

Marbling

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LEAFLET

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THE CHARM OF MARBLING

Modern materials have brought this ancient and beautiful art form up to date. It is now very straightforward and simple, with ready to use paints, and where necessary, easily prepared size. Marbling is now far more accessible to anyone wishing to try this compelling process. It is an immediate art form, where large areas can be covered quickly and the results are always pleasing from the very first time you try, making it an encouraging and rewarding pastime.

Marbling is simply the transference of floating colour from a water based liquid onto another surface, usually paper or fabric, but quite feasibly wax, wood or plaster.

Modern colours are bright and cheery. Gold and silver tones for fabric add an exotic touch to items, while fluorescent and pearlised hues lend a fun and lively feel to marbled papers. It is an enjoyable and very absorbing occupation that produces delightful and useful results. The papers and fabrics can be used for decorating many items, which in turn are made more desirable by their interesting patterns.

Each time you apply the colours to the bath, you are creating a unique design, as it is impossible to recreate another identical result, though many of the patterns can be copied. This is part of the charm inherent in marbling. We have included the traditional method of seaweed marbling in this booklet, as it is still an important way to produce stunning results.

Historical note

Early marbled papers date back to 12th century Japan at least, where the method was kept a secret. Gradually over the next 400 years the secret spread to Turkey and from there, to Europe. Many of the patterns have Turkish and French names such as Get Gel and Nonpareil.



SIMPLE MARBLING

This is the least complicated of all the methods as the colours are placed directly onto water. It is less controllable than the thicker bath necessary for marbling on fabric but bright swirling patterns are easily produced in minutes. The paper requires no priming before use making it ideal for newcomers as the spontaneity of results is inspirational.

You will need: -

Tray of tap water

Marblin inks (inc. fluorescent and pearlescent. NOTE: pearlescent inks require fixative)

Pipettes

A drinking straw

A stylus/stick

Paper

1. Cover your work surface with newspaper and assemble everything you need.
2. Drop colours onto the water using the pipettes.
3. Move the colours around on the surface by blowing air through the straw, or moving the colours with a stylus.
4. Transfer the design by lowering a sheet of paper onto the surface starting at one edge. This method will reduce the chance of air bubbles. Lift out the paper immediately and place face down on newspaper to dry.
5. Skim the surface with the newspaper ready for the next time.



MARBLING ON FABRIC

The marbling on fabric method requires a special thick bath that will allow the colours to sit on the surface of the liquid without sinking, as well as be fluid enough to form patterns. The colours and marbling ground have been designed to be compatible so that optimum results can be achieved.

The bath is easy to prepare and the results should delight you. The bath will improve with use i.e. the first few attempts should be viewed as practise. After that the bath will be primed. It is a good idea to practise your designs first before using fabric. If you do not like a pattern you have created, just skim the surface with newspaper once more and carry on. Skimming the surface is important. It breaks the surface tension and allows the colours to

spread. Be sure to skim just before applying colour each time. Tension will reform between one and two minutes after skimming, so this is the length of time you have to create your design.

You will need: -

Marbling ground. (Size)

Warm water.

Mixing bucket.

Marbling tray.

Fashion Marbling colours.

Stylus.

Comb.

Washed cotton or silk fabric.

Newspaper.

Paper.

Ten step method to perfect marbled fabrics.

1. Mix 50grams of marbling ground with 2.5 litres of warm water to the consistency of cream. NOTE: The marbling bath (size) needs to be prepared in advance as it takes time to mature. If you can, mix the ground with warm water and leave overnight. On hot days the bath will be ready sooner. If you can still see granules in the mixture it may not be quite ready.

2. Cover your work area with newspaper. If possible try to work near a sink. Pour the size into the marbling tray.

3. Colours can be squirted from the bottles, or placed in a palette and applied with a brush or pipette. Assemble all the items you need for manipulating the colours, such as a comb and stylus.

4. Before applying any colour to the bath, the surface tension must be broken by skimming it with newspaper. Surface tension reforms after a minute or so, and during this time you must apply the colours and manipulate them into your design. To skim, draw the newspaper carefully across the surface of the size all over. To create further marbled items, you will need to re-skim the surface before applying colour each time.

5. Drop your chosen colours on to the size. They will spread out across the surface. Draw your comb across the surface in varying directions or manipulate the colours with a stylus.

6. When you are satisfied with your design, (and before the surface tension reforms), transfer it to fabric or paper, lay it over the surface of the

colours starting at one end and gently lower it taking care not to trap air bubbles which will prevent the transfer of colour. With fabric, you may need someone to help you, lower the fabric onto the colours and watch for air bubbles.

7. Both paper and fabric can be lifted off immediately.

8. Leave your wet fabric to dry somewhere flat. If you try to wash the fabric while still wet some colour bleeding may occur.

9. When the fabric is dry, it will be crispy. This dried size can easily be removed by washing in water. Leave to dry after rinsing.

10. Wash paper immediately in cold water and leave to dry.



NB: Natural fibres are best such as white silk or cotton.

Wash out any dressing the fabric may have so that it can absorb the dyes properly. On darker fabrics the colours will be less apparent.



TRADITIONAL MARBLING ON PAPER

The Seaweed Method

This method gives the typical swirling effect often seen in book endpapers. It requires the most fine-tuning of the three methods described in this booklet. The size is made from Carragheen moss, which must be slowly brought to the boil and left to mature over night. The paper must be applied with a mordant so that it can

receive the paint. The paint must be mixed with water and oxgall and tested on the bath. We describe the process in brief, but please read all the instructions before starting.

You will need: -

- Saucepan
- Heat source
- Trough/plastic bath
- Tray (for alum)
- Rubber gloves
- Carragheen moss
- 7 litres cold water
- 2 litres hot water
- Moss size preservative
- Combs, rakes, stylus
- Newspaper
- Paper

- Muslin or old tights (for straining)
- 150ml Alum mordant
- Gouache paints
- Oxgall
- Pipettes
- Jars/plastic cups for paint
- Sink
- Board for rinsing
- Sheet of wood for flattening the paper



1. Make the size. Mix 50grams of dried moss with 5 litres of cold water. Place in a saucepan and slowly bring to the boil. Let the moss boil for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and let the mixture stand overnight to mature. The mixture should now be a murky gelatinous consistency. Add a further 2 litres of warm water and 50ml of moss size preservative. The addition of preservative prevents bacteria forming within the size. (If left unused for longer than 2 weeks a layer of mould may form on the surface, this should be removed before using the size). Sieve the complete mixture through muslin, or an old pair of tights, to remove all lumps and particles. As Carragheen moss works better when slightly warmed, it may need gently re-heating each day before use. Approximately room temperature is best.

Keep the container of size covered at all times to prevent dust settling on the surface.

2. To prepare the paper you wish to use, put 2 litres of hot water in a tray big enough to hold the paper. Stir in 150ml of alum mordant until it has dissolved. Mordant makes the paper receptive to colour. When the mixture has cooled, lay a sheet of paper on the surface. When the face down surface is completely wet (i.e. with no air bubbles to resist the mordant), lift it out. Put your treated papers to one side in a well-ventilated area to dry. Press your papers under a flat weight, such as a sheet of wood, to flatten them. Keep all the alum sides facing the same way. As alum can be a skin irritant wear rubber gloves when applying the mordant.

3. The gouache must be diluted with water and oxgall, and tested on the bath of size. Put approximately one tablespoon of gouache into a jar or plastic cup, add water so that the consistency resembles single cream. Using a pipette add two drops of oxgall. Stir the mixture thoroughly, skim the size and drop some paint onto it. Observe what happens. The paint should float on the surface and spread to a 'stone' approximately 3 to 4 inches across. If it sinks add another drop of oxgall, re-skim the surface and apply another drop. If the circle paint spreads too far the size is probably too thin, or the paint contains too much oxgall, adjust accordingly. Test all the paints in this way, individually, and then test together. Adjust the paints until they work perfectly.

4. When you are ready to

marble, prepare your work area: cover the floor with newspaper; tear newspaper strips ready for skimming; stack the mordanted papers next to you, mordant side down and covered with newspaper so that they remain clean; place your prepared and stirred paints on the opposite side to the papers; combs, rakes and styluses should be placed at the far end ready for action.

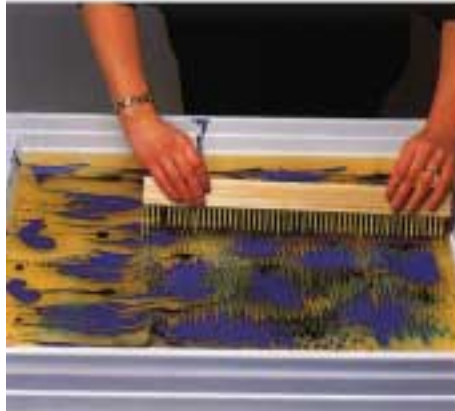
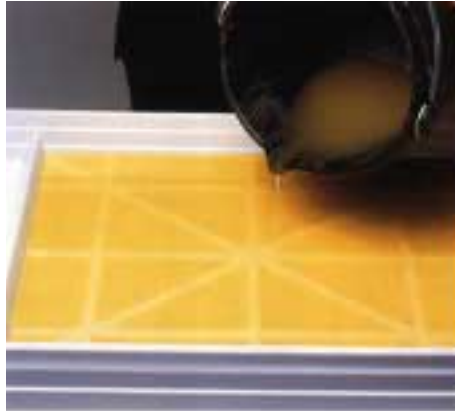
5. Before applying the paint, you must skim the surface of the size to break the surface tension and remove any traces of dust. Working quickly, stir your paints then drop colour onto the surface. Use the rakes and combs to create patterns.

6. Lower your paper, alum side down, gently onto the size being careful not to trap any air. When the surface is completely covered with size and paint, lift the paper

out being careful that it does not fold up on itself. Lay the paper on a board and rinse the size off. Leave to dry.

7. Skim the surface and continue marbling.

8. Dry marbled papers can be flattened with a cool iron.



CLASSIC PATTERNS

1. GET GEL. On the longest side, draw the rake across the surface from one side to the other and back again. On the short side, do the same. Four strokes.



2. PEACOCK. From the Get Gel, wave the rake across the surface in the direction of the last stroke. Five strokes.



- 3. NONPAREIL.** From the Get Gel, draw the comb once across the bath. Five strokes.



- 4. BOUQUET.** From the Nonpareil, draw the rake in a wave across the surface in the same direction as the last movement. Six strokes.



5. FRENCH CURL. From Nonpareil, lower the comb into the surface of the size holding it parallel to you, pull it slightly to the left and away from you, move it further back and to the right, then continue the circle back to the starting point. Lift out the comb and continue next to this row of circles until you have covered the whole area.



CHECKLIST OF MARBLING TERMS

Caragheen Moss.

Irish moss used for size. It is in fact seaweed.

Comb.

Item for making marbling patterns with close together teeth.

Mordant.

Chemical that allows a paper or wooden surface to be receptive to paint.

Rake.

Similar to comb but with teeth much farther apart.

Size.

Thick mixture on which colours float. Made from Carragheen moss, or marbling ground.

Skim

Break the surface tension on the size using newspaper so that colours will spread.

Oxgall

Bile from a cow that enables the paint to resist the surface. Tension of the size and other colours. (I.e. it will not mix).

Stylus

Implement with single point such as a cocktail stick, needle or wicking needle.

NOTE: If you are using a rectangular bath, you will need two combs, just slightly shorter than each length. This is to avoid distortion of the pattern. Do not use combs from fabric marbling for a traditional bath. The seaweed bath is easily contaminated in this way.

USING YOUR MARBLED

PAPERS

1. Fold them into boxes of all shapes and sizes, (pyramids, obelisks, squares, etc), and put presents in them.
2. Cover notebooks with them
3. Frame your favourite sheets in a simple clip frame.
4. Wrap presents with them.
5. Marble a piece of card and use it as a clock face.
6. Use large marbled sheets of paper as puppet theatre backdrops.
7. Personalise your own notepaper with cut out shapes.

FABRICS

1. Marbled fabrics make beautiful cushion covers. Why not make a marbled patchwork cushion?
2. Roll the edges and make headscarves.
3. Marbled fabrics look stunning when made into lampshades.
4. Decorate a plain hat with long strips of marbled silk.
5. Make fabric flowers and apply them to a hat.
6. Make blouses and tops from your favourite pieces.
7. Thick cotton pieces can be made into evening bags.
8. Use marbled fabrics for puppet theatre curtains.

OTHER OBJECTS TO MARBLE

1. Plaster items can be dipped into the marbling bath. White plaster absorbs the dye easily and the effect is bright and effective.
2. Fat candles look good when marbled. Try to avoid thin candles with a thick amount of colour, as it will smother the flame when alight.
3. Glass and china can be marbled for decorative purposes, though food should be kept away from them.
4. White card is ideal for marbling and it makes beautiful greetings cards.
5. Pale wood can be effectively marbled. You may need to apply alum mordant as with traditional marbling.
6. Cotton T-shirts are easily decorated by marbling.
7. Ready made white silk ties and scarves are easy to marble and make ideal presents.



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