The Possibilities of Batik

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Recommended Citation

Schultz, Rhea Ferne (1924) "The Possibilities of Batik," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 4 : No. 8 , Article 15.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol4/iss8/15

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THE POSSIBILITIES OF BATIK
By Rhea Ferne Schultz.
(Continued)

There are two methods of applying the wax to the material, with a small brush, or with the Japanese instrument, the tjanting, which is a small oval cup made of very thin copper with a slender curved spout projecting from the base of the cup, and with a short piece of reed for the handle. The use of the tjanting is an ideal method of making long even lines and of outlining large spaces. The brush is in more general use than the tjanting even for outlining, and is preferred by many who have had experience with both. For filling in large spaces, larger brushes are best as they are faster than either the small brush or the tjanting. A pretty effect may be obtained in waxing by using a wide brush and spreading the bristles as the teeth of a comb, then dip in wax and make waxy lines which resemble the fronds of a peacock or an ostrich feather. Stippling may be accomplished by filling a toothbrush with hot wax and drawing a comb through it, letting the hot wax fall in tiny drops on the cloth.

In any method of applying, care must be used not to drop wax where it is not wanted, as it is very hard to remove. To remove these spots, they may be sponged carefully with gasoline, benzine, or carbona.

In waxing any thin material, it is usually sufficient to wax only one side, but with heavy materials, as velvet and heavy crepes, the material must be waxed on both sides.

Another important part of the tools is the batik frame, which is a wooden frame, adjustable in size at the corners and faced with cloth, to which the material may be either basted or pinned. Sometimes the material may be pinned over a cardboard box, or with small pieces, may be held up from the table with the hand. In any case it is very desirable that there be nothing back of the material, to which the wax may stick, as it will break and cause the design to crackle when it is pulled away.

When the design is outlined with wax, it is ready for the dye. There are many which contain beautiful colors and should be used exactly as directed on the package.

Solutions may be made and kept in glass jars to have ready for use, but they must be strained through several thicknesses of cloth before using. Most dyes are used with either salt, vinegar, or acid. In batik work the acid is generally added to the water in which the cloth is to be dipped. Hot dyes cannot be used as the heat would melt the wax, but dyes will all work a trifle better in lukewarm than in cold water. Several dips in a weak dye will give a more permanent color than one dyeing in a strong color.

It is not only waste of dye to use a strong solution, but a more durable fast color can be obtained by allowing the goods to remain in the dye bath until there is a strong union between the dye and the fiber of the cloth. This union cannot be obtained in a few minutes sufficiently to stand much rough usage. Therefore it is better to allow at least some time, depending much on materials used. Wool and silk absorb the dye easily, and quickly, cotton, hemp, and linen much more slowly. The closeness of the weave and hardness of the twill must also be considered. A very loose porous silk or cotton crepe will dye in a few minutes, while a firm muslin will require perhaps half an hour to produce a strong fast color.

The intricacy of the design is the determining factor in the number of processess necessary for any given piece of batik. The more colors desired, the more often will the fabric have to be immersed in the dye bath. The simplest and therefore first process for the beginner is that of dyeing the material one color with the pattern left in the original color of the cloth.

Tints and shades of any full color give harmonious combinations. The nearer the shade approaches black and the tint approaches white, the greater the contrast. The more closely related the two are, the less the contrast, yet may at the same time be a very pleasing combination. To the beginner the analogous group or one-color group is of the greatest use. A tint is secured in dyeing by reducing the full strength of the dye with water, and also by shortening the time of dipping. A shade is secured by adding the complementary color.

In dyeing one color over another, the result is naturally the stronger strength of the first as well as upon that of the succeeding dyes. As yellow is the lightest, it tends to dye yellow first, as other colors are stronger. If the yellow is very weak, succeeding dyes will be little effected by it on all dyes are available, and it is very hard to remove. Some time, depending much on materials used, until as many as twelve or fifteen colors have been introduced. To use complementary colors, as reds and greens, is necessary to use one of two methods.

The painting process may be used, in which the material is stretched over the batik frame, and the colors painted in with a brush. This is desirable only for small spots or areas as it is impossible to cover large surfaces evenly because the color will be stronger in the touched areas and the color is not as fast when applied in this way, and often does not harmonize as well with the other colors produced by dyeing one color over another, which results in a modified color of the first.

The other method is to cover with wax from the first all parts which are to contrast with the other group, as for example the reds. Then go through the colors for the group of greens. After these have been added, remove the wax which was the design as at the start, except this time covering the colors already in, that is, the green colored, and then dye in the values of reds. This method, however, takes much more time, and unless very carefully cleaned, the wax may affect the cloth so that the second group of colors do not dye so easily.

It is best always, to have the design worked out in colors on paper as a guide. It is very easy to become confused as to colors to be used in various sections of the pattern, and mistakes in painting with colors are serious enough, but to paint with the design as the start, except this time covering the colors already in, that is, the green colored, and then dye in the values of reds. This method, however, takes much more time, and unless very carefully cleaned, the wax may affect the cloth so that the second group of colors do not dye so easily.

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A Batik Scarf.
over a waxed card, to prevent streaking by the absorption of dye by the cord.

As the dyes usually color the bands, rubber gloves are a convenience. Even then the hands are sometimes stained. Ammonia or washing soda will help remove the new dye. After the dying is completed, the wax must be removed. With thin pieces of silk this can easily be done by ironing between newspaper pages, but with heavier material this method is not so satisfactory. Gasoline is the best method of removing the wax in such a case, though benzine or carbona may be used. It is best to wash out as much as possible in the first gasoline bath, then rinse in clear gasoline. This will remove the wax enough for repeated dyeing if desired.

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had fair success in the adventure until coming back whom should we meet face to face, but 'Prexy' Welch. He spoke to us and passed on, which wasn't much in itself, but it led to great complications. We had to get chapel excuses from Prexy himself.

"The pleasureo jaunt must have been my idea, anyway I was the one who went next day to Prexy's office for an excuse. I wasn't in the most joyful state of mind as I went in to ask for the excuse."

"Where had you been when I met you yesterday?" asked Prexy. I told him we'd been after botany specimens, which was the truth.

"How is it that you weren't back on time?" was his next question.

"My watch was on the bum," I told him.

"I believe that was true too," Mr. Frazier's eyes twinkled.

"Prexy looked serious, then he leaned forward and said with an engaging smile, 'Mr. Frazier, the next time you go flower-picking you just stop at the office and I'll lend you my watch!'"

"Yes, I can hear that old chapel bell now. That's your Victory Bell, I believe. It was bought to hang in the north tower of Old Main but was too heavy for the tower so they hung it in a frame coop where it stands now and used it to call us to chapel, meals and the like. At 6 o'clock A.M. was the rising bell and at 10 P.M. the bell for lights out and 'Old Harlow' checked up on us, too.'"

"Who was 'Old Harlow?" I interposed.

"Well, I don't remember clearly; he might have been a janitor. All I recall distinctly was that he was six feet, four inches tall, and an active foot racer."

"Was he old?" I asked.

"We thought so. He was about forty I suppose, but he looked old to me. I remember Jerry Sexton better. He was a sort of gardener-watchman combined."

"The grounds," I noted mentally.

"He used to be stationed in the grape patch which covered the site of Margaret Hall, I remember but he wasn't always active. I can see him asleep under the vines one moonlight night when some of us were playing hide and seek."

"I'm glad you're going to print the old book," I said, "at least they won't have to dig up the patch. 'Jerry' was a sound sleeper when he once got a start, and Mr. Frazier laughed over the remembrance, which never before occurred to us.]

Suggested and Mr. Frazier seemed to agree with me.

"We had more of it after the new gymnasium was built," he said, "but that was in '82. We each subscribed five dollars apiece and with a little allowance from the state built a frame gymnasium north of the Victoria Buildings. Equipment wasn't very elaborate. I don't remember all of it, but I know we had a horizontal bar and a trapeze, but I never 'parlour' of these as I wasn't expert enough."

"Were there any secret societies in those days, Mr. Frazier," I asked.

"Not officially," he responded with dry humor, "but I did belong to the first fraternity, and he launched with enjoyment into reminiscences of those secret meetings and hair-breadth escapes from the 'anti's.'"

"I was so green," he said, "that I didn't really understand that my 'bid' was to be signed on the afternoon I didn't fall from grace for a long time, not because the idea of a secret society didn't appeal, but because they said I'd have to give five dollars to belong."

"Five dollars!" I shrieked and did a little rapid mental arithmetic of my own.

"Yes, five dollars. I finally raked it up somewhere and joined. We used to attend meetings in the different rooms by candle light with quilts hung over windows and transoms and a tripod stationed in the halls. That makes me think of the first fraternity picture we had taken. We met at Old Main and were to sit on the steps for our picture. This was after the ban was off, but feeling was still pretty strong among some of the 'anti's.' I remember how they threw old shoes at us out of upstairs windows while we sat. The wind was blowing a stiff gale so the camera didn't stand alone and we had to get a single 'anti' to hold it while we sat for the photographer. We finally dug holes and set the tripod in the ground. I'd see that picture again finished, "It would be a contribution to any comic section, I assure you."