

Pastepaper Demo

Linda Stinchfield • *Book Arts Jam Special Edition, October 2005*

Pastepaper is paper that has been decorated by covering the surface with colored paste and drawing designs on it through the paste. Similar to finger painting, pastepaper is simple and fun to do.

The following recipe is one I got from Leigh McLellan's class at the San Francisco Center for the Book. There are many other recipes, and I've tried some. So far, this one has worked best for me.

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2 tbl. wheat flour 1 heaping tsp. powdered alum
3 tbl. rice flour Acrylic paints

1. Stir all dry ingredients together and add enough cold water to make a smooth paste the thickness of soft custard.
2. Add two cups of boiling water and cook until the paste thickens. Add another cup of boiling water, stirring constantly. When the paste thickens for the second time, strain into a bowl and allow to cool. (The paste may be kept, refrigerated, for several days, but after that it will begin to smell.)
3. Once the paste is prepared, divide it into smaller containers, one for each color you wish to work with. Add pigment in the form of acrylic paint, liquid or tube, and stir extremely well. You want about 1–2 tbl. paint to about 1/2 cup of paste. If the color looks thin when you start working with it, add more pigment. If the paste is too thick, add a bit of water. If the paste is too thin, allow it to dry a bit on the paper before beginning to work into it.
4. Any kind of paper will work if it can be wet without falling apart and is flexible enough for your end purpose. Colored paper works well. The paper should be wet before painting; either dip the paper and sponge off the excess or simply run a wet sponge over it. This allows the paper to relax and mitigates the frustration of curling paper.
5. Spread the paste and paint mixture onto the paper with a cheap bristle brush, foam brush, or sponge. Colors may be mixed or kept distinct. Create patterns using combs, kitchen or hardware tools, texturing tools, stamps, brayers with string wrapped around the roller, etc. Use your imagination. My current favorite tool is a cheap plastic fork. Make combed patterns, sponged patterns, and splatter patterns. Try folding the paper in half, then open it out for a "pulled" pattern. Lay one paper over another, face down, rub gently with the fingers or heel of your hand, then pull papers apart. Allow one pattern to dry, then add another layer of color and pattern. As the books say, the possibilities are endless.
6. Allow papers to dry flat. They may be ironed afterwards to flatten wrinkles and puckers. For bookbinding, I find that applying PVA glue to the back will relax them enough to create a smooth surface on binder's board.

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Other resources:

The Art of Making Paste Papers, Diane Maurer-Mathison, Watson-Guption Publications, New York, 2002

Paste Papers, Compiled by Marie Kelzer, *The Ampersand Resource Guide*, Vol. 20, Quarterly Journal of the Pacific Center for the Book Arts, San Francisco, Spring/Summer 2000

On Making Decorative Paste Papers, Carol J. Blinn, www.warwickpress.com

To see examples, go to www.turtlesilk.com/pastepaper_gallery/

