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Research Dye Project

During the natural dye process I was able to achieve a beautiful earth toned color on a white cotton shirt. Not only was this process fascinating but witness but informative on the power of natural dyes. Through this experiment, I learned that this dyeing technique is an environmentally friendly alternative to chemical based products. Along with tea dyeing I implemented the Shibori method which is a very well known form of resist-dyeing. This strategy consists of manipulating fabric to create various shapes and patterns. Although Shibori is popular for using indigo dye, other colors can be utilized to produce unique designs.

Originating in ancient China, herbal teas have been used to naturally pigment cotton and other fabrics for decades. Just as today, tea dyeing was popular due its natural and sustainable approach. The variety of different teas give you an array of color options to choose from. In the Tea Party experiment I used black tea which resulted in a soft brown shade. Other teas used for this dyeing technique could include lavender, matcha, or turmeric. During the Tang Dynasty in 618-907 which acted as the expansion of Chinese arts and culture, tea dyeing became increasingly more popular (Owyong, 2019). This creative trend would last through the Song and Yuan Dynasty and is still being practiced today. Several appreciated the art of tea dyeing as it was a key component in Chinese culture for its versatility and natural appeal. Tea dyeing was practiced at Chinese cultural festivals and used on several textiles such as fabric, ribbon, and yarn.

Dyeing pure cotton material with black tea resulted in a natural brown color with splashes of a nude tint. These earth tones directly correlate with my oneness with nature and inspiration from former Yeezy collections. This brown color emphasizes my personal aesthetic and eagerness to connect with and preserve mother nature. Yeezy's environmental initiatives align with my thoughts on sustainable fashion and the state of our planet. In an interview with Mashable.com, the multi-billion dollar company discussed the responsibility of having less impact with the dyes used by the brand (Yeo, 2019). The Shibori tea dyeing technique used in Tea Party was a thoughtful depiction of eco-friendly practices within the fashion industry. I absolutely love to wear these earth tones because it represents the color palette that resonates with me the most. This palette has also been influenced by modern fashion houses such as Skims and The Row.

The Shibori tea dyeing process consisted of five important steps.

Step 1: Select 100% cotton material and the type of tea used for natural pigmentation.

- Boil 2 cups of water and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt.
- Steep 10 bags of black tea for 15 minutes.

Step 2: Begin the Shibori process by folding your cotton material accordion style and banding it together with rubber bands.

- Each rubber band should be placed approximately an inch apart, assuring they are spaced equally.

Step 3: Remove black tea bags and submerge cotton fabric into liquid mixture.

Step 4: Ensure that your cotton material is completely covered.

- Allow the fabric to absorb black tea mixture into fibers for at least 30 minutes (the longer the fabric soaks, the more saturated the color will be.)

Step 5: Remove textiles from the natural tea dye.

- Rinse excess liquid under cold water until it runs clear.
- Let fabric dry in a well ventilated area for 6-8 hours.

After completing this project, I observed the transformation of color through organic alteration using the natural dyeing process. The color evolved from a pure white to a rich herbal brown tone. We can accredit this permanent dye to tannins that are found in the black tea. Tannins can be defined as water-soluble polyphenols that bond fibers together (Staff, 2023). I found that the black tea penetrated the fibers quickly yielding unique results in 30 minutes. Overall in conclusion, this sustainable dyeing technique paired with the Shibori method resulted in a phenomenal final product. Tea party speaks to how much fun I had creating this fashion-forward, eco-friendly, cotton t-shirt. This project allowed me to design something that symbolizes my simple, soft and minimalist aesthetic.

References

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