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The forms and colors of nature on silk

Sulaiman Abdul Ghani

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THE FORMS AND COLORS OF NATURE ON SILK

BY

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# CONTENTS

## PART I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Statement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreward to the Dictionary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionary of the Language of Flowers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facts and Interpretation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Paintings</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pressing the Silk</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on the Silk</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying the Resist</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dyes</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salts</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airbrush</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masking Techniques - Friskets</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of Masking Film</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Masking Film</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mask Cutting</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Statement</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs of Thesis Panels</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Resources</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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and all my friends at R.I.T.
DEDICATION

To my mother, father, and Dave

for their understanding, patience and constant support.
INTRODUCTION

Nothing in nature is endowed with the same imaginative power and richly varied metaphorical significance as the world of flowers and blooms. Their very names call to mind the imagery of dreams, longing and enchantment -- golden bell forsythia, forget-me-not, moss rose, daisy, mignonette, lilac, peony, fuschia. Universally viewed as positive omens, flowers possess their own special magic, a suggestive force emanating from their shapes and colors, their incomprehensible harmonies and elusive fragrances.

The symbolic value of flowers can be traced to our earliest cultures. The heaven promised to the faithful by Mohammed in the Koran is depicted as a flourishing rose garden. According to Hindu belief, not only is the goddess of beauty at rest in a lotus blossom, but the entire universe is said to have sprung from the depths of a water lily. The adherents of the Persian sect, Bahaism, are obliged to plant flowers and trees wherever their life's journey may lead them. The Persian concept of garden is, moreover, derived from the etymological root of the word "paradise". Indeed, in almost every religion, flowers represent hope, foreshadowing the bliss of a world beyond life.

Ancient Greek and Roman lore is particularly rich in flower symbology. When the goddess Venus, born of the sea, first set foot on land, the foam that modestly protected her charms was transformed into a cascade of white roses. Lilies were derived from the mother's milk of Juno; the violet originated from Attis' blood; and in order to fan the flame
of Hera's desire, Zeus perfumed himself with the saffron scented crocus.

Artists of all types have explored the associative qualities and appeal of flowers. About the same time that Gustav Theodor Felcmer developed his romantic theories, the French draftsman and caricaturist Jean Ignace Isidore Gerard, known as Grandville, produced a pictoral series, "Animated Flowers." In these fanciful portraits, Grandville endows flowers with human characteristics, transforming them, as Karl Krolow has remarked, into "composite beings hovering on the borderline between the human and the vegetal." Similarly under the sway of floral beauty, Shakespeare also frequently endowed flowers with human traits in his writing:

"And winking mary-buds begin
To open their golden eyes;
With everthing that pretty is,
My lady sweet arise;
Arise, arise."

In his plays Shakespeare set no fewer than twenty-nine scenes in flower gardens and mentions twenty-three different kinds of flowers. His private passion for gardens is today immortalized in the Knot Garden in Stratford-on-Avon. The poet Goethe's awareness of the positive force of flowers was so marked that he not only included flowers extensively in his writings, but also scattered violet seeds during his meditative walks.

Very few flowers of such unimposing size as the violet have attracted so much notice from the great names in history. The violet's subtle coloration, balance, symmetry, and enticing fragrance were prized equally by the British statesman Winston Churchill and the German emperor Wilhelm I. The violet even accompanied Napoleon during a significant episode of his life. Josephine is said to have conquered him
with a bouquet of violets that she presented him as a farewell on the evening of their first meeting. When Napoleon died in exile on St. Elba, he was found wearing a golden capsule around his neck. It was filled with dried violets, which he had previously gathered from Josephine's grave.

Many notable figures have been drawn to gardening as both a restorative and a creative act. It is known that, while on St. Helena, gardening offered Napoleon a distraction from his military defeats. Napoleon did not, however, leave behind any noteworthy botanical achievements. Nevertheless, there were those whose gardens are as memorable as their life's works. Every year, from Spring to late Fall, the impressionist painter Claude Monet's flower garden at Giverny draws thousands of visitors from all over the world. Monet, who designed the garden "in order to have something to paint on rainy days," would be amazed to find that almost as many people make a pilgrimage to Giverny to admire the composition of his flower beds as travel to Paris to study his water lily paintings.

For some artists, their creative work with flowers eclipsed their art. Thus, the literary output of the English writer Vita Sackville-West has been outstripped by her acclaimed garden at Sissinghurst. Her contemporary and fellow writer Rebecca West judged her as an artist "who has written a few good books and poems," but whose "great creative act" was Sissinghurst garden. Sackville-West, who led a tumultuous personal life, herself admitted that it was the garden alone that verified her "not having lived in vain." Today, a quarter-century after her death, Sissinghurst is admired by ten thousand visitors a year.

While luxurious gardens enthrall us, perhaps our awareness of the importance of flowers for our affirmation of life is greatest when they appear in the most miserable surroundings as symbols of last hope: a rank,
potted geranium on a fire escape in a Bronx ghetto; a primrose growing in the window box of a prison cell; a red carnation held in the fist of men being led to the executioner's scaffold during the French Revolution. Such examples also serve to remind us of the essential prized status of flowers. Historically, particular types of flowers have been considered the privilege of the ruling class. For example, in the France of Louis XIV, roses could be worn by the bourgeoisie only for weddings; and those fortunate enough to obtain the right to grow roses had to pay a tax. For centuries in Japan only the emperor and nobility were permitted to cultivate chrysanthemums; and in India orchids were considered the privileged flower of the aristocracy. Even in recent times, the identification of certain flowers with the luxury and prodigality of the ruling classes had remained so strong that the destruction of peonies and chrysanthemums was ordered during the Cultural Revolution in China.

Today, with the genuine democratization of flower usage through mass growing in hothouses and rapid transportation, such an aura of luxury still clings only to the orchid. Many consider its expensive cultivation to be a sign of status, as was the raising of tulips in seventeenth-century Holland, where the rare bulbs were a matter of costly speculation, involving the risk of entire fortunes. In our century, it is perhaps the tulip, which has endured at great expense, that best demonstrates the magnetism of flowers. Each Spring myriad tulips blaze forth from the dry and barren hulls in which they have lain dormant for months.

It is no wonder that mankind chooses to assert the belief in an otherworldly paradise. Flowers give us much reason to do so.
GENERAL STATEMENT

Flowers are very much a part of my life. They have a language all their own, though few people know it. Each flower has its own symbolic meaning, and every human sentiment is represented by its own floral emblem. A very charming and interesting method of communicating thought (very common in medieval times) is through the language of flowers, their meanings and sentiments being understood by the parties who present them.

Because flowers are beautiful and meaningful to me, I paint them. I enjoy the presence of plant life while I paint. My art imitates nature, in the sense that I try to work as she works, and not merely to reproduce her appearance. I use nature to express what I want to say -- what I have to say.

My extensive work with flowers and plants prompted me to think about their true significance. Flowers are more than the beautiful bouquet in the vase sitting in one's room or the bloom in one's garden. The most significant aspect of the flower is that it is the sex organ of the plant and, as such, it is essential for the plant's reproduction. Almost every plant utilizes some type of blossom to reproduce itself.

Every living being on this earth depends directly or indirectly on plants for existence. Thus, in turn, it can be said that all life as we know it depends on the flower for its existence. Flowers are the beginning and the end of all life. For this reason, no one should casually dismiss flowers as a trivial aspect of his life, but should realize their significance in the continuing process of life.

As the sex organ of the plant, the flower is designed to facilitate
its pollination. The brightly colored petals of some flowers attract insects, birds or animals to help in their pollination. The scent of the flower, its fragrance, is only present until the flower has pollinated. The purpose of this fragrance or sex smell of the flower is to help attract insects insects to its organ to complete its reproductive process. The reason that night-blooming plants especially fragrant is that their pollination occurs only during the night. One can compare the function of the flower's fragrance to the coloration on a male bird. Both serve a similar purpose in the continuation of the species, that is to attract the pollinating agent in the case of flowers, and to attract the female in the case of the birds.

Most people praise a flower for its beauty in terms of its fragrance, its color, or its form rather than in terms of a sex organ. Very few people look at a flower and see it for what it truly is or what it really is saying. I believe that in the United States, flowers have been given a personal connotation, but while they are personal their meaning is much more extensive. A plant's struggle for life is great. To see the bloom on a plant is a joyous sight, for now life -- all life -- has a chance to carry on. This joy is both universal and personal.
FOREWORD TO THE DICTIONARY

Today it seems there are few people who know or care about the history and meaning of flowers. I believe that people must become more sensitive to their surroundings and Nature before any flower or plant can be really meaningful to them. Through plants and flowers people can and will come back to the Earth, to Nature speaking with the aid of flowers.

This dictionary of the language of flowers and plants should only be taken as an informational guide and never as a literal definition in the interpretation of the symbolic meanings of flowers.

There are many meanings for each flower or plant. Since some of the meanings are often contradictory, it is up to the artist or individual to clarify the intended meaning.

A dictionary of the Language, Sentiment, Symbol, and Meaning of flowers as translated by Humans:
Orchid

Love, beauty, nobility, purity, modesty, flowers of magnificence, refinement, fragrance; symbol of numerous progeny.

1) *Odontoglossum rossii* Lindl. (page 9, panel 10)

With its eighty to ninety species, the genus *Odontoglossum*, which was founded in 1815 by Humboldt, Bonpland and Kunth, comes from fairly high, mountainous locations in tropical and sub-tropical America, a large number of these species preferring the mountains of Columbia in particular. Some species and also a series of hybrids have won a reputation as cut-flowers. Our Mexican *O. rossii*, however, together with *O. grande*, *O. pulchellum*, *Lycaste skinneri*, *L. aromatica*, *Coelogyne cristata* and *Brassia verrucosa*, is one of the best orchids for cultivation.
2) *Dendrobium fimbriatum* Hook. (page 11, panels 1 & 10)

As already indicated by the name of the genus, the Dendrobiums live on trees (Gr. *dendron*, tree; *bioein*, live). But there is always the exception to the rule: there are also rock-dwellers among them, such as the Australian *D. speciosum*, and terrestrial forms. *D. fimbriatum*, which was discovered in Nepal by Wallich in 1820 and described three years later by Hooker, is a very attractive orchid but unfortunately does not produce long-lasting flowers.
3) *Sophronitis cernua* Lindl. (page 13, panels 1 & 5)

The distribution of over ninety percent of all orchid species is in tropical and sub-tropical regions. Since the continents in the equatorial area and in the southern hemisphere are supposed to have drifted apart at a much earlier period in the history of the Earth than those of the northern hemisphere, the flora of these areas have followed a much more independent course of evolution.

Whereas, for instance, the *Oncidium, Odontoglossum, Epidendrum, Pleurothallis, Cattleya, Laelia* and *Sophronitis* are confined to the Neotropics, the genera *Dendrobium, Paphiopedilum* and *Coelogyne* are peculiar to tropical South-East Asia with its abundance of orchids, and Africa, including Madagascar, has *Ansellia, angraecum* and *Bulbophyllum* Sect. *Megaclinium*. 
4) *Cattleya trianaei* Lindl. & Rchb.f. (page 15, panels 5 & 10)

Orchid of orchids, the most gorgeous group of the 18,000 different species -- these are Cattleyas! Indeed, Nature has decorated their large flowers on a lavish scale. As regards the variety of their colors, the pure species are even surpassed by the great number of artificial hybrids. "They have been grown in every imaginable shade and colour, there exist pure white flowers with a yellow centre of scarcely imaginable splendour, pink in every shade, from the slightest trace to the darkest hue, mauve to purplish brown, yellow ranging from primrose and cream to to the fullest shades of this colour."

By 1927, the forty natural species of *Cattleya* had already been supplemented by a thousand hybrids and today this number has increased many times.

The distribution of this genus extends from Mexico to the southernmost part of Brazil. In Costa Rica and Venezuela, two *Cattleya* species, *C. skinneri* and *C. mossiae*, first known as *Flor de San Sebastian*, have been given special recognition since they have been raised to the status of national flowers.

The flowers, which are six to seven inches (15-18 cm.) in diameter and of which only two or three are found on one scape are very variable in color.

It is worth knowing that the species was named after Jose' M. Triana, the Colombian botanist who discovered it, and the genus in honor of the English gardener William Cattley.
5) *Phalaenopsis amabilis* Bl. (page 17, panels 1, 4, & 7)

What orchid would be more suitable for a bridal bouquet than *Phalaenopsis amabilis* or *P. schillerana*? Its large, well-shaped flowers, white or pink in color and on long, elegantly curved stems, are in keeping with the great solemnity of the wedding day. However, these butterfly-like flowers (Gr. *phalaina*, night butterfly; *opsis*, appearance) are not only exceptionally decorative, they also possess an interesting feature in the unique form of their labellum. This is made up of three parts in which the two lateral lobes curve upwards and enclose the red-spotted, saddle-shaped callus; the broad front lobe, on the other hand, is drawn out into two antennæ. Another quality of this species is the fact that the flowers remain fresh for a relatively long time, a characteristic which has earned *P. amabilis* the name of *angrek bulan*, 'Moon Orchid' (orchid of a month) in its Malaysian homeland.

The inflorescence terminates a stalk of often considerable length (*P. amabilis* from 16 to 27 inches (40-70 cm.), *P. schillerana* up to 5 feet (150 cm.), growing from an extremely short and bulbless stem which has only a few rather broad leaves.
6) Oncidium splendidum (page 19, panels 2 & 3)

Orchids and cacti are to be found together not only in florists' shops but also in the wild, in their natural locations. *Oncidium splendidum*, for instance, in its Honduran homeland, lives in prickly company among cacti and agaves. Unlike the majority of the species in this genus, it is not found on trees, but usually grows on steep scree slopes along the river Choluteca.

*O. splendidum* has adapted itself to the harsh conditions of life and, like its spiky neighbors the cacti, possesses sophisticated devices for reducing transpirationally -- thick cuticles, storage tissue and a diurnal acidic cycle.
Peace, fertility, eternal sleep, imagination and dreaminess.

The crinkled new petals of Europe's common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) surround the pistil and a fringe of stamens tipped with black pollen. The four paper-thin scarlet petals drop off soon after they unfurl, leaving the pistil to mature into a capsule filled with tiny black seeds. Another European poppy, with flowers of lilac or white, is the source of seeds used to add zest to breads and cakes and to yield oil used both for salads and in the manufacture of paints.
Cinquefoil [rose family] (page 23, panels 3, 4, & 6)

Cheerfulness, symbolizes fruitfulness, long life, a heart left to desolation, optimism, rest, ease and happiness.

The yellow flowers of cinquefoils are known throughout the northern lands; there are some 500 species in the genus Potentilla, of the rose family. The common name, derived from the French, means 'five-leaved'; the generic name translates as 'little potent one,' because of the reputed medicinal powers of a tea brewed from the foliage. Shrubby cinquefoil (Potentilla fruticosa) is a woody, bushy species found in bogs and meadows across Eurasia and North America.
Majesty, modesty, motherhood, good luck, gift to a woman, bible, Virgin Mary, virginity, purity, chastity, innocence, heavenly bliss, the Annunciation, immortal life, redemption, the Immaculate Conception, Immaculate Purity.

The Turk's-cap lily (*Lilium superbum*) certainly is, as its botanical name states, a superb lily. The largest and most spectacular of North America's twenty native lilies, it grows as tall as eight feet, with as many as forty flowers on a single stem. The three sepals and three petals of the spotted orange-red flower are curled back sharply to reveal six long, pollen forming stamens and an equally long three-lobed pistil, the female seed-forming organ.
Anenome (page 27, panels 5 & 6)

Love, inspiration, truth.

A hundred species, mostly inhabitants of woods and meadows, belong to this genus; its name is derived from the Greek *anemos*, meaning 'wind'. Several stories explain this connection: according to one legend, the flowers open at the command of the Spring breeze. Tiny flowers on delicate stems, they certainly tremble at the slightest gust.
Could be Fleur-de-Lis, dignity, message; the lily of antiquity, power and victory; you may be blessed with strength and rugged health; vitality, faith, wisdom, valor, hope, light, eloquence, promise; a good luck gift to a man.

Some 200 hundred species of irises grow in the northern climes, often in wet habitats. The genus bears the name of the Greek rainbow goddess because of the beauty and wide variety of colors found in its flowers.
FACTS AND INTERPRETATION

Nature is the universe, which is infinite. For the artist, communication with nature remains the most essential condition. The artist is human, himself a part of nature within "natural space".

The reality of nature is always a consideration in my painting, but reality in never my primary objective. My primary objective is to paint an image that resides inside my mind, even though my imagery is directly related to the subject.

"I cannot copy nature in a servile way. I must interpret nature and submit it to the spirit of the picture. When I have found the relationship of all the tones, the result must be a living harmony of tones, a harmony not unlike that of a musical composition."¹

My painting always begins with facts taken from nature, but along the way, I make the subject my own. The transformation begins when I add an element of self to the visible world. I rearrange, alter or edit whenever I think it essential for the improvement of my design. My personal selections and adaptations of my ideas result in an original drawing. If I faithfully render or paint all blades of leaves, details of the flowers, shadows, etc., I have only accomplished what anyone with a camera could easily do. And, in fact, I believe hundreds of painters could probably render them more accurately than I could. On the other hand, if I choose to express myself through an original concept - my own composition, color choice, size and shape - I will have created a unique and personal approach

to painting, something no camera or other artist could possibly match.

Everytime I use a photograph or a book as a reference, I interpret it from my own point of view. I make every effort to alter, change and rearrange the photograph into my own personal statement. Sometimes, if the subject is depicted in warm colors, I try to paint it in cools. If there is sharp contrast, I consider painting in more subtle, suggestive or close values -- as if slightly out of focus. Also, if the image is in bright colors, I try to neutralize the color intensity by mixing.

As I design further, I try to focus more on emotion and feeling, the color, shape, and qualities I remember about the subject matter, and what made this subject matter special to me. If there is a particular feeling I want to express, I try to choose color, line and form to convey this feeling.

I believe books and cameras are only a means toward an end, not an end in itself.

Through a process of selection, alteration and interpretation, I am able to develop a painting largely of my imagination. Expressing my emotions, being free with value and color, experimenting and playing with shape and edges can be a liberating force. This type of approach most likely results in personal satisfaction and a creative finished work.
STATEMENT OF PAINTINGS

Every person interprets what he sees, hears and feels. I believe that an artist best expresses himself through his art whether it is painting, music, or any of the other fine arts. Words to describe the art can only form a subordinate statement as to what the work is expressing.

The forms and colors of nature on silk have been a theme of much of my work since I came to the United States. In this thesis, I have attempted to broaden my creative experiences by further exploration of flowers and by research and study of other artists who found nature - especially flowers - as their inspiration.

I have attempted to express my discoveries in drawing, printmaking and weaving. It is my hope that I have expressed through this thesis a greater need for the artist to be aware of the experiences of other artists and to be open to new ideas and discoveries in his own work.

Landscape surrounds us and influences us in many ways, some subtle, and some obvious. For me, nature - especially flowers - is a driving force influencing my attitude, my work, my feelings, in essence -- my mindscape. I find my actions and reactions touched by places I've been and things I've seen and experienced.

Every creative work of art requires elimination and simplification. Simplification results from a realization of what is essential.

In designing, I begin with a realistic image and, through the creative process, the image evolves, changes, and often simplifies into a more abstract form. This non-realistic format allows me more freedom. As I design further, I try to focus more on the color, the shape and other qualities of the image. Through all these qualities I am able to
concentrate on the moods, feelings and concepts I want to evoke or convey in each piece. I believe that any work of art requires personal interpretation and reaction.

As Cynthia Schira pointed out in Kansas Alumni Magazine about her work:

"I'm not trying to make pictures of a landscape. I'm much more trying to get across a kind of feeling that one has in a particular place. The kind of peace or emotion you would have felt in that place . . ."¹

The use of color has become my principle tool for creating poetic mood and personal expression in my painting. I also find that in one way or another we are emotionally affected by color.

Color has an appealing quality that makes one aware of his own senses. This power of color is used to symbolize ideas in order to emphasize their meaning. Colors and their relationships serve to create a direct emotional effect upon us in conjunction with the symbolic poetic meaning in paintings. This colorful poetic effect can become descriptive of the images and their mood. This poetic attitude about the use of color can be seen in Van Gogh's work, as John Rewald mentions in his book, Post Impressionism, from Van Gogh to Gauguin, that:

"It became clear from Van Gogh's own commentaries that each subject he chose to paint released in him specific emotions or associations of ideas which he sought to express by means of composition, of

simplification and especially of color. Each amplifies its literal, obvious value with a hidden, symbolic one that adds another dimension. In certain ways, therefore, Van Gogh's paintings done in Arles are like a diary, a record of his changing moods and inspirations, of his hopes and desires."

Being a creative artist has led me to experiment with a multitude of approaches in order to develop a personal style using color, through a process that works together in a subjective manner according to my own feeling.

Expressing and exploring a diversity of color effects gives me more ways of expanding the use of color in its interrelationship with images. This color interrelationship makes me look towards the evolution of a personal style using color to determine the final appearance of my painting.

At this point, it has been necessary to analyze the components of color emphasizing adjacent colors and their reaction to each other. This analysis defines a mood that arises out of an exploration essentially based on making one color look like two or two different colors look alike.

Color usage is decorative in that they are not used intentionally to create an illusion of space. Colors are not chosen to represent parts

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of landscape, (i.e. leaf is green, sky is blue, etc.) but for personal reasons stemming from my reactions to the image and the feeling I am trying to evoke in the work. The color of the flowers has been treated in an abstract manner suggesting perhaps that reality is not always the way we are used to seeing it.

Creativity is an art of organizing ideas. As an artist I have been able to combine elements introducing a pattern of my own, among the forms of nature, evoking sensations based on color.
PRESSING THE SILK

Steam press the silk with an industrial steamer or an electric steam iron on the wool setting. According to information found in Alma Chestnut Moore's *How to Clean Everything*, shake the silk gently until it is the proper dampness for ironing.¹

Silks should be uniformly damp when they are pressed. Iron them before they are dry completely for best results. If they are too wet when ironed, the fabric will be stiff and papery. Use a warm temperature, iron and press on the wrong side, preferably with a piece of clean cheese cloth protecting the fabric.

DRAWING ON THE SILK

Before transferring the design onto the silk, first draw the design on paper to size. Lay the paper onto the printing table. A piece of silk slightly larger than the design is fixed to the tabletop over the drawing with a T-pin placed approximately every 2 inches apart on the outside edges of the silk. The T-pins serve a dual purpose, to both stretch the silk across the design and to create a flat surface.

A well stretched surface makes it easier for the metal tip of the gutta applicator to move across the silk, allowing for the smooth application and penetration of gutta.

APPLYING THE RESIST

Gutta resist is similar in consistency, smell, color and properties to rubber cement. It has a rubber or latex base and usually comes ready to use out of the can.

There is an applicator which can be purchased along with the dyes. It is a small plastic bottle with a nozzle, which most people find easy to control and very clean.

The gutta should always be tested on a sample before starting on the final piece to make sure that it is the proper consistency. New gutta resist is sometimes too thin while the old is sometimes too thick. Test by drawing a few small circles. If the gutta line spreads too much after it is applied, the resist is too thin and the applicator should be left open for a while so that some of the moisture is able to evaporate. If dye brushed inside the gutta circles runs outside the circle, the resist is too thick. It is sitting on top of the fiber, not penetrating it, and the dye is running underneath. The gutta can be thinned with a few drops of a thinner which is available from the manufacturer.

THE DYES

I used DuPont French Dye and Senellier Super TinFix. Each is a highly concentrated liquid acid dye which must be diluted with a solution of denatured alcohol. This helps the dye penetrate the fabric. Using the dye full strength dulls the brilliance of the color and may cause a discharge when one washes the fabric for the first time. Pure alcohol reduces washability and causes the dye to penetrate the gutta line. I mixed the dyes with the ratio of 1:2 solution of denatured alcohol to water. It is best to store the color mixtures in a tightly covered glass jar. The manufacturer recommends that the dyes be diluted two hours prior to
application in a ratio of 1 part dye to 2 parts water and 1 part of denatured alcohol.

All the French dyes made by DuPont and Senellier provide an infinite variety of hues. It is probably safe to say that there isn't a color that can't be easily mixed. Pale tints to bright vibrant hues to dark rich shades can be achieved with some knowledge of color mixing and a willingness to experiment. Unlike batik and tie-and-dye, hand painting allows the artist to see the work progressing, thus allowing greater control.

Manufacturers sell two different forms of basic dye, one for silk and wool and one for cotton. When ordering the dyes, whether under the brand name of DuPont or Sennelier TinFix, it should be specified on which material the dyes are to be used.

The best effects are achieved on silk which absorbs the dye easily. The natural luster of silk makes the colors look even more beautiful. Also, silk absorbs less dye than wool or cotton and is therefore more economical.

PAINTING

As soon as the resist lines have dried, I start painting with the dyes. Soft, natural hair brushes are the best for this -- sable, fitch, ox hair and others are equally good. The brushes are not damaged by using them with these dyes, so it is worth investing in some good natural hair brushes. Be sure to give them a good wash with water after each use.

Dyes come in a liquid form looking much like colored inks. These dyes will really spread when put on fabric. Therefore, it isn't necessary to paint too close to the resist lines and risk painting over them. If the dye goes over the gutta, it will become stained and will remain that way even if the resist is removed. To paint a large area with flat color, it is best to
do it in a medium to dark color. To get a perfectly flat effect, brush the dye on in parallel strokes. Each new stroke should partially overlap the previous one. I always make sure that I have mixed more than enough dye since there is no stopping once I have started painting an area. If I do stop painting, even for a few minutes, there will be a dark, messy line where I start again. That is, the part I painted first will have started to dry and the wet dye against it will make a mark that cannot be remedied.

To get a gradation of color within one area (i.e. from dark to light pink), I paint the dark where I want it, and then paint the light where I want it. Working quickly to keep both colors from drying, I use a damp wide brush and brush it back and forth where the dark and light meet. This will cause the two colors to blend without leaving a hard edge at the meeting point.

SALTS

I usually use table salt and pour a small amount in my hand to toss onto the silk. Kosher salt comes in larger granules for a slightly different effect. The ideal time to apply salt is when the silk is wetter than damp and drier than soaking. It will work only on wet pigment. As each crystal absorbs some dye from the fabric, lighter areas will appear around the crystal in interesting patterns, and one darker spot will remain directly beneath the salt. The effect will appear softer where the silk is wetter and a more granular texture will be visible when the silk is closer to the damp stage. Contrasts can be obtained by using salt on both pale and darker valued areas. I also found that salt will absorb dyes when it is wet and leave white spots behind. It will never absorb dyes that have been previously dried and then rewet. I always remove all salt from the silk after I have finished. This can be done by softly brushing over the surface.
of the silk so that it will not continue to act.

**AIRBRUSH**

The airbrush is a precision spray gun that allows the artist to control the concentration of color in the spray, the size of the spray pattern and, to some extent, the size of the droplets in the spray. Color coverage may be fine or coarse, dead flat or granulated.

In the airbrush, a stream of gas is mixed with a stream of liquid color. The tiny but powerful jet of gas atomizes the liquid into microscopic droplets and blasts them toward the drawing surface.

The gas may be compressed air, carbon dioxide (CO₂), or some other propellant. The color may be ink, dye, watercolor, gouache, acrylic or any other paint capable of being rarefied. Any liquid that can be thinned can be blown through an airbrush, even artist's tube colors. However, the smallest nozzles (which make the thinnest lines) should be used with naturally thin liquids, such as dyes, inks and watercolors. Heavier lacquers and enamels may be used in airbrushes with slightly larger nozzles.

The airbrush is held pencil-like, with the index finger resting on a button called the "trigger". Pressing the trigger with the index finger opens a valve that allows the gas to pass through and out of the nozzle. By varying the mixture of gas and color, I can produce a wide range of patterns and effects.

In single-action brushes, the trigger controls only the airflow. The amount of paint that feeds into the air stream is pre-set before spraying by turning a valve at the nozzle or at the end of the handle. This simplified mechanism is easy to control but isn't meant to produce variable, graduated tones while spraying. After setting the paint-feed control, I
test the spray on a scrap piece of paper before spraying the artwork (silk).

Most single-action airbrushes are also "external mixing" -- that is, the dye is drawn into the airstream after it leaves the nozzle. Dye droplets in the spray aren't as completely atomized as in the "internal-mixing" airbrushes. On the other hand, since the air and the paint are mixed outside of the airbrush tip, this less complicated mechanism can handle heavier pigments - acrylics, enamel, lacquer, ceramic glaze - without clogging.

In the double-action airbrushes, pulling back on the trigger (while pressing down to open the air valve) retracts the tip of a long steel needle from the nozzle, allowing a small amount of liquid color to be drawn into the air stream.

With single-action brushes, the color is siphoned into the airflow, drawn by the lower pressure of the fast-moving jet of air.

Most double-action brushes, however, are internal mixing, the air and pigment mixing inside the tip. Many of these internal-mixing brushes are also siphon fed, allowing use of containers ranging from tiny cups to large bottles, and even to a larger supply if a flexible hose is used. Larger color cups allow uninterrupted spraying of a given color without having to stop and remix. Since I paint large works, I use this kind of airbrush.

**MASKING TECHNIQUES - FRISKETS**

It is quite possible to use the airbrush freehand most of the time; but it is often more convenient and accurate to use masking. In fact, probably about 90 percent of all airbrush work involves masking for optimum effect and efficient use of time. To make my mask cutting as easy and accurate as possible, I use a surgical scalpel which I find to be the best mask cutter. There are, however, a range of tools commercially
available including curve cutters.

Friskets are any material used to mask off a painting to prevent the application of paint to the designated area. These friskets take several forms. A liquid frisket is a rubber based liquid applied to the painting surface with a brush. This method is preferred when the design is too intricate for hand cut stencils. Its drawbacks are that it is messy, inconvenient and could leave a residue on the surface if extreme care is not taken when removing. Hand cut stencils are usually cut from thin acetate or from a transparent vinyl with an adhesive on the back to secure it to the ground.

The modern vinyl friskets are the most widely used because of their conveniences. The adhesive back keeps the frisket fixed to the ground, but it allows clean removal and can be reused. It will not stretch or buckle under the moisture of the paint. The frisket's transparency also makes it possible to cut on the design. They come in two types: a low tack adhesive back for smooth surfaces and a high tack adhesive for textured surfaces.

Since I am working on a flat, smooth, soft ground, the masking I use is a low tack vinyl. The low tack adhesive is preferred because it leaves no adhesive residue.

CARE OF MASKING FILM

It is worth treating all masking films with some care both in storage and in usage. They should not be pressed too forcefully to the ground (and certainly not burnished down) because they may disturb the surface underneath. Equally, if in the process of airbrushing, one leans hard on the masking once it is in position, the same result may occur. Masking film should be kept away from direct sunlight or direct heat, as they bubble or peel at the edges and, therefore, have to be discarded.
APPLYING FILM MASKING

There are one or two points to remember about the application of masking to the ground. As an airbrush spray spreads beyond the main stream of its flow, it is important not to allow the spray to spatter past the outside edge of the masking, and so affect unwanted areas. This happens only when the masking is too small for that particular job. There are two main remedies: a) cut the masking larger than the artwork, a wasteful and expensive tactic with large work; or b) cut a smaller piece of masking and improvise as follows. Put the film's backing paper (or newspaper) around the outer edges of the masking so that the effective area of mask is substantially increased. Stick it in place under the edges of the film masking. It is simple, then, to stick the outer edges of the "extra masking" with adhesive tape, around the edges of the ground. It is imperative not to attach adhesive tape to the in-use-ground, as it may have a high enough tack to lift some of the painted surface away when it is removed.

I tried both techniques just to find out which is best for my painting. Finally, I decided to use the first technique, even though it is expensive and wasteful, because it is much easier and faster to work with.

MASK CUTTING

In many pieces of airbrush artwork, the cutting of the mask requires the most skill. One cannot overestimate the value of a sharp knife. A friend of mine recommended a surgical scalpel with disposable blades -- easily sharp enough as long as the blades are replaced regularly. It is clear that the blade has not been replaced as it should when the delicately incised masking tears instead of coming away clean. Blades can
be restoned with a sharpening stone, but new ones are easily available. Surgeon scalpels are both flexible and versatile.

The knack to masking is to cut it clean once it is fixed to the ground without cutting the ground itself. As many films are thicker than paper, cutting can require quite a skilled hand. The cut must be definite and clean. It is not satisfactory to tear the last bits away; this can disturb the rest of the masking, damage the ground underneath, or it may come away ragged. It is possible to overlap layers of masking on a ground. In this case, cutting pressure must be increased.
CONCLUDING STATEMENT

When does the creative process come to a conclusion?

A work of art is finished from the point of view of the artist when feeling and perception have resulted in a spiritual synthesis; a work is finished when all parts involved communicate themselves, so that they are complete. When the painting is wholly successful it achieves quality ... the fruit of the sensitive and creative mind.

The artist is a king, not only because of his great powers, but also because he has great obligations. If the artist be guardian of beauty, beauty can be measured only by the yardstick of internal greatness and necessity. That is beautiful which is produced by internal necessity springing from the soul.

Vision appears when an artist is looking at the world through his own eyes. What he sees is not what others see. His heart responds, therefore, to this unique vision ... unusual environments, outstanding shapes and colors, particular textures, encountered at the right moment, connect with an artist's character, style, mood, thought, spirit and manner. His own vision then surfaces.

For my thesis project, ten panels were painted although my initial goal was for eight (panels 2,3,4,5,6,7,8). After I finished the eight panels, I realized that I still had enough time to do an additional two (panels 1,10). I felt that this would make the complete work even more interesting. It is in my nature to challenge myself. I find that the more I paint, the more I want to paint. I think each painting is a performance. I just want to be better and better and I strongly believe that successful people are those that are willing to face challenges in their life.

Of all the ten panels that I completed, panel number five (panel 5) was the most challenging mainly because of the great size and the fact
that this piece was to be hung in the middle of the ten panels. The largest panel (45" x 90") was difficult for me to work because the space in the dye room was limited. Also, when working with a panel of this magnitude, I had to work very quickly yet very patiently, being careful with the color intensities and their combination.

After I finished painting the ten panels, I hung all of them on the wall in the printing room, according to the sketch. To my surprise, the colors in most of the panels appeared much softer than I had expected, especially the first three panels (panels 2,3,4). This is mainly because I was nervous about making a mistake by applying either too dark or too bright a color. I knew that it was much easier to start out with very light colors, then move to darker intensities/values rather than start from darks to lights. Even though I was a little surprised with the result in some of the panels, I didn't panic because, based from the experiments and research that I did earlier, I was confident that airbrushing would overcome this problem -- to balance and harmonize the colors.

I airbrushed all the panels -- especially those areas where I felt needed more work. I spent a lot of time airbrushing the flowers and the leaves to make them look more fresh and alive. I planned a color scheme, with a dominant color to interweave with the surrounding colors. I began with very light color and proceeded to middle values and dark, thus producing a full tonal range. It is important to integrate the color and the texture of each form to its surrounding forms and colors. I built up the under-painting by airbrushing layers of color to produce a pleasing visual sensation. A great deal of time was spent to harmonize the surrounding color.

Even though it is possible to use the airbrush freehand most of the time, it was more convenient to use friskets. It really helped, especially
where I airbrushed the flowers and leaves, where some of the images needed sharp and crisp definition. The only problem I faced with the use of masking was the cutting. It is a very delicate process, which takes full concentration, patience and experience. This is because the frisket is placed right on top of the silk. If too much pressure is applied to the blade, it might cut the silk too. But I did complete all of the cutting with no damage.

After I finished airbrushing, I peeled all the frisket from the panels and to my surprise the results were excellent. I was very pleased with what I saw in front of my eyes, it turned out better than what I had expected. I managed to balance and harmonize the color of the forms with the colors of the background. With the use of the airbrush I managed to make the background in some areas of the panels look foggy (panels 1,6,7) and misty while the flowers appeared cooler, softer and livelier. Thus, a poetic mood or feeling was created -- the kind of romantic, quiet and dreamy mood I wanted to convey.

My ability to paint sensitively and with dexterity is in direct relation to the well-being of my mind, body and environment. If I feel well physically and mentally, and am working in a perfect environment, I set about thinking and painting with greater harmony and balance. I direct myself to the purpose. This is what happened when I was working on my thesis project. I was very excited about my work, especially after I came back from participating in the American Craft Fair in Baltimore.

I am glad that I decided to work from 11 o'clock at night until early morning in the printing room, especially when I was working on airbrush. I found that was the perfect time and environment for me -- it was cool and quiet with no interruptions. There were no other students in the studio other than myself and my paintings. It felt as if I was working in a garden.
full of beautiful flowers and colors, so romantic and easier for me to concentrate and 'communicate' with my work. Because of this, I managed to finish the airbrushing within two weeks, which was earlier than what I had planned. Although it was difficult for me to switch my lifestyle -- sleep during the day and work at night -- I feel that it was worth the pain.

The results of using salts was very successful. Working with the large panels with wide areas of color, I did not want these areas to become uninteresting by being completely flat. I found that this slight texture added interest to the painting by breaking the flat, 'monotonous' quality of the surface. I enjoyed the interplay of the flat and textured areas and decided to utilize this random texture as a design element in my work. The texture also made the painting more alive while maintaining a smooth softness.

The day I installed my painting in the Bevier Gallery I was very nervous, due to the fact of not seeing my paintings from any distance, this was because of the limited space in the printing room. The whole painting was viewed from a range of only 15 - 20 feet away.

After I finished hanging my panels, I went to the front of the gallery and looked back at my work. There are no words that I can use to describe how I felt, seeing my work for the first time, a completed thesis project hanging in a large open space in the middle of the gallery. Because of the space, environment, lighting and the way it was hung, it made the whole painting look even more livelier. Some of the panels moved slowly and softly when the wind blew. Every time I looked at my paintings in the gallery, I smiled. Deep inside me, I was communicating with my work. It felt as if I were looking at a floating garden in a world of fantasy. The french dyes and the silk worked together extremely well, one can see the color and feel the softness of the silk.
I purposely hung all ten panels at different levels and distances: this made the whole format more interesting and also created more space for each panel to move and breathe. I realized that although the panels were hung at different levels, it still maintained the smooth flow of the colors and the continuity of the image from one panel to another. Whether people realize it or not, every time they look at the painting their eyes tend to move horizontally from one panel to another, following the flow of the colors and images that appear in the painting. Their eyes also move slowly and smoothly, vertically following the changes from yellows to blues to greens to pinks.

The space I'm dealing with in my work is actual physical space. I am not intentionally after a perspective type of space -- one shape appearing to be in front or behind another -- although this may happen occasionally through the use of color.

The images and the colors which intertwined symbolize the deeply woven fabric of my life, my understanding and my attitudes. I do not find these factors to be separable, and it is this belief which helps to make my thesis project successful.

I believe we all have a creative ability that can be split in two. We can be very technically competent and creative, or we can be creative in terms of our imagination. If the two things don't go together, we are not going to produce our optimum level of work. If our creative spirit is limited by our technical ability, we're not free to be totally creative. These days there is so much emphasis placed on creative ability rather than technical ability that a lot of people are producing work that is far beneath their potential. If they took the time to be technically competent first, they would be a lot more creative afterwards. I am proud to say that my thesis work 'Mindscape' was the result of a combination of technical
competence, creative imagination and interpretation.

On the last day of the show, I looked again at my work hanging in the gallery. I said to myself that I was proud of what I had done and had achieved what I wanted to achieve. I realized that my life in the United States for the past two years was responsible for many influences in my work -- especially in my attitude toward color. Most of the colors that I used in my paintings before I came here were dark, earth or muddy colors. Now, though, my color scheme tends to be brighter and softer.

'Mindscape' was the biggest, most challenging and successful work I have ever done. I feel that the experiences gained by the thesis project have been invaluable to me and that they will continue to aid me in my future work. During the course of this thesis I have succeeded in improving my technical skills as a painter, with the expert help of those on my thesis committee. I have learned to be more careful about my selection of content and composition. But, perhaps just as importantly I am more aware of influences in my life and my work. I have developed a stronger confidence in myself as an artist, and in my ability to incorporate my ideas and feelings into a painted image.

In conclusion, I maintain that, for me, art and life can only be concluded with death. Just as flowers and plants are an essential link in the continuing process of life, I feel that my work is essential in the continuing process of my life which will not reach a conclusion until my death. Each day is filled with new experiences which contribute to my growth and development as an artist and as a person.

Through my work and my experiences to this date I can say that I love art, nature and life. There is so much joy and happiness to be found in this world if one knows where to look for it. Just as the flower blooms -- so does all life.
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