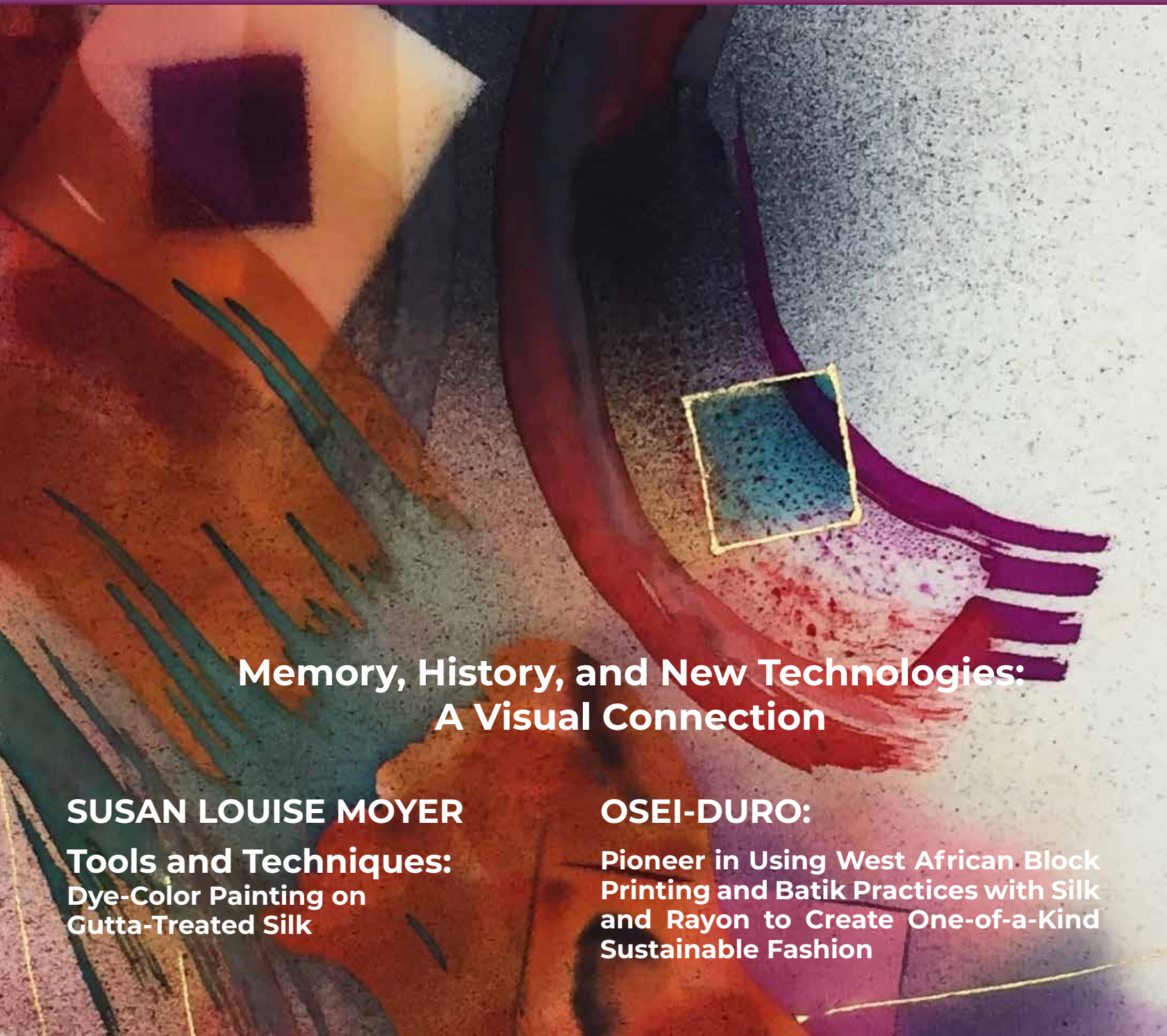


SILKWORM

The Magazine of Silk Painters International

Volume 26, Issue 3, Autumn 2019



Memory, History, and New Technologies: A Visual Connection

SUSAN LOUISE MOYER

Tools and Techniques:
Dye-Color Painting on
Gutta-Treated Silk

OSEI-DURO:

**Pioneer in Using West African Block
Printing and Batik Practices with Silk
and Rayon to Create One-of-a-Kind
Sustainable Fashion**

Detail of *Abstract, Sample 2*, © SL Moyer

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SILKWORM CREDITS

Editor: Liz Constable

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

After the Summer issue of *Silkworm*, I heard directly from some of you querying my decision to feature the art and techniques of a watercolor artist. I also noted the lively exchange of opinions on the SPIN Facebook page. I so welcomed hearing and reading your opinions, and wholeheartedly encourage you to continue sharing your ideas and reactions with me and with the magazine's Advisory Board. To me, it seems that lively and thoughtful discussion and dissent are crucial to arts communities' well-being and responsiveness to their participants and to changing cultural contexts.

The techniques, styles, materials, tools, and aesthetic principles we use with silk art emerge from a much broader inter-arts context across times and spaces. If silk art is to engage and inspire new generations of practitioners, I think that the inter-arts conversations and conflicts, and the histories and geographies of silk art, deserve to be part and parcel of the purview of the magazine.

Since the Summer issue, some of you have been experimenting with Blockley's techniques, and Tunizia and I are looking forward to publishing an article in a forthcoming issue on your experiences.

For this issue, "Memory, History, and New Technologies: A Visual Connection," as contributions came in, my initial interpretation of each of these words---memory, history, new technologies---shifted. Today, the default definition of technology is often digital technology, and yet the term "technology," in its basic meaning, is the development of tools, and the systematic application of those tools to change culture. And so it's entirely logical that our first feature article is Susan Moyer's comprehensive and informative description of the Gutta Treatment she has developed to enable dye-color painting on silk, a technique akin to water-color painting that opens up new artistic possibilities.

And then, in response to the SPIN Board's feedback earlier this year, for this issue, we include a section on silk fashion that integrates the themes of memory, history and new technologies. We invite you to discover the bold designs of a company based in Accra, Ghana, *Osei-Duro*, and I quote directly from the team at *Osei-Duro* to the connection:

"Born out of the designers' interest in discourse between different fashion systems, *Osei-Duro* began as and still remains an experiment. We focus on developing new and hybrid materials based on traditional textiles. Processes we have used include (but are not limited to): batik, tie and dye, hand weaving, block printing, lost wax brass casting, and natural indigo dyeing.

We prioritize social responsibility and transparency in our projects, preferring to work collaboratively with a wide range of artisans, designers and fine artists"

As I suggest in the article on *Osei-Duro* and the short piece on wild silks, as we all become acutely aware of the devastating environmental and human impacts of metals, chemicals, bleaches involved in cultivated silk production, and in the "fast fashion" industry overall, it's time we also consider alternative approaches, and alternative materials.

Example of *Osei-Duro* Block Printing.



**LIZ
CONSTABLE**

Please send your ideas and feedback to the Editor. Stay in touch. We want you to be involved. If you have comments, complaints or suggestions, let us know. Send correspondence or photos to elconstable@gmail.com.

If you have photographs of your art that you would like to have showcased in the *Silkworm* magazine, send photos with your name and the name of the piece. The photo size should be minimum 5"x7" and 300 dpi for best printing.

KAKI'S KORNER: MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Transition

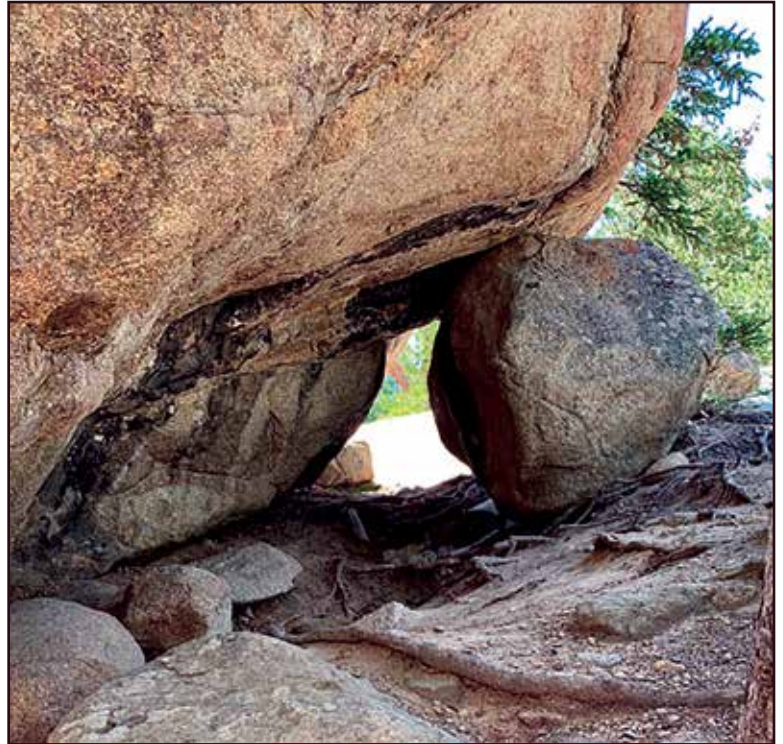
Dear SPIN Members:

Every summer my husband, aging dog, and I make our pilgrimage to enjoy the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. This national park is dear to us because it's very close to my childhood home in Boulder. As purists in our early years, we camped with backpacks. As we have aged, we've moved, first, to a tent and now begrudgingly to a trailer. Much as we hate to admit it, our aging parts tend to dictate equipment changes. However, these accommodations have not diminished our passion for the mountains' beauty. The spectacular views of these mountains still require hiking into the higher altitudes. And by that, I mean between 8,000'-12,000'. This does require some acclimation adjustment time.

Our most recent hike brought us to Ouzel Falls, where we happened upon a striking combination of boulders creating the beautiful rock window you see above. Understanding its formation calls for a basic understanding of geology. My somewhat fuzzy memory of a college course reminded me that receding glaciers create such rock combinations. Ever so slowly the glacier would have deposited its treasure as the ice melted. And the gradual scraping of the boulder smoothed away the edges. The smaller rock managed to position itself, with perfect balance, wedging the giant one at an angle. To give you some perspective, at 5'2," I could have made it through, but why tempt centuries of stability right?

Our ever-changing technology and money provided me with a smartphone which I carried in my pocket. Without reception for calls or texts, the phone served almost exclusively as my camera. This small tool spared me hauling a large camera body, lenses, tripod, filters, cleansers, cable release, memory cards, batteries, charger and carry case. Of course, had I known what to do with the equipment listed, the resulting photo might have been better. Yet, alas, I never would have made it past the trailhead to take that incomparable photo!

Although perhaps mildly entertained, you're probably asking, "What does this have to do with our Silk Art?" First, this photograph triggers memories of the beautiful hike we took that day. Secondly, a historical understanding of the window formation makes me appreciate the millions of years it took to create it. Third, the new technology of my "pocket camera" allows a capture of the image. And finally the visual connection links everything together.



This Fall Silkworm issue will bring these factors together. Our artistic memories, both positive and negative will provide us with a timeline of our own development. The rich history of silk art creates an understanding of just how precious our tools are. New technologies add deeper dimensions to our skill set. That same technology challenges us to learn new skills. The visual connection will be the result of our newest efforts. For us to advance as silk artists we will continue to need imagination, talent, guidance, and just as in hiking, practice, always practice.

Kaki Steward, President

Kaki Steward

WE'VE GOT THE STUFF YOU MAKE IT ART



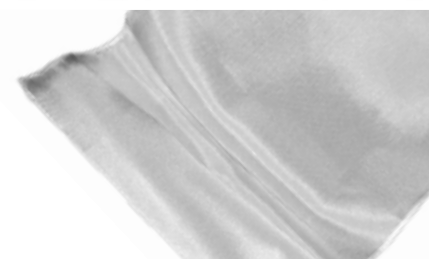
FEATURED ARTIST: KRISTI KRANZ



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Dye-Color Painting on Gutta Treated Silk

By Susan Louise Moyer

When I was working in the fashion industry, creating designs on silk, my colleagues and I used gutta and other linear resists to control the flow of dye. However, this wasn't the only way we used gutta. We also thinned the gutta with a solvent to make a treatment that we applied to the silk. Once dry, the gutta treatment made it possible to control the flow of dye on the silk without the traditional reliance on a resist line. We referred to this method of silk painting as *painting direct*.

There are a number of products available for painting direct. Unlike gutta, the following products are water-soluble and support two basic methods of direct painting.

1. Treatments: the surface of the silk can be treated with a stop flow such as *Sennelier* and *Dupont Anti-Fusant*, sodium alginate or carboxymethyl cellulose (CMC, and the main active ingredient in the *Magic Sizing* product);
2. Dye thickeners: the dye can be thickened with sodium alginate, gum arabic, CMC and a product called *Superclear*.

Sodium alginate, gum arabic, and CMC can be purchased in powder form. These products are readily available in many countries and easily shipped or carried on flights from country to country.

Each product supports specific painting techniques that, in turn, create distinct visual effects. To customize their thickening, they can be mixed with varying amounts of water. Less water is added to make dye thickener, more water for a "stop flow." Since the products are water-soluble, once the dye is steam-set, washing will remove the treatments and thickeners from the silk. Some wash out more easily than others.

Gutta treatment, however, like gutta, is not water-soluble and can only be removed by using the same solvent from which the treatment is made.



To distinguish painting on gutta-treated silk from water-soluble treatments for painting direct, I refer to gutta treatment as *dye-color painting* on silk on analogy with watercolor painting. This seems appropriate because both dye-color painting and watercolor painting are aqua media supported by a substrate that has been treated with a product to impede the flow of water. And most importantly, many of the dye-color painting techniques used on gutta-treated silk are similar to the transparent watercolor techniques used on paper. One difference between painting on silk versus watercolor paper is that watercolor paper can become too wet, overworked and start to deteriorate. However, most silk weaves can take a lot of blending and abuse before they start to bruise. In addition, the soft luster of silk gives colors a dimension of lightness, whereas the same colors may look dull, flat, or muddy, on paper.

When gutta treatment is applied to the silk, the solvent evaporates leaving the silk fibers with a thin coating of rubber and wax. Since rubber and wax are not water-soluble, the coating stops the natural capillary action (flow) of water and liquid dye on silk. Dye and water penetrate the treatment but the dye does not flow unless you first apply water to the surface of the treated silk. The dye then flows in the water. This water media technique is called wet-in-wet or wet-into-wet. Watercolorists use the expressions, “*It is all about controlling the water*” and “*let the water do the work*.” You can say the same for working on gutta-treated silk.

The versatility of gutta treatment provides a painting surface for a variety of additional techniques and products that can be used in dye-color painting such as dry brush, air brush, discharge, stenciling, wax resist, gutta resist, water-soluble resist, thickened dye, salt, *Derwent Inktense Pencils* and permanent inks such as Chinese Ink. Also, masking fluids familiar to watercolorists for example, *Pebeo Drawing Gum* can be used with care along with creative combinations of all of the above.

Painting and mixing color from a palette of concentrated dye-cakes is the first step in controlling the water. In the previous issue of *Silkworm* under Tools and Techniques (Vol. 26, Issue 2, Summer 2019: 1619), I explained how to make dye-cakes out of *H. Dupont Dye*. If you are interested in exploring the creative possibilities of dye-color painting on gutta-treated silk, you will want to refer to that issue and make yourself a basic dye-cake palette.

Gutta Treatment Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- Jacquard or *H. Dupont* Gutta.
- Choose one:
 1. Naphtha: If Naphtha is available in your state it can be purchased from your local hardware or paint stores. Naphtha is the least expensive choice.
 2. *Formula 66*: If naphtha is not available in your state, for example California, the alternative is *Formula 66*. It is a refined solvent that can be ordered and shipped to you through the manufacturer.

CBGBiotech.com
800-941-9484 ex 201 and 230,
2211 Lake Club Dr., Suite 205, Columbus, Ohio 3232, USA.

Minimum order is one gallon. Use a valid business address for shipping purposes.

EQUIPMENT and SUPPLIES

- 1) Ventilation and Respirator: Work outside upwind of the work surface or use a closed system exhaust fan in the window and make sure you have cross ventilation. Your worktable should be placed in front of the exhaust fan with you facing the exhaust fan. Protect your health by wearing a respirator with an organic cartridge filter for solvents. I wear a 3M Respirator 6100/0724 with an Organic Vapor Cartridge #M 6001. When not in use, protect the cartridges from exhausting by storing the respirator and attached cartridges in a sealed durable plastic bag. Available at hardware and paint stores and on line.
- 2) Nitrile gloves (no latex/rubber) and eye protection. Available at Costco, hardware and paint stores.
- 3) One 16-ounce Pyrex glass container for measuring and pouring liquids.
- 4) One 16-ounce metal container with a screw on cap for storing solvents. Hardware and paint stores often carry these metal containers and they can be ordered from <http://www.berlinpackaging.com> (Search Steel F-Style Cans with Caps)
- 5) One 6-8-ounce container (no rubber) with a tight lid. Choose plastic, metal or glass containers that will not dissolve in solvent. (If glass is dropped it will create a difficult mess.)

The containers should have openings wide enough for a 3” foam brushes below.

- 6) Two of each 1”, 2”, and 3” foam-brushes that fit into the container above. The solvent in the treatment will dissolve the glue that is holding the brush together. Therefore, before using the brush, staple the top of the foam brush to the plastic support that is between the two layers of foam so the foam does not slide off the handle.
- 7) One clean wash brush for applying the wetting agent. Do not use a foam-brush. The grey color releases and stains the silk.
- 8) *Zip Lock* bag for sealing in the wet foam brushes. This prevents the brush from drying out and keeps the solvent fumes contained.
- 9) A few paper towels.
- 10) A cardboard roll covered with acid-free paper for storing the treated silk.



Detail of *Tulip Tango*, © Mini K.

- 11) After wash (*Dharma Professional Textile Detergent*)
- 12) **Silk painting supplies for testing the gutta treatment:** *H. Dupont* dye (preferably in dye-cakes), water, hairdryer, silk painting brush, the weave of silk currently being used for painting (12mm habotai) stretched on an embroidery hoop or small frame. *H. Dupont* Dye thinner/diluent. In dye-color painting on gutta-treated silk, the thinner is used primarily as a wetting agent that breaks the surface tension of the silk and assists the dye in penetrating the silk evenly.

PROCESS

Once you go through the process of making the gutta treatment and become familiar with the safety precautions, you will be surprised by how easily and safely you will be able to make it.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Follow the product safety and storage information found on the label of the solvent container. Solvents and their vapors are flammable. Excessive exposure is known to be harmful. Therefore, keep solvent containers capped when not in use. When working with solvents, keep and store them away from an open flame, sparks and excessive heat. Do not smoke. Use adequate ventilation, wear Nitrile gloves, eye protection and a respirator with a cartridge rated for organic vapors listed previously under Equipment.

If exposure during or after use is causing you to feel dizzy, you do not have adequate protection.



***Fern Design*, © SL Moyer**

Gutta treatment was applied over a painted ground that was steam set. To build the design, Susan used cut stencils as well as fern leaves and a mist of dye applied with a mouth atomizer.

***Abstract Sample 1, ©SL Moyer (right) and
Abstract Sample 2, © SL Moyer (front cover)***

These are samples of the experiments Susan did to explore the possibilities of incorporating multiple products and techniques on gutta treated silk.

Dry-clean resistant gold decorative resist was applied and iron set before the gutta treatment was applied. Once gutta-treatment was applied, the techniques explored were dye-painting, wax resist, alcohol discharge, stencils, dye applied with a mouth atomizer followed by wet and dry brush techniques used to build design through layers.



ZigZag Pillow, © SLMoyer

Starting from the right side, gutta resist line and dye were used to create the first three rows of zigzag. Gutta Treatment was applied to the rest of the silk. A blue ground was brushed on the gutta treated segment of the silk followed by the use of stencils and dye applied with a mouth atomizer, hot wax resist was brushed on followed by dye applied as wet and dry brush work. The painting was steam set, dry cleaned and then cut so a black and white striped zig zag could be sewn in. The painted and stitched design was machine quilted and made into a pillow.



Roger's Red, © Barbara Pease

The artworks pictured in this article (*Tulip Tango*) on page 8, (*Birds*) on page 6 and (*Roger's Red*) to the left, were created by Susan's private students. Their original paintings are excellent examples of the controlled blending and fine detail that working on gutta treated silk provides.



PROCESS cont.

The ratio is approximately 2 parts solvent to 1 part gutta. For example, 2/3-cup solvent and 1/3-cup gutta make a total of 1-cup of gutta treatment.

1. Mark the increments 2/3 cup and 1 cup mark on a 16-ounce plastic or glass container that has a screw-on lid.
2. Make sure the container is dry.
3. Pour in the solvent to the 2/3-cup mark.
4. Slowly add the gutta to the 1-cup mark making a total of 1 cup.
5. Secure the lid and shake.
6. Let sit to allow any air bubbles to rise before applying.

Applying Gutta Treatment:

Generally, if the humidity in your work area is over 86%, the treated silk may hold moisture. This can cause uneven application and/or wicking which is when the treatment does not hold the edge of a brush stroke. Therefore, apply and test the treatment when the humidity is below 86%.

Before applying the latex treatment, use a hairdryer to remove any dampness from the stretched silk. If you see wrinkles in the stretched silk, wet the silk with a clean wash brush and dry completely. Let the silk cool before applying the treatment.

Use a fresh, dry, foam brush to apply the latex treatment. Apply the treatment quickly and evenly by following these steps. As you apply the treatment, constantly check the surface of the silk from all angles and immediately go over any missed spots. Once the treatment starts to dry, it is too late to maintain an even application. The remedy for an uneven application of treatment is to brush over it with a clean foam brush and pure solvent. Once the solvent is applied, quickly rub the foam brush over the surface to even out the gutta treatment and let dry.

Application Steps:

Step 1 and 2: Load the foam brush and wipe off any excess on the edge of the container.

Starting at one side of the silk, apply two brush strokes vertically, one going from bottom to top the other in the opposite direction from top to bottom.

Step 3: Smooth out the vertical strokes by brushing horizontally over the vertical strokes. Stopping each horizontal stroke just past the last vertical stroke.

Step 4, 5, 6: Load the foam brush and wipe off any excess on the edge of the container. Apply two or three vertical strokes.

Step 7: Repeat step 1 through 4 until done.

Step 8: Check the surface of the silk from all angles and go over any missed spots.

Dry flat in front of an exhaust fan or outside on a warm dry day. Do not use a hair dryer. Should take about 5 to 10 minutes.

When not in use, keep the foam brush in a zip lock bag. After completing the process, do not reuse or store the brush. Allow the brush to air dry outside and then discard. A used foam brush will drop pieces of dried rubber, wax and foam brush particles onto the silk. These particles adhere to the silk and resist the dye showing up as little white spots in the painting.

Do not fold unless your goal is to create texture and other special effects. Fold lines will catch the dye and show up in you painting. Store or transport on a roll covered with acid-free paper or hang.

Applying Wetting Agent/Thinner:

The best time to apply the wetting agent is just before you start a painting.

Dilute the concentrated manufacture's dye thinner/wetting agent by following the instructions on the container.

Use a wash brush (not foam) to work the wetting agent into the topside of the treated silk. You may dry the silk with a hairdryer.

Testing Gutta Treatment:

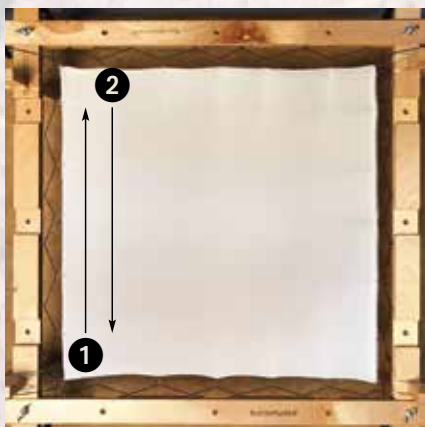
Depending on the consistency of the gutta and the weight of the silk being treated, the recipe of 1 part concentrated stock solution to 2 parts solvent may vary. If needed, adjustments can be made by following these testing instructions.

Once the silk has dried, test the quality of the treatment by applying a brush stroke of concentrated dye. Try four or more colors: red, blue, yellow, hot-pink, violet, green, black. If the dye creates a fuzzy edge, adjust the treatment mixture by adding more gutta, mix thoroughly and apply the gutta treatment and wetting agent on a new piece of silk and test again.

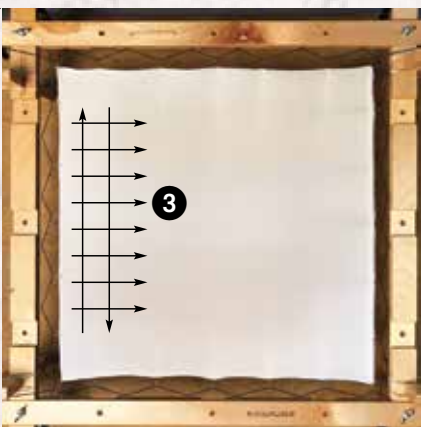
If the dye does not penetrate evenly into the treated surface and bubbles up on the surface, adjust the treatment mixture by adding 1/8 cup of solvent. Mix the solution thoroughly and test on a new piece of silk.

You will find that the different colors may act differently. If only one color out of four or more does not penetrate, no need to adjust the formula. Just add a drop or two of diluent or Kirkland Liquid Dish Soap to the brush water that you are also using to activate your dye-cakes.

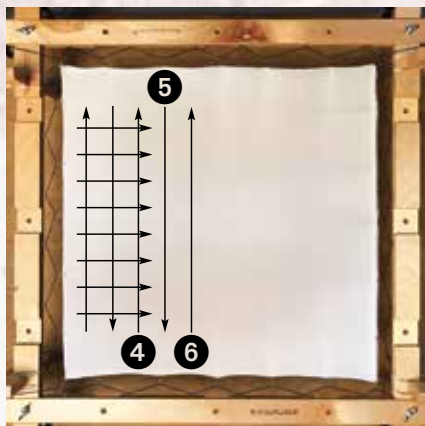
Treatment-Steps 1 and 2



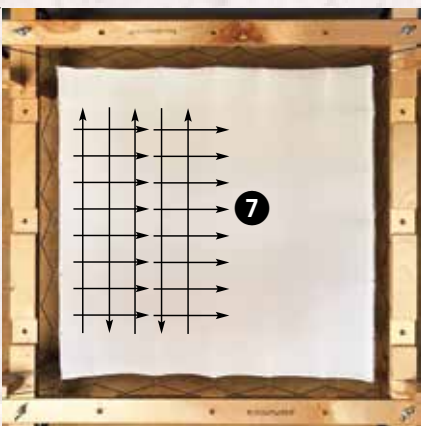
Treatment-Step 3



Treatment-Steps 4, 5, and 6



Treatment-Step 7



Removing The Gutta And Wax From The Silk:

After the dye-color painting has been steam fixed, the gutta and wax can be removed from the silk with the solvent used in the gutta treatment. Work outside, wear nitrile gloves and a respirator. Completely submerge the silk into the solvent. Put the lid on the solvent and let the silk soak. Occasionally agitate the silk. After 5-10 minutes pull the silk out, hang it to air-dry. It should dry in about 5-10 minutes. Once the silk is completely air dry it should be washed in an after wash. Label and store the used solvent in a metal container for future use.

After several uses, the dirty solvent should be filtered. When filtering use adequate ventilation, wear nitrile gloves, eye protection and respirator. To filter, pour dirty solvent into a clean container through a funnel lined with a cone shaped coffee filter. Once the filtering is complete, let the filter and funnel air dry outside. Once the filter paper is **completely air dry**, it can be disposed of safely.

STORING AND DISPOSING OF GUTTA/SOLVENT SOLUTIONS

Storing Gutta-Solvent Solutions:

Label, date, and store, gutta-solvent solutions in the appropriate metal containers previously listed under equipment. Refer to your solvent product-container for proper storage directions. *Store away from oxidizing agents, chlorine, phosphorus, heat, sunlight and extreme cold.*

The shelf life of solvent gutta solutions will vary. Some of the conditions that will affect the shelf life are temperature fluctuations and the type of solvent used to make the treatment. Gutta treatment made with *Formula 66* solvents tend to have a longer shelf life. Always test gutta treatment that has been stored. Adjust a thick solution by adding more solvent. If the gutta treatment has become a little thin, you can add gutta. But if it is very thin, it may have become ineffective so dispose of properly and make new.

Proper Disposal of Solvents

A solvent should not be poured down the drain or into the ground. It will contaminate the ground water. Instead, on a *dry* day let it evaporate **outside**. Evaporation is the process used by hazardous waste disposal facilities. To evaporate the solvent, pour it into an aluminum foil baking pan lined with crumpled up paper and let the solvent wick up the paper and evaporate. Solids (wax and rubber) will collect on the paper and in the pan. Once the pan is empty and the paper is **completely air-dry and solvent free** (fume free), it can be disposed of with other studio trash.

Editor's Note: *In the last issue's Tools and Techniques by Susan Louise Moyer, we forgot to include her information describing and explaining some of the images. Here's a quick recap:*

HOW TO MAKE A PALETTE OF H. DUPONT DYE-CAKES

1. Sample showing H.Dupont dye made into dye-cakes and tested on gutta treated silk.

After the treatment was applied to 12mm silk habotai and allowed to dry, the silk was coated with H.Dupont diluent (1 part to 10 parts water) and dried. The sample was steamed in a Stove Top Steamer for 1 hour 15 minutes and washed in synthropol. We found there was no bleeding of color nor browning of the silk. However, we did find that after a 3 hour steaming treated silk as well as untreated the silk tended to brown.



Walking on the Wild Side of Silks

by Liz Constable

You might think that bug collections are probably not the most fruitful site for silk artists to find inspiration? Think again, as I discovered when visiting *The Bobart Entomology Museum* at UC Davis over the summer.

As I walked towards the main entrance, three spectacular wild moth specimens caught my eye alongside several silk fabrics made, respectively, from the Tussah moth, the Tasar moth and the Eri Moth. Next to the wild moths was the rather dowdy-looking *Bombyx mori*...

And yet, of course, it is the dowdy mulberry-eating silkworm, *Bombyx Mori*, that we silk artists know best. And for two simple reasons. The cultivated sericulture of the *Bombyx Mori*, as opposed to cocoons of wild silk moths, accounts for the entire range of silks with varying textures that silk painters use. Indeed, entomologist and wild silk moth specialist, Richard Peigler (who'd donated the specimens) points out that about 99% of the silk produced worldwide come from cultivated silkworms.

Why do silk artists work almost exclusively with *Bombyx Mori*'s silks? It comes down to texture and color. The fine, smooth, and shiny texture of silk that takes the dye so well depends on unbroken silk filaments, and then *Bombyx Mori*'s silk thread is white. Only when the cocoons are boiled before the worms emerge do the threads remain intact. Left without human intervention, when the larvae



Tasar Moth

chew their way out of the cocoon, they break the filaments. Broken, or imperfect filaments, are the raw material of the wild silks.

The wild silks, by contrast, involve little or no human intervention in the early stages. The larvae break out of the cocoons to continue their life-cycle, and the resulting wild silk textures are slubby, or knobbly, and somewhat rough to the touch. While less suitable as ideal canvases for silk painting, the wild silks generate glorious

fabrics for clothing and upholstery. And they're often the silk fibers treasured by artists creating other forms of art using silk in various parts of the world.

For those reasons alone, it's worth meeting the wild moths. The wing designs of each of the three wild moths are in and of themselves inspiring beauties compared to *Bombyx Mori*'s simple appearance. And then, exploration of the wild silks prompts a pivoting of our attention to India, West Africa, China, and a fascinating journey into the interactions between cultural values and silk production.

The Eri wild moth [*Samia ricini*], whose wings are a soft mushroom or earthy brown color, turns out more accurately to be a domestic polyhybrid. It is often known "silk of the poor," and "peace" silk or *Ahimsa* (do no harm) silk. Why? The silkworms are not killed in the process, and for this reason, it is a silk preferred by Buddhists and by artists and designers engaged with the ethics of their artistic practice. Eri moths feed on a diet of castor plants, and the silk is closely associated with the Assam region of North India where its heft, strength and warmth make it a highly desirable fiber for clothing.



Tussah Silk Fibers



Eri Silk Moth



Tussah Silk Moth

By contrast, you'll find the strikingly intense yellow Tussah wild silk moth [*Antheraea Pernyi*] in China, in the provinces of Shandong (hence Shantung silk, and the Shantung silk dress), Liaoning and Hebei where it chows down on oak, and also in South Korea and Japan. The cocoons generate a beautiful golden fiber. Rough, but very soft, it's a silk fiber that some artists and fashion designers appreciate precisely for the textured softness, as opposed to smooth sheen, feel and look of domesticated silk.

Finally, the Tropical Tasar moth [*Antheraea Paphia*], whose wings are a delicate dusky pink with the striking high-contrast wingspots, lives in Eastern India where it has been integrated into silk production for thousands of years. Its diet consists of a mixture of Indian Dammer, White Murdal and Laurel trees. We probably know Tasar

Silk because it is the fabric that we see in the beautiful sarees and dupattas (long scarves) produced in South East Asia.

Why should we spend some time getting to know the wild silks for fashion and art? Because the colors of the wild silks are beautiful in and of themselves. As a result, they're often undyed, and not treated with the bleaches and chemicals used with cultivated silk. The filaments of wild silks are also more robust than those of cultivated silks. And in times when we're increasingly aware of the destructive impacts of harmful chemicals, bleaches, and salts used in the processing of cultivated silk both on the environment and on workers, wild silks may present an important alternative material for silk artists and fashion designers.



DYES

for every Silk Painter



Artist: Natasha Foucault

RED LABEL SILK COLOR

- Concentrated for economy, making these colors ideal for the professional silk painter
- Must be set with steam
- Available in 20 intermixable colors for an infinite palette!



Artist: Linda Goss

GREEN LABEL SILK COLOR

- Ready-to-use from the bottle, perfect for beginners
- Can be set by immersion in Permanent Dyeset Concentrate or with steam
- Available in 20 intermixable colors for an infinite palette!



Artist: MJ Korman

DYE-NA-FLOW

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Osei-Duro:

Pioneer in Using West African Block Printing and Batik Practices with Silk and Rayon to Create One-of-a-Kind Sustainable Fashion

by Liz Constable

For many of us, when we think about fabrics and fashion created by contemporary African designers, it's the confident, bold, and often sassy, wax-printed cotton fabrics come immediately to mind. Not silk. However, that's not to say that indigenous silk production and silk garments are absent from the continent of Africa. Far from it. But silk textiles from Africa have traditionally been woven silks, such as opulent and dignified Asante Kente cloth in Ghana or the Malagasy lamba (woven silk textile) or embroidered silks.

Enter *Osei-Duro* in 2011. Co-founded by Maryanne Mathias, an independent designer and marketing teacher based in Seattle, and Molly Keogh, a Los Angeles-based costume stylist, *Osei-Duro* marked a new direction for silk textiles and fashion in Ghana and worldwide. Both co-founders were struck by the vibrancy of clothing and fashion they found on the streets in Ghana's capital, Accra. As friends since high school, both shared a desire to establish an ethical and sustainable clothing business that would use traditional Ghanaian block-printing, batik, and dyeing practices but with silk, rather than cotton. In doing this, they are the first to create printed silk fashions in Ghana, and they conceived the project as an intercultural bridge, combining Ghanaian textile traditions with Western designs. The pair's emphasis on ethical and sustainable practices informs each stage of

Osei-Duro's process, from production to consumption.

What does that mean in practice, for Mathias and Keogh, to focus on ethical and sustainable practice through the trajectory from production to consumption? The concepts are embodied in the meaning of the company's name. In the Ghanaian Twi language, *Osei-Duro* means noble medicine, or noble magic, indicating that their company's clothing serves as a corrective, or healing, agent for some of the most damaging impacts of the "fast fashion" industry on the environment and its resources as I'll explain below.

For Mathias and Keogh, respect for the rights and aesthetics of local workers is paramount, and all of their clothing production is small-scale, relying on hand dyeing and block printing. They preserve the traditional Ghanaian techniques, but reinterpret the traditional aesthetic. With their batiks, they use the traditional method of cutting stamps from wood or foam and dipping them in wax to



***Osei-Duro* Easy Jumpsuit in Carmine.
Dolman Sleeves and Deep V at Front and Back Neck.**



Osei-Duro
Letsa Wrap Dress
 in Binary Black

form a resist before dyeing the cloth. However, the designs and prints they develop depart from traditional Ghanaian ones. Their success as one of the new sustainable fashion companies has not gone unnoticed, and they count among their customers, former First Lady, Michelle Obama, Ghanaian-born singer, songwriter, rapper and performance artist, JoJo Abot, and Nigerian portraitist, Toyin Odutola.

Their company is based in Accra, Ghana, Los Angeles and Vancouver. In Accra, their production center, they work with seamstresses from Nima, one of the poor, yet vibrant, neighborhoods because of the cultural and religious diversity brought by the large numbers of migrant workers from rural Ghana and neighboring communities who live there. Both Mathias and Keogh emphasize that “the politics of production” concerns them, and that they want their process to be “transparent.” In foregrounding transparency and respect for the aesthetics and working conditions of their local workers, Mathias and Keogh refuse participation in the circuits of “fast fashion” that have exploded over recent years. For example, an EU report finds that whereas in 2000, fashion companies produced two collections each year, but 2011, this number rose to five, with some companies, such as Zara producing

Osei-Duro Shaya Dress in Snakebite



fashion fuels is a matter of life and death for the planet and for the workers.

How does *Osei-Duro* propose alternatives to fast fashion's destructive impact? *Osei-Duro* works with both natural dyes (onion skins and indigo) and chemical dyes, and yet it is not only in their small-scale, hand-dyed, hand-printed production, and in their direct personal relationships with artisans that they push back against fast fashion's unsustainable practices. In producing clothing items that are stunningly beautiful, unusual and that integrate local artisans' techniques, they strive to produce individual and unique works of art that are enduring, that we want to wear again and again, and yet that also remain accessible and affordable. In doing this, they hope to offer an ethical alternative to fast fashion purchases, the habits that they recognize many consumers

twenty-four collections a year. "Fast fashion" exacts a terrifyingly high price in human lives and jeopardizes the survival of the environment, yet far too often those environmental and human catastrophes at the production location remain out of sight, or seem remote to any of us consuming fast fashion. How many of us realize that for a kilo of cotton, the water footprint is ten thousand to twenty thousand liters of water? Cotton production is extremely water intensive, and much of this production takes place in India and Pakistan, both countries with water shortages. As the 2012 Wrap Report findings show, the water, carbon, and waste footprint of the "fast fashion" industry is staggering, and the interruption of these practices and the consumption patterns fast



resort to only out of necessity because of their own restricted budgets. Moving away from fast fashion, *Osei-Duro's* clothing lines nudge us, as consumers, away from the habit of wearing a garment only a few times before moving on to our next purchase.

As the photos indicate, *Osei-Duro's* garments' simple, fluid lines bring an elegance of movement that is sometimes married to a delicate and graceful print, as in their top-selling snakebite print. In other garments, the bold colors and design provide a compelling and punchy counterpoint to the flowing movements, and yet in all of their clothes, loose fits, ease of movement, and comfort prevail in wrap dresses and skirts and Muumuus.

"To explore *Osei-Duro's* fashion, and to learn more about them, visit their website: oseiduro.com"





Osei-Duro Silk Slip Dress in Snakebite



Osei-Duro Winona Wrap Skirt in Gauzy Daffs





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OSEI-DURO KATHAROS DRESS IN CARMINE

