

**A free project, compliments of...**

# Two Creative Studios

*getting started with*

## **Soy Wax Batik** by Sue Bleiweiss

All information provided herein is done so in good faith. Two Creative Studios takes no responsibility for problems or issues encountered by the reader when using any of this information. Always make sure you take appropriate health and safety precautions when working with your supplies and equipment.

**NOTE:** Please use common sense when working with hot wax! Do not work near an open flame. Do not leave melted wax unattended. Keep pets and children away from the area. Wear appropriate clothing and make sure that your hair and shirt sleeves are tied back and secured. Work in a well ventilated area, preferably outside. Do not let any water come in contact with the hot wax or it will splatter and never pour water on a wax fire. Keep a fire extinguisher or bucket of sand nearby in case of fire.

I've always been intrigued with batik but was reluctant to try it because of the trouble of being able to get the wax out of the fabric using dry cleaning. Then I read about using soy wax as an alternative to traditional batik wax (a mixture of paraffin and beeswax) and decided to try it. I have been pleasantly surprised with the results that I've gotten working with soy wax so I thought I'd put together a project sheet to help others who want to try working with it but aren't sure where to start.

One of the advantages to working with soy wax is that it is water soluble, meaning that it dissolves in water. This makes it easy to remove from the fabric; however, it does post one big disadvantage when compared to working with traditional batik wax and that is that it makes it not suitable for immersion dye methods. However, I have had great success with painting dye directly onto the waxed surface and have also used Jacquard Dye-Na-Flow to paint the fabric. Both methods work very well; however, the procion dyes have the advantage of not needing to be heat set before they are washed, which means you can just soak the wax off without having to iron the fabric to heat set the paint first.

### **Choose your fabric**

In order for the wax to work as an effective resist it



must penetrate through the fibers of the fabric. This makes cotton, silk, linen and other lightweight fabrics a good choice for soy wax batik. I've experimented a bit with silk velvet and if you want to use it I recommend that you apply the wax generously on the wrong side and using thin lines.

### **Prepare your fabric**

If you are planning on painting your fabrics using procion dyes then you'll need to soak your fabric in a solution of soda ash and water first. To do this, dissolve ¼ cup of soda ash in a bucket filled with two to three gallons of warm water. Soak your fabric in the soda ash/water solution for at least 20 minutes then remove it, squeeze the excess water out and hang it to dry (do not dry it in the dryer). When it's dry it is ready to use.

If you are planning on painting your fabrics with paint, such as Jacquard Dye-Na-Flow paint, then it is not necessary to soak your fabric in soda ash water.

## Melt the wax

It's very important not to overheat the wax!



At high temperatures the wax will put out hazardous vapors and ignite. Do not melt your wax over an open flame such as a gas or propane burner. You should melt your wax in a crock-pot or an electric skillet that has a temperature control. Always use the lowest amount of heat possible to melt the wax. Soy wax in flake form melts between 130F-150F, so it's not necessary to use high heat. Your wax should never ever get hot enough to bubble or smoke. I melt my soy wax in an inexpensive electric skillet that I bought for \$20 at a local department store.

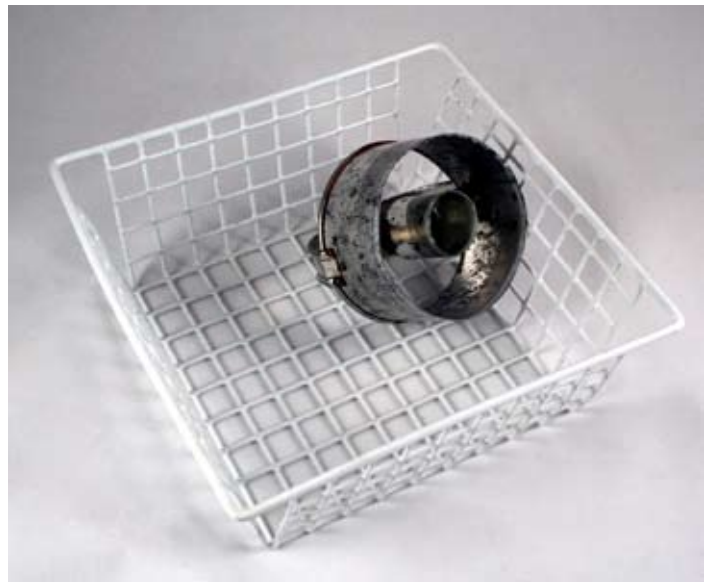


I pour in some of the soy wax flakes, turn the temperature control to the lowest setting and it melts the wax very quickly. You can see in the previous photo I let the leftover wax cool and harden in the skillet when I'm done. When I'm ready to do more batik work, I will just pour in some additional soy wax flakes and re-melt the hardened wax left in the skillet.

## Stamping with wax

I found that I get better results when I work on a padded surface. Place a couple of old towels on your worktable and cover them with a piece of plastic. Place your fabric on top of the plastic and you're ready to start stamping.

You can use any tool you like to stamp wax onto your fabric as long as it can take being exposed to the heat of the wax. Old cookie cutters, found objects such as wire baskets, old cooking tools such as potato mashers can be used.



If you can't find anything to stamp with then you can simply brush the wax onto the fabric with a paintbrush.

**TIP**

When working with metal objects for stamping, hold them in the wax for a few moments to allow them to warm so that the wax doesn't cool on them too fast when you pull them out of the wax.

Place the item you want to stamp with into the wax. Lift it straight out of the wax letting the excess drip off and then immediately press it onto the fabric.

Hold it against the fabric for a few seconds to make sure that the wax penetrates through the fabric. Then lift it straight up off the fabric.



When you have finished stamping the fabric wait until the wax has completely cooled before you start painting.

**TIP**

Make sure that you apply enough wax to the fabric so that it penetrates through to the other side. Otherwise when you start painting the color may migrate to other areas of the fabric or flow underneath the wax itself.

### Adding color with paint

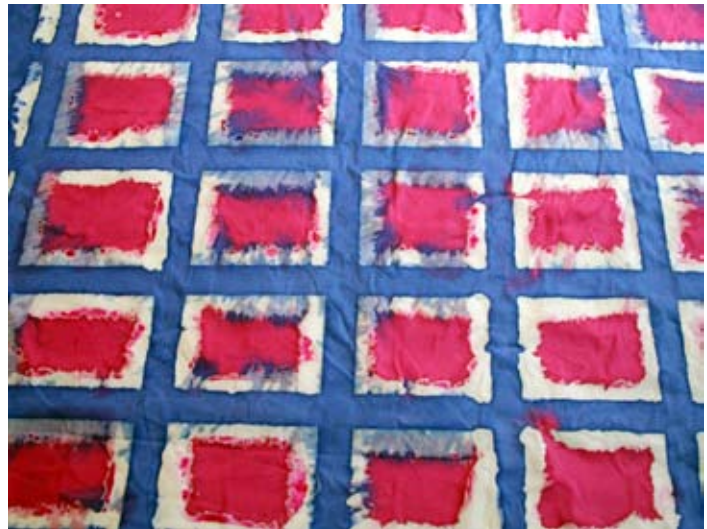
I like to use Jacquard Dye-Na-Flow to paint my waxed fabrics. It's thin like a dye and flows onto the surface of the fabric very nicely. Simply dip your paintbrush into the paint and brush it across the surface like I did for this piece:



Or if you prefer you can apply the colors in specific areas like I did in this piece:



For this next piece I created a grid on the fabric using some painters tape. And then used a paintbrush to brush the wax onto the edges of the tape onto the fabric. Once the wax had cooled I removed the tape and then painted the fabric.



When you are finished painting, leave the fabric to dry completely before proceeding to the next step. When it has dried completely you'll need to heat set the paint before you can wash your fabric.

### Heat setting the paint

Turn on your iron and place some sheets of newsprint on your ironing surface. Place your fabric on top and cover it with a piece of newsprint. Run the iron across the surface of the newsprint.



As the heat penetrates through the layers, the wax will melt and the newsprint will absorb it. Depending on how much wax you've used and how large your piece is this process may take a while. As the newsprint becomes saturated with wax, replace it with fresh sheets and continue ironing. It's important to make sure that you spend a good amount of time ironing the fabric because not only are you removing the wax but you are also setting the paint. If you don't spend enough time on this step then you may wash out some of the color.

Once you are finished with the ironing step, your fabric is ready to be washed. There may be some residual wax left on the surface of the fabric so it's a good idea to rinse the fabric first in some warm water to help dissolve any leftover wax. I like to just rinse the fabric with some warm water and then toss it in the washer and wash it with a hot water setting and some regular laundry detergent. It may take more than one wash cycle to completely remove all the leftover wax from the fabric.



### Adding color with dye

If you've stamped your wax onto fabric that was presoaked in a solution of soda ash and water then you can use procion dyes to paint your fabric. Mix your dye and then use a paintbrush to paint the dye onto the fabric. Once I've painted the dye onto the surface of the fabric, I cover it with a piece of plastic so that it stays wet and the fabric doesn't dry out too quickly. After four or five hours, I remove the plastic and then rinse the fabric in warm water to dissolve the wax. Then the fabric is washed in a hot water setting and some regular laundry detergent to remove any residual wax. It may take more than one wash cycle to completely remove all the leftover wax from the fabric.

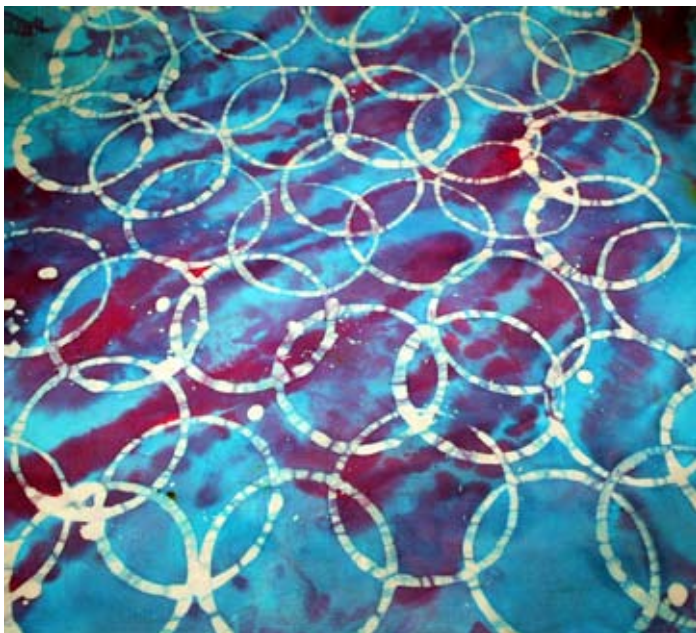
Some examples of soy wax batik fabrics:



Silk scarf – Wax applied with a tjanting and painted with Dye-Na-Flow



Silk fabric – Soy wax applied with a paint brush, painted with procion dye



Cotton fabric – Soy wax applied with the rim of a glass, painted with procion dye

## Resources for supplies

Dharma Trading – [www.dharmatrading.com](http://www.dharmatrading.com)  
ProChem – [www.prochemicalanddye.com](http://www.prochemicalanddye.com)

## Further reading

*Batik using Soy Wax* – an online pdf information sheet by Pro Chemical & Dye can be found on their web site at: <http://www.prochemical.com/directions>

*Soy Wax: An Alternative Resist* by Dorothy Bunny Bowen – In June 2005 Dorothy presented a paper at the World Batik Conference in Boston on her experiments using soy wax as a resist. You can find the paper on her web site here: <http://www.db-bowen.com/soywx/soywx.htm>

### *Soy Wax Material Safety Data Sheet:*

<http://www.prochemical.com/MaterialSafety/Waxes/Soy%20Wax.pdf>

*Create Your Own Hand-Printed Cloth* by Rayna Gillman; ISBN 9781571204394

You'll find some great information about working with soy wax in chapter 7 of this book.

*Creative Batik* by Rosi Robinson; ISBN 9780855328924

Although this book is written for working with traditional batik wax and not soy wax, it has some wonderful techniques that can be used with soy wax as well.