

Art Activity

Natural Dye Painting



The McNay Art Museum, in collaboration with Contemporary Art Month (CAM) San Antonio, presents 2020 CAM Perennial: *Topographies of Truth*. This exhibition features works by nine San Antonio-based artists, including Amada Miller. Miller's work *The Sun is a Star Too* was created during a residency in Trinidad. The piece consists of several fabric panels dyed using locally grown materials. The panels are sewn together to create the larger than life textile painting.

Natural dyes can be made from a wide variety of common household materials and used to transform fabric in fun and exciting ways. This Activity is an introduction to the natural dyeing process and simple sewing techniques. We will create a minimalist textile painting, but the same steps can be used to make wearable pieces.

1

GATHER

Gather the materials needed for dyeing.

2

CREATE

Get creative with each step and think outside the box.

3

ENJOY

Enjoy your creation and share with others.

McNay Connection:
In Exhibition: 2020
CAM Perennial.



Amada Clair Miller's
The Sun is a Star Too

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Anne Ryan's Untitled

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Robert Rauschenberg's
Rush #5 from the
Cloister Series

Suggested materials:

- Cotton shirt
- Water
- Vinegar/Salt
- Dyeing Materials (Options listed below)
- Stove pot

Instructions:

Natural fibers will readily take natural dyes. Cotton is a good material for dyeing but you can use other natural fabrics. (or paper)

To begin the dyeing process it is important to prepare both the dye and the fixative that will set the color to your fabric.



1. Start by preparing the dye. Chop plant materials (dye materials) in small pieces and incorporate with water. Add 2-parts water to 1-part dye material. Bring to a boil then let simmer for an hour. Strain solids and return the dye to the pot. You can use this guide to help you along the way.

Yellow/Orange: Onion skins, mango leaves, butternut squash husks, celery leaves, turmeric.

Red/Pink: Beets (deep red), bougainvillea flowers, raspberries or mixed red berries, roses,

cherries, strawberries, avocado skin and seed, prickly pear.

Tan/Brown: Dandelion roots, coffee, tea, bamboo.

Blue/Purple: Hyacinth flowers, purple iris flowers, blue berries.



2. To prepare the fixative follow one of the recipes bellow. Place your fabric in the mix and boil for an hour.

If you are using berries: Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of salt in 8 cups of water.

If you are using plants: Mix 1-part vinegar to 4-parts water.

3. Place your wet fabric in the dye bath and simmer together until desired color is obtained. For a darker color leave overnight. We used flowers and onion peels at very mild concentration to obtain the results above. Consider using gloves to prevent skin staining.

After your fabric is done rinse under cold water. Dyed fabric should be washed separately with cold water.

4. Finish by sewing your fabric together. Create a hem by folding in the edge of your panel about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and sewing together. You can use the graph bellow as a guide for the simple sewing technique. This stich is very simple and strong.

