

Azure Your Art

By Artist Michael Harbridge

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Materials List

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Azure Kits (several available)
Soft Fan Brush
Aqua-Flo Brushes
Brush-On Sealer
Banding wheel
Metallic Markers
Rubbing Alcohol
Ceramic Surfaces (or glass)

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Individual and studio assortments are available



Azure Marker Painting

Azure markers have alcohol-based pigments that dry really fast and will bond to almost any surface. They have different tips on each end of the marker, one wider and one fine point. For all of the ceramic samples shown, we worked on surfaces that were clear glazed and fired, so they had a shiny surface. These do not work the same on bisque without glaze. If you do not have access to glazed and fired ware, the process will work over items that have been base coated with good quality acrylic paint. White will work best, but silver metallic or opalescent colors work well too. The glass plate shown was a clear glass plate from the dollar store. You can also create your own shapes by slumping or draping glass prior to adding color. These markers DO NOT get fired. They are primarily for decorative purposes, but read on for more information about using with food.



There are a couple of primary methods to using Azure on pottery and glass. These same methods can be used on other surfaces like wood, plastic, metal and even canvas. Dotted is one method and flowing is the other. You will see several items here that have a combination of the two.

Each process starts out the same, regardless of surface. Color the prepared surface by randomly using the markers to add overall coverage. Colors can touch, and you can create a blend by slightly overlapping. When working on glass, like the plate shown, I did the coloring on the back of the plate so technically the top is still food safe. However, it's not recommended to place this plate in a dishwasher or even a sink full of water to clean. While these colors won't easily wipe off, soaking can remove color. Gloss and matte brush on sealers can also be used to help protect them, but still don't protect from soaking.



Defined Patterns

If you like the look of defined patterns, you can tap various colors over the entire area using the large tip. End with the gray handled marker which is the blender. Use the large tip end for bigger spots, and the fine point end for smaller spots. Simply touch it to the colored surface, and continue to tap over the colors. The blender will pick up some color as you do this, and that's okay. Each time you touch it down, it deposits alcohol dots, and it will also deposit a little bit of any color on the tip. It actually helps by giving more color and definition to the spots. If you really don't like the color, you can work the tip on paper to remove the color. But all of the samples shown utilized the added color. You can go back and add more dots at any point, and it's strongly recommended to do so. It adds even more dimension and depth.

Take a look at the yellow areas on the vase and plate to the left. You'll see some defined spots, and then as you move down, the spots get more muted. This is created by tapping the yellow marker tip on the yellow area. I also did a little bit with the orange marker. You can tap any colors on top of other colors to get unique looks. The black marker can be used to add smooth line edges to things like the top of the vase or solid coverage on the base. The blender marker will not leave rings of color like it does on other colors.



Flowing Patterns

Flowing patterns start out the same by coloring in the areas you'd like with the colors you'd desire. Rather than using the blender marker, fill the Aqua-Flo brushes with rubbing alcohol (as low as 50% works, but higher numbers like 91% works best) and dab the alcohol on the colored surfaces. Give a gentle squeeze to get more flowing. Tip the items to help get the colors flowing. After you flow color, you can continue to dab more alcohol to get smaller areas



the open up with rings. Flick the Aqua-Flo brush against your finger to get the alcohol to create splatter or small spots.

If you happen to get areas where all the color washes away, or you want to add more color back in, you can. Simply use the markers to add more color and repeat the process. And if you have more color than you like, or colors get muddy, you can easily remove color from most surfaces with rubbing alcohol.

Add Metallic Color

Metallic paint pens work great in conjunction with Azure techniques. These metallic markers don't react to alcohol or flow. They are designed to accent the ware and can be applied before or after sealing. They are permanent and don't require sealing, but it does not hurt to seal them.

Sealing Azure

Azure markers dry pretty quickly and are fairly permanent. But using a brush on gloss or matte sealer will help protect the colors. You may see some color being picked up as you brush it on the surface. Once the sealer dries, you won't really notice color streaks. Brush on sealers from Mayco and Duncan work great. You can also use Mod Podge or other brush-on sealers. While spray sealers would protect the colors, a heavy application could cause colors to run, so brush-on sealers do work best. You can always spray over the brush-on sealer for even more protection.

Refilling Azure Pens

Azure pens can be refilled with alcohol ink available at art and craft supply stores. Use a tweezers or a plastic bag (to prevent the ink from getting on your hands) to pull the large tip out and pour the ink into the body of the mark-

er through the opening. If the gray handled blender gets dry, you can fill it with rubbing alcohol. Azure markers are great quality and contain a lot of pigment. There are low cost brands you can find, but we've found they contain less ink and tend to not work as well or last as long.

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