

## Breakdown Your Palette

Thank you for signing up to the workshop. I have tried to keep the requirements list as short as possible but there are some things you will need to prepare and bring with you.

### Cotton Fabric

We are going to be using Procion MX dyes which will only work on cellulose fibres such as cotton, viscose, linen or hemp and on silk which is a protein fibre. Procion dyes do colour wool but often only yield pale results. They do not work on polyester and will give very poor results on polyester / cotton blends. I recommend that you use a medium weight cotton fabric for the majority of the class but consider sampling fabrics if you have time.

The amount of fabric needed for the class will depend on how quickly you work, the scale you choose to work at and, because we have to dry our screens before printing, the weather. You should expect to print a minimum of 8 metres of pre-soda soaked and dried fabric. You will also be offered the option of hand dyeing fabric in colours that match your printed fabric. Please bring six fat quarters (approx. 50cm x 50cm) of fabric that has not been soda soaked if you wish to do this.

Whilst I understand that fabric is expensive please do not be tempted to use cheap cotton sheets or a 'bargain' – we want fabric that takes colour beautifully and can be put through more than one printing or dyeing process.

I recommend that you look for a white cotton that is sold as 'prepared for dye (PFD)' or silk from a supplier that supplies to dyers and printers. Many local quilt shops now stock PFD cottons or you can buy online:

- <https://www.empressmills.co.uk/>
- <https://www.doughtysonline.co.uk/>
- <https://www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk/>
- <https://www.rainbowsilks.co.uk/index.cfm>

Alternatively, you can buy fabric and soda-soaked fabric from me. I stock two types of cotton. You can order unsoda soaked fabric from Leah's website:

- Cotton Poplin Delphina (PFD) 148cm / 58inches wide = £9.50 per metre.
- Plain White Cotton (PFD) 240cm / 95inches wide = £8.50 per metre.

Or if you are local to the InStitches studio you can buy and collect, please let [Hazel](#) know

- Cotton Delphina (PFD) 148cm / 58inches wide = £9.50 per metre
- Optical white shrunk cotton (PFD) 150cm/ 59inches wide = £7.50 per metre

Or you can purchase soda soaked and dried fabric from Leah during the workshop.

- Pre-soda soaked pieces approximately 75cm x 150cm = £8.00.
- Pre-soda soaked pieces approximately 75cm x 150cm = £5.50.

The plain white cotton is perfect for beginners. It can be used for hand or machine stitching. The poplin Delphina is the fabric I use in my own art. It has a slight lustre that gives really vibrant colour but, because it is tightly woven, it is not suitable for hand stitching.

Even with PFD fabrics it is worth checking how easily they absorb a drop of water – water should be absorbed instantly. If in doubt always pre-wash your fabric at 60°C (40°C for silk) with detergent to remove any dressings or residues from the manufacturing process before you soda soak the fabric.

You will need to pre-soda soak and dry all your fabric before the workshop as I can't guarantee that fabric can be soda soaked during the workshop.

Soda fixes the dye so is really important. I recommend that you use soda ash but you can use washing soda crystals from the supermarket provided the soda crystals do not contain chlorine or optical brightening agents. You can buy soda ash online from my webshop or from other suppliers:

- <https://www.leahhiggins.co.uk/shop/soda-ash-300g>
- <https://www.colourcraftltd.com/fabric-art/fabric-dyes?cat=332>
- <http://www.kemtex.co.uk/dyes.html>

Prepare your soda solution by mixing 15 rounded tablespoons or approximately 250ml of soda ash (or 20 rounded tablespoons of soda crystals) in 5 litres of lukewarm water in a bucket. ALWAYS WEAR A FACE MASK AND GLOVES WHEN HANDLING SODA ASH IN POWDER FORM. ALWAYS WEAR GLOVES WHEN USING SODA SOLUTION.

- Immerse a couple of pieces of fabric in the solution, agitate well and leave for at least 15 minutes. Don't leave silk any longer than necessary.
- Wearing your gloves remove the fabric from the solution, squeeze out as much water as possible then hang the fabric outside to drip dry.
- DO NOT TUMBLE DRY – soda is very caustic and the powder released by tumble drying is harmful.
- DO NOT IRON – soda soaked fabric will also scorch very easily if ironed. It also releases soda into the air.
- Repeat for your other pieces, making up more soda solution as needed. The fabrics need to slosh about in your bucket!
- Store your dry, soda-soaked fabric loosely in a bag, box or on a roll. Soda soaked cotton and linen fabrics can be stored indefinitely but silk fabrics should be soda soaked no sooner than six weeks before they are being used.
- Soda soaked fabric can feel quite powdery – this is normal.
- Any unused soda solution can be stored in a labelled container.

## Source or Sources of Inspiration

You do not have to work from a source of inspiration to take this class but I have found that having 'something' to use as a starting point can help. It may be an image or collection of images or it may be a physical object. Ideally it should be something which contains colours that excite you, that you love! Is your inspiration industrial or man-made? This might lead you to seek more linear or graphic marks. Or are you inspired by nature and respond more to softer marks?

One breakdown method involves embedding objects into thickened dye on a screen before leaving it to dry. I have a really wide range of 'stuff' that you can use but there may be things that you could collect and bring with you that are unique to you and your inspiration. Anything that can be used to stamp a mark is worth trying. Old keys, buttons, printing blocks, utensils, weird and wacky packaging materials, washers, waxy leaves, anti-slip meshes etc.

But please do not get stressed over this! I have been there and, believe me, serendipity (plus a bit of thought about colour) can give you the most beautiful pieces of printed cloth!

## Other Requirements

- A drop cloth – a heavy weight piece of cotton fabric approximately 100cm x 200cm that has been washed a few times. Loomstate cotton drill makes a great drop cloth but it needs to be washed at least 2 times before use. (Be aware that loomstate fabrics can shrink by up to 25% on initial washing).

A dropcloth can be purchased from InStitches (£17.25) and be collected at the start of the workshop. Please contact [Hazel](#)

- An apron or old clothing.
- Comfy shoes or trainers – you will be on your feet a lot!
- Rubber gloves – both 'Marigold' type and disposable 'latex' type.
- Two sheets of heavy plastic to take home wet cloth in.
- Notebook / camera
- 2 rolls 2 inch wide masking tape
- 1 roll 1 inch wide masking tape
- 2 old towels
- Tape measure

If you also wish to dye fabric:

- 1 x 2 litre plastic jug
- 3 x 1 litre plastic jug

If you have any questions or wish to buy pre-soda soaked fabric from me please email me at [admin@leahhiggins.co.uk](mailto:admin@leahhiggins.co.uk).