque leaves or other objects on top of the wet painted fabric and leave in the summer sun for half an hour.
- You can also create leaf prints by putting the opaque or shimmer paint directly onto the leaf and then printing onto the fabric. You can often get more than one print.
- The reverse side of the fabric is often as interesting as the side you painted.

Colour on Cloth Playday: Inkjet Printing

We will be printing on to fabric using an Epson WorkForce **inkjet printer** which has pigment-based inks, and will take paper up to 11"x17". **Laser printers do not work for printing fabric as the ink is plastic-based and done at high temperature, and fabric may damage the printer.**

The inkjet pigments do not bleed and are permanent when heat-treated with an iron. You can use digital files through wifi or can photocopy an image or material (a leaf, for example) directly on the printer. The prints do use up a lot of ink, which is expensive. It is always worth doing trials in black and white on paper first, to make sure you have it set up the way you want.

Materials for Demo:

- Sheets of cotton and silk organza prepared for using in the printer.
- Digital files of photos or images to photocopy
- Freezer paper
- Cotton and silk organza
- Rotary cutter for paper
- Cutting board

Trial Runs

- Choose a prepared piece of fabric and put it into the paper tray with the fabric side down.
- Send the file to the printer, and print.
- Pull the fabric off the paper and use a dry iron to heat set the printed fabric. You can reuse the freezer paper once or twice.
- Prepare a piece of fabric by cutting a piece slightly larger than you want (8 1/2x11 or 11x17) and then use the rotary cutter and cutting board to cut it to exact size. Using a piece of printer paper as a guide is helpful as well.

Other Options

- You can adapt your own photographic images using photo-editor Apps such as Prisma or ColorThief, before printing them.
- There are printing services you can use such as Spoonflower or designyourfabric.ca which allow you to print on bigger pieces of fabric.

Colour on Cloth Playday: Printing with Gel Press

What's a gel press? It looks and feels like thick gelatin, and is used for making monoprints using water-based media. Dyes and inks should not be used on the gel press. One brand name is Gelli Plate. Gel presses are often used for printing on paper, but they can also be used to print on fabric. We will also be using a silicone mat prepared by Wenda's daughter – be gentle with it so it doesn't get any nicks or scratches. There are a number of paints and gels that can be used on gel presses, and in addition to trying these out we will also be using it in conjunction with stamps and stencils.

As we'll be using fabric paints on fabric, the patterns and designs are apt to be a little fuzzier depending on the thickness/moisture of paints and the dampness of the fabric. Dry fabric will create crisper results, but will depend on how moist the paints are. Expect some bleeding and softened edges on fabric.

Materials for Demo:

- Gel press
- Sheets of cotton
- Water sprayers
- Brayer
- Variety of fabric paints.
- Disposable nitrile gloves

Trial Runs

There will be a wide selection of stencils, stamps, and bits to create texture for your usage, but do bring along any of your own to use, if you wish. Stamps include Christmas, leaves, flowers. Be aware that any stamps with words printed will show up reversed. Stamps can be used to pull colour from the gelli plate, or add colour onto the surface. When you're using the paints, be aware of the colour wheel and do not use complementary colours together unless you wish to create mud (red with green, blue with orange, yellow with purple).

Here are some videos to watch to give you ideas of what is possible:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSC6lwAXd5I>

https://www.google.com/search?q=what+is+a+Gel+Press%3F&oq=what+is+a+Gel+Press%3F&aqs=chrome..69i57.10891j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_fu9vY6PIK4SYptQPILGygAM_6

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK3AQ08sYRc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSAo6Z4LiOs>

Information copied from website: <https://www.gelliarts.com/pages/what-to-know>

- The gel printing plate has an extremely sensitive surface and will imprint any texture it is sitting upon or covered with.
- Do not cover your gel printing plate with plastic wrap or waxed paper. Also, do not place your gel plate on these materials. These wraps will wrinkle and imprint their texture on your gel printing plate.

- The gel printing plate is made of a unique plastic that contains mineral oil. The gel plate will leach a small amount of harmless mineral oil when left sitting on an absorbent surface.
- We recommend you protect your work surface by placing your gel printing plate on a smooth, flat, non-porous barrier such as a Teflon® sheet, baking tray or piece of glass.
- Do not place your gel printing plate directly on a surface that may absorb the harmless mineral oil, like a wooden table.
- The gel printing plate may exude a small amount of harmless mineral oil when exposed to warm environments. This is normal and, when wiped off, will not affect printing performance.
- Keep away from open flame and other heat sources. The gel printing plate is for art and craft use. It is not a toy.
- Do not use any glossy paper stock, including glossy photo paper. It can stick to and damage the surface of the gel plate.
- As your gel plate is used, it is normal for it to lose its glass finish and become matte and cloudy. This does not affect its performance.
- There is no latex in the gel plate, and it does not contain any animal products.
- We recommend using acrylic paints. It is not necessary to clean the plate between prints, unless desired. Paint residue can contribute to surprising and pleasing results.
- There is no need to clean your plate between prints, but it is recommended to clean your plate before storage and remove all paint residue at that time.
- We do not recommend using dyes when printing on the plate (such as rubber stamp inks, spray inks and fabric dyes) as the gel will absorb some of the dye and become permanently stained. However, stains will not affect printing performance.
- Many paints and inks are compatible with printing. These include water-soluble printmaking inks and fabric paints.
- You can also use washable and permanent markers. When using permanent markers, the ink dries more quickly so you have to move quickly to pull the print. You have more time with washable markers - as they stay wet longer.
- Acrylic paints can be easily cleaned from the plate with mild soap and water. Rinse and gently pat the gel printing plate dry with a paper towel.
- Gel hand sanitizers (such as Purell®, etc.) can be used to remove paint residue on the plate. Simply rub onto the plate and wipe clean with a paper towel. Baby wipe products can also be used to clean your gel printing plate. Some paint pigments can stain or discolor the gel plate. Stains can usually be removed by following the cleaning instructions recommended for oil paint. Fun textures are easy to find ... to get started, try using bubble wrap, plastic grids, foam stamps, stencils, leaves and string to create interesting imagery on your plate.
- For hand drawn mark-making, use soft-tipped tools like paint brushes, cotton tipped swabs or soft rubber-tipped tools.
- Do not use pointy tools such as pencils or toothpicks. They may scratch the gel plate surface and leave permanent marks.