

# Make a Diary Painting on Cloth with Susan Shie

Created 6-9-12 by Susan Shie

This essay is my demo of how I create my paintings on fabric, many of which I later stitch. The standard name for this kind of work is art quilts, but I have gone back to calling mine "soft paintings," because I am really more of a painter, and that's what I began calling them, when I first started painting off stretched canvas and on loose fabric, back in the late 1970s.

am showing you here all the basic processes I teach in all my classes.

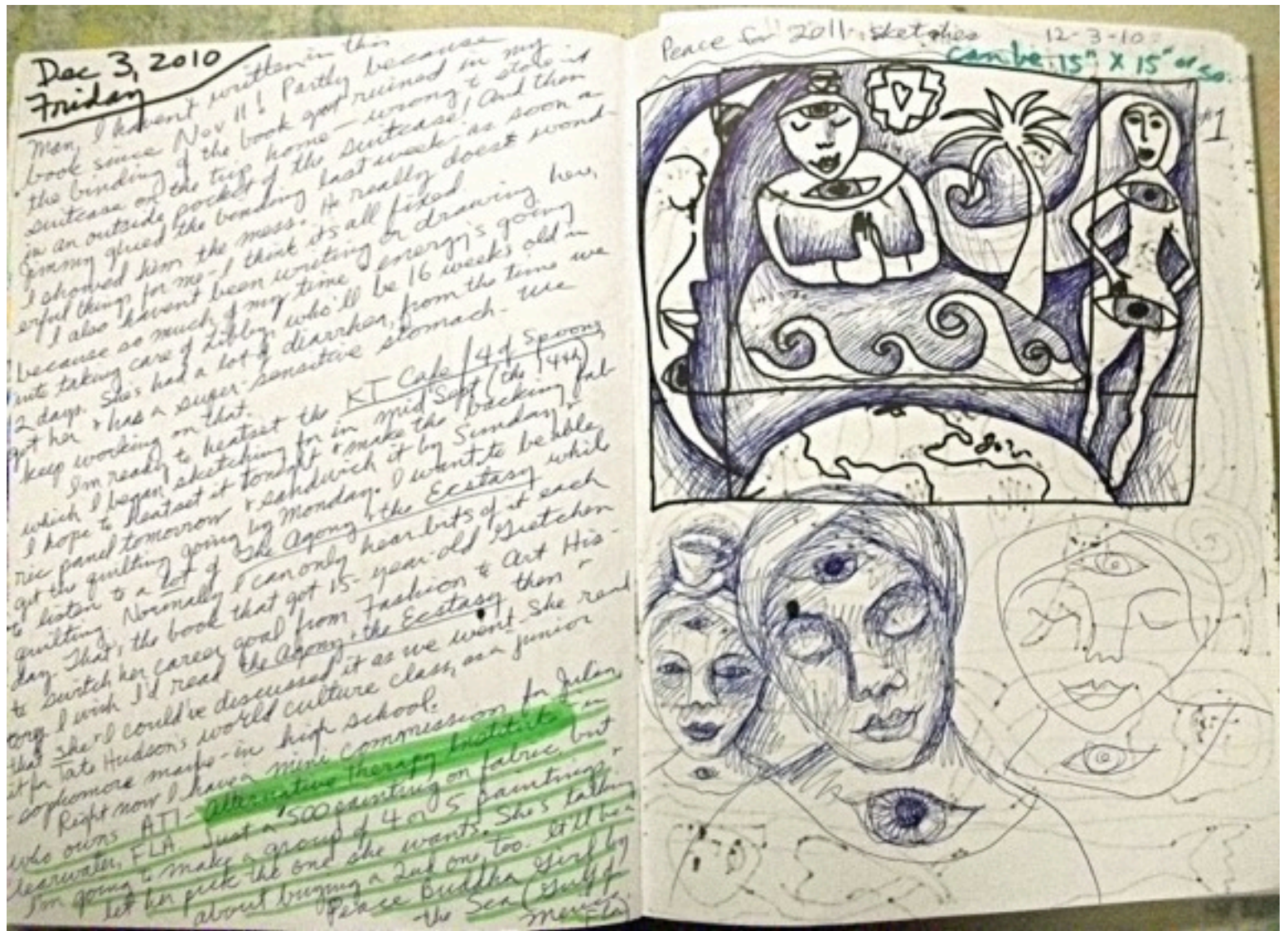




Above: "Turtle Moon Sign." ©Susan Shie 2012. 22"h x 24"w. Begun 9-3-11, finished 5-27-12. Whole cloth painting with crazy grid quilting.

I often sketch on paper first, using simple tools like ballpoint pens and markers. In this case I knew I wanted to make a series about buddha girls, moons, and water. I named the series "Healing Songs for the Earth" and made 10 paintings, some of which I sold as paintings, and turned some into quilts. I still have a few of them, in both paintings and quilts.

Here are some of the sketches:







I like to draw across the “ditch” in my sketchbook, so I really have a very wide page to work on. That’s possible when you use a hardbound sketchbook. I also love to use a ballpoint pen, preferably a cheap little blue-ink Bic, to shade my favorite drawings with.



12-3-10

Peace Buddha girls for 2011  
sketch #2

12-5-  
I need  
sta







So after I've made enough sketches that I feel like I've caught my groove and know what I want to make - who's in the piece, what they're doing, what their props are, etc - then I'm ready to draw on fabric.

I use Kona or Kona weight white cotton that's prepared for dyeing - PDF, and in some cases, like for this series, I cut out anywhere from 2 to 10 pieces, so I can work on a bunch of pieces at once. If it's a big piece for one of my major works, then it's totally different, as I'll be using my airbrush on a much larger piece of fabric, and it'll be up on a wall, not lying on a table. But I can get the same painted look with my brushed on paints as I do with my airbrush. I like to use hand painting brushes for small works, instead of my airbrush.





I draw on fabric with a Rub-a-Dub laundry marker, which is currently owned and made by Sharpie. A Rub-a-Dub will never halo, create a brownish hazy stain around the lines later, like a regular Sharpie marker will. Rub-a-Dubs are harder to find, so google them. I like them better than any other fabric markers made, because the line is sturdy and dark. It is NOT a permanent line, for my taste, as I have an obsession with really rich lines. I go over it later with airpen and fabric paint. But many of my students are happy with the line a Rub-a-Dub makes. And it's quick and easy!

When you start a piece, open a brand new marker and hold it upright at first, drawing fairly quickly. People who draw very slowly tend to get a fuzzy line, because too much ink is coming out and spreading a bit. Let the lines flow out of you. It helps to stand up. It really, really helps to not judge your drawing and instead, to celebrate it and enjoy the images you're making.





This is the main drawing I'm going to show you my painting process with. It's fairly close to the one sketch you saw above, even though I drew it freehand. I hate "copying" when I draw, so I never use tracing paper or erasers (which you can't with a permanent marker, anyhow!)

I love the flow of freehand drawing, and I think that when you copy from your sketches, you go into analytical mode, and you wreck the spontaneity and flow of the lines. You flatten the drawing when you copy, and you'll never like it like you did the sketch you just copied from. So try just glancing at your sketches, so you can see what you put where, so you can get it all into the new piece. The sketch tells you what the story is, how you've decided to show it, etc, but beyond that, don't copy it!



After you make your drawing on the cloth, go heat set it.

Wear a good respirator and run an exhaust fan out a window, or at least do this outside, if you won't do the rest. You can't smell much fumes with this marker, but heat setting is always a process that changes the chemical structure of the ink, paint, or dye. That means it will off gas some chemicals as the compounds are changed to a permanent state by the heat.

Always put your work face down on the ironing board and move your hot, dry iron slowly over it for a minute or so, when it's just a drawing like this. You can stack a few drawings and rotate which one is on top, to speed up the process.

If you don't heat set at this stage, and you decide later that your painting is too dark or too murky, and you want to wash out some of the paint, the lines will fade with the paint. As long as you heat set the drawing, before you paint, you can wash your painting if necessary, and the lines will stay black.





Time to paint!

I use Jacquard Textile Colors fabric paint. Silk paints and textile inks are too runny for what I'm doing, and Setacolor is not as bright as these paints and won't blend the way these do. Seta tends to stay where you put it. It's good for not bleeding and for soft colors, but I prefer being able to blend my colors, to shade them, and to have dye-like richness in my paints.

Here I have a little palette that has yellow paint and colorless extender in it. I use the extender when I want to lighten my paint to a pastel but not have it run. Extender keeps the paint at its normal thickness and gives you a lot of control. Many people love extender.

But I usually lighten my paints with water instead. I prefer the flow I get with that, and I watch for bleeding and am pretty good at catching it and controlling it. When I teach, I always demonstrate painting straight from the jars, lightening with extender, and lightening with water.

Paint straight out of the jar and paint lightened with extender will both dry to the same brightness you see when the paint is wet. But when you water your paints down, they will dry several shades lighter than when wet. This happens, because the darkness is largely due to the fabric becoming wetter and darker. It's just important to think about, as you work.

I keep my water in a jar that has a lid, so I can cover it, if I have to leave the room. I don't want my cats drinking that water, or walking on my wet paint, for that matter. I keep a water sprayer handy, to squirt my cats, if they think they're coming up on the table.



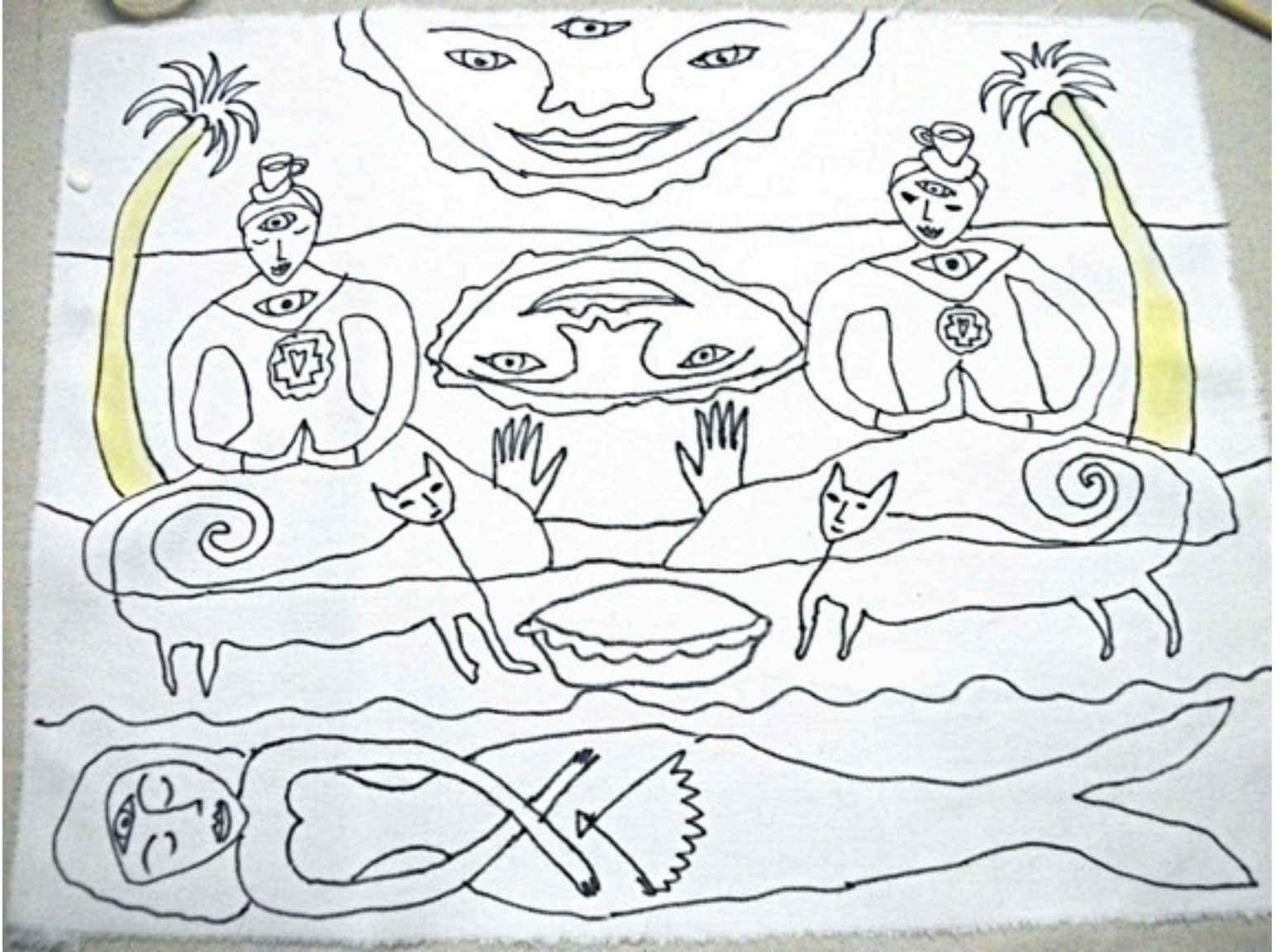
You don't see it here, but I use cloth rags to clean my brushes, instead of sloshing them in my paint water. I only dip the brush into the water, not slosh it. The cleaner you can keep the paint water, the cleaner you'll keep our drinking water and the Earth in general. The paint water will eventually get dirty, but it'll happen much more slowly, if you wipe your brushes on rags, before going to the water again.

Notice that I have a canvas dropcloth on my table. Under that canvas is a sheet of plastic. The plastic obviously protects the table, and the canvas keeps the fabric I'm painting in place and acts as a blotter to absorb extra water, so the painting can dry faster. You can also use regular cotton for a dropcloth, but you need several layers of it under your painting. And since I move my paintings to dry places on the dropcloth, to help them dry faster as I work, it's good to have a large area to work in, even if your paintings are small.





I use boar bristle brushes with flat tips, so I can either get a line or a wider stroke with my paint. These brushes are sold for painting with acrylic or oil on canvas, but they are excellent for use with fabric paints, because they are stiff enough to really push the paint into the woven surface. These brushes have long handles, which are great for keeping your hands away from the paint, and also are conducive to you being able to brush more loosely, since you can hold the brush up higher on the long handle. I buy the less expensive ones, as these brushes all wear down fast and behave the same.



You gotta start somewhere! I almost always start with yellow paint, because it's the weakest pigment. That means that other colors will all go over it and change it. The colors you can't put over it are pink, purple, and blue, if you want them to stay those colors. Pink will turn orange over yellow. Purple will turn brown, and blue will turn green. Otherwise, colors over yellow will just brighten.

Fabric paints are like watercolors, as long as you're using the transparent ones. I stick with these, as they are very luminous. Opaque paints can change the hand of the cloth and look more chalky, especially in photographs. I don't even use white paint, as it really chalks up the look of the piece.



So you work like a watercolorist: you can't hide anything you paint with other paints you put on top of them. So you start light and work darker. You can leave the cloth's white for white, and you can make colors light by watering them down or mixing them with extender, before you brush them on.



Don't stall out when it comes time to paint! Just pick a spot and brush into it!

Watercoloring is really fun. It's immediate and final. You have to learn to accept what you've done and not look back. You can think of how much fun you had with drawing and painting, when you were about six years old, before you really started to stew over whether your artmaking was good enough. Get back to that innocent stage of thinking, and you'll probably be a lot happier person in general. Maybe healthier, too!

I really believe that our bodies are meant to be self-regulating, but they can't do a lot of healing work for us, when we're in stress. Being contented when you make art is one really nice way to help your body do its thing!







I put my yellow into all the pieces I'm working on, before I go on to another color. I drew them all by hand, each one a different composition in the set, but I plan to have the same color scheme in all of them, so I just move around my table and paint with one color at a time.

The only difference with doing just one painting is that it would go faster.



Here are my Jacquard Textile Colors. Sometimes I work right out of the lids, if I'm not mixing colors. And sometimes I mix in a little palette or on a plate.





So now I've used yellow, orange, green, and blue, all in watered down pastel versions, and then some full strength green, in the palm tree tops.

Besides not using white paint, I also don't use black for brush-on paint. Remember that the paint is transparent, and black is it: you can never change it to something else, not to anything at all, unless you use opaque things like Lumiere or Neopaque. Stiff and chalky, sez I!





Now I'm going in and brightening the paints in all the pieces. I've decided that the green was too light, too dull looking. I have several green colors of paint, too, so I've switched to a different one here.





Now that green is in the mermaid's body on this one, and on the grass and volcano on the one to its left.





Now it's time to give the works more depth by shading them. I've got a more full strength blue here now, instead of the watered down version I used in the sky, and I'm painting in darker areas that I blend out to the lighter blue, by using water to spread the dark paint out from where I want it to stay dark to where it softly blends in with the sky. This is more time consuming, but I love the results.

When I'm working on my big pieces with my airbrush, this is easier to do and faster. But it would be hard to do in such small pieces with the airbrush. The airbrush paint also dries a lot faster, since it uses very little water and the paint basically is misted onto the cloth surface.

But then, airbrush takes a lot of learning and has a lot of fussing to do with equipment. Hand brushes are very peaceful to work with, so here I am!





Now you can see how some of the colors have blended, especially around the mermaid's body, in the water. This is because of the yellow/green and blue blending together, and I like the resulting darker, duller color they make together.

The images of this piece are showing up in different color ranges here, and it's from different lighting situations in different rooms. Sorry about that.





the lighting here is the most true of the pix you've just seen of this painting. At this stage, it's dry and I've heat set all the paintings again, and am ready to start airpen writing on them.

You can see an album I made of all the paintings, just before I wrote on them, on my Facebook page, even if you're not on Facebook, at <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150111849749158.290585.721464157&type=3&l=e6e1f3a01c>







Airpen work is another lesson, for another time. The reason to use it instead of a Rub-a-Dub marker is that I put black fabric paint through my airpen. So it's very rich and crisp looking for lines. In my old days I hand embroidered over all my lines and words, so did a lot less writing! But when I figured out how to make an airpen behave on fabric, I finally had the perfect line for what I wanted. (The dirty mug in the foreground here needs explanation! It's what you set your airpen in, when you're not using it, so it stays upright. There's a wet paper towel in the bottom of the mug, too, to keep the needle from drying out and clogging, when the airpen is not being used.) You can see the blockish air pump for the airpen above on the left, and the air line that goes to the airpen itself. I love my airpens!

You can go ahead and leave your work unwritten on, or you can write on it with a Rub-a-Dub or other fabric marker. Still heat set after you're done, of course. And still wear a respirator, if you want to stay healthy!



Here's the painting written on. Another and longer heat set with the iron makes it permanent. This time I use the hot, dry iron for about 3 minutes on this size of a piece, and of course, iron on the back side, as always.



You can see an album I made of all the paintings, after I wrote on all of them in April, 2011, on my Facebook page, even if you're not on Facebook, at <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150145419039158.297793.721464157&type=3&l=56e4bb0d34>



“Healing Songs for the Earth #7.” ©Susan Shie 2011. 19”h x 29”w.

The painting I was showing you didn't get quilted, but this one from the “Healing Songs for the Earth” series did, so I'm showing up how it looks quilted.

I use Nature-fil bamboo and cotton batting by Fairfield and AURifil Mako cotton machine thread. I buy Laura Wasilowski's Artfabrik hand dyed perle cotton for my hand sewing of the border.





How I put my quilt sandwich together is also in another lesson demo, and it's very different from how other quilters work. Basically I make my batting as much bigger than my painting as I want the border to be. After putting the painting and batting together, I lay them on my backing fabric and cut that big enough to come around, over the batting border, and tuck under the raw edged painting.

Then I pin all my layers together, using straight pins at the border and safety pins in the main part of the piece.





I sew the border edge first (which is really weird sounding to other quilters, I know!), then do my “crazy grid” quilting in the body of the work, really ad libbing, going all the way across the piece in any direction, removing my hundreds of bent safety pins as I go. I keep criss crossing the quilt from edge to edge, making slightly wobbly, unmarked grid lines that become closer and closer together, and I switch colors of thread at random, to add to the interest. I love the chevrons and varied grid “square” sizes I get. I love having the lines go really crooked and crossing. I feel like this kind of quilting is another form of personal taste, like handwriting.

When I teach short classes, like one to two days, I will still demonstrate how I use my airpen and how I sandwich and quilt my pieces. But the students go home with their finished fat-quarter size paintings, which they can quilt at home.

In longer classes, students get one-on-one lessons from me in using the airpen, and then, if they want to use it, can do so in class. They also have time to quilt a piece.

AND, when I teach at my home, when students come for a five day class in a weeklong experience of living and working here, I also teach airbrush. We have a syllabus, just like in all of my classes, but at Turtle Art



Camp at my home, after the students have their basic lessons in my methods, they can choose to focus on something in particular.



And here's a close-up of this quilted piece.

In all my classes, we start each day with ten minutes of "library time," in which we draw or write or both in our sketchbooks, to get centered for the day. No talking, thus the library reference.

You don't have to write anything on your work in my classes if you don't want to. And your drawing style is going to be your very own, right were you left it, if you stopped drawing along the way in your life. You don't need any previous adult experience in drawing, painting, writing, or sewing, to take my classes. I want you to mainly learn how to open up to your more innocent, more enjoying self and live it up while making art, to accept whatever comes out of you!

Until you take my class, I hope you and I both spend time intentionally being less judgmental. It's something I work on over and over. About my self, my failings, my art, and about others. I think the world will be a better place for any less stewing we can do.



Just love and be kind. You and me both!

Susan, in Wooster, Ohio, June 9, 2012.

## Contact Susan Shie:

Cell: 330-317-2167 no texts, please. Home: 330-345-5778

Email: [susan@turtlemoon.com](mailto:susan@turtlemoon.com)

Web: [www.turtlemoon.com](http://www.turtlemoon.com)

Blog: <http://susanshie.blogspot.com>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/susanshie](http://www.facebook.com/susanshie)

and [www.facebook.com/susanshieturtlemoon](http://www.facebook.com/susanshieturtlemoon)

and <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kitchen-Tarot-Cafe/115733145108020>

Mail: 2621 Armstrong Drive

Wooster, Ohio 44691-1806 USA

Thank you for thinking about taking a class or two from me!!!

## Turtle Art Camp:

To study in depth with Susan at her home studio, see Turtle Art Camp at <http://www.turtlemoon.com/classes/tcamp.htm> .

Learn in depth how to work on fabric with airpen and airbrush at this five day, live-in art camp. These are the main painting processes Susan uses in her work. You'll be drawing and possibly writing daily in your sketchbook, and using fabric paints and regular brushes on fabric. Students make between 2 and 5 fat quarter size paintings during their week, depending on their personal speed, and machine quilt one of them at camp, using Susan's personal methods of construction.

TAC (Turtle Art Camp) is a 5-day, live-in experience, between two travel days. Susan began TAC in 1994 as a 1-day program, expanding it to its current weeklong form in 1995. Two to five students attend each session and live in Susan and her husband, artist Jimmy Acord's house. With the studios in the basement, it's a very concentrated learning experience, guaranteed to get you creating in high gear. The fee of \$1,000. per student includes most expenses: tuition, basic supplies, room and partial board, as well as airport ride service, if needed. You'll find this year's camp schedule and details on the front page of [www.turtlemoon.com](http://www.turtlemoon.com). Read about our town, Wooster, Ohio, at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wooster,\\_Ohio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wooster,_Ohio).

## RESOURCES AND SUPPLIES:





## Jacquard Textile Colors fabric paints:

<http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/1813-AA.shtml> or

[http://www.jerrysartarama.com/discount-art-supplies/Fabric-and-Pearl-Ex-Paints/Jacquard-Fabric-Paints-Pearl-Ex-Colors-and-Mediums/Jacquard-Permanent-Textile-Colors.htm?gclid=Cl\\_C3MHL46gCFWNx5QodcDKWCg](http://www.jerrysartarama.com/discount-art-supplies/Fabric-and-Pearl-Ex-Paints/Jacquard-Fabric-Paints-Pearl-Ex-Colors-and-Mediums/Jacquard-Permanent-Textile-Colors.htm?gclid=Cl_C3MHL46gCFWNx5QodcDKWCg)

**Natural bristle brushes:** for using fabric paint on cotton fabric. I buy mine locally for a very good price, but here's a good one online: <http://www.misterart.com/g123/Silver-Brush-Faye-White-Chinese-Bristle-Paint-Brushes.htm> I buy either flats or brights, which are still flat tipped, but are shorter bristled. Try flats and brights both.



**Respirator:** 3M 6000 respirator and necessary parts: [http://www.uline.com/BL\\_992/Reusable-Respirators-Supplies](http://www.uline.com/BL_992/Reusable-Respirators-Supplies) I suggest the Medium size half-face respirator and the multiple gasses cartridges. You need one set of 2 cartridges for the respirator. This is one of the few latex-free respirators sold and is very light and comfortable. In 2011 this will cost you about \$25. plus shipping, for a very comfy and effective respirator. More if you add the filters and filter retainers sold on the same page, for dust and particles. You need those for airbrush work or mixing powdered dyes, etc.

You can also buy the filters and filter retainers, to make your cartridges last longer. You'll have to buy one box of each, to get started. They are good for catching paint particles when airbrushing, so they keep the cartridges clean longer. Filter retainer

snaps onto the cartridge, after you put the filter inside the retainer. (The filters and retainers are also useful for working with powdered dyes and other particulates.)

Your respirator and filters, etc, will arrive separately, and you'll have to put them together, but it's not really hard. Just analyze how the cartridges twist and lock onto the respirator. You'll leave it all put together, once you do that. You should keep the respirator in a ziploc bag when you're not using it, once the moisture from breathing in it is allowed to dry. This lets the cartridges last longer, as they're not filtering the air constantly.





## Rub-a-Dub laundry markers:

This is the marker I have my students use in drawing and writing on their class pieces, before they learn to use airpen, or if the class is too short to have airpen use or too big for each student to use airpen beyond trying it out. They are hard to find, so here is the lowest price I've found online, as of 2-10-09. If you cannot find them here, google "Rub-a-dub marker by Sharpie." Figure that you need one marker per two small paintings. They will work well on paper long after they stop making a crispy line on fabric.

At Rapid Supplies online: \$.90/each, plus shipping. \$99. order has free shipping.

<http://www.rapidsupplies.com/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWPROD&ProdID=89853>

Detailed Description

Sanford Ink 31101PP Rub-A-Dub Laundry Marking Pen, Fine Point, Black Ink, SAN31101PP, SAN 31101PP, Porous-tip laundry marking pen makes laundry marking quick and easy. Marks permanently on cloth without bleeding or feathering. Uniquely formulated to remain permanent through washing and dry cleaning. UPC Code 71641311015, Quantity 1 EA

## Kona cotton fabric, PFD (prepared for dyeing):

Test Fabrics Kona or Kona-like cotton fabric for painting. 2009.

Kona or Kona-like cotton, white, PFD (prepared for dyeing): I buy bolts of this from St Theresa Textile Trove in Cincinnati, Ohio. It's a very small, very funky fabric and embellishments store that I prefer to support.

<http://www.sttheresatextile.com/> I would call them to order.

I also get Kona-like fabric from Test Fabrics and Dharma Trading Company. You can google "Kona PFD cotton" and find it at other places, possibly at your local fabric store, too.

Kona-like PDF cotton from Test Fabrics. "60 x 60 cotton sheeting": <http://www.testfabrics.com/products/fabrics.htm>. Scroll down the page to the second set of cotton fabrics, and look for fabric #493. You have to buy a minimum amt of fabric from them. They don't call this fabric Kona, but it's much like it and very high quality. This is their cotton #493, their, 60 x 60 cotton sheeting, at \$4.39/m, sold by the meter, not by the yard. It's 55" wide. 60 x 60 refers to thread count in the weave. It's slightly heavier than the Kona I was getting from Lunn Fabrics, who closed down in 2005, and it takes airpen applied fabric paint line absorption really well for writing. What's really good is that if you buy in quantity, it comes on a big roll, so there are no creases to iron out.

Test Fabrics info 2008:

email [info@testfabrics.com](mailto:info@testfabrics.com)

phone (570) 603 0432

hours 8-4 M-F Eastern Time

Prices in 2008 for (Kona) 493 and 493U follow: measured in m (meters)

1-9 m @ \$4.79/m

10-24 m @ \$4.39/m

25-49 m @ \$3.99/m

50-99 m @ \$3.59/m

100+ m @ \$3.19/m





St Theresa Textile Trove in Cincinnati, OH, is my favorite real fabric store! Their site is [www.sttheresatextile.com](http://www.sttheresatextile.com). I would CALL them to order Robert Kaufman Kona PFD. 513-333-0399 or 800-236-2450. [info@sttheresatextile.com](mailto:info@sttheresatextile.com), You won't have to buy a minimum amount of fabric. But it's a lot more expensive and will need to have the fold crease ironed out. The photo above is of St Theresa owner Becky Hancock and me, taken in early April, 2011, when I had my solo show at the Spring International Quilt Festival in Cincy.

Also Dharma Trading Company has Kona (but not from Robert Kaufman) cotton PFD. (But it's not as nice as Robert Kaufman's Kona Cotton PFD.)

<http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/823971-AA.shtml?lnav=fabric.html>

In 2011 prices were: #KC60 \$7.15 to \$8.45/yd. (Price depends on quantity ordered.) 59" w (they say 60")

Dharma says: Our Kona Cotton is a quilter's dream fabric! One of our best selling cottons, this fabric takes dye as if it were mercerized. It's very reasonably priced considering its quality, strength, weight, and softness. Let's face it, you don't come across a great value like this every day!

#### Fabric Details

- 100% cotton
- 4.4 oz per square yard, 60" wide
- Thread count is 60 threads per inch x 60 threads per inch
- Dyes up amazingly with Our Fiber Reactive Dyes
- Suggested usage; for quilting, tops, blouses, dresses, children's clothing etc.
- We found that this shrinks 3% in Length and 5% in Width disclaimer
- Fabric has a soft luscious feel and smooth surface
- Available in cut yardage ( bulk discounts levels at 10+ yds.) and in 30 yard bolts
- Machine wash in any temperature water

Made in: THAILAND (TH)



Or you can buy from online suppliers like this one: <http://www.onlinefabricstore.net/broadcloth-fabric/cotton-broadcloth-fabric/bleach-white-kona-cotton-broadcloth-fabric-.htm> Theirs is \$4.80/yd or less, depending on quantity ordered, in 2011.



**Backing fabrics:** My favorite fabric makers are Lunn Fabrics: Deborah Lunn and Michael Mrowka. They now design for Robert Kaufman exclusively, so you have to order their lovely batiks online at [http://www.robertkaufman.com/fabrics/artisan\\_batiks/](http://www.robertkaufman.com/fabrics/artisan_batiks/) They have a huge selection of their designs there. I often use much more subtle fabric patterns than the classic Lunn turtles here, as I like to write on the borders of my pieces, and the bright or dark fabrics aren't good for writing - too much competition with the design. So I buy lots of light to medium mottled batiks or tie dyes from Lunn Fabrics or from other sources, when I run across fabrics I want for backings. Of course, I only use cotton cloth that's woven, not knitted. Small pieces, like the fat quarter size works we do in classes, often have just one fabric on back, but my very large art quilts usually have many different fabrics sewn together on the back. I love to see how they interact.

**Recycled paper sketchbooks:** Short of saving the blank-back-sided junk mail you get and making your own sketchbooks, you

can find lots of really nice recycled paper sketchbooks now, even ones made with wind power!

Here's one page of cool recycled paper sketchbooks, but look around! [http://www.utrechtart.com/dsp\\_view\\_products.cfm?classID=1601&subclassID=160104&brandname=Utrecht](http://www.utrechtart.com/dsp_view_products.cfm?classID=1601&subclassID=160104&brandname=Utrecht)

A girl (or a guy) really needs to keep drawing paper and pens, colored pencils, markers, etc, around a LOT! OH, and USE THEM!!!



## Threads:



For machine work I use Aurifil threads. <http://www.aurifil.com/Aurifil/Home.html> I like the 50 weight Cotton Mako thread and also the 40 weight, but you can't get as much of that on a bobbin as the 50 weight. The sheen on this thread, and the amazing color selection are breathtaking! And it seems to work really well, regardless of the tension needed on your machine for the fabric being sewn. Magical stuff!

For the hand sewing I do around the border edges of my pieces, I use Laura Wasiloski's hand dyed perle cotton #5 threads. Her variegations are mouth watering and stunning! She even has great artsy names for each color way. Check out <http://artfabrik.com/store/threads.html> Here are a few of Laura's colors of perle cotton:



Batting: I use Fairfield Processing's Nature-fil batting, which is 50% bamboo and 50% organic cotton. <http://www.fairfieldworld.com/product/47>



**Sewing machines:** What matters is that you have a walking foot, and if you want to do large pieces, look for a machine that has a wider throat than normal home sewing machines. My little 1990 Pfaff top-of-the-line #1473 has a normal throat, but a great little built-in walking foot, and a wonderful built-in needle threader.



My 2008 Janome Memory Craft 6600 Professional (MC6600P) has a wider throat by at least 2", a powerful walking foot (said to be the best in the industry), and a good built-in needle threader. I like Janome's top-loading bobbin. Both machines have the needle-down feature, and though they both do a lot of fancy stitches, I just care about their really good straight stitching. Keep your machine tuned up and cleaned out.



**Airpen:** <http://www.silkpaint.com/airpen/ap-selection.htm> Silk Paint is the small, family company who invented the airpen. I buy from them, to help make sure they can always be in business! :) The airpen kit includes 6 cartridges and plungers, 6 foam plugs, an assortment of tips and caps, the airpen itself, an air pump and airline, and a pad for the pump, with foam cartridge holders.

I use the basic airpen model, not the studio or pro model, because the simplest one is all that we need for use with fabric paint. Airpens are used for applying many other media, as well. Consider adding 6 or more needles, size 23 gauge steel, to your first order, because you only get one with the airpen's tips selection. You can order more cartridges later, when the ones you have get too hard to easily glide the plunger through, for cleaning.



**Paint strainer for airpen work (I consider this a necessity):** Only source I know of: Dick Blick art supplies

[http://www.dickblick.com/zz269/22/products.asp?param=0&ig\\_id=1477](http://www.dickblick.com/zz269/22/products.asp?param=0&ig_id=1477)

product # 26922-1609 Paint Strainer, Size 60

\$5.39 each online. I suggest that you order three, all size #60, so you can use dry ones each time you fill your airpen, and so you have spares.

The shipping will probably be the same, whether you order one or more.

To order: (800) 828-4548



**Airbrush:** I use an Aztek A470 double action airbrush, especially when I make my very large paintings for my gallery pieces. But I only teach airbrush painting at my studio at home, not at any classes I teach elsewhere. If you're interested in it, you can buy it from Dick Blick at <http://www.dickblick.com/products/aztek-model-a470-double-action-airbrush-kits/>





“Heal the Gulf #1” ©Susan Shie 2010. 15”h x 15”w. This was my 2010 SAQA auction donation. It includes all the processes I teach in my workshops, except airbrush, which I only teach at Turtle Art Camp in my home studios.