

Painting on Fabric

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Please feel free to contact me with questions or any newly found information on this subject.

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My process of painting on fabric is very organic as I am always trying to find the better way of painting on fabric. So the following will most likely change a bit as time passes for me as well as it will with you.

This instructional is working with modern chemical paints on natural fabrics. NOT “puffy paint”, things sold as “Fabric Paint”, or paint that is meant to heat set, all of these are not meant for this process.

The following process is used for Paint brush primarily, but can be used for all applications of painting on fabric.

Supplies:

1. Acrylic Paint [*I use Folkart and Americana Brands*]*For metallic I use Lumiere by Jacquard (which does not need a textile medium, but DOES need to be heat set)*
2. Textile medium [*comes in slow to fast drying times- I use slow if stated on bottle*]
3. Short round tip acrylic brushes [*you can use whatever you like best*]
4. Parchment paper, Wax paper, Shower Curtain [*protecting the surface you are painting on*]
5. Paper towels-*For Cleaning up*
6. Water cup-*to rest brushes in*
7. Small Weights-*keep fabric from moving*
8. Small Paint jars/containers [*something to put paint and textile medium in*]
9. Iron and ironing board [*not mandatory*]
10. A couple Cotton pieces of fabric: like a old plain colored shirt [*I use a cotton under shirt*]
11. Good size stable table
12. Extra fine point Sharpie/pen/pencil or chalk. [silver sharpie for dark colored fabrics]
13. Fabric to paint on [*I only paint on natural fabrics from Linen to heavy weight Cottons.*]

Depending how you choose to apply the paint to the fabric; brush, stamp, stencil using a brush or what is called a Pounce [sponge on a stick] will mean some supplies will differ from the list of supplies above.

Fabric Preparation

Wash all fabric in hot water with No dye-No perfume-detergent. *Do not add fabric softener liquid or dryer sheet as it coats the fabric and could prevent the paint from sticking.* Dry all fabric in the dryer on the hottest setting, then Iron all the fabric. This brings all the fibers close together to give you a flatter surface to paint on.

Design Conception

When you are picking a design you would like to use, consider the size you want. Really big items will act stiff on flowing fabric, too small of a design and it will be too hard to see what the item is. To make sure everything will look the way you want I would suggest drawing up a rough sketch of what you would like the final product to look like and make sure everything will fit. You can also print out some sizes of the items you are going to paint and pin them to the outfit or pieces of fabric that you will be using to see how it might look from a distance.

Design Application

Once you know what you are putting where, here are a few ways to get your picture on your garment:

1. Stencil [making one or buying one]
2. Light table
3. Trace using an Opaque projector
4. Free hand
5. Prick and Pounce (*Taking a printed design, putting pin holes in the lines of the drawing, then pounce powder on the drawing*)

You can trace your design on your fabric in sharpie/pen/pencil or chalk. With dark fabrics you can use a **silver** sharpie/pen/pencil or chalk. (Never %100 trust something that says "NO BLEED and or PERMANENT INK"-test is first)

Paint Application

If the surface you are going to paint on is of porous material, or is valuable to you, cover all the area you will be painting on with either wax/parchment paper, or old Shower Curtain. Then place fabric that you are going to paint on over that. I place dry dirt free weights on top. *[out of the way of any movement you might make]* to prevent the fabric from moving at all, I then place wax/parchment paper over the top of the fabric in all the places I do not want paint to go. I do this in case I do not paint on the fabric where I do not want it accidentally. * *[How to deal with mistakes are located near the bottom of this instruction]* though you may want to move faster as you go along, you really have to be patient. The fabric is not forgiving and it is easy to make mistakes.

The first coat that is applied is the base coat. Mix one part textile Medium to two parts paint (*or whatever the Textile Medium bottle says*) this is the layer you really want to soak in and hold on the fabric, and that all following layers of paint will cling to. So as you are painting you are also

trying to make sure the paint is going in all of the fibers. After I lay down this coat of base color paint, I try and let it settle for 24 to 48 hours to make sure it is dry all the way through, shrink a little, and come to its final color shade, but you do not have to.

Rest of the Paint Application

The color of the paint will slightly change as it dries, so give yourself small breaks to reevaluate how your piece is coming along. Use the least amount of coats of paint as possible. When everything is painted and dry you are done, go over the lines of your design with an ultra fine black sharpie or black paint with an ultra-fine paint brush.

EXTRA TIPS AND TRICKS

I have been adding a finishing coat of Ultra Matte Varnish. This has so far helped the integrity of the paint by keeping flexible and also further sealing the paint to the fabric. As the paint dries it pulls the fibers of the fabric closer in spots. By adding the Ultra Matte Varnish it fills the spots from the top of the paint though to the other side of the fabric itself. Turns out after I started doing this it seems putting varnish over painted fabric is historically correct.

***Working with Mistakes**

There are a few ways to try and fix a mistake: One way is to try and wash the spot as soon as possible. This may or may not be possible in all situations and if so it is only done in one spot. The next way is to let it dry as is and try and lightly scrape the paint off with a rounded razorblade, all the while being very careful not to wear a hole in the fabric. No matter how you try to remove it will be very hard to do and could cause more issues for you. The last two ways are to either paint a light coat of the same color of the fabric you are painting on and try and cover it up, or paint another design over it, like I mentioned mistakes are very unforgiving. The only way to help is to cover up as much of the area you do not want paint on. Painting on black or dark fabric might give you the option to paint over your mistake.

Care of Painted Garments

Hang up painted garb before and after you wear it, and after you wash it. Do not let it sit in a pile and or with other clothes. Heat and moisture can cause the paint to stick to itself, other clothes, or just come off.

After you have worn it for the first time hand wash with *Woolite*, or other very low strength laundry detergent, in cold water and hang dry. **[NO BLEACH OR HARD SOAPS]** If you do not have time to hand wash then you can put it in a washing machine set on delicate, on the shortest wash possible, in cold water, and hang dry. Look and see if there is any issue with the paint, if everything is okay then the next time you can dry it in the dryer on LOW. If you try and dry your painted close on anything other than low the paint may become soft and stick to other parts of the fabric, or fold and stick to itself.

Ironing: do not iron directly on the paint especially if you use metallic paints; it is prone to come off on the iron. You will have to iron your Garment between two pieces of cotton cloth on low heat. You will have to also have to keep an eye on the cotton fabric you use when ironing the garment as it will pick up paint, and if you are not careful you will be ironing paint back on where you will not want it.

Final Note:

Everything you do will be on a learning curve. You might find different parts of this process change as you find better/different ways of doing things, or run across issues. Be patient with this process, diligent in being cautious, and always be aware where everything is placed.

History:

All paints are not the same. Every brand has their own recipe, close to each other, but not quite. Paint goes bad. Keep that in mind when planning a paint project.

Painting on Fabric Sources:

- Excerpt from "Whips and Angels" Painting on Cloth in the Mediaeval Period by Barbara Gordon. In England, the Royal Court called on London workshops for large-scale work. The 1340s Wardrobe accounts show that the painted, stenciled, stamped and appliquéd cloths required for royal feasts were regularly made up at the same workshops. The Wardrobe accounts for 1347 mention painted tunics, cloaks, crests and masks for the Christmas festivities. These would probably have resembled the costumes seen in the marginal illustrations of the Romance of Alexander"

- The book "Medieval and Renaissance Treatises on the arts of Painting," translated by Mrs. Mary P. Merrifield. It is a reprint of an 1849 treatise with quotes from various sources.

Page cxv "In the introduction to the MSS. of Le Begue a practice is noticed

which prevailed in England, previous to the introduction of printing with blocks, of painting linen cloth intended for wearing-apparel with figures, flowers, and various devices in imitation of embroidery."

ill.11: mummers from Romance of Alexander Bodl. ms 264 (fig 4)

The Wardrobe accounts for 1347 mention painted tunics, cloaks, crests and masks for the Christmas festivities. These would probably have resembled the costumes seen in the marginal illustrations of the book "the Romance of Alexander"

- Excerpts on GUILDS & DIVERSE DETAILS such as they pertain to Printed & Painted Textiles

Portuguese legislative documents cited by de Oliveira Marques, the Ordenaçoens do Senhor Rey D. Affonso V, vols. I-V, refers to a 1391 law prohibiting anyone not a knight from wearing hose that were printed, painted, or striped. (Thanks Astrida)

- English Costume from the Early Middle Ages Through the Sixteenth Century by Iris Brooke, pg 104 -

"Painted hoods and hats were worn from about 1325, and embroidered and hand-painted materials were popular throughout the century."

- The Artist's Handbook - Ill Libro dell Arte - Cenninihe Artist's Handbook - Ill Libro dell

Cennino Cennini (about 1370–about 1440) was an Italian artist and writer, and is now most famous as the author of Ill Libro dell'Arte probably written in the late 1390s. This work is concerned with the practice of painting and was intended as a technical handbook for the apprentice.

"CLXXIII A Section Dealing with Miscellaneous Incidental Operations: First, Block Printing on Cloth. [pg 115]

Inasmuch as the execution of certain products painted on linen cloth, which are good for garments for little boys or children, and for certain church lecterns, still has to do with the profession of brush, the way to do them is this.”

WEBSITES:

- <http://www.larsdatter.com/banners.htm>
- <http://www.noteaccess.com/Texts/Cennini/>

Cennino D' Andrea Cennini. The Craftsman's Handbook. The Italian "Il Libro dell' Arte." Translated by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1933, by Yale University Press.

- <https://archive.org/details/lesmtiersetcor00boiluoft>

The first description trades Paris: the Dictionarius of John of Garland (circa 1220-1230)

But the translation is awful as I believe there's more about painted clothing & I just can't make it out -

PG 17 -"John of Garland gives a fairly wide range of diverse products on the Paris market, the vernacular gloss helps to identify. His neighbor sells pointed toe shoes with laces, buckles for shoes, different types of boots and sandals (§ 9). Saddlers expose plains and painted saddles, saddle blankets, saddles, horse blankets, and stirrups of troussequins (§11). The decor of certain objects appear well: the crowns are covered with fabric, leather or brass, and painted lions and leaves of lilies (§12)