

Out of This Earth

Earth Pigments & Soya Milk on Cloth

KEY INFORMATION

Date: 22-26 April 2024

Venue: InStitches, Eversley, nr Wokingham

Experience Level: suitable for all levels

Student Supplies Fee: £35 per student (does not include cloth)

OVERVIEW

This workshop is designed to introduce you to an ecological method of binding earth (or mineral) pigments to textiles using soya milk. The workshop will explore a wide range of approaches using liquid and thickened pigment paints and enable you to get to grips with the process. You'll leave with knowledge, experience and a wide variety of samples – of a size that could be used for stitch or embroidery, small compositions, cushions, quilt-making or small bags. The teaching style will encompass lectures/explanations, group reviews & discussions and one-to-one time. Content will include:

- Collecting and processing your own earth pigments and using purchased pigments.
- Making pigments sticks/crayons.
- Making soya milk and thickening it to make soya paste.
- Making liquid and thickened soya paints.
- Applying paint to plain and pre-coloured cloth, including:
 - ⇒ Pre-sizing
 - ⇒ Working with liquid paints: the use of calligraphy tools, fingers, brushes, thieves, resists, cloth-to cloth transfer, use of surface pigment residue and the exploitation of different surfaces to create texture.
 - ⇒ Working with thickened soya paint: using silkscreens, thermofax screens, needle-nose bottles, brushes, rollers, mono printing and stencils.
- Working up multiple layers of processes/techniques, and the working window of opportunity.
- Post-sizing.
- Curing the cloth.
- To wash..., or not to wash.
- Exploring hand stitch in advance of pigment application (pre-work or evening work!), and to progress work.

WORKSHOP HOURS

Monday; arrive for a 9.30am start, close at 5.00pm.

Tuesday to Thursday: 9am to 5pm.

Friday: 9am to 4pm.

SUPPLIES ON-SITE

The supplies fee of £35 will include use of the following media and materials:

- Soya beans
- Earth Pigments
- Handouts; 70-pages, illustrated and bound.
- Tools: a selection of tools for general use throughout the workshop.
- Threads: Claire will supply a selection of hand stitching threads, but you'll see you've been asked to bring some yourself.

WHAT TO BRING

CLOTH

I have provided details of some cloth and thread suppliers at the end of this document. The cloth must be of natural fibre and many different weights of cloth can be used; anything from a silk organza to a 7.5oz cotton canvas. However, for the processes being used, **I recommend a medium-to-heavy weight of bleached or unbleached linen** (not upholstery weight). DO NOT leave things to the last minute when ordering – as the cloth must be scoured to remove the sizing in advance of the workshop (unless it's sold as pre-washed), so give yourself time to do that.

- **Linen:** Ikea sell a decent unbleached line at around £8 per metre, which is 150cm wide and of a medium weight, but stocks can vary hugely. Dalston Mills sells a linen called Milltown Irish linen in white or ivory, and it's a good weight at 230gsm and reasonably priced.
- **Medium-weight calico:** this can be an interesting cloth to use for some processes, but is optional. Easily available, sold by Whaleys.

I recommend:

- 5m of medium-weight linen.
- A half or one metre of medium-weight calico (optional).
- If you wish to bring other cloth to try, please only bring half-metres and don't go crazy!

To scour:

- Load between 2 to 4m of cloth (depending on weight and width) into the washing machine: don't over-fill as the cloth needs to be able to move about. Close the door and then...
- Dissolve 150-200ml of soda ash (sodium carbonate) in some warm (not cold, not hot) water and pour this into the detergent dispenser. Sodium carbonate is available from swimming pool suppliers. DO NOT use household washing soda. If you cannot obtain sodium carbonate, just use detergent.
- Add a small squirt of hand-wash detergent into the dispenser.
- Wash at 60°C or hotter, but not cooler.

We'll initially be working to sample sizes of 50 x 50cm (there or thereabouts – a little smaller won't matter, but not larger). But, please don't cut your cloth in advance, as there will be size options.

PLASTIC

Many processes will be done on top of smooth, un-creased sheet plastic which must be of a size to fit the tables, so 1.25 x 2.25m. You will need at least 2 pieces and your options include:

- Buy from InStitches on the day: the studio will be stocking un-creased, smooth sheet plastic at 1.2m wide. You'll need 2.5 m @ £3.50
- PVC tablecloth; in plain or clear. John Lewis sells clear PVC by the metre at £6pm. Or simply google PVC by the metre and you'll find plenty of suppliers online – look for 300-400micron weight. Buy 4.5-5m. Ask for it to be delivered rolled and store rolled to avoid creases.

AND THE REST...

- 50g of soil from your environment. Please DO NOT choose soil that is rich in organic matter, we need plain old 'dirt'; clay works best.
- A drop cloth: this is a piece of sturdy cloth such as 7.5oz canvas or cotton drill, used to cover your worktable for specific approaches. Your drop cloth needs to **measure 1.5 x 2.25m** once hot-washed and shrunk. **Note:** InStitches keeps stocks of drop cloth fabric for you to buy on site (£16.25 per cloth) or order from Whaleys.
- One empty beer or soft drink can, rinsed out (we'll be using this to make a calligraphy/mark-making tool).
- One small box of ball-headed or T pins.
- A sewing kit with a variety of needle sizes, a small pair of scissors, thimble if you use one, a stitch ripper.

- Thread: hand stitching thread in 'earthy' colours such as rust orange, burnt red, yellow ochre, unbleached/natural, cream, brown, charcoal, black. Choose something similar to a cotton Perlé 12 or a 2-3 ply linen (see supplier list).
- Cloth apron (or wear the equivalent of gardening/decorating clothes).
- Notebook (for those who like to take notes).
- 1 x black Sharpie/laundry pen to label your samples.
- Pen and pencil.
- Comfortable, rubber-soled shoes (think concrete floor).
- A camera as it's useful to record work-in-progress.
- 4 bricks or large 'ish rocks; if we have the chance to dry things off outside, we'll use the bricks to weigh down the sheet plastic. Bung them in the boot of your car and leave them there until needed. If you're not travelling by car, ignore this!

HOMEWORK - BEFORE OR DURING THE WORKSHOP

- Please prepare a small sample of hand stitch before the workshop or if you're staying away from home, this can be done in the evening after workshop hours.
- Tear or cut a 10cm strip across the selvedge width of a piece of linen to get a long, thin length of between 1.3 - 2m depending on the selvedge width.
- Using something like a Cotton Perlé 12 or a 2-3 ply linen thread in a toning colour, hand stitch about 20-30cm of this length; ladder stitch, running stitch, herringbone etc., but nothing too close or satin-stitched.
- We will apply liquid soya paint to the stitched area during the workshop and the rest of the length can be used as a continuous sample thereafter.

If you have any questions about the workshop content or supplies, please email Claire direct at cb@clairebenn.com. If you have queries about the venue, accommodation of dietary requirements please email InStitches.

SUMMARY OF SUPPLIER INFORMATION

- **Dalston Mills;** www.dalstonmillsfabrics.co.uk ; best price for a 230gsm linen. Look for Milltown Irish Linen in white or ivory.
- **Ikea** for medium weight, white or unbleached linen at a low price but stock levels vary hugely.
- **Whaleys of Bradford;** www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk: cotton drill loomstate for dropcloths (ref CC12) and medium weight calico
- **Paintbox Threads;** www.paintboxthreads.co.uk: hand dyed silk and cotton Perlé 12 thread. Ready-for dyeing hanks, some cloth.
- **Namolio;** go to www.etsy.com and look for Namolio (shop). Excellent range of linen threads and other nice stuff. Based in Bristol.
- **InStitches;** Plastic & drop cloth: email Hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk