

Fabric Coloring 101 Class Using Fabric Markers, Gel Pens, Paints and Inktense Pencils on this 12 inch Butterfly Block



Interested in seeing more fabric painting items? Check out www.medinadomarts.com for other blocks and coloring tools.

Coloring Class Notes

Tools Used:

Gelly Roll Pens

Fabric Markers (focus on Fabrico markers)

Fabric Medium

Inktense Pencils

Watercolor paints

Fabric Paint

Paint Brush

The class includes the use of my “crayon boxes” which allows the student to test drive a product before purchasing it. However, if you would like use your own tools please feel free to do so and I will try to accommodate how to use them within the lecture.

Some basic information regarding fabric painting

- Just about any paint or pencil can be used in fabric painting. However, all of them have one thing in common – you must use a hot iron to set the color so that it will not bleed or run. Make sure your work has completely dried then with a dry iron and press cloth press the iron over the entire work letting the iron sit for up to 10 seconds. This will ensure the color fastness of your work.
- The fabric used for painting should be a high grade/high thread count cotton. Kona white cotton seems to be most artists’ favorite but I seem to do just fine with Roclon Industries Avalon 200 count bleached muslin. Washing the fabric first helps to set color better.

- Cotton thread/fabric will only absorb so much color at one time. If you notice that you continue to apply color but it doesn't deepen, let the first layer dry then go back over it with a second coat to deepen and intensify your color.
- Although you can wash your painted work; any metallic or glitter paint used will wash off in the wash. To be safe consider this as a work of art rather than a quilt! If it is to be used as a table runner or other type of use; spray it with Scotchguard to protect the paint finish.
- Color your lightest areas first then graduate to dark. Start working in the center and work out if possible.
- Sometimes it pays to plan ahead – color a paper version first before jumping in on a wholecloth quilt. It is very hard to correct a mistake. You have a paper version of this pattern in your kit.
- Do not use water as a medium nor any kind of alcohol based product. Both cause bleeding. By the way, Sharpie pens have an alcohol base – do not use for coloring.

Using Gelly Roll Pens on Fabric

Gel pens such as Gelly Roll pens by Sakura are excellent for coloring fabric and the best way for beginners to learn how to color on fabric. They are permanent, waterproof (after heat set with an iron) and do not bleed. (Bleeding can occur with some gel pens such as Copic and Pentel but it is usually minor). These pens are a great way for a beginner to color without fear of ruining their purchased work. Here are some tips for using gel pens on the sample:

1. Always start coloring from the center of your project out. It not only prevents potential bleeding but also prevents your arm or hand from smudging your work.
2. You can layer color using different colored gel pens – but do a trial run first to see what the combo will look like. Light first the dark color seems to work the best although using Gelly Roll Clear Stardust works with everything including pencils and paints.



Example of Gelly Roll coloring.

Using Fabric Markers on Fabric

Fabric markers are specifically made to color directly onto fabric with no additional product such as fabric medium or alcohol. Many markers have a brush and bullet tip, specifically designed for smooth ink flow. I recommend that all fabric markers be heat set with an iron for colorfastness.

Like gel pens, it is advisable to start in the middle of the section you are coloring and work towards the edge of your pattern. Fabric markers are more likely to bleed so stroking lightly at first will give you an idea of any bleeding without the color going outside of the line. Strokes should be short by pressing lightly onto the fabric. This not only keeps bleeding to a minimum but cuts down on leaving stroke marks on the fabric (which is the downside of fabric markers in my opinion.)

Blending with fabric markers can be achieved but it takes a bit of practice to seamlessly blend one color into another. First, work in a very small area (like a single leaf). Start with your lightest color and lay it down over the entire leaf. Then quickly come back in with your darker color and color lightly to blend with light color. Another option is to use fabric medium to blend. My preference is to put the fabric medium down first then color over it with the fabric marker.

If you want to add a bit of sparkle over any fabric marker coloring, you can use a Gelly Roll Clear Stardust pen. Color the area with your fabric marker and let it dry (usually takes about 5 minutes). Rub your finger over area to make sure it is dry then color over it with the Gelly Roll Clear Stardust pen. As always, heat set everything once you have finished coloring!



Example of coloring with Fabrico Fabric Markers. Second example is coloring dark over light with fabric marker.

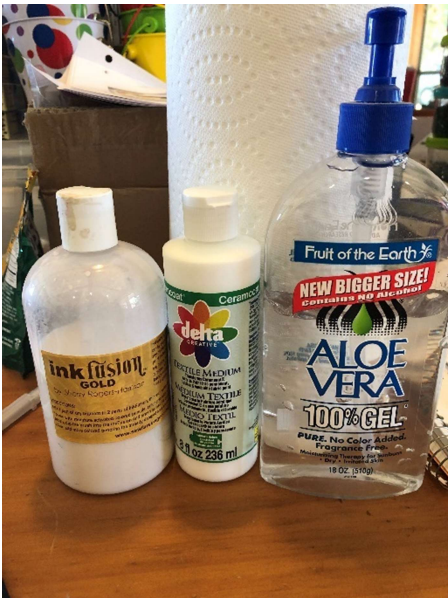
Using Pencils to Color on Fabric

There are many ways to set color other than pens or fabric markers. Colored pencils, Inktense pencils (which are probably the most popular), watercolor pencils, and a wide assortment of paints can be used on fabric. However, most of these tools require a catalyst to set the color permanently. Alcohol and fabric medium are most popular. I primarily use fabric medium because it is washable and easy to use.

Use of Mediums

In order to get the brilliant colors from a colored pencil of any type, you must use a wet medium to activate it. Water is not a good medium for activation on fabric as it bleeds into the fabric very easily. You must use textile medium to prevent bleeding.

Textile medium – A word about Textile Mediums: There is a variety out there – some are better than others. I make my own blend from ProChem's online recipe that allows for little bleeding. For a direct use textile medium there are a variety out there: Delta Ceramacoat, Jo Sonja's Textile Medium, Americana Fabric Medium; and PaintFusion by Sherry Rogers-Harrison (see website below). These all leave a soft feel and goes on smoothly. Liquitex is ok but can get really thick after sitting for a while. You can also use **Clear Aloe Vera gel**. You need one that is 100% Aloe Vera and colorless. It is brushed on and acts as a wet medium to activate the color. You must, however, be careful to use it sparingly also. If you have puddles of it, when it dries, it can flake off with the color.



All mediums should be heat set. The Aloe Vera gel should be washed out after it is heat set. The acrylic textile medium will, depending on how viscous the medium is, slightly change the hand of the fabric. I tend to use the fabric medium as I can control the color blending a bit more dependably.

Controlling the Bleed

Some fabric mediums, fabric markers, inks and paints can bleed depending on the type of fabric you are coloring. There are several products that can be brushed onto fabric that prevent bleeding. The best one that I use is Jacquard's No Flow. You brush it on, let it dry then you can color directly onto fabric without the worry of bleeding. Once you have heat set your color you can then wash your art and the No Flow rinses out and the fabric has its original softness.



No Flow

Other Tools

There are a few other tools you will need when you start applying color.

- Brushes – I like using #2 – #4 round and flat Taklon brushes to apply medium to the color. Cheaper is usually better! Don't use watercolor brushes as they are too soft.
- Paper towel – Always keep some sheets of paper towel around to dab off excess medium before activating the color. Less medium is better.
- Paint palettes to hold the medium and mix colors. I use paper plates and Dixie cups for mixing.
- A cup of water to wash out brushes in between coloring.

- Freezer paper: Can be ironed onto the back of your artwork and will act as a barrier to prevent leaking color from behind.
- Foam core: Another option is to use a piece of foam core shaped for the item. Spray a temporary fixative on the foam core and attach the fabric/artwork to the sprayed foam core or use painter's tape to hold it down. You will want to put your fabric on a solid surface such as freezer paper, glossy poster board, and foam core. You can also use a heavy poster board instead of foam core – just be aware that the color can smear underneath on any paper product.

Using Inktense Pencils on Fabric

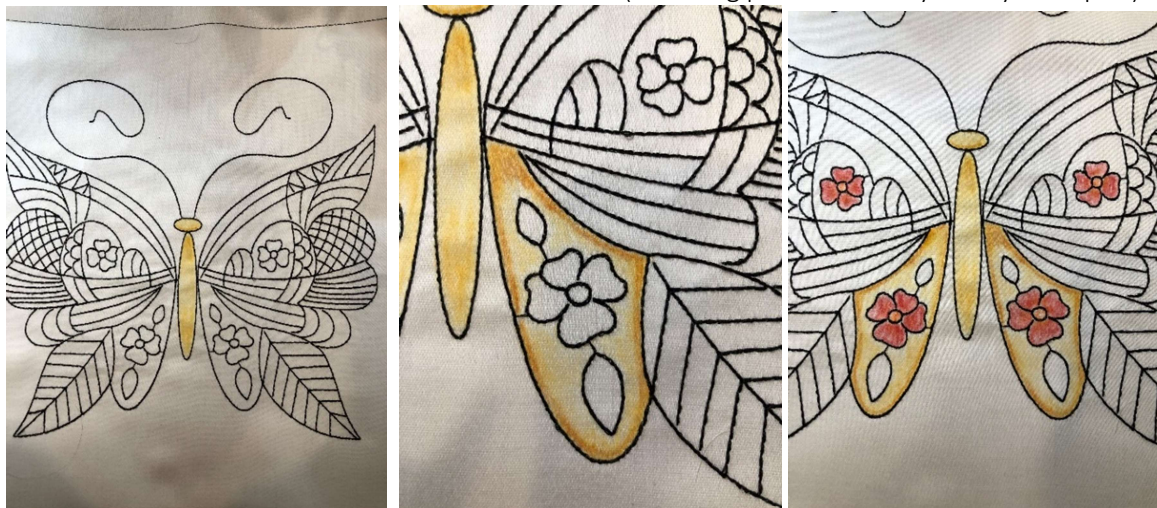
Most of the classes I teach involve using Inktense Pencils and fabric medium. The techniques described below can also be applied to regular colored pencils and/or watercolor pencils as well. Be aware that the color in Inktense pencils is much more vivid than colored pencils so if you use colored pencils you may have to color the fabric more heavily.

Derwent Inktense pencils are solidified ink in the lead and when activated with fabric medium permanently color the fabric. (Although permanent, the color needs to be set with an iron to make the ink colorfast. See notes below on washing.)

- Inktense pencils can be used like colored pencils, but their color becomes very vivid when activated with fabric medium. But since they are inks, the colors are permanent once dry. Because the color dries permanently, Inktense allows for over washing or color layering on top of the previous color. However, unlike watercolor, Derwent Inktense color cannot be rewet in order to mix color later on. If you intend to mix or blend the colors while working with them, it needs to be done before the area you are working in dries.
- **Suggestion:** I make color swatch samples on muslin in order to keep track of what each color looks like on fabric. Draw a rectangle with permanent ink for each Inktense color and label each one. Color each rectangle with the colors of Inktense pencils chosen. Leave half of the colored rectangle dry and activate the other half with fabric medium, so there you have a sample of how each pencil looks dry and activated.

Inktense Pencils Coloring Methods (There are videos on my website that go in to more detail on the following methods. You can find the videos at www.medinadomarts.com)

- **Dry on Dry Method.**- Using the Inktense pencils similarly to coloring with a colored pencil. Start coloring lightly making sure not to press too hard which leaves harsh streak marks. After coloring, brush the fabric medium lightly over the colored areas working from light to dark. If there are distinct colors wash your brush out in between colors so as not to mix them on your fabric. If the color is too light you can go over the wet area with the pencil again to deep the color. Note that the Inktense color looks very different when it is applied dry as compared to when it has been activated with a wet medium. Use your fabric sample colored earlier to give you a better idea of what the color will look like with the fabric medium. (following pictures are dry on dry examples)





- **Wet on Dry Method** – A very intense color can be created by wetting the medium prior to applying to dry fabric.

Wet a brush with the medium of choice and rub it along the tip of the pencil and then apply to dry fabric. This method allows you to see what the color is going to be right away and the color is usually very strong. The pencil itself can also be dipped into the medium and applied directly onto the fabric. Again, the color will be very strong. You can blend the color down with additional medium. Both of the wet on dry methods will leave a coating of medium on the lead. Use a paper towel to wipe the tip of the pencil clean. If the medium dries on the pencil sharpen it to remove medium.



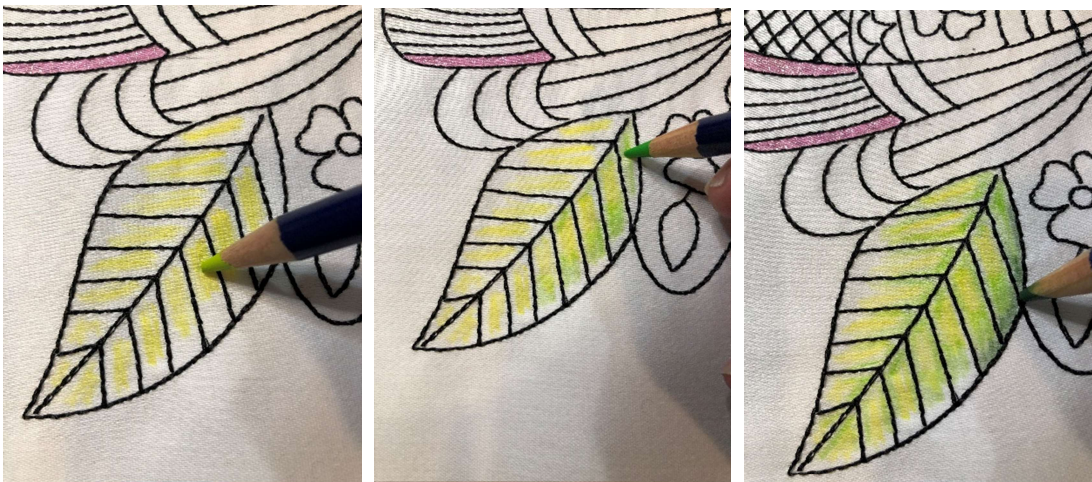
- **Wet/Dry on Wet** – one can also wet the fabric prior to applying either dry or wet color with a brush and then apply the color with a brush into the medium, allowing for nice blends.



Example of wet/dry on wet. Fabric was moistened first then color applied. Make sure to wash the brush before you move on to new coloring area. If you use a dirty brush from one area to the next, you may get strange color combos!

Blending Different Colors Together

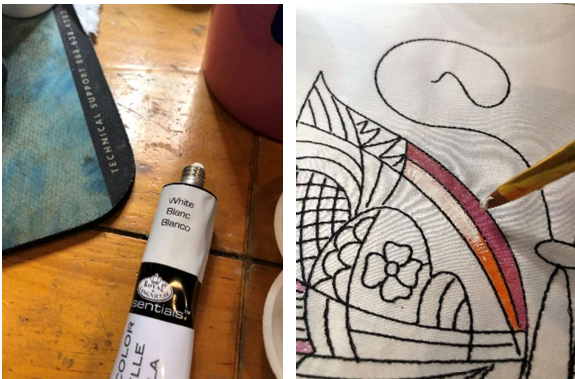
My favorite technique using Inktense pencils! The beauty of these pencils is that they blend so easily!



Color each part of the leaf starting with the lightest color first and work towards the darkest. Notice that the coloring does not have to be perfect. Now apply fabric medium starting at the base of the leaf and work up towards the edge.



While leaf is still wet you can add color depending on what you want then blend again with wet brush. Notice the color outside the lines... that can be fixed by allowing the area to dry then color over the mistake with a Gelly Roll white pen (aka a BooBoo pen). If you make a huge mistake (like the wrong color in the wrong area) you can use white paint to cover up the area then apply with correct color over the white paint. Make sure white paint is completely dry before applying new color. If the incorrect color is very dark, you may have to apply the white in two layers.



One note about Inktense Ink... it also comes in blocks or sticks of pure color. Sometimes coloring a large area with a pencil is time consuming and awkward. You can use the blocks to produce a large quantity of paint by scraping part of the stick into a small paper cup that has some fabric medium in it. I find it is easier to mix in cups that have plastic lids so that I can save my paint for later use.



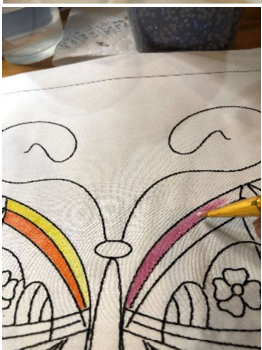
Example of some very used Inktense blocks!

Using Paints/Watercolors on Fabric

There are many, many paints that are acceptable for use on fabric; usually ones that are acrylic based work the best. Watercolor paint works as well when fabric medium is used in lieu of water as a paint activator.

A word about fabric paints: there are a number of fabric paints and fabric inks available on the market. I have tested and use a wide variety in my own quilts. I have made a test quilt of all the paints I use and how they look after the quilt has been washed. Of all the paints out there I believe that Jacquard's Textile Paints and ProChem Fabric Paints are best suited for beginners. They don't bleed; they paint on easily and they are very washable. The only downside to fabric paints is they tend to be thick. You can thin them down a bit with fabric medium but that can also affect the intensity of the original color. I have been asked about Shiva Paintstiks which are an oil based paint stick. They are beautiful colors and blend very easily however I prefer to use water based products that can be cleaned with soap and water. An oil based paint like Shiva Paintstiks needs to be cleaned up with mineral spirits as well as the brushes used to apply the paint.

Using Paint on Fabric (this example uses ProChem Pearlescent Fabric Paint)

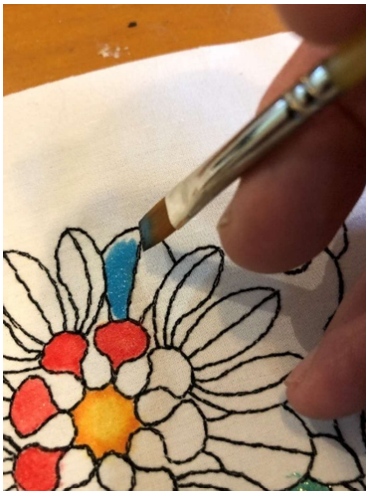
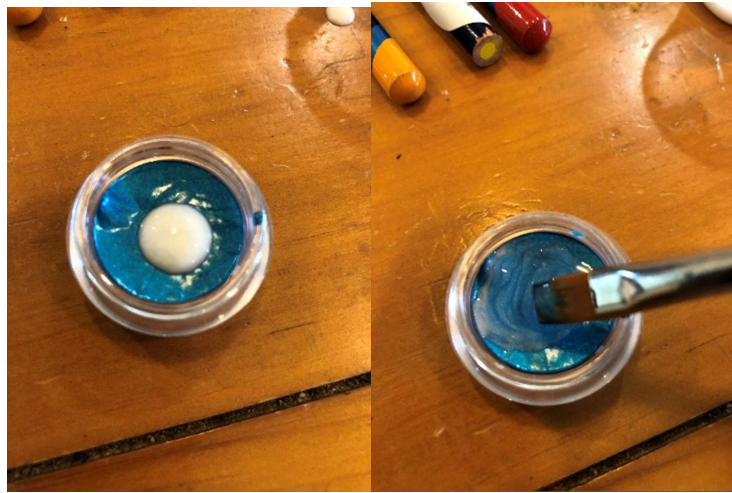


Dip your brush

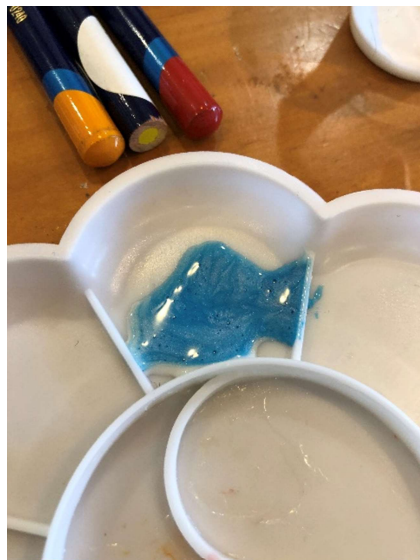
into paint and apply directly to fabric. As before with other tools, start in the center of the area to be painted and work towards the stitch line. Since most paints are semi- to fully opaque be careful not to get the paint on the stitching. If it does, use the end of the paintbrush to scrap away the paint off the stitching. You can also use fabric medium to smooth the paint out and feather and shade the color lighter.



Left - Examples of watercolor cakes. Watercolor cakes, tubes and pencils work very well with fabric medium because of how versatile they are for controlling color and blending/shading. If you are using watercolor cakes (or little pans with watercolor squares) there are two ways to get color. First apply a drop or two of fabric medium directly onto the cake. Let the drop sit a minute or two then take your brush and swirl it around on the cake to get color. Now apply directly to colored area. Also make sure to clean excess fabric medium off cake so that it will not dry and harden on cake. If it does harden on cake you will have to use a knife to scrape off dried fabric medium to get to watercolor.



The other way to get color from watercolor cakes is follow step one but take the color to a paper plate or plastic paint palette. Scoop as much color off the cake as possible and put a large drop of fabric medium in the same area then mix. The color will become noticeably lighter. This is a great way to get shading without layering on your fabric.



Example of scooping out color from melted watercolor cake and blending with additional fabric medium to make a lighter shade of color. The sky effect was done by putting fabric medium down on the fabric first then coloring with watercolor.

Continually stir your paints if mixed with textile medium to keep it from drying out. You may want to mix your paints in Dixie cups with lids as they can be saved for a short while using the lid. However, the paints will eventually dry so use them within a couple of days after mixing. You may also try using a couple of drops of your fabric medium to revive your color.

References

Most of the techniques that I use are from three award winning quilters who use painting techniques in their quilts. The list below is by no means complete but if you would like to see some beautiful works of quilt art, these ladies have it in spades! All

three have awesome websites with plenty of free videos and other information that you can apply to your own creations!

Sherry Rogers-Harrison: www.sewfarsogood.org Sherry has won many awards for her wholecloth painted quilts. She has her own line of patterns, books, paints, and textile medium. Sherry also uses an Innova Longarm and is an expert longarmer as well as a wonderful quilt painting artist! If you do a Google search on her name, you will find plenty of YouTube videos on her painting techniques.

Linda M. Poole: www.lindampoole.com Linda is another textile artist out there and one of the best teachers I have ever had the pleasure to meet! When I started to write the instructions for this class I realized she had already written the best book for quilt painting – **“Painted Applique – A New Approach”**. You cannot go wrong by purchasing this book if you want to learn how to use painting techniques that look like applique!

Irena Bluhm: www.irenablumcreations.com Irena’s quilts are spectacular! If you go to her website she has plenty of eye candy to look at as well as YouTube videos that explain her painting technique that primarily uses colored pencils and fabric medium. Her book **“Quilts of a Different Color”** is an awesome tool for quilt painting.

Finally, if you are interested in using your embroidery machine to do outline quilt patterns, check out Leah Day. She uses her sitdown for both free motion quilting and her embroidery machine for quilting quilt as you go. She has created a series of embroidery patterns called Stitch N’Paint that are specifically designed to be painted once you have stitched them out. You can find her at www.leahday.com along with tons of helpful videos.

Embroidery Websites for Line Patterns for Painting – This is a small list of the embroidery sites I use for purchasing patterns that I use in the painting blocks.

1. Oh My Crafty Supplies – this is the site where most of the Animals Gone Zen came from. Web address: <https://ohmycs.com/>
2. Embroidery Library – really love this site! They have great sales so sign up for the email newsletter... you can't go wrong with them! Web address: <https://www.emblibrary.com/EL/default.aspx>
3. The sister company to Embroidery Library is Urban Threads. Web address: <https://urbanthreads.com/>
4. A lovely lady from South Africa (DALEEN LUBBE) does some really great designs. Her web address is: <https://www.stitchdelight.net/>
5. A big fav of mine is Designs by JuJu. She has great sales as well. Web address: <https://www.designsbyjuju.com/>
6. Sometimes I find good patterns on Etsy but they can be hit or miss.