

PRINTING IN WOODLANDS – TECHNIQUES

THE TRUE COLOUR OF THE COTINUS TECHNIQUES:

The Botanical contact printing used for The True Colour of the Cotinus method was built around the online project curated via online live workshops with a large number of participants testing methods with me and sharing results online.

The leaf prints are obtained by steaming them onto fabric (I use silk) to release their pigment and creating the colour. No added colour is added apart from a background of natural dye and a traditional mordanting inspired by the Natural dyeing techniques is used.

Depending on the leaf variety, their age and exposure to the sun the prints will reach certain hues and shades... they are colour fast but if exposed in full sunlight some of the pigment may fade with time. Some varieties of Cotinus plants will give blue in the good season.

I study the background colours possibilities and how they can affect the leaf print colours. My favourites ones are the tannins (Pomegranate from the fruit, Myrobolan from the seed, Oak gall from the gall) but I also use coloured dyes such as Cochineal (bug that will give a strong very colourfast red/pink) Sapan Wood (a wood from South Asia that will give pink). I only use recognised dyes. I do not use colours/kitchen dyes for this technique.

All prints in this exhibition are made on silk (chiffon silk) and paper (Fabriano, Khadi, Lining paper) They were all mordanted and have been “finished” that means neutralised and sealed. The treatments you give to your target materials affect the length and quality of the prints.

I teach “The True Colour of the Cotinus” online live and via self-paced PDF to those who would like to try and take part in the project.

<https://thelansdownehouseofstencils.com/2022/02/22/the-true-colour-of-the-cotinus-2/>

PRINTING IN WOODLANDS TECHNIQUES:

Printing in woodlands was a “no budget project” and as such we used up and recycled the left over from various workshops adapting to the material for each session.

In the Woodlands community garden, I offered some Community time, it was more about getting together and making some Eco Art than learning a technique. The pieces made were left behind by the participants for the next exhibition.

Technically we used a lot of recycled Cotton and ferrous mordant, a cheap and quick was to mordant fabric. You can make it from powder or rusty bits collected on the ground. It secures a strong print but a limited colour pallet and the quality of the print and colours shift with time.

The Tryptic was printed by using a recycled cotton dipped into a ferrous bath. The Artichoke a combined mordant but was not finished or neutralised at the time and as a result has faded slightly. This method is good to educate participants in understanding how Botanical Contact printing works but it does not give quality prints.

THE TRUE COLOUR OF THE TEAK! COLLABORATION IN SOUTH EAST ASIA:

Working with new vegetation can require a new set of testing as pigments will react differently. My experience with Teak leaves has been mixed. It always gives a print as it is really tannin rich but does not always give the colour, I was planning... I had to find a tutor to show me the way... someone who had substantial experience with the leaf and had already made all the mistakes I did not have the time to make.

In 2020 I experienced with a combined mordant and my own technique using a simmering method and secured interesting prints.

In 2022 I was lucky to meet a young Botanical printer who had a lot of interest in the Teak leaf and was kind enough to show me how to combine the two elements of a mordant, Alum and Ferrous to get wonderful prints.

All my earlier prints were simmered in a dye bath (Logwood and Morinda) the later were steamed using mainly Alum and no background dye.

One of the very great features of the Teak is its ability to print both sides and creating Mirror images is unique. Most of my 2022 prints are made that way. Including a large panel of Eucalyptus leaves.

All printed on Thai Wild silk.

PRINTS ON PAPER DISPLAY AND SMALL BOOKS;

My favourite medium is paper and I often print strips using either a simmered and/or a steamed method. When I am teaching in my studio/or online.

The Paper prints displayed in "Printing in Woodlands" are made in a variety of technique but only using Natural dyes as backgrounds. I teach those techniques online live and, in my studio ... I would love if you would like to join me in one of those classes. They are very suitable for beginners and produce great artwork for collage, mixed media, etc...

Elisabeth Viguie Culshaw
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