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Advanced Textile Techniques

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Block-Printing on Fabric

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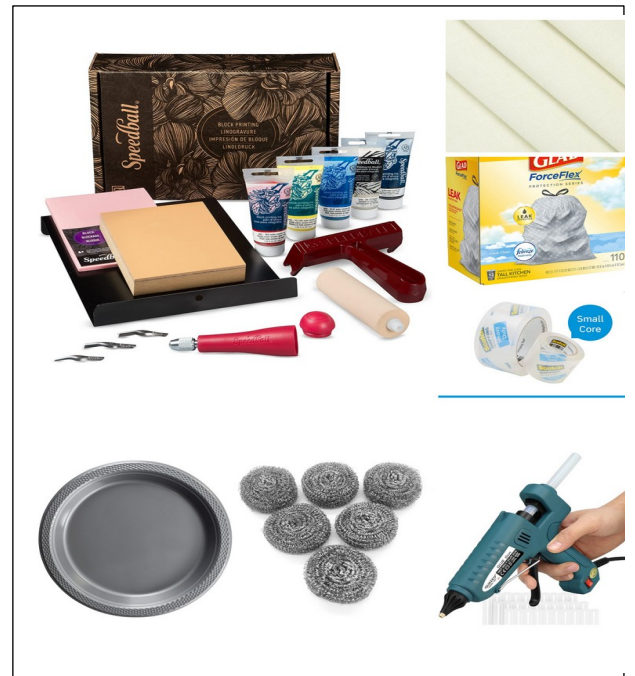
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Tutorial

In this project, I will show you how to transform a simple white fabric into a beautiful piece that could be converted into a useful object by printing it with your own motif. You will learn what are the materials you need, what are the steps to follow and tips that would make it a lot easier for you when block printing.

Materials

- A yard of white cotton fabric
- A Speedball deluxe block-printing kit which comes with a carving block, cutters, fabric ink, inking plate and much more.
- Garbage bags
- Tape
- Scissors
- Plastic plate
- A stainless-steel scrubber
- A hot glue gun and glue stick



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Step 1: Finding your design

The first thing you do is to find the design you want to print on your fabric to create your very own motif. In my case, I chose flowers and since I did not have a transferable paper on hand; I used a pen and a pencil to transfer it to the rubber block. I did this by going through the lines of the flowers several times until I got the desired amount of ink from the pen that when I turn the paper over, the pen ink would stay at the rubber block. Then, I used a pencil to press the sheet by going horizontally back and forth from one side to the other, allowing me to transfer the design. Last, I went back with a pencil to mark the transferred lines of the design right on the rubber block. So, it would be easy for me when carving it, but you can skip these steps if you have transferal paper or if you are drawing your own design straight onto your block.



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Step 2: Carving your block

After you got your design right onto your rubber block, you will proceed to carve it. Use any of the cutters that you feel comfortable to work with and the one that best works with your design to create clean lines and get a neat result. I recommend you start with the straight lines first. That way you can gain confidence with the cutter following with the curves and details. You can also add texture on your design, that way your motif gets more visual interest. In my case, I added a lot of texture to the leaves, petals, and stems. After you have carved your motif, you can opt to cut out the shape of your motif so there is no excess of the rectangle rubber block. That way, it would look like your motif is floating in the background.



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Step 3: Setting up the printing space

To prevent staining the surface where you are going to work, you must protect it with anything you have on hand. In my case, I used garbage bags to cover my table up and tape it down to keep them safe but can use a plastic drop cloth or a plastic shower curtain if you do not want to use garbage bags. Also, tape down both the cover, and the fabric because you do not want them to move around and ruin your design when printing it.

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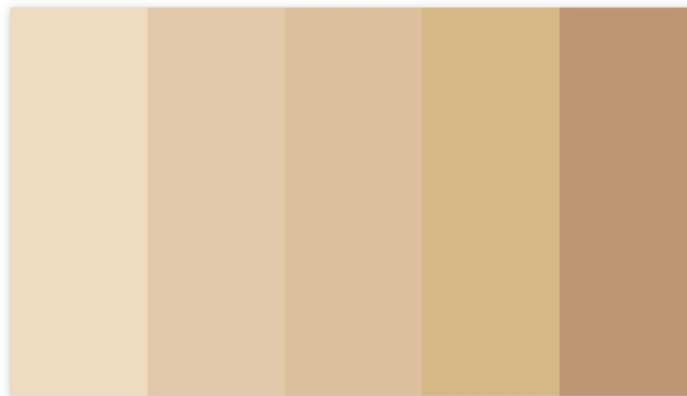
Step 4: Creating a sub-pattern

After I covered my printing space, I placed the piece of fabric on top, tape it down, and started to create my sub-pattern. You can create your sub-pattern with anything you have on hand by printing the fabric with a shape or texture before you print your main motif. So, to create my sub-pattern, I first mixed up the colors I wanted which were black, red, white, and yellow until I got what I was looking for, which was this beautiful and neutral peanut butter tone.

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Peanut Butter Color Palette



- ❖ I used a stainless-steel scrubber to give texture to my fabric, but you can use any household item you have on hand and any color you like to get these done. Be creative!

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Step 5: Testing out your motif

Printing your motif is the most significant part of the process because here is when the magic begins. After giving your fabric texture and letting it dry, it is important that you test out your motif to see if it would look like the way you have planned to be. In my case, I had to go back with the cutter because my texture lines were not deep enough, and my motif color was very flat. So, I recommend you use printing paper to test it out until you got what you aim for.



Step 6: Lay outing your motif

Now that you have tested your motif, decide where on the fabric you want your design and what pattern layouts you are going to use. In my case, I decided that the pattern layout I wanted to use was the straight one. So, I marked down with a ruler where I wanted my motif to be located to get a better use of the space and to be proportioned.



Step 7: Printing your motif

Now that you have decided where you want them to be, you can start printing your fabric. You must be careful when inking your motif because if it gets too much ink, you may ruin your print. So, try to add a uniform layer of the ink by transferring it in one direction. Do not make my mistake of transferring the ink in all directions because then it would go straight into your deep carved lines and that will affect your design.



- ❖ When printing your motif, make some pressure on it with the palm of your hands so your ink will stick better to your fabric.

Step 7: Colorways

In this part of the process, you can create colorways which is to produce the exact pattern with different colors, meaning that you can use as many colors as you would like, but using the exact pattern. In my design, I created two colorways, but a bit different because I used black color on my biggest motif for my entire fabric, and red and blue for my second motif.



Final product

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After printing your fabric, you should have a result similar to this one. It is curious to see how with a simple paint and a pattern, you can transform any fabric you have on hand just by inking a motif and putting your creativity to blow.



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I found this project to be easy and fun. I never thought that with so few materials we can create so many things, nor did I think that behind printing there were so many details that have to be considered when doing these techniques. I am very glad that in this course I have been able to learn what are the processes that a fabric must go through before being printed. At this point, block-printing has been one of the projects that has inspired me the most throughout my journey as student because I have thought about how amazing the people who are dedicated to carrying out these techniques and everything that entails are. This project turned out much better than I imagined, and I plan to continue doing it, not only to alter a piece of clothing but also to change my household decorations such as pillows, comforters, curtains, or even to create canvas frames. If I had known about these techniques three years ago, I would have saved a lot of money on decorating my home. Overall, block printing has been a great experience and I wish more people know about it as they can do it themselves with no prior skills, at cheap prices and just putting down a bit of effort and dedication.

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