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COLOR BY ACCIDENT

Using Fiber Reactive Dye and Low water immersion to create variations and textures on cotton and silk

EQUIPMENT

Plastic containers for mixing dye
Plastic water bottles with the tops removed as fabric containers
Mixing spoons
Measuring spoons

SUPPLIES

Cotton fabric
Silk scarves
MX Dye in various colors
Urea
Soda Ash
Synthropol

SCOUR THE FABRIC

Use cotton or silk fabric. Wash fabric in hot water with hot water, soda ash and Synthropol. For each 1 pound of fabric (3-4 yards of cotton fabric) use 1/2 tsp soda ash and 1/2 tsp Synthropol in hot (140° water). Agitate for 15 minutes and rinse well and dry.

For this project, use “fat” quarters of cotton broadcloth, silk yardage or silk scarves

MIX THE DYE CONCENTRATES

Dissolve Urea in warm water. After Urea water has cooled to room temperature, mix dye concentrates in 1 cup quantities. Paste dye with small quantity of water, then add remaining water to make one cup.

Water	1 cup
Urea	2 to 4 tablespoons
Dye	1 1/2 tablespoons (use double quantity for Black)

Non-activated dye concentrates will keep at room temperature for about a week. Store tightly covered in a dark, cool place.

MIX THE SODA SOLUTION

Dissolve soda ash in hot water. Use at room temperature for best results

Water	1 gallon
Soda Ash	9 tablespoons

Store tightly covered in a cool dark place.

DYE THE FABRIC

1. Wet the fabric in warm water. Squeeze out some of the excess water.
2. Manipulate, fold or twist fabric in tall narrow container.
3. Mix dye concentrates with plain water to make up to 1/2 cup.
4. Pour dye over wet fabric. Press out some of the air bubbles and manipulate fabric as you wish.
5. After 5 to 15 minutes, pour 1/4 cup soda water solution over the fabric. Mix or press to distribute.
6. Let the dye work one-hour minimum. Press or stir the fabric once or more during this time.

REMOVE EXCESS DYE

1. Remove soda ash and some of the extra dye by rinsing fabric in warm water several times.
2. Wash in hot (140°) water and Synthrapol. Use 1-2 tablespoons per washer load.
3. Test for color fastness by ironing wet over white cotton.

VARIATIONS

Value Parfait

1. Follow instructions to Step 5 under "Dyeing the Fabric".
2. After 5-10 minutes, wet and layer second piece of fabric. Let dye work additional 5-10 minutes. Add 1/4 cup soda ash solution. Mix or press to distribute.
3. After 5-10 minutes, wet and layer third piece of fabric. Let dye work additional 5-10 minutes. Add 1/4 cup soda ash solution. Mix or press to distribute.
4. Let dye work a minimum of 1 hour after last layer is added. Remove excess dye following directions above.

Color Parfait

1. Follow instruction to Step 5 under "Dyeing the Fabric".
2. After 5-10 minutes, wet and add second layer of fabric. Pour additional 1/4 cup dye over second layer. Let dye work 5-10 minutes. Add 1/4 cup soda ash solution. Mix or press to distribute.
3. After 5-10 minutes, wet and layer third piece of fabric. Pour additional 1/4 cup of dye over third layer. Let dye work additional 5-10 minutes. Add 1/4 cup soda ash solution. Mix or press to distribute.
4. Let dye work a minimum of 1 hour after last layer is added. Remove excess dye following directions above.

Striped Parfait

1. Follow instructions for “Dyeing the Fabric” above, but fold or twist three pieces or more pieces in tall narrow container.
2. Mix two or three colors of dye and pour down sides of containers. Use a measuring cup, syringe or turkey baster. Allow dye to work 5-15 minutes. Add 3/4 cup soda ash solution. Mix or press to distribute.
3. Let dye work a minimum of 1 hour. Remove excess dye following directions above.

If you don't like the results of any of these experiments, over-dye the pieces (evenly or un-evenly) in a harmonizing color or tone until you achieve the results you desire. As a last resort, strip the color and start over. Don't give up!

QUESTIONS

- Why is urea added to the water?
- Why isn't salt used in this process?
- Does the dye take differently on the silk and the cotton?
- How would you get repeated results on long yardages?
- What happens when you don't mix the dye thoroughly?
- Leave some of the pieces in the dye container overnight? What happens?
- Design a placemat, runner or quilt block using the results of this project.