

ICE DYEING

Overview-- Protect your work surface, clothes, and hands. This is best done outside and under cover to melt, like a carport or overhang. I dyed mine on the deck. It's best for the ice to melt slowly so starting in the afternoon and letting it sit overnight seemed to work well. Wet fabric is bunched or twisted and put on a screen which is placed over a tub to catch the melting ice. Ice is piled onto the fabric and dye is dripped or sprinkled over the ice. As the ice melts the dye is diluted and blends into the fabric. Variations in density of color and pigment separation make for very pretty batik-like color on the fabric.

Supplies--

Cotton fabric ready to dye

Rit Dye--liquid or powder. Two colors work well but you may use as many as you like.

Ice--cubed is best. A small bag from the store will be enough to dye a couple of pieces.

A tub to catch the melting ice/dye and some kind of screen to hold the fabric/dye/ice above the tub. A cake or cookie cooling rack will work. Other options are an old oven rack, a piece of screening stapled to a set of inexpensive stretcher bars, or a plastic baby gate. Anything you have that will allow the melting ice to drip through will work.

Technique--

I used half-yard pieces but any size can be used. Several pieces can be placed next to each other. Wet the fabric and wring out. Twist/bunch/pinch it into a compact pile. The more you pinch and compact, the more light areas will be trapped in the creases. Pile on the ice making sure to cover the fabric completely. One seven-pound bag covered two half-yard pieces nicely. If using refrigerator ice, make sure the ice is piled high.

Powdered Rit Dye--sprinkle the powdered dye over the ice. Any powder that immediately touches fabric will leave interesting speckles and the pigments may separate. Yellow powder on my fabric left nice tiny orange spots. Use a heavy hand if you want dark colors. I used less than half a packet each of yellow and dark green on one piece and got really dark greens in some areas. After you're happy with the dye, leave it until the ice is completely melted. This will vary, of course, depending on the temperature. Mine was started at 3 pm, left overnight and the ice was melted by about 10 am.

Liquid Rit Dye--the same technique except you drip the liquid dye onto the ice. Any dye that immediately runs between the ice to the fabric will be darker. Dripping two colors will of course give you a blended look. The same waiting period applies.

Finishing and setting the dye-- When the ice is completely melted, put on gloves and lift each piece separately into a glass or stainless bowl to transfer to a sink. Rinse/rinse/rinse with very hot water until the water is clear. This may take a while. If you have Synthrapol (a solution used to remove excess dye)

you may treat the piece and then use Retayne (a solution used to set any residual dye) to finish. Without these products, just make sure the piece is rinsed until the water is clear. I put mine outside on the grass to dry and then heat-set with a hot dry iron.

Carefully dump the dye solution into a drain. It's non-toxic and can go into septic systems or the sewer system. After being diluted by the melted ice and sitting for a long time, the dye won't be usable for more projects.

What to expect? The dripping of the ice distributes the dye and the more water slowly dripping on a specific area will give a softer "watercolor" effect as the color spreads out. Strong dye application in one area will give strong colors. Application of two colors in one spot will make for nice blending. If you want sunrise sky colors, blend liquid colors before application for corals, pinks, peach, and soft blue. Diluted liquid dye will give softer colors. With powdered dye, a light hand at one end of the fabric and a heavier hand as you reach the other end will give you a gradient effect.

This one is easy, fun, non-toxic, and the end result is always a surprise.

Any questions or problems? Contact

Linda Rech