Marbling

TIPS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

- Make sure the paints, chemicals, and the size are all at room temperature. Differences in temperature will affect results. Specifically paints spread less on the size when cold.
- When working with T-shirts, insert cardboard to stretch fabric and keep it rigid. This will make it easier to handle and help to avoid white seams along the sleeves or sides.
- Marble tennis shoes by starting at one side and rolling evenly across the surface of the size.
- Marbling colors will not adhere to wet fabric or paper. Keep this in mind when marbling on T-shirts or other double-sided projects. Water can be used as a "resist" or "mask" in this way as well.
- Size is very slippery! Clean up floor spills immediately.
- Stars instead of circles indicate that a film or "skin" has congealed on the surface of the size and needs to be skimmed off. Prevent the formation of film by resting newsprint, paper towels or other inexpensive paper on the surface of the size during breaks between prints.
- Hard water and minerals can affect results. You may consider using distilled water or adding some Calgon water softener. Size that is too thin can be an indicator of hard water.
- If the size is too thick, the marbling colors will not spread as much and will be dragged along on the comb instead of cut cleanly in half. Add more water to thin down the size.
- Thicker size is better for stone or marbled patterns, while thinner size works better for combed patterns. Adjust the amount of water in the size according to your personal style.
- Release the drops of paint close to the surface of the size. A drop applied from a greater distance will have more force to break the surface tension and cause the paint to sink.
- Alum-treated paper or fabric can oxidize when exposed to air, so treated items should be used within 2 days to make sure the mordant is still effective. Treated paper and fabric can be preserved by storing in an airtight bag or container.
- More alum does not make the paint stick better. Too much alum will cause the paint to bind to the alum instead of the fibers of the paper or fabric and cause it to run. Problems with adhesion usually point to an alum issue.
- Leaving the alum paper or fabric on the surface of the size longer does not help the paint stick any better. In fact it allows alum to contaminate the carrageenan which can prevent subsequent prints from sticking properly.
- Working fast is usually better. The longer the color stays on the size the more it breaks up or "shatters." It's best not to work on a pattern much longer than 4 minutes because paint left too long looks broken up by tiny micro cracks.
- Adding drops directly on top of a drop added a second before causes the paint to sink. Add a drop, let it spread all the way, and then another can be added directly on top.

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