

# Acrylics with a Textile Sensibility

Claire Benn, February 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**Venue:** InStitches, Eversley, nr Wokingham

**Experience Level:** suitable for all levels

## OVERVIEW

The key aim of the workshop is to develop understanding of the properties of acrylic mediums and paints in specific relation to their use with textiles, with an option to explore raw earth pigments with acrylic medium. As such, the structure of this workshop will focus on sampling to enable you to experience a wide variety of applications and approaches and start understanding the media.

We'll explore:

- the range of available mediums, their key differences and applications.
- development of a colour chart.
- working on raw and primed cloth.
- Working on damp & dry cloth
- the use of clear mediums to increase the transparency of the paint colour, create tints and glazes.., and to save money.
- the difference and impact of opaque vs transparent/translucent colours.
- the use of water to dilute both consistency and depth of colour in order to create washes or very liquid paints.
- underpainting in order to generate 'life' in a layered surface.
- creation of faux discharge effects.
- the use of fluid and gel mediums as glues in order to laminate tissue paper, thread, scrim and/or art papers to cloth to generate surface texture.
- the impact of paint on tissue paper which has been stitched to cloth and torn prior to painting.
- applying paint to stitch.
- general use of the media; watercolour-type washes, scraping, impasto, sgraffito/lifting off, printing, mono-printing, painting, drawing and other direct surface applications.

**If you have any questions about the workshop content or supplies, please email Claire at [cb@clairebenn.com](mailto:cb@clairebenn.com). For questions on the venue, accommodation or dietary requirements, please contact InStitches: [hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk](mailto:hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk)**

**IMPORTANT NOTE: the use of acrylic media will stiffen the hand of the cloth to a varying degree according to the paint load.** Whilst it is still stitch-able (by hand or by machine), it will not be suitable for classic piecing techniques, although it can be cut or torn and stitched together by overlapping as opposed to classic seaming.

## WORKSHOP HOURS

Monday; arrive for a 9.30am start, close at 5.00pm.

Tuesday to Thursday: 9am to 5pm.

Friday: 9am to 4pm.

## SUPPLIES ON-SITE

All media is included in the workshop fee and will include use of the following media and materials:

- **Acrylic mediums** (Fluid Matte & Soft Gel Matte)
- **Acrylic paints:** a selection of hi-flow and fluid colours, with some colours available in heavy body/soft gel consistency.
- **Raw Earth Pigments:** a selection to sample.
- **Paper:** acid-free tissue paper and a small selection of art papers.
- **Misc:** jute, cotton plasterers' tape, a 40 x 40cm linen and interfacing sample.
- **Tools:** a selection of tools is available at the studio, including some thermofax screens.
- **Handouts:** handouts will be provided but you'll need to take notes of your own process explorations.

## CLOTH

Although acrylic paints and mediums can be used on almost any kind of cloth, we'll be using 7.5oz cotton canvas as it copes with the weight of the media and is suitable for all the processes we'll be covering. You'll need:

5m of 7.5oz cotton canvas, 2m wide, Ref. CC31A, available from Whaleys of Bradford ([www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk](http://www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk)).

OR

If you live near the studio, you can buy and collect the canvas from InStitches at £7.00/m. If you choose this option, please do not leave it until the last minute because you will still need to take it home for scouring! We can also sell you a small quantity of soda ash for the scouring process.

To buy canvas and soda ash please email Hazel:

[hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk](mailto:hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk)

### **The canvas needs to be scoured before the workshop, as follows:**

- Canvas is quite heavy so don't over-do things in your machine – if the machine is stuffed too tightly, the cloth won't be able to move freely and the spin cycle may be affected. Scour one of the 2m lengths, and then the remaining 2m and 1m lengths on a second cycle.  
Close the door and then...
- Dissolve 150-200ml of soda ash (sodium carbonate) in some warm (not cold, not hot) water and pour this into the detergent dispenser. Sodium carbonate is available from swimming pool suppliers. DO NOT use household washing soda. If you cannot obtain sodium carbonate, just use detergent.
- Add a small squirt of hand-wash detergent into the dispenser.
- Wash at 60°C or hotter, but not cooler.

### **THREAD & SEWING SUPPLIES**

Please bring:

- A hank of medium-weight thread in white, cream or a neutral colour.
- A sewing kit including a variety of needles, a thimble if you like to use one, scissors and a stitch-ripper.

### **PLASTIC**

Many processes will be done on top of smooth, un-creased sheet plastic which must be of a size to fit the tables, so 1-1.25m x 2-2.5m. You will need at least 2 pieces and your options include:

- Buy from InStitches on the day: the studio have stocks of un-creased, smooth sheet plastic at 1m wide (it's actually 2m wide with a crease down the middle and costs £4.50/m). You'll need 2.5m @ £4.50/m (then you can cut it in half down the crease). Please let InStitches know you want this option:  
[hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk](mailto:hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk)
- PVC tablecloth; in plain or clear. John Lewis sells clear PVC by the metre at £6pm. Product code is 67420801. Or simply google PVC by the metre and you'll find plenty of suppliers online (probably cheaper) – look for 300-400micron weight. Buy 4.5-5m. Ask for it to be delivered rolled and store it rolled to avoid creases.

### **OTHER SUPPLIES**

#### **General Supplies**

- **Tools:** tools will be available, but if you have specific tools you wish to use, then bring them and make sure you've labelled them with your name.
- **Thermofax screens:** thermofax use will not be the focus of the class, but if you have them, you can opt bring no more than three thermofaxes for accent images or to create texture.

- One roll of 1" and one roll of 2" masking tape.
- **A dropcloth:** please bring a sturdy dropcloth: drill cotton, denim or something similar. Be aware that the dropcloth will stiffen up in places due to the use of polymer media. Your dropcloth needs to measure 1.25m x 2.25m, once scoured and shrunk. InStitches can supply drop cloth cotton on-site, £6/m, please let InStitches know by email [hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk](mailto:hazel@institchestextilecourses.co.uk) or you can order from Whaleys (Cotton Drill Loomstate, Ref CC12, see previous page)
- Disposable gloves if you don't like getting paint on your hands/nails.
- 1 x box of ball-headed or T pins.
- A hairdryer (in case we need drying assistance in poor weather).
- 4 bricks or large-ish rocks; if we have the opportunity to dry outside, you'll use these to weigh down the plastic sheets. Just leave them in the boot of your car. If you're not travelling by car, don't worry – we have some at the studio!
- Cloth apron (or wear the equivalent of gardening/decorating clothes).
- Notebook and pen/pencil.
- 1 x black Sharpie to label your samples.
- Pen and pencil.
- Comfortable, rubber-soled shoes (concrete floor).
- A camera as it's useful to record work-in-progress.
- An ipod and headphones if you like to work to music.

And finally, before coming to the workshop please prepare and bring the following samples:

### **1. Hand stitch for over-painting with soft gel/heavy body paint:**

- ⇒ Tear two pieces of the 7.5oz cotton canvas (or linen if you prefer) to a size of 30cm square and iron it flat.
- ⇒ Tack them together.
- ⇒ Choose a natural fibre, thread (something like a Perlé 12 or 2-3 ply linen) in toning (but not perfectly matching!) colour.
- ⇒ Hand stitch the piece in any way you want to; you don't have to smother the entire surface (e.g. avoid dense satin stitch) but don't be lazy about the amount of stitch. Couching, ladder stitch, running/kantha stitch, herringbone are all good stitch types and don't be afraid to use several different stitches as you'll then be able to see the effect paint has on different types of stitch. Hand stitching takes time, so treat this as an evening meditative activity and start well in advance of the class as there won't be time to do this during workshop hours.
- ⇒ Remove the tacking stitches once finished.
- ⇒ The piece will be over-painted with a white or pale neutral acrylic paint on the Friday morning of the workshop.
- ⇒ If you wish, prepare up to and no more than three hand-stitch samples in advance, but one will be enough if you're not fond of hand stitching!

## 2. Hand stitch for over-painting with very fluid paint:

- ⇒ Tear a 10cm strip of 7.5oz cotton canvas or linen; tear from selvedge to selvedge to get a long length that will act as a continuous sample.
- ⇒ Assemble a selection of natural fibre stitching threads; 30 weight machine thread, Perlé 12 or 2-3 ply linen thread in toning (but not perfectly matching!) colours.
- ⇒ Working across the short width, hand stitch about 20cm of the length in any way you want to; couching, ladder stitch, running/kantha stitch, herringbone or any kind of stitch that appeals to you.., and don't be afraid to use several different stitches as you'll then be able to see the effect liquid paint has on different types of stitch. Again, do this in advance of the workshop or in the evenings during the workshop as there won't be time to do this during workshop hours. Paint will be applied on Thursday afternoon, so they need to be finished by then!
- ⇒ The piece will be over-painted with your choice of liquid paint.
- ⇒ Working a long length will give you a continuous sample to try out more stitches in the future.

## 3. Machine straight stitch as a resist:

- ⇒ Stabilise a 30cm piece of your chosen fabric with medium weight fusible interfacing.
- ⇒ Set your machine to the **longest straight stitch length** (no fancy stitches) choose one of the following:
  - load the bobbin and the top with a 25-30 weight machine thread.
  - load the bobbin with something like a Perlé 12 weight of cotton and stitch the sample interfacing side up, so the bobbin thread is on the right side.
  - choose to use a suitable weight of embroidery thread and a top-stitch needle, and 25-30 machine-weight in the bobbin.
- ⇒ Machine stitch the sample in any way you like but PLEASE only use straight stitch set to the longest stitch length. You'll be applying paint to this sample, letting it dry and removing the stitches, so don't go too crazy or the stitches are impossible to remove!
- ⇒ If you don't have a machine or don't like machine stitch, then do this by hand; couching or backstitch.

## 4. Machine stitch using a tailor tack foot.., if you have one

- ⇒ This applies if - and only if - you have a tailor tack foot.
- ⇒ Stabilise a 30cm piece of your chosen fabric with medium weight fusible interfacing.
- ⇒ Load the machine with a 30-weight machine thread, top and in the bobbin. Choose a thread that tones with the fabric you're using.

- ⇒ Set the machine to the widest zig-zag stitch, set close together, and stitch the stabilised piece of cloth.
- ⇒ We will be applying paint to these stitches and leaving them in rather than removing them.

### **SUMMARY OF SUPPLIER INFORMATION**

- **Whaleys of Bradford:** [www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk](http://www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk): 7.5 oz cotton canvas (ref CC31A), cotton drill loomstate (ref CC12).
- **Ikea** for medium weight, unbleached linen at a very low price but stock levels vary hugely. This is an option as the canvas is a cheaper option for samples.
- **Online:** do look for linen mail-order but be aware that sometimes, linen may not be linen but a cotton look-alike. A very cheap price usually indicates it's not 100% linen. Expect to pay between £10-£18 pm.
- **Paintbox Threads:** [www.paintboxthreads.co.uk](http://www.paintboxthreads.co.uk): hand dyed silk and cotton Perlé 12 thread. Ready-for dyeing hanks, some cloth.
- **Namolio:** go to [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) and look for Namolio (shop). Excellent range of linen threads and other nice stuff. Based in Bristol.