

Silk Suncatchers Serti technique

(art + social studies)

The natural translucent quality of silk paired with transparent paints rivals the glow of stained glass when held up to the sun. This is an easy way to teach introductory silk painting because the silk is prestretched and ready to paint. Because the silk is not intended to be draped or worn, the colors don't require fixing or steaming — finished paintings are ready to hang. Even very young artists enjoy watching the colors flow and interact with one another. Older students learn to use resists, glaze colors and create textural effects.



Grade Levels 7-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Students will create a transparent painting employing basic fabric techniques including incorporation and application of resist, flowing and brushing fabric colors, glazing (layering thinned colors on top one another) and special effects
- Students will use the elements of line, shape, value and color as they plan and execute a design within a circle
- Students will use the traditional eastern "Serti" technique of creating positive and negative spaces, confining color and defining lines with resist
- Students will learn to use a staining media in a responsible manner



Materials

Jacquard® Silk Hoops, 9-1/2" dia. (63005-1030) package of 30, need one per student

Jacquard® Silk Dye (01234-), 2-oz bottles, assorted colors, need at least six bottles to share across classroom

Jacquard® Waterbased Resist, 2-oz, Colorless (01231-1605) and Black (01231-2024), need two each to share across classroom

Blick Scholastic Red Sable Round, size 4 (05863-1004), need one per student

Droppers (04958-0000), package of five, use to distribute color across classroom

Round Plastic 10-well Tray (03041-1010) with Cover (03041-1000), one per student

Blick Economy Graphite Pencils (20302-2009), box of 12, need one per student

8mm Jeweler's Jump Ring (60697-4000), for hanging, need one per student

Blick All-Purpose Newsprint, 12" x 18" sheet (10311-2016), 50-sheet pad, need one sheet per student

Styrofoam water cups

Paper towels

Optional

Jacquard® Silk Salt, 10-oz (01233-1010)

Squeeze Bottles for resist application (04958-1000)

Rubbing alcohol

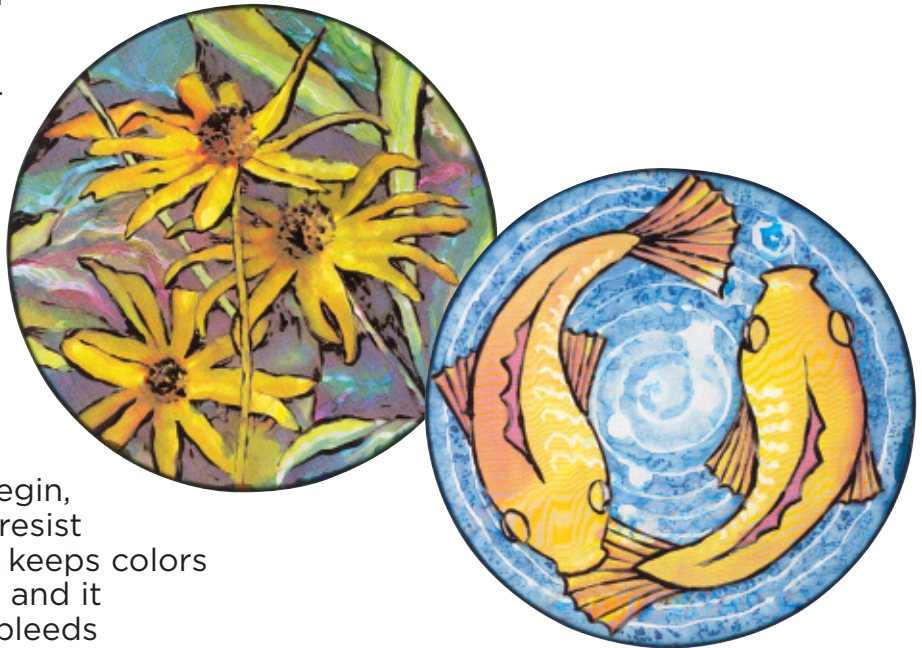
Cotton-tip swabs

Preparation

1. Use eyedroppers to transfer silk dye from bottle to palette. A small amount goes a long way, so it's best to limit the color. Cover the palette until the dye is ready to use. You may also wish to fill the Squeeze Bottles with resist prior to project session. Resist may be applied with small brushes or Squeeze Bottles. Using a squeeze bottle is faster, but a brush allows more control and variance of line width.

Process

1. **PLAN:** Have students trace around their hoop on the drawing paper, then plan a design within the circle. Encourage free-form, self-enclosed shapes & simple lines that intersect. Discourage geometric designs relying on straightness or symmetry. Having samples to look at or shapes to trace (i.e. leaves or flowers) is helpful. Once the design is planned, have students place their silk hoop over the design and using a graphite pencil and very light pressure, trace the drawing below onto the surface of the silk. The pencil lines should be light and barely visible.
2. **APPLY RESIST:** Before you begin, discuss with students how a resist works - it outlines a shape, it keeps colors from flowing into each other, and it protects pure whites. It also bleeds through the fabric and forms puddles if used directly on the table surface, so use the styrofoam cups, an eraser, paint tube or other object to prop the hoops up off the table at an angle. It's a good idea to use newsprint to practice applying out of a squeeze bottle before actually touching it to the silk. Using squeeze bottles or brushes, have students apply resist directly over their pencil lines on the silk hoop. If possible, allow resist to dry completely before painting. Resist will still hold the flow of the color back if it's wet, but it will easily smear if touched.



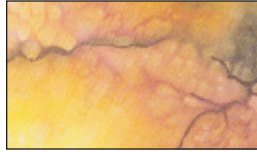
3. **PAINT:** Start with the lightest color first, load a small amount in a brush and lightly touch it in the center of a shape that has been defined by the resist. The color will flow into the silk and stop at the resist line. Encourage students to apply paint by touching and flowing, rather than brushing it on. Rinse brushes thoroughly before changing colors. Have students lift their hoops up frequently during painting, so they can see the effects of light through the transparent colors.
4. **FINISH:** Allow the painting to dry completely, then gently attach a jump ring around the top edge of the hoop, taking care not to puncture the silk. Use a ribbon or monofilament line to hang the hoop in the window, where it can catch the sunlight.

Hints

- The silk is attached to the hoop with a water-based glue, so rinsing may cause the fabric to detach. Because the suncatcher will not generally come in contact with water or be handled extensively, heat setting of the colors is not required. However, clear resist cannot be rinsed out safely. Plan to leave it in the design - it adds sparkle and dimension, which may actually be more desirable than pure whites. Colored water-based resists (gold, silver, black) are permanent and will not wash out of silk.

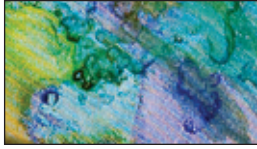
Advanced Techniques

1. Apply crystal salt to create interesting star-burst shapes and texture. Salt needs to be applied quickly, while painted area is still very wet. This technique is especially dramatic with darker colors.



Texture created with crystal salt

2. Dip a cotton swab in rubbing alcohol and touch to a painted area. Color will flow away from the alcohol, then back as it dries, creating feathery "bubbles". Once again, this technique will only work while the paint is still wet.



Texture created with rubbing alcohol

3. Create "glazes" of color by diluting with water, painting an area, allowing it to dry, then painting over it again to build up varying color intensity and opacity. Mixing silk dye to obtain color beyond the range that is available in bottles is difficult to do, because the transparency of the color is not visible as it sits in a well on a palette. By "glazing" colors over one another directly on the silk, shades can be altered until the desired mix is achieved. It can also be useful in creating soft gradients or shadows.



Example of "glazing", creating layers of colors

National Standards

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

- **9-12** Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

- **5-8** Students use subjects, themes and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

- **9-12** Students describe the origins of specific images and ideas and explain why they are of value in their artwork and in the work of others.

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture

- **5-8** Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.

- **9-12** Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making.