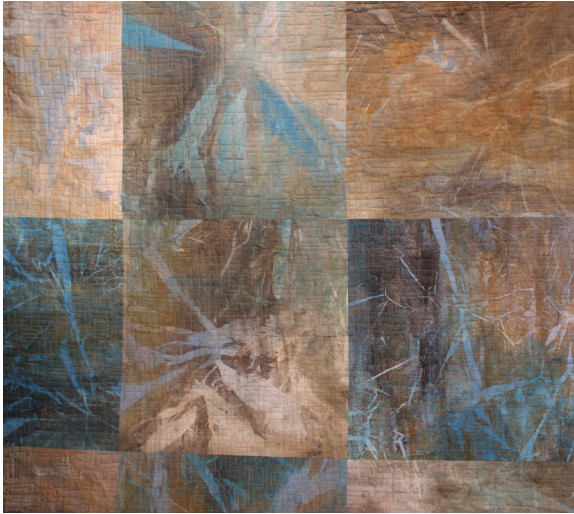


Painting Geological & Botanical Surfaces

by Maggie Vanderweit

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Maggie Vanderweit with host Susan Brubaker Knapp

Materials

- Prepared for dyeing (PFD) white cotton cut into 12" x 12" pieces
- Assortment of foam brushes, 1"-3" wide
- Apron, latex gloves, and plastic sheeting for protection
- Colour Vie™ Pigments, base, and fixative
- Clear plastic 2-cup containers with lids, 1 per color
- Extra empty plastic containers
- Plastic spoons
- Paper towels
- Table salt
- Drying rack

Will other paints work?

The short answer is Yes! These paints are special because of their brilliant colors and because of their thick consistency (like yogurt). Other textile paints will work, too. Experiment and find what works best for you and what is available in your area, if desired.

Surface design has intrigued me for many years. I paint and dye PFD cloth to sell and use in my art quilts. I use a water-based pigment system called Colour Vie, a thick textile paint that is wonderfully smooth. It is easy to brush on directly or use in many other applications. I like it because the hand of the fabric remains soft, the paint is non-toxic, and it cleans up with water. With it, I have painted thousands of yards of cotton.

During a recent painting session, I discovered how to create surface textures that look like close-up botanical details, rocks, and aerial views of the earth. By scrunching, printing, and over-painting, I get unpredictable and organic results that are the perfect starting points for abstract and landscape art quilts.

INSTRUCTIONS

Painting is messy and these pigments will stain! Before you begin, protect your hands, clothing, and painting surface by wearing an apron and latex gloves, and by covering your work surface with plastic sheeting.

1. Following the manufacturer's directions, mix the Colour Vie paints in the small plastic containers. Start by adding white base and a few drops of Resfix (fixative). Then slowly add a few drops of pigment. Stop after a few drops and stir with a plastic spoon to see how intense the color is. The more pigment that is added, the more intense the color. Add black to darken or more base to lighten—what you see is what you get. Mix each color in a separate plastic container.

Note: The resulting paint should be the consistency of yogurt. If the paint is too thick, add a small amount of table salt to thin.

2. Dip a sponge brush into the paint and cover the cloth in broad strokes. I use only 1 brush; the sponge acts as a paint reservoir and I enjoy the way colors come through unexpectedly. Leave the cloth on the table.
3. Place an unpainted piece of fabric loosely yet exactly on top of the painted fabric and then lift them both up quickly from the center, twisting and scrunching them together. Pull the fabrics apart and allow them to air dry. The first cloth will be solidly colored, but the second will be streaked with white in unpredictable ways that resemble mountains crevasses or leaf veins. Allow the fabric to dry thoroughly.
4. When the streaky piece is dry, over-paint with a contrasting color. Here are some pleasing combinations: green and red; black and light blue; brown and gold; blue and turquoise.

Spread the second layer of paint over the entire piece of fabric, then dry it on a drying rack.


5. You can also add table salt to small batches of paint to thin them for softer, watery colors and etched lines; don't put this thinner paint back into the main batch of color or it will all be thinned. Scrunch up single pieces of cloth to get effects that look like water, plants, stone, rock formations or bark. The salt effects show up best when the cloth dries.

Tip: I use the paint left on the plastic drop cloth to create grunge or distressed effects. I rub white cloth into it and then paint over that.

Tips for using Colour Vie pigments

- Do not allow paints and base to freeze.
- The pigments come in the primary colors plus black, brown, and white—perfect for mixing your own personal color palette!
- Leftover paints can be stored for a long time in sealed containers away from light and heat.
- All paints are translucent like watercolors, except for the white pigment which is opaque (not to be confused with the base).
- Use table salt to thin the paint. Adding water will not change its consistency.

6. When the fabric is dry, it must be heat set. Press small pieces slowly on highest setting. Or, much faster and more efficient, put the fabric in the dryer on very high for 40 minutes (test a piece first to make sure your dryer gets hot enough); all colors can be dried together.

Use these fabrics in your work to create one-of-a-kind art quilts! 

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Colour Vie paint is available in Canada at colourvie.com.