

For a number of years I have made quilts using white or neutral coloured fabrics with the view to adding colour to them after they have been finished.

To some this seems like madness, especially when faced with a beautiful white quilt! This isn't a problem for me because when I am working and planning the piece the final vision in my mind is coloured, not white.

Results are not always predictable – you can develop a rough idea as to how things will turn out because of the fabrics used and so on. Using pre-dyed fabrics to achieve contrast is an option, as is using man made fibres to keep colours that would otherwise be affected by the dyeing.

It needs to be noted that my pieces are dyed up to 6 to 8 times in order to achieve the depth of colour that suits me.

There are two methods.

## **1. Immersion Method**

- After making the quilt, wash to remove any sizing in the fabrics used. I usually wash at about 40°
- Mix up a dye bath of Procion Cold water dye and salt in the colour you wish to use. I am not giving specific quantities here and rely on your own knowledge to mix up a suitable dye bath of Procion cold water dye and salt to suit the size and weight of the quilt.
- Immerse the damp quilt into the dye bath and agitate well to remove all pockets of bubbles etc.
- After 15 minutes to ½ an hour add the soda ash to set the colour. Leave, occasionally stirring, for at least one hour.
- Remove, rinse thoroughly to wash out as much dye as possible.
- Wash using Sythrapol at a 40° or 60° wash
- Dry flat
- If the colour is not as deep as you require repeat the procedure, or alternatively add colour using the space dyeing method detailed below.

## **2. Space dyeing**

- After making the quilt, wash to remove any sizing in the fabrics used. I usually wash at about 40°
- Make up pots of dye solution using 1 generous/heaped teaspoon of dye powder to 1 litre of water which has ½ cup of cooking salt dissolved in hot water and allowed to cool
- I use 6 basic colours – 3 warm primaries (scarlet, blue violet and golden yellow) and 3 cold primaries (magenta, Turquoise and lemon yellow) with Brown Rose, black and Rust as supplements. See MX information below
- While the quilt is still damp lay it on a flat surface. If it is small enough this could be in the likes of a grow bag tray or gravel tray. With larger pieces I lay them onto a plastic sheet on the patio!

- Using large turkey basters put the dye onto the quilt. Because of the layers involved the dye will not flood through as quickly as it would on a single layer of fabric. This means that you can control the colour placement and blending of colour.
- Start with the palest colour (dye can be watered down to achieve paler colours) and gradually bring in other colours as required. Blend by easing in with your hands, or alternatively trample with your feet (wear suitable foot wear!) to ease the colours in.
- When the colour has been added to your satisfaction add a mixture of 3 heaped tablespoons soda ash to 1 litre of water over the surface of the quilt – use a turkey baster – and leave for an hour or longer.
- Rinse thoroughly to remove as much dye as possible. If laid out flat on the patio I turn the hose pipe onto it!
- Wash using Sythrapol at a 40° or 60° wash
- Dry flat
- If the colour is not as deep as you require repeat the procedure.
- ENJOY

### Recommended reading

Colour by Accident – Ann Johnston – ISBN 0-9656776-0-5

Dyeing in Plastic Bags – Helen Deighan – ISBN 0-9540333-0-2

Dyeing to Colour – Bailey Curtis – ISBN 0-9541419-0-3

### Kemtex references

Price list – Phone 01257 230220, web page [www.kemtex.co.uk](http://www.kemtex.co.uk))

Colour	Procion reference
Lemon Yellow	Procion Acid Lemon MX-8G
Golden Yellow	Procion Golden Yellow MX 3TR
Magenta	Procion Magenta Red MX-8B
Scarlet	Procion Orange Scarlet MX-G
Turquoise	Procion Bright Turquoise MX-G
Blue Violet	Procion Electric Blue MX-7RX
Brown Rose/Red Brown	Procion Red Brown MX-5BR
Rust	Kemtex 'Reactive' Rust CD
Black	Kenactive Black K2647