

What is Pigment?

Things to think about

RELATED TO RHONDA'S PIGMENT PATCHWORK TECHNIQUES



Introduction

If you have ever thought about using pigments to color on fabric, you may have discovered that it is a huge topic to try to master. Where do I start? What do I need to know? What do I even mean when I say the word *Pigment*?



My most serious journey in the use of pigments on fabrics began in 2013. I had been on a guided safari tour in Kenya, East Africa in 2011. The small group in our safari vehicle decided



to create a special Round-Robin quilt project to celebrate the trip. I wanted to add my special touch to each quilt top piece I contributed and decided to use colored pencils. Using photographs as a reference, I created original pigment drawings on fabric. Now, that project was a learning experience! However, I was hooked! I loved what I could do with pigment on fabric!

Over the years, I have continued experimenting with pigments on fabric, learning and refining my techniques. And I will tell you that I have yet to try out all the pigments that are out there!

I call my techniques "Pigment Patchwork". It is loosely defined as using pigments on fabric, including whole-cloth, pieced, appliqué or collage, along with stitching, to create depth and dimension.

Mark Twain said "There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages."

And so here is a part of my kaleidoscope! I have been teaching my techniques for over 15 years. This short guide is an example of the culmination of my experiences and knowledge gleaned from classes I have taken and taught, research I have done as well as life lessons. My goal is to help get you started on your Pigment journey!

Enjoy!

Key Points to this eBook

- This little guide contains both high level concepts as well as in-depth details.
- You DO NOT need to have a lot of knowledge or background in art to use pigments effectively in your work! It is a skill that can be developed.
- Use this guide as a reference to plan your journey into the use of pigments on fabric. Have fun! We learn so much more when we are willing to play and experiment!



What is Pigment?

Pigment is defined in Wikipedia as *a colored material that is completely or nearly insoluble in water. In contrast, dyes are typically soluble, at least at some stage in their use. Generally, dyes are often organic compounds whereas pigments are often inorganic compounds.*

One of the Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions for the noun Pigment is: *a substance that imparts black or white or a color to other materials especially: a powdered substance that is mixed with a liquid in which it is relatively insoluble and used especially to impart color to coating materials (such as paints) or to inks, plastics, and rubber.*

Pigments made from iron oxides have been used as colorants since early humans began painting on cave walls.

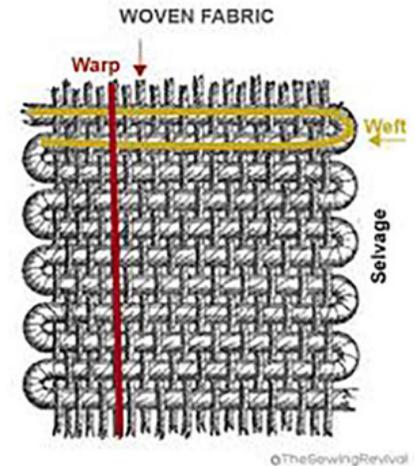
To help you understand the majority of the techniques that I have been using in my Pigment Patchwork projects, follow the distinction outlined by Wikipedia. Specifically, pigments are not dyeing. Dyeing is an entirely different approach than my use of pigments on fabric.

Fabric – How it can affect the use of Pigments

To understand how pigments and dyes react with fabric, we need to look at how woven fabric is made.

Fabric is made from fibers (natural or synthetic) that are formed into threads or yarn. Those are then woven together to make fabric.

You don't necessarily need to understand the details of warp and weft as they relate to weaving, or the type of weave system (plain (or tabby), twill and satin, or other weaving processes) that is used. However, those aspects can influence how pigments attach to fabric which, in turn, may affect how permanent pigments can be when they are applied to fabric.



Fabric Thread Count

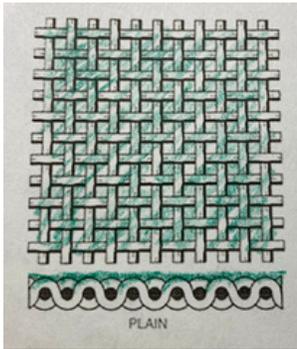
The fibers that make up woven fabric are usually classified by the number of lengthwise (warp) threads and then the widthwise (weft) threads. That is called a fabric's thread count or threads per inch (TPI).

TPI is an indication of the coarseness or fineness of fabric. Coarser fabrics are the looser or lower thread count; finer fabrics have a more dense or higher thread count. The content fibers that are used make the threads of the fabric can also influence or impact how well pigments adhere to it.

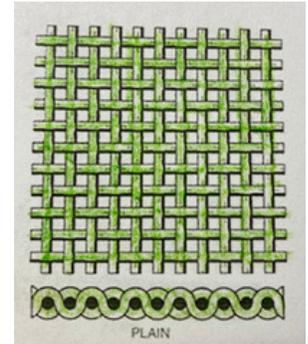
You should be aware of the "quality" of the fabrics you use in your Pigment Patchwork techniques, if for nothing else than to better understand if the results are not what you expect. My philosophy is that life, much like learning to use pigments, is a journey. So, have fun, take notes and experiment! You may just discover exactly the special technique you need for your project!

Basic differences between Pigments on Fabric and Dyeing Fabric

The drawing of plain woven fabric on the right side shows how dyed pigments are actually absorbed into the fibers of the threads.



The drawing on the left illustrates how coloring with pigments lays down the color on the surface of the thread fibers. There may be some absorption, but usually there is a need to bind the pigments to the fabric for permanency.



Hue versus Color

There are several different classifications of colors and many different terms that can be used to describe aspects (like hue, value, shade, tint, tone, saturation, richness, purity, chroma, intensity, etc.). For our purposes in using manufactured pigments to color on fabric, much of the details are only important if you want to blend and create your own colors. Hue is just one aspect of color.

So, for simplicity sake, **Color** is the general term we use to describe every hue, tint, tone or shade we see. White, Black and Gray (Grey) are often referred to as a color. **Hue** refers to the dominant Color Family of the specific color we're looking at. White, Black and Gray (Grey) are never referred to as a hue.

In many cases, people use the terms Color and Hue interchangeably, but clearly, they are also quite different. Does it matter? The terminology is not important with regard to Pigment Patchwork.

Want to Learn My Pigment Patchwork Techniques?

Now that I have stimulated your imagination with the definition of pigments, perhaps you are thinking about the possibilities of using pigments on fabric. It would be wonderful if you are interested in taking the next step in learning my Pigment Patchwork techniques!

There are some more fundamentals to cover, but I can help guide you on your creative journey. I have other eBooks about some of these basics. If you are interested in them, please contact me.

You can contact me using my email, Rhonda@RhondaDenney.com, or go to my website, www.RhondaDenney.com, for more information about my training and mentoring.

Let the journey begin!! Enjoy!

Rhonda