

Stencil Brush Techniques

Beyond stenciling

Naturally, the brush is great for stenciling, but that is just one of many uses for your stencil brushes. Have you ever been underway on a project, and couldn't find the "perfect" fabric for the border or binding, coordinating fabric for a garment, or felt that certain sections of a quilt design just weren't right? Stencil brushes can be used to alter the color of a fabric, add subtle texture or mimic hand dyed fabric--all without the use of a stencil.

Change Background Color



Original Background



After color change



Here's how: The bamboo leaves were stenciled on a pink/orange batik with a paintstik stencil brush, but I wanted more blue in the background. I applied iridescent turquoise paintstik color to my standard stencil brush and brushed directly over the entire fabric (including the stencil leaves) in a circular motion. Larger brushes work best, either 1/2" or 5/8" size. This process turned the background shades of blue and minimized the pink. The technique is similar to applying eyeshadow -- just build up layers until you get the right effect.

Add Subtle Texture



Solid black background



Soft, subtle texture

Here's How: The Ariga star (instructions in my StarBuilder Inspirations book) was fused directly on a solid black fabric, but I wanted more dimension and texture for the background. Rubbing directly on the fabric with a paintstik caused strong colors and texture that fought with the star--not pleasing to my eye. The solution was to achieve a much softer effect by placing texture under the fabric, **applying paint to a paintstik stencil brush** (iridescent purple, gold and turquoise used to coordinate with the star colors) , and **brushing directly on the fabric**.

The only difference between the two illustrations below is one uses direct application with the paintstik and the other uses a brush:



Tips: I've found that small, asymmetrical textures work well for this purpose. Here, I've used one of the plates from the Animal Skin set of rubbing plates. Yes, I know some of you react to the name of Animal Skins with "eewhew", but giraffe skin, snake skin, and elephant skin textures are excellent. As always, I use a Grip n' Grip no slip mat to help keep my plates from slipping.

Mimic Hand dyed Look



White silk scarf transformed

Here's how: This sample began as a plain white silk scarf. First, I gently brushed iridescent turquoise paintstik color over the fabric with standard stencil brushes. Then, I placed my Fantasy Script under the fabric and did another layer of soft rubbings with iridescent purple to create a hand dyed look.

Tips: Dedicate a brush to each color (otherwise, you will get mud). Make sure the work surface is completely free of threads, cat hair, paint crumbs, etc -- or these objects will show up as texture on the fabric.

Caring for your tools

Although there are a number of ways to clean brushes (soap and water, solvents, degreasers), my favorite method is to use the Cedar Canyon Textiles Brush Soap ([link to stencil_bushes](#)). This product is made specifically to clean oil paint from brushes, works great for getting paint out from under fingernails, and even removes paintstik stains from clothing.

Cleaning brushes requires applying the cleaning agent to the brush, and rubbing against a rough surface--the sink trap is handy for this purpose. Rinse, and continue the process until the water runs clear.

Recently, I discovered that using a grubby rubbing plate or stamp as the rough surface cleans both items simultaneously, which speeds up this chore.



Simultaneous cleaning of brush and textures.

