

How to Paint a Wedding Scarf

by Arati Devasher



Custom scarves have always been a large part of my silk painting work. In bringing a client's vision to life lies the greatest challenge and sweetest reward. This scarf was made for a lookbook photoshoot by the wedding collective London Local Weddings.



All the makers participating in the photoshoot were given a brief and a moodboard to follow for 'Emily and Daniel,' who would be portrayed by models. The theme was Botanical meets Industrial – the moodboard included mixed metallics, industrial materials, lots of greenery and botanical plants with an overgrown but delicate vibe. ~

Materials

- » An original design of your own

Art Supplies & Auxiliaries

- » A silk scarf or length of silk fabric that you will hem later - use Prepared for Dyeing (PFD) fabric
- » Scrap piece of silk - to test your dye colours
- » Jacquard Auto Fade Pen - to trace your text
- » Jacquard gutta in a colour of your choice - metallic is best for this sort of design
- » Jacquard red or green label Silk Colors dye - steam-fix dyes, not iron-fix paints, there is a difference
- » Jacquard soy wax flakes
- » Jacquard Synthrapol detergent
- » White vinegar
- » Water in a jar - to clean your brushes

Tools

- » A computer, printer and paper (optional) - to create and print your text
- » Silk painting frame and clips in the correct size - so your fabric can be stretched taut
- » Small jars for mixing your dye - these should be airtight if you want to store the dye in them
- » Natural fiber brushes for dye - watercolour brushes work well
- » Squirrel hair brush for the hot wax - do not use the dye brushes for wax, and vice versa
- » Wax melting pot with a thermostat - to control the temperature
- » Wax thermometer (recommended) - to control wax temperature
- » Kitchen roll (paper towels) - to wipe up spills and to hold under your brush so you don't drip wax or dye
- » Gloves - if you don't want to stain your hands
- » Old newspapers or blank newsprint / steamer paper
- » A homemade or commercial steamer for silk (you can send this to a professional to steam if you wish)
- » Brown paper
- » Masking tape
- » A sink with running hot and cold water
- » A towel - not one that is used for personal hygiene
- » Iron and ironing board

Optional

- » Pegs or bulldog clips - to clip your silk and trace your text
- » Small thermofax screen with your logo on it
- » Hang tag
- » Gift box, tissue and ribbon



About the Artist



Arati Devasher fell in love with silk painting the first time she tried it. She makes luxury painted silk accessories – scarves, ties, jewelry. Born and raised in India, she now lives and works in north London.

Learn more about Arati and her work:
<https://aratidevasher.co.uk>

Instagram: @adevasher
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To create a successful commemorative scarf, three things are essential.

Firstly, decide on the material: it should be a robust silk of not less than 6-8 momme weight (the way thickness of silk is measured). This is so that it will take rough handling and last down the years even if worn often. Thinner materials tend to tear or fray easily. This is even more important if the scarf is going to be framed or displayed rather than worn.

Secondly, choose a size – standard pre-hemmed scarves are usually the best to use, but if you're intending to display the piece, use fabric off the roll in a size you're happy with – the larger the size, the more difficult (or expensive) it is to paint, frame or display it. For wearable scarves, 90cm square or 45x180cm long are the most popular sizes. These give you enough space to add text and your design without overcrowding.

Lastly, think about your design and the person you're making it for. Create a plan to follow so it's easier to think about colours, patterns and the steps you have to follow. I usually paint on the go, but for scarves like this one, I always do a mockup beforehand, and then improvise while painting if I need to. Dyes are unpredictable and spills or mistakes inevitable. ~



Here's the design that I came up with for the lookbook photoshoot (above) – it's an Adobe Photoshop mockup, that I used to set the approximate colours. I used metallic gutta for the text, and painted the pattern using a modified batik technique with hot soy wax and dye in multiple layers.

Here is the finished scarf. It's 45x180cm long, and the silk is Habotai 8 momme. As you can see, it looks similar but not identical to the mockup... the crucial part of painting silk is to go with your instinct about colours and pattern while you are painting.



Directions

1. Print the design out as a reference. Pre-wash the silk scarf using Synthrapol or any other mild detergent. Then soak it in vinegar-water for about 15 minutes. Don't wring it out, just lay it on a towel to blot out the excess water and then air dry. Iron it once it's completely dry.



Trace or draw your text directly onto your fabric.

2. Print out your text in the trace onto the fabric (see left). If your printer only prints A4 sheets, use the 'tile' feature to print on several sheets and then join them together. You can choose to draw directly on the silk if you're using a handwritten style but do double check to make sure you haven't made any spelling mistakes.
3. Attach the silk to a board to keep it from moving too much and then carefully trace the text using the temporary ink pen. It's important to do this within an hour or so, before the temporary pen fades out.
4. Once the tracing is complete, stretch the silk on a frame to keep it taut, so that it's almost like painting on canvas.

5. Carefully use gutta to fill out the letters. I used gold gutta. You can use a combination of applicator and brush. I used the applicator to get clean outlines, and then filled in with the applicator and a brush. Make sure you get an even coating. Be quick but tidy. Work from left to right so the back of your hand never accidentally touches the wet gutta. If you're left-handed, work from right to left.

Use a ruler to rest your arm on if the scarf is wide or your hand shakes like mine does. It can be quite tiring holding the applicator and applying even pressure over an extended period of time.

When you're done with the text, let the gutta dry completely. Depending on how thick the layer is, it may be best to leave it overnight. The first part of the scarf is complete.



Jacquard's Green Label dyes. Mix for different concentrations.

Always test your colours on a small piece of silk stretched in an embroidery frame (bottom right). Dry the dye quickly with a fan or hairdryer so you can see the final colour. Colours always seem darker when wet so beware.

7. Paint the lightest colour onto the silk. You can choose to paint so that the dye dries a flat colour, or shade it. I painted it flat on the first layer. Don't saturate the fabric too much, or it won't take the next layer of dye well. Be sparing but not stingy with the dye. Paint around the gutta – the dye can stain it if it's painted over.
8. Let it dry completely; my scarves usually take about an hour or two to dry enough to paint the next layer. If you wish to hasten the process, use a fan or hair dryer, but be wary that this may cause some areas to dry faster and cause unsightly marks on the dye.

NOTE: From this point on, make sure you have very dry hands when you touch the scarf, and don't bring any liquids other than the next layer of dye near it. Water can ruin your hard work. It can also be used to your advantage to create patterns on the dye, but that's another tutorial for another time.

This is what my scarf looked like at this stage (see below).

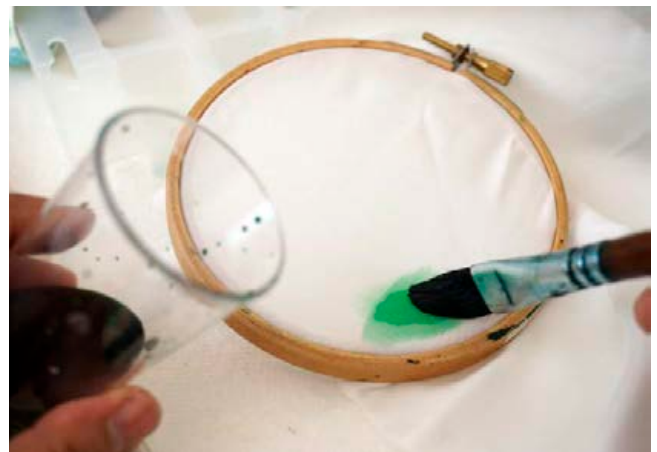


6. Next, it's time to mix your dyes and choose the final colours for the scarf. You'll be painting in layers, so think about how dyes will look when placed one on top of the other. They're translucent, so blue on top of yellow will give you green, pink on top of red will give you a reddish-pink, and so on. Think in reverse... lighter colours go on first, then darker tones.

I used Jacquard's Green Label dyes – Kelly Green, Cyan and Yellow mixed together in different concentrations to get the particular shades of green I wanted. I also mixed in some Royal Blue to get deeper shades for the second and third layer.



Measure amount of colour and water you put into each mixture so that you can repeat it if necessary.



Testing colour prior to application on project.



Make sure you know what you have to paint with wax.

- Heat your soy wax (or batik wax). Use the instructions on the packet to judge heat, and do not let it get so hot it smokes. I use a wax thermometer to keep it at the right temperature. It is dangerous when it goes above its melting point. Wax is usually ready to use when it goes transparent and all the flakes have melted. In the image of my wax pot, you can see that the wax near the brush is ready to use, while the wax to the left of the pot is not yet hot. Be patient and wait until it's all at the right temperature.

At this point, take a look at your design, make sure you know what you have to paint with wax (left).

- Once your wax is heated, paint the first layer of the design on to the silk. To the right, you can see that the circles and some leaves were designed to remain light green. So I painted those on in wax to preserve those areas.

You should be able to paint over the gutta with wax, I have not found that it affects it much. Since I wanted the leaves to overlap the text, I left spaces in the gutta work, since dye will not cover gutta opaquely. This is all part of your overall design and can be planned beforehand.



These circles and leaves were designed to remain light green.

- Next, mix the dyes for the next layer of colour. Test it over the first colour swatch to see how it will affect the overall colour you painted (shown left).

The soy wax dries almost immediately. Give it about ten minutes to completely set, and then paint on the next colour. When doing this, remember to always have a wet edge to the dye. The dry dye underneath will 'move' when the wet dye is placed on top and if you want a flat colour, you'll need to be really careful not to get patches where the dye dries before you get to the next section.

NOTE: You can paint over the soy wax if you like to get a little texture on those areas. The dye will soak through the water-soluble wax. This may not happen if you are using traditional batik wax (beeswax or paraffin wax). Don't leave too much dye on the wax for too long, and wipe away the excess with a cloth or paper towel very gently.



Mix next layer dyes and test it over the first colour swatch.



- Here's what the scarf looks after the second layer of dye (above). You can see that I have some texture in the second layer of dye. This was intentional to create some depth and a feeling of movement. Leave it to dry, the same way you did the first layer. The second layer of wax can then be applied to the scarf. Again, consult your design so you know what you need to do. Leave the wax to set for 10 minutes.



13. Mix the third layer of dye. This should usually be the last and darkest layer. Most light silks won't take any more dye than this, and a lot of the dye will come out in the post-steaming wash and may stain the rest of the scarf.
14. Paint on the third layer of dye in the same manner as the first and second. You won't have to worry much about patches because most of the scarf is now covered in wax and you'll have smaller sections to paint in.

You may choose to stop here. I added one more layer of wax and dye for depth, using a slightly darker colour than the layer before.



15. The painting of the scarf is now complete. Leave it overnight to 'rest'.
16. The last step before fixing the dyes is to iron off the wax. Most often, I will leave the wax on the scarf and let it come off in the steaming. However, when there are two or more layers, not everything steams off and ensuring the wax doesn't leak through to the next scarf can waste a lot of paper. So, ironing now will take off most of the wax and what is left will come off on the paper that is wrapped around the scarves while steaming. You can see here how much wax is on the silk at this stage. For this scarf I chose to remove the wax before steaming.



Place the scarf between two sheets of blank newsprint paper and iron on slightly hotter than silk setting. DO NOT USE STEAM.



Here you can see the difference between the waxed area and the part where the wax has been removed.

17. Place the scarf between two sheets of blank newsprint paper and iron on slightly hotter than silk setting (as shown above left). DO NOT USE STEAM. You can use newspaper, but make sure it's at least a week or two old so that the ink doesn't come off onto the newly painted scarf. Once the paper is saturated, remove it. If you can still feel wax on the scarf use a fresh sheet and iron again. Be careful, the silk and wax may be hot and cause burns. If not, move on to the next section of the scarf.



Wrap the layered silk around a “core,” tape shut and hang the roll in the steamer.

19. Steam for 2-4 hours. It depends entirely on the dyes you’re using. I steam for 4 hours because of multiple layers of paper and scarves. It may also depend on the weather and altitude at which you live. Experiment before you do the final scarf. Experience is the only way to find out.
20. Once you’re done, carefully remove the scarf from the steamer; unroll – again, be wary, it can be very, very hot. Let the scarf ‘rest’ again overnight.

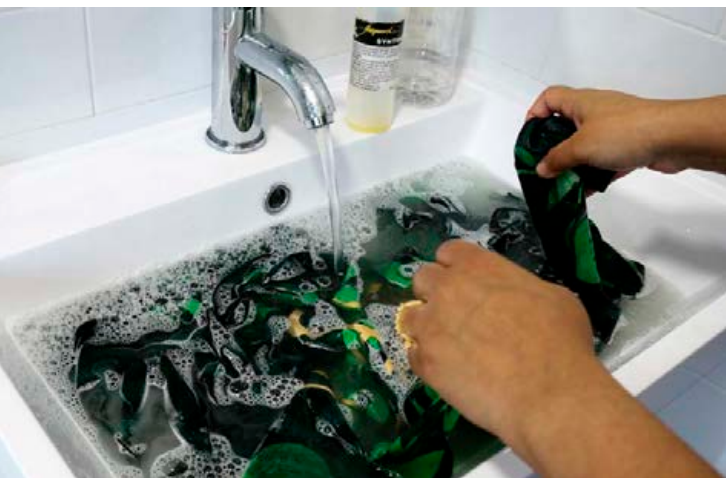
18. Now it’s time to steam. You can steam multiple scarves at once (shown at left). Just make sure that you put at least one layer of paper between them.
 - a. Wrap the layered silk around a ‘core’. I use a simple roll of brown paper. It’s to make sure that there’s space in the middle of the roll for the steam to go through.
 - b. Once that’s done, wrap a short sheet of brown paper around the whole roll. This prevents condensation from getting in to the susceptible newsprint paper.
 - c. Tape shut. You can hang this directly in the steamer, or use a cotton bag like I do.

NOTE: I use a vertical steamer that my husband made for me. You could also steam in a pot on the stove but I have found that the wrinkles created are hard to remove when using this method. Jacquard has steamers for sale, and Dharma Trading also has instructions on their website for home-made steamers. The key is for the steam to reach at least 80°C, be contained inside the container (not leak out) and for the scarf to be kept away from water or condensation (freely suspended in the steamer), which can ruin it before it’s even had a chance at life.

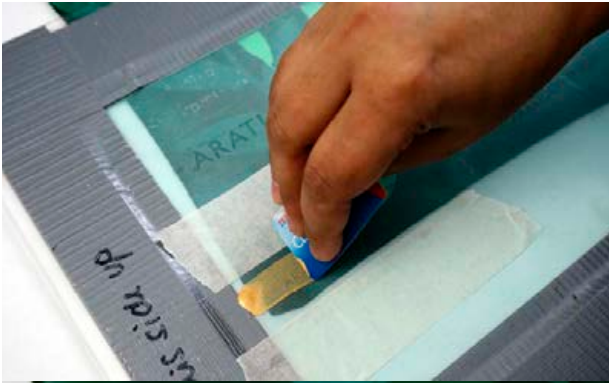


After steaming, carefully unroll and allow to rest overnight.

21. The next day, wash the scarf gently in running cool water. Add a little Synthrapol or mild detergent. You’ll have some dye runoff and also some wax floating to the surface of the water. Once the water runs clear, use warm water to make sure all the wax is taken out.
22. Gently squeeze the water out, don’t wring or twist the silk. Do the last rinse with some vinegar – about half a cup in sink full of water. Scrunch to get most of the water out, and then lay flat on a towel to partially dry it.
23. Iron on silk setting while it’s still damp, but not sopping wet. Be gentle.



The next day, follow washing instructions.



24. At this point, you can sign your scarf if you wish. Because I have my own brand, I screen print my logo in a corner using gutta and then add my hang tag. You can have your own little screen made or just do a freehand signature with gutta. Use the same colour gutta as your text, it will look more cohesive.

I also add my brand's hang tag to the scarf.

The scarf is done!



You can view photographs of the London Local Weddings lookbook shoot here:
<http://blog.aratidevasher.co.uk/the-custom-made-botanical-wedding-scarf-featured-on-boho-weddings-blog/>

I hope you enjoyed this tutorial. Here's an example of a square scarf in a similar style. The possibilities are endless. Please send me photographs of what you make at info@aratidevasher.co.uk. ~

