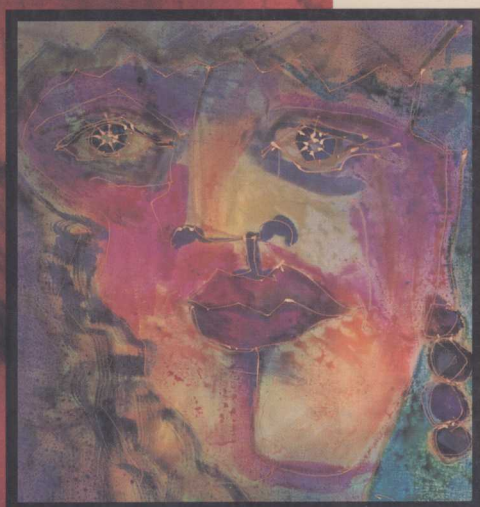


# CREATIVE *Silk* PAINTING

DOZENS OF INSPIRING PROJECTS AND  
TECHNIQUES WITH INSTRUCTION ON  
EASY-TO-USE NEW DYES



Diane Tuckman  
& Jan Janas



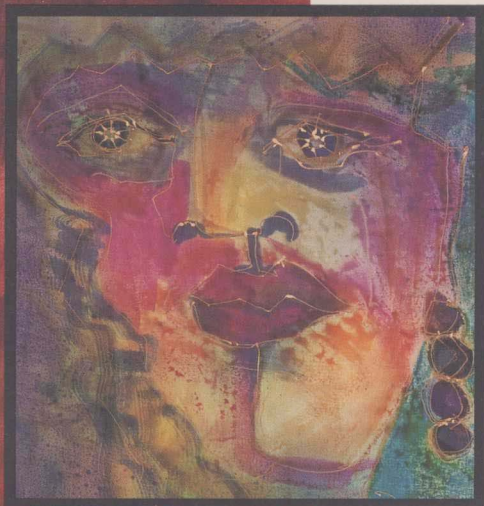
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To my friend Diane for her perseverance.

To my friend Jan for her artistry.



To our editor, photographer, friend,

Bonnie Iris,

for her enthusiastic prodding

in the right direction.



We are thankful for all the silk painters  
we have met in our life travels.

They have shared in our dedication  
to make silk painting an art form  
accessible to all.

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## METRIC CONVERSION CHART

TO CONVERT	TO	MULTIPLY BY
Inches	Centimeters	2.54
Centimeters	Inches	0.4
Feet	Centimeters	30.5
Centimeters	Feet	0.03
Yards	Meters	0.9
Meters	Yards	1.1
Sq. Inches	Sq. Centimeters	6.45
Sq. Centimeters	Sq. Inches	0.16
Sq. Feet	Sq. Meters	0.09
Sq. Meters	Sq. Feet	10.8
Sq. Yards	Sq. Meters	0.8
Sq. Meters	Sq. Yards	1.2
Pounds	Kilograms	0.45
Kilograms	Pounds	2.2
Ounces	Grams	28.4
Grams	Ounces	0.04

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### JAN JANAS

Born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, Jan Janas pursued her dream of art, studying at Northern Michigan University, the University of Northern Illinois, and the Art Institute of Chicago. She wanted to experience all the art world had to offer, from oil, acrylic and watercolor to ceramics, silversmithing, welding, sculpture and finally, fiber art.

Upon graduating Janas decided to share her knowledge and experience and entered the teaching profession. In 1989 she published her first work on the subject of fiber painting entitled *Janas' Faces*. Pattern books followed and can be found at arts and crafts shops throughout the United States. In 1992 she coauthored *The Complete Book of Silk Painting* with Diane Tuckman of Ivy Imports. Jan's work has been exhibited in galleries and art museums, and her silk wall hangings and exotic one-of-a-kind clothing have been purchased extensively for corporate and private collections.

Jan demonstrates and teaches silk fabric painting across the country, traveling extensively and demonstrating for Ivy Imports, in workshops and on public television. Jan resides in Boulder, Colorado.



### DIANE TUCKMAN

Diane Tuckman, nee Yedid, was born in Heliopolis, Egypt. She spent a privileged early childhood learning English, French, Arabic and art at the English Mission School. Nearby Cairo offered the excitement of a modern city richly mingled with the ancient past. Frequent expeditions to the famous Cairo museums, the pyramids, royal tombs and archeological digs were thrilling and inspirational.

Next stop, Paris, France, with visits to the Louvre Museum, exhibits at Le Grand Palais, excursions to Versailles and walks through the woods and countryside around Paris, so delicately depicted by the Impressionist painters. In this romantic setting, Diane met her husband to be, Morton Tuckman. Together they toured France, England, Italy and Austria.

After settling in the United States, Tuckman realized that information and supplies for silk painting were unavailable. She started her ongoing business, Ivy Imports, Inc. The constant search for new and better products led Tuckman to the new instant set dyes used by so many creative silk painters.

Tuckman and Jan Janas, coauthors of *The Complete Book of Silk Painting*, have established a silk painting studio at Ivy Imports in Beltsville, Maryland. They created a comprehensive, in-depth program to train instructors. They also offer "hands-on" silk painting classes on a regular basis in the spacious well-appointed studio. This program brings a diverse stream of beginners, dedicated silk painters and artists from other media to inspire and challenge each other.



# THE SILK ROAD CONTINUES...

As the long silk thread tugs, we are again pulled to explore the magic and challenges of silk painting, a watercolor medium using dyes with “silk” as the painting surface. Since the publication of our first volume, *The Complete Book of Silk Painting*, dramatic changes and growth have taken place. Silk painting has become an established and credible art form in the United States brought about by the large number of talented artists who successfully sell their art. More and more silk paintings are becoming part of museum exhibits, and teaching the art form is included in museum and surface design educational programs.

Initially, direction and inspiration for modern silk painting flowed from France. A large number of French how-to books on the subject helped disseminate information. Silk painting gradually spread to the rest of Europe and other parts of the world. This phenomenon was mirrored in the United States. In the last few years, with the publication of American books on the subject, the vitality of American silk painting has flourished. In typical American style, a “what if” attitude has given impetus to new silk painting techniques. These developments encouraged us to share our innovations to further challenge *all* silk painters.

Silk painting ideas are now flowing across continents, as evidenced by the international work featured in this book. Silk has always been a thread that linked civilizations in commerce and art.

Some of the aspects of silk painting you will find in this volume are old traditional techniques, but they have been

updated and used in unconventional ways to create amazing effects. This revitalized approach to silk painting is particularly exciting in view of the new dye products now available. Incredible new ways to paint silk are now possible. This will require experimentation, but it is all part of the satisfying and fulfilling experience of silk painting.

Because of our commitment to the continued vitality and growth of silk painting, we teach and travel, passing along expertise, tips and hints that we have gleaned from the large number of silk painting students we meet. These students often find unusual and smart solutions to problems we did not even know existed!

In the course of our peregrinations, it became apparent to us that there was the need for a silk painting network. The interest expressed by readers of our first book has allowed *The Silkworm* newsletter to become a reality. This is a publication for and by silk painters, and we invite your participation in this newsletter.

Knowing your materials is important to being successful in silk painting, as it is in any art form. By learning the basic techniques—what each silk painting product does and doesn’t do and seeing how the medium works—you build a solid foundation that will eventually free you to paint with ease and creativity. All experiences and observations accumulated in the course of your daily life should become part of your own unique development as a silk painter. In short, you must “crawl before you can walk” and “learn all the rules” so you can break them and paint in your own style. By

doing that, you will also become familiar with the possibilities as well as the limitations inherent in the art form.

As silk painters, we are committed to the expansion and continued vitality of silk painting. Silk has become the fabric of our existence. So follow us in this adventure as the long silk thread tugs at you, too.

The Silk Road Continues . . . from the silk moth cocoon to the unraveling of the silk filaments that are twisted into a thread that is woven into silk fabric that is hand-painted with silk dye.







## PART ONE

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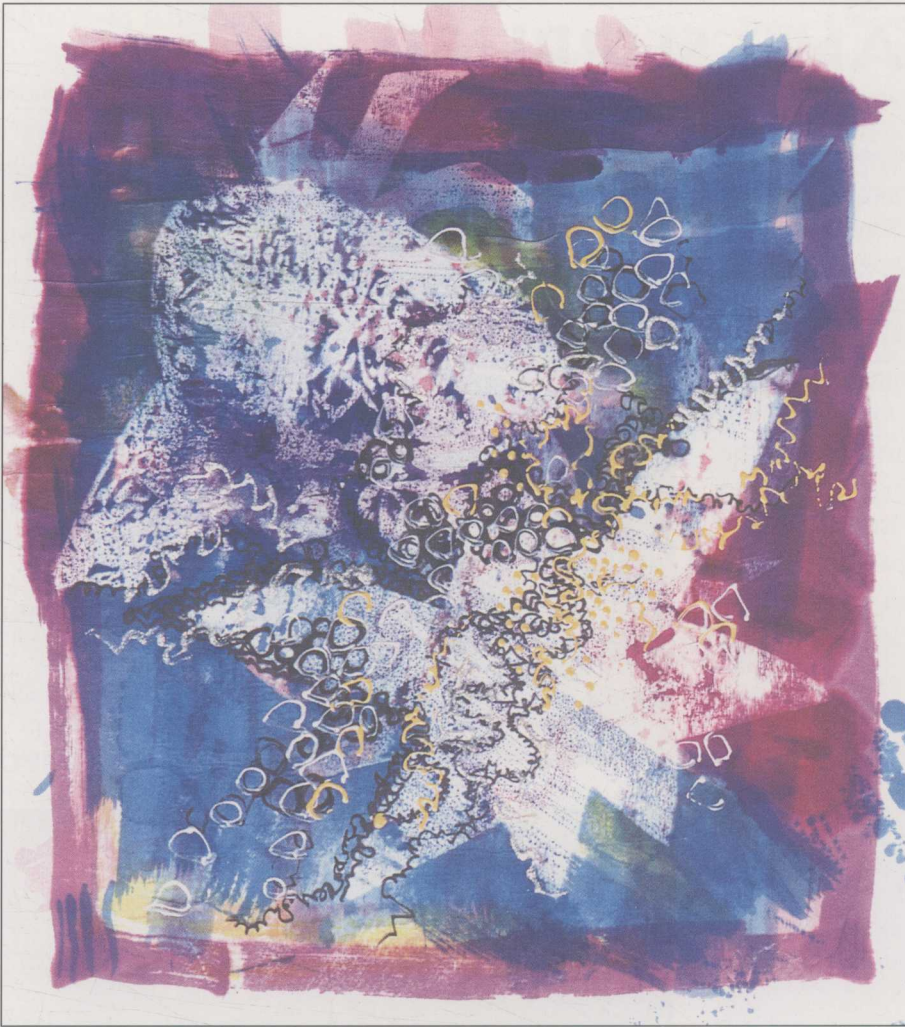
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Jan Janas, *The Big Bang*, 10mm china silk, 12" × 12", instant set dyes and metallic paints, wax paper resist.

One of Janas's students discovered she could use wax paper as a resist instead of the traditional melted wax applied with special tools and removed by dry cleaning.

There was no plan in the creation of this piece. Janas took a random spraying approach, using old stencils she happened to have on hand, to see what kind of design would result. When she stood back and looked at her work, she saw all these caricatures. Rather than have the dye color dominate the scene by painting in the caricatures, she brought them out more graphically with a black marker. Since Janas knew how to use her materials, she got beyond them . . . for an excellent result. She was not silk painting; she was *creating*!

Jan Janas, *Dream Scene*, (detail), 8mm china silk, 10" × 36", instant set dyes and permanent black marking pen.





# BASIC TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

Your silk painting tools, supplies and workspace can be as flexible as the medium itself. Adapt the workspace to your particular situation and your creative needs. Some silk painters work on a card table with the supplies in a box underneath, while others, lucky dogs, have a completely furnished studio. Even the tools and supplies should be adapted to your particular situation. You can purchase tools and supplies at an art store, craft shop or by mail order. We also found the most useful tools in the drugstore and the most unusual ones in the painting section of the hardware store. No possibility should escape your scrutiny. Make your own supply list from the suggestions below to help you get started in silk painting. To start small, begin with a dye kit, one brush, and a small piece of fabric. Enlarge your tool chest as your confidence grows.

## THE DYES

See page 23 for information about flowable and nonflowable dyes.

## THE CATALYST

A catalyst is a chemical added to distilled water and used to prepare fabric for painting and to dilute instant set dyes. See page 18 for an in-depth explanation of using the catalyst.

## PREWASH

A commercial textile prewash (e.g., Synthrapol or Tanager) or water and mild soap removes sizing, grease and dirt which can interfere with the dyeing process.

## SHAMPOOS

Neutral shampoos, such as baby shampoo, Milsoft or Visionart silk shampoo, combined with one tablespoon of white vinegar, condition the silk and improve the hand of the fabric.

## THICKENER

Sodium alginate (a powder mixed with water) thickens the dyes for direct painting, silkscreening, block printing or monoprinting.

## FABRICS

Dyes behave differently with silks of varying weights and weaves, so purchase an assortment of white silks. First try 5 momme or 8 momme china silk, then experiment with heavier weights. The instant set dyes are also effective on wool, so try a lightweight wool challis first.



There are many types and weights of silks available. This boxful of unpainted silk is just waiting to be painted.

Having on hand an assortment of brushes makes silk painting an exciting adventure.



Use a different sprayer for each color dye. Always wear a mask.



## **PAINTING SUPPORTS**

Dyes can be painted with the fabric flat or suspended. To work flat, place the fabric on plastic tablecloths, Plexiglas, Formica, trash bags, floor covers, and similar liquid-repellant items.

To suspend silk, you will need a frame (canvas stretcher strips, embroidery hoop, lumber and C-clamps), pushpins, and a table large enough to hold the frame. See pages 53-55 for more information on stabilizing fabric.

## **BRUSHES**

The two most useful brushes to have on hand are the medium-sized pointed round and the 1-inch foam. But try to collect a variety of natural hair or synthetic filament brushes that will let you create a range of effects.

## **SPRAYERS**

Since the consistency of liquid dyes is conducive to spraying, you can use fine mist sprayers, atomizers or an airbrush.

## **STENCILS**

Quick repeats with thickened liquid dyes are easy with precut or handmade stencils. To cut your own designs, use Mylar, stencil paper, or nonabsorbent heavy paper and a sharp cutting tool. Be flexible; try tape, leaves or a cheese grater as alternatives for block outs.

## **STAMPS**

Another quick and easy way to repeat a shape is to use premade stamps or cut your own using a potato, art-gum eraser, sponges, linoleum block, etc. Stamping works best when dyes are thickened and/or when fabric is stabilized.

## **RESISTS**

Resists are used as a blocking agent on fabric and for outlining pattern pieces when you are planning to sew a garment from painted yardage. A wide variety of resists exist. See pages 21, 31 and 60-67 for more information about resists.

## **RESIST APPLICATORS**

Resist applicators include squeeze bottles with or without metal tip, paper cone (similar to a cake decorating tool), brushes and tjanting tools. For a more creative approach, try sponges, syringes or toothbrushes.

## **CONTAINERS**

Silk painting always seems to create the need for a wide variety of storage containers for the dyes. You will need a dozen or so clear plastic cups for color mixing; large and small

containers for rinsing brushes, dipping small pieces of silk and storage of dyes; white plastic buckets for dip-dyeing and rinsing yardage; and a wellied palette and ½-ounce plastic cups for painting with the thickened or liquid dyes. Don't use metal or aluminum containers, which can affect the instant set dyes.

## **TEXTURING TOOLS**

The most amazing effects can be achieved very simply with texturizing tools. The challenge is recognizing the tools and realizing their potential. Try cotton swabs, sponges, plastic shapes, brayers, wads of wax paper, plastic wrap, blackboard erasers, straws, toothpicks or empty refillable markers.



Keep a portfolio of the stencils you've made. It's amazing how useful they are for layered effects.



Anything goes in silk painting. You'd be surprised how many texturizing tools you can find when you look around you.









PART ONE

Exploring  
Instant Set  
Dyes



# ABOUT TRADITIONAL DYES



Jan Janas, *Coffee Klatch*, 10mm china silk banner, lined, 48" × 36", French acid dyes.

These realistically painted, brightly colored birds were done with a combination of resists, blends and water-spotting techniques. The background was created wet-on-wet to add depth, and the leaves and berries were drybrushed with quick, loose strokes.

Imagine the potential of silk painting: exquisite works of art, luminous colors, soft-draping fabrics. What a combination! But where do you start? Whether you are a beginner or an experienced silk painter, an important starting point is a central player in the mystery: dyes.

Silk painting is the direct application of dyes to fabric. Like watercolor, silk painting uses transparent colors and no white, just the white of the fabric. An important feature of silk painting is that the dyes flow over and through the fibers of the fabric. You can use many different types of dye: acid, reactive, vat, instant set or liquid paints. We have used and continue to use some of them. You may wish to research the characteristics of these various products and select the one or ones that best suit your needs.

Due to the dramatic way the new instant set dyes increased our own silk painting repertoire and enhanced our creativity and due to the paucity of information about them, we will explain their characteristics in depth in this section. We encourage you to explore the traditional dyes, too, and recommend our first book, *The Complete Book of Silk Painting*, as one source of information.

## WORDS OF ADVICE AND CAUTION

The art materials market has been changing radically in recent years. Chemical dyes that have been around for years can suddenly change drastically or disappear from the market. As some chemicals become unavailable, they are replaced by others, requiring the reformulation of certain colors within a product line. Other changes are the result of health and environmental concerns and laws regulating some products. Due to these factors, changes are constantly being introduced by manufacturers. You should therefore continue to keep abreast of these changes and remain flexible.

Be aware of the particular hazards involved with any dye. Read the labels. If you want more information, contact the manufacturer. As an occasional silk painter, follow the precautions indicated and use your common sense. If, on the other hand, you paint several hours or more every day, you must take better precautions. Install an exhaust fan, wear a mask when required, and use gloves to avoid skin contact. Dispose of your dyes responsibly, and follow the rules in your community.



## TYPES OF DYES

- **ACID OR FRENCH TRADITIONAL SILK DYES:** These contain soluble colorants in a solution of water, alcohol and acetic acid. They are considered a fugitive dye until steam set for an hour or more. They should be used only on protein fibers, silk, wool, hair (dog, rabbit, camel, etc.), and man-made protein fibers, such as nylon.
- **FIBER REACTIVE DYES:** These dyes come in liquid or powdered form and are mixed with salt or urea and washing soda. They dye cellulose and protein fibers and require a final chemical bath or steam setting to chemically bond colorants with fiber molecules.
- **LIQUID VAT DYES:** Vat dyes are light sensitive. To create the color, the dyes must be developed in ultraviolet light (sunlight or artificial). They require no heat setting to make them permanent and can dye cotton, linen and rayon.
- **INSTANT SET DYES:** The instant set dyes chemically bond instantly to protein fibers and do not require steam, heat or chemical setting.
- **LIQUID SILK PAINTS:** Liquid colors are composed of a pigment base highly dispersed in a water solution and acrylic resin. They require heat setting with an iron and work on all fabrics.



Jan Janas, *Stripes on the Run*, 10mm china silk banner, lined, 48" × 36", liquid silk paints.

The zebras were resisted wet-on-wet to get the repeated stripes. While the background was still wet, Janas applied salt heavily to the mountains and sky to create a lot of texture. Less salt was applied to the foreground. Then she drybrushed the grasses. The overlapping shapes and unconventional colors of the zebras add unexpected excitement to the work.



Jan Janas, *Two by Two*, 10mm china silk banner, lined, 48" × 36", instant set dyes.

The fish were resisted, then light stripes in the background were painted, then overdyed with pale blue. Brush marks were stroked to texture the fish and seaweed. The colors were layered gradually to reach the final vivid, intense color.



# INSTANT SET SILK DYES

When the instant set silk dyes from Switzerland came to our attention we were intrigued as we watched Swiss artists use them. The potential for their application to silk painting was evident, but the cursory German-language instructions that came with them were incomplete. We discovered that *instant set* means just that: these dyes bond to the fabric without any setting process to make them permanent. *No steam, heat or chemical setting is required.* These dyes are self-setting and immediately become an integral part of the fabric. How easy and what a time-saver!

When we tried the dyes, we were initially turned off. They did not *flow* like traditional silk dyes! The colors were too bright for us, and layering them sometimes led to dull color. We could not get them to do what we wanted them to do! It took a lot of introspection as well as trial and error for us to understand the product. What we discovered was that we were trying to make them behave like steam set acid dyes. Once we overcame this prejudice, we were able to make them work and we gained something: an instant set dye with no setting process.

But we also lost something: the easy flow of the dyes. However, we are now able to compensate for the loss of fluidity by taking advantage of the moisture level on the surface of the silk and in the brush. This evolved into new approaches to old techniques, which will be explored later in this book.

The instant set dyes are easy to use and nontoxic. They are concentrated and *must* be diluted with distilled water or a catalyst diluting solution. No measuring or mixing with any other chemicals is required.

Due to the unusual properties of instant dyes, they can be painted with the fabric flat or stretched. When painted flat, the fabric is placed on a plastic-covered table, and the painting approach differs from stretched silk (see page 52). In addition to small projects, these dyes are well suited to the production of large brilliant silk paintings and yardage and for immersion dyeing of yardage.

Kurtzbein's soft blending of background colors gives a wonderful depth to this floral composition. Notice the strong linear and rhythmic qualities of the resisted foreground. This teasel looks as if it was reaching up to the sun on a balmy fall day.



L. Maxine Kurtzbein (Camas, WA), *Teasel*, 10mm china silk, 13" × 36", instant set dyes, gutta resist, fabric pen embellishment.



## Properties of Instant Set Silk Dyes

The instant set dyes, available in stores and by mail order, offer a unique approach to silk painting because of their immediate reaction with silk fibers. These dyes consist of highly reactive molecules that have a particular affinity for silk. As soon as the chemical dye molecules come into contact with the receptor molecules of the silk filament, a chemical reaction takes place. The dye and the silk bond *permanently*. The dye molecules that do not adhere to the silk remain suspended until they are rinsed away.

If the fabric is overloaded with dye, that is, too concentrated, the excess will transfer to other sections of the silk when rinsed. This is called *dye-back*. However, if the dyes have been sufficiently diluted and applied correctly, there will be no dye-back and the water will be clear after rinsing.

### DILUTING THE DYES

The instant set dye colors are transparent, bright, clear, intense, and they intermix well. They are concentrated and must be diluted for best results. When undiluted they are too heavy to be easily absorbed in the fabric. The ratio of dilution is determined by how many dye molecules are necessary to fill the receptors on a particular weight of silk and the intensity of the color desired. Since every situation is different, you will have to experiment and create your own diluting chart based on the weight and type of silk you are using and your own color choices. We have found some colors to be more concentrated than others, so dilution varies from color to color.

### CONTROLLING THE COLOR

The best way to control the dyes is by diluting and layering the color. Since the dyes bond instantly to the silk, it is important to begin painting light over light and build up to darker values and colors until you obtain the right hue and value, as you would using watercolor on paper.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT FIBER

Instant set dyes are most compatible with protein fibers, such as silk (bonding is instantaneous) and wool (bonding can take up to an hour). Man-made fibers, such as rayon and nylon, which mimic the characteristics of silk, do not work as well with instant set dyes. The dyes bond slower on these fabrics, the colors are duller, and the washfastness is not reliable. We do not recommend them for these fabrics at this time. Instant set dyes do not work on cotton or polyester.

### PREPARING THE CATALYST DILUTING SOLUTION

The catalyst made by the dye manufacturer is a chemical that softens the water and prepares the fabric to better interact with the dyes. Use this solution to dilute your dyes as well as to prewet your fabric so it interacts better with the dyes. The catalyst is a concentrate, so add one teaspoon of catalyst per gallon of distilled water. (Tap water may contain contaminants that could affect the dyes.) This catalyst solution will not spoil, so feel free to make it in large quantities. For smaller quantities, use just a few drops. Too much catalyst in the solution or undiluted catalyst prevents the dyes from bonding to the silk.



Jan Janas, *Lizard People*, 10mm china silk, 9" × 10", instant set dyes.

Because instant set dyes bond immediately to the silk fibers, Janas was able to adhere the silk to an adhesive board, paint directly and frame it. No fixing, no steaming, no fuss. Just plain create!



## CONTROLLING THE BONDING TIME

Even though the instant set dyes bond within seconds, you use the catalyst to speed up the bonding time by approximately 20 percent. The result, though, is less time to work the dyes. Here are several ways to counteract this rapid action:

- Use only distilled water to dilute the dyes. Then paint on dry silk. This method is great for textural effects.
- Prewet the silk with distilled water only, and use distilled water (no catalyst) to dilute the dyes. The distilled water will oversaturate the fiber, leaving no room for the dye to bond. As a result, until that water evaporates, you have time to move the color around on top of the wet silk (hydroplaning) to your satisfaction. This gives you a watercolor look.
- Prewet the silk with the catalyst diluting solution, but use dyes that have been diluted with water only. Again, the dyes will hydroplane, slowing the bonding time. This also results in a watercolor look but reduces streaking. To get a very smooth, unstreaked coating of color, saturate your silk fibers with catalyst solution before painting.

Knowing the subtle effects of each of these methods—dilution with or without catalyst and prewetting the fabric—will make a significant difference in the manipulation of the instant set dyes and the look of your fabric. To control the dyes and obtain a watercolor look, you must understand the diluting principles described above.

## LIGHTFASTNESS

The lightfastness of the instant set dyes is good, although exposure to continuous sunlight will cause the dyes to fade. To improve the lightfastness, consider using a silk shampoo that contains a sunblocking agent that protects the silk from ultraviolet rays.

## SHELF LIFE

Instant set dyes have a shelf life of two years or more if unopened and not contaminated by bacteria in the air, trace elements in the water, and containers and brushes that are unclean. Opened and uncontaminated dyes will last from months to two years. Opened and contaminated dyes will last from days to weeks depending on conditions. You can visually tell that a dye color has expired because the color will turn a watery gray in the bottle.

## CONTROLLING COLOR



**STEP 1.** Instant set dyes handle just like watercolor. You can begin by lightly sketching in your design on the silk. Then paint directly, in light colors, and mass in the base color.



**STEP 2.** Since the dyes bond instantly to silk, it is important to gradually layer the dyes, adding more detail and darker color as you work.



**STEP 3.** Add more definition with a black permanent marker.