

A free project, compliments of...

Sue Bleiweiss

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Crayons on fabric

This project sheet is all about working with water-soluble crayons and Shiva Oil paint sticks. Both of these are fun and easy ways to add color to cloth and can be used in a lot of different ways.

Watercolor crayons

Using watercolor crayons to color cloth is so much fun! They don't affect the drape or hand of the cloth at all, the way some textile paints do. They are easy to use and clean up is a snap. I'm always looking for easy, low mess ways to add color to cloth. Watercolor crayons eliminate the need to worry about fumes, mess and clean up is a breeze.

There are a lot of different crayons on the market and you'll need to experiment to find the ones that you like working with. I don't recommend using these crayons to color cloth that you will be putting through the washer because it's been my experience that they are not permanent and will fade with multiple washings. So use any cloth that you color with the crayons for things you don't plan to wash such as handbags, totes, postcards, artist trading cards, etc.



Let's start by choosing a crayon and just doing some random scribbling onto the cloth. Put your fabric onto your work surface, pick a crayon and begin scribbling. For this set of examples I'm using the Caran D'Ache Neocolor II water-soluble wax pastel crayons, which are the ones that I prefer working with.



Once you have added all the color you like it's time to spray the cloth with some water. The more "runny" your colors will get. When you add the water the colors will intensify quite a bit. Before you start adding water you may want to protect your work surface with a sheet of plastic. The color is going to bleed through the cloth and onto the surface you're working on.





You can use foam makeup wedges to help blend the edges of the colors together. You could also use a stencil brush, paintbrush or even your fingers.

At this point you can set the cloth aside to dry or if you're in a rush you can hurry the process by ironing the cloth while it's wet. You need to move the cloth to a surface that you can iron onto. Be aware that the colors on the cloth are going to transfer to whatever you put it onto. This can actually work to your advantage if you put another piece of plain white cloth under the surface of the cloth when you iron it.

To iron the cloth, use a hot iron and a press cloth. For those of you who work with paper crafts, try using a piece of white copy paper as your press cloth. You'll end up

with a beautiful piece of watercolor paper to use in your scrapbooking or other crafts.

Here's a piece of paper that I used as a press cloth.

Iron the cloth using slow even pressure. You'll hear a sizzling sound as the cloth begins to dry. When you're done with one section, move the press cloth to another and continue to press.

When you are finished with one side, flip the cloth over and iron the other side.



You can get some interesting results with the colors if you hang the cloth before you spray it. Hanging it will cause the colors to run once the water has been applied.

Here I've hung the cloth and begun to spray. You can see the colors beginning to run.



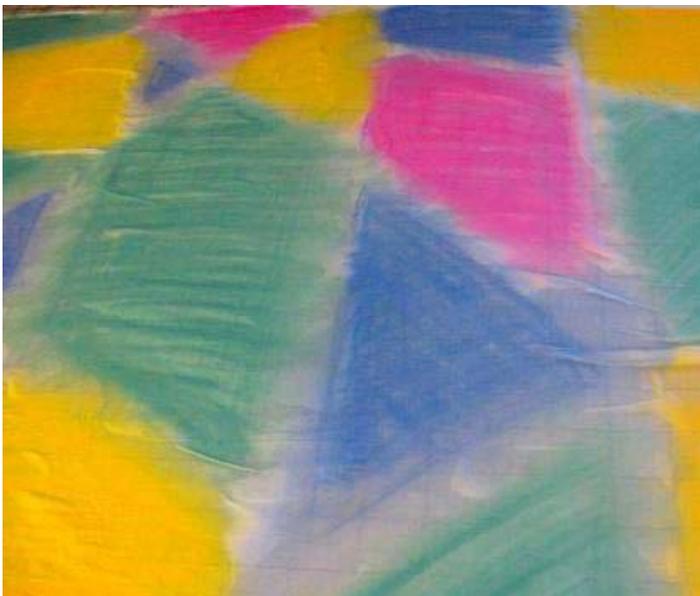


For this piece of cloth I've used painter's tape to mask off some simple shapes and I've colored in each shape.

Then I removed the tape and sprayed on the water.



I blended the colors into the white spaces a bit using a makeup wedge.



Then the cloth was pressed with a press cloth, put into the dryer for 45 minutes and then ironed again.

You can see that even after spending 45 minutes in the dryer prior to washing there was still some loss of color, but I like the results that I got, so experiment with washing the cloth if your final piece ends up being too bright and you want to tone it down a bit.



Shiva Paintstiks

Shiva Artist's Paintstiks are another easy way to get color onto cloth. Just like the water-soluble crayons, the mess is minimal and they are easy to use and clean up after and they don't affect the drape or hand of the cloth at all. They do have one, very big advantage over the water-soluble crayons though; you can heat set them and make the cloth you use them on washable. They are specially formulated to work on fabric and have a very low linseed oil content which means that they will dry faster than a regular artist oil stick and won't be harmful to your fabric over time.



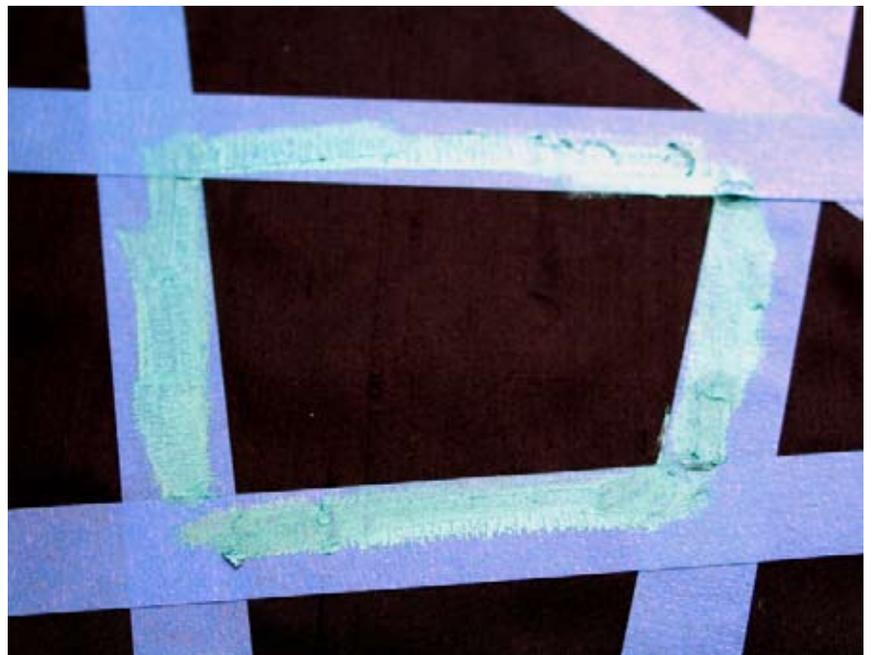
The Paintstiks have a film or a skin over the top of the paint stick that needs to be removed before you can use it. I like to rub it off by using a good amount of pressure and scribbling with the paint stick onto a piece of white copy paper. You can also peel it with a knife, paper towel, vegetable peeler or your finger nail. The film will form again after a day or so and it will keep the rest of the stick from drying out. No special storage is needed for the paint sticks, I just throw mine in a plastic zip lock bag and when I'm ready to use them again I just rub off the film.



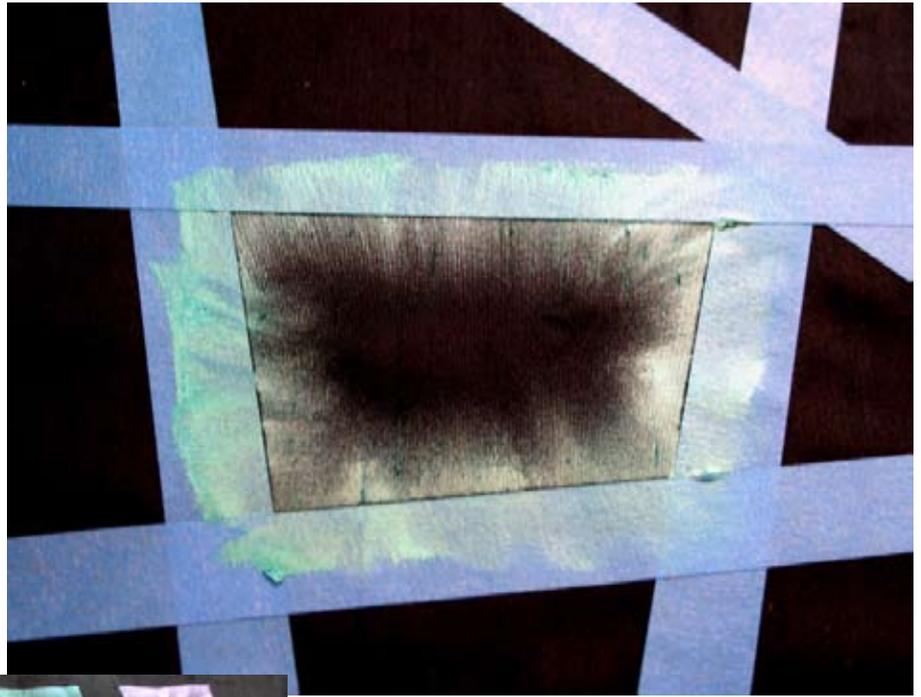
I like to use the iridescent Paintstiks because I like the way they shimmer when I use them on black silk. I'm using black silk dupioni for these examples but you can use any color fabric you have on hand.

Use some painter's tape to mask off a grid on your cloth.

Choose a Paintstik to work with and remove the film. The easiest way to get the paint onto the surface of the cloth of course is to just draw right onto it with the Paintstik. However, I like a more muted, blended look. Take a paint stick and rub some of the paint onto the painter's tape around one of the blocks of fabric.



Now using the makeup wedge, “push” or “pull” the color off of the painter’s tape onto the cloth.



Continue filling each square with color and when you’re finished remove all the painter’s tape.

I used this same technique to embellish a plain, black scarf that I wove using black cotton.

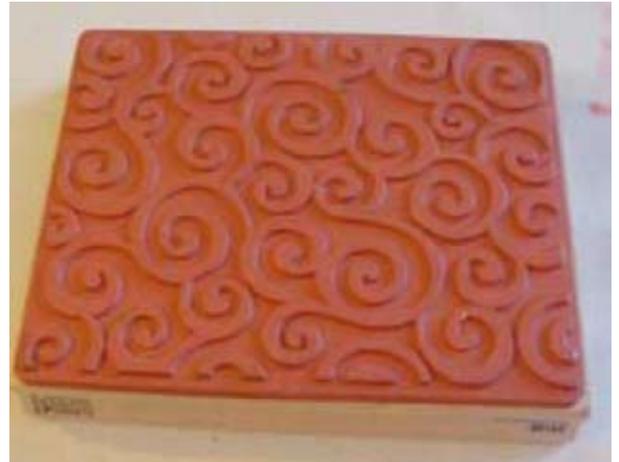
The iridescent Paintstiks added a nice shimmer to the surface of the otherwise rather boring scarf. Since the Paintstiks are washable you can use them to dress up just about any wearable item that doesn’t need to be dry cleaned. Use them to add some color to a handbag, shirt, jeans or even a pair of canvas sneakers!



Another way to use the Paintstiks to apply color to the cloth is by using a rubbing technique. You can use rubber stamps, textured wallpaper pieces or you can also purchase rubbing plates to use with your Paintstiks. These come in a variety of shapes and designs.

To use a rubber stamp as a rubbing surface choose one without a lot of tiny details and place it underneath the cloth you want to color.

Use the Paintstiks to rub over the fabric to reveal the image of the stamp. Use short strokes and it's helpful to rub the crayon tip down to a flat surface first. You can also peel off the paper on the Paintstik and use the side of the Paintstik, although this makes a mess of your hands!

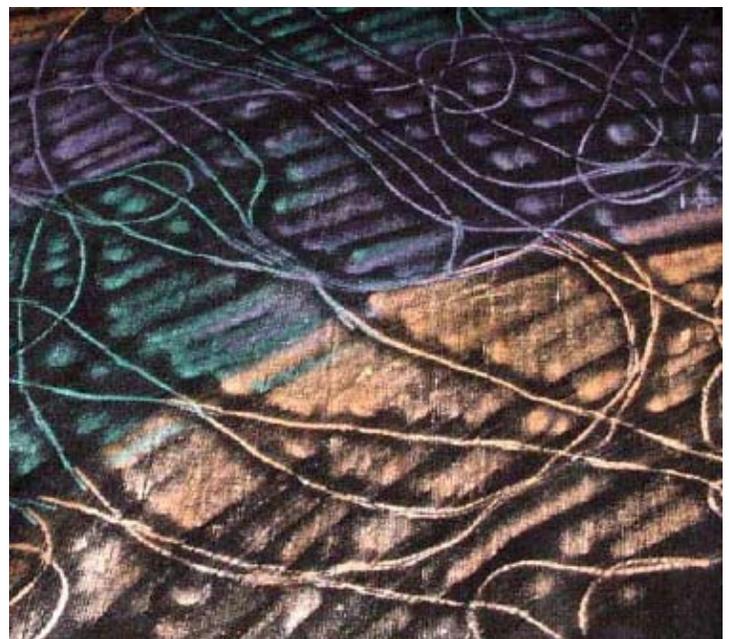


For this piece of cloth I laid down some yarn onto my work surface in a random pattern and then placed the cloth over it. Then I rubbed over the surface with different colors of Paintstiks.

Some other rubbing surfaces to try:

- Stone patios, bricks or concrete surfaces
- Tree bark
- Rug canvas
- Plastic canvas
- Lace

Paintstiks also work great with stencils. Use the Paintstiks with stencils the same way you did with the painter's tape by rubbing some color on the stencil first and then using a makeup wedge to push the paint onto the cloth.





Fabric painted with the Paintstiks needs to cure for at least 48 hours or more before you can heat set the paints. You'll notice an oily smell coming from the fabric while it's curing and that is okay. How long the paint takes to dry will depend on how thickly it was applied to the cloth. I prefer to wait at least three days or until I can't smell the oily odor anymore before I heat set the color. To heat set the color, set your iron for the hottest setting that your fabric will allow and iron the cloth on both sides using a press cloth. After heat setting, the fabric can be washed and dried. Don't dry clean a fabric that has been colored with the paint sticks. The dry cleaning solvents will dissolve the color.

