

Taking Tangling Off the Page On Fabric with Inktense Pencils

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I have been a multi-media artist for quite a while, gravitating to different media over the years; weaving, spinning, drawing, photography, quilting. I tend to come back to fibers/textiles in some form. One medium that has fascinated me for some years is the Derwent Inktense Pencil. I've used it on paper of different types, wood, canvas, and other substrates but I've come to really enjoy being able to wear or use the items that I draw on, i.e. functional art. So drawing on textiles and teaching the techniques has become a favorite for me.

Below is an example of one of the white t-shirts that I've embellished. The drawing/patterning style is Zentangle® inspired. If you are not familiar with Zentangle®, it is a meditational art process that encourages relaxation and focus through pattern drawing. Anyone who can hold a pen and make basic marks can manage the pattern 'tangles'. It is an easy way to put patterns on an art piece, like making your own coloring book. You learn relaxation and focus at the same time. Look up the website, take a class with an instructor, or find any of the many books on the subject for more information. www.zentangle.com.



The contour drawing on the textile is done with a good fabric pen and then colored with Derwent Inktense pencils and an activation medium.



Let's walk through the materials and techniques.

There are a number of considerations when drawing on and using the Inktense Pencils on textiles.

Fabrics: Fiber type, content, and thread count of the fabric used is important. I use only fabrics made from natural fibers. The finer the fabric, the finer the line you will make on the fabric. Obviously a t-shirt will hold a finer line than a heavy cotton canvas will. The manufacturer of the paints and inks that I've used in the past recommend 100% natural fibers such as cotton, cotton canvas, ramie, silk and linen. The colorant penetrates and binds with the natural fibers and becomes light and water proof/resistant. Whereas man-made fibers do not absorb the color, the color sits on top of the fiber and can be



much less colorfast. Derwent Inktense pencils work very well on 100% cotton fabrics, including cotton canvas. I would always recommend testing the media on whatever textile item you choose to use if it's new to you. Also, be aware that the color of the fabric will influence the brightness of the Inktense colors. I would recommend white or off-white as a fabric color. Most textile items advertised for dying could also be used for this technique.

Derwent Inktense pencils, indeed, have ink in the lead and will be permanent once dry. Preparation of the fabric does not require pre-washing, although you can if you wish. I have embellished finished textiles without washing (t-shirts, purses, etc), washed yardage and yardage that is prepared for dying (PFD) and all of them work well when colored with the Inktense pencils.

I recommend stabilizing the item with a water barrier. If you have a bag, t-shirt, or other embellishable item, there are different options for stabilizing. It depends on what you have, how heavy the fabric and the item. Methods I've used for stabilizing are freezer paper, glossy poster board, and foam core. One could also use a heavy poster board instead of foam core.



- 1–Freezer paper: I'm not sure about freezer paper in other countries, but in the US, freezer paper is slightly waxy and can be ironed onto the back or inside of a textile item. Quilters use this technique often to stabilize applique. The freezer paper acts as a water barrier also, for when you are activating the Inktense pencil. This is used on t-shirt or fine-medium weight fabrics.
- 2 – Foam core: Another option is to use a piece of foam core shaped for the item. I use this often for t-shirts, cases, purses, bags or yardage. I will then spray a temporary fixative on the foam core and attach the t-shirt to the sprayed foam core. It holds the fabric in place to draw on and acts as a water barrier when activating the color. This can be used on t-shirt or fine- medium weight fabrics or without an adhesive inside of a heavier fabric textile bag.
- Posterboard or mat board: If you have a textile item that can enclose something like a purse, book or other bag, pencil or makeup case, poster or mat board could be cut to appropriate size and placed inside the textile item.

Pens: I use the Inktense pencils as a colorant for the contour drawings I put on the fabric item with fabric pens. I have tried many different pens and do have a few favorites. I use almost exclusively black pens for contour drawing.

- Pentel's Gel Roller for Fabric – is an outstanding pen that rolls onto fabric very smoothly and does not bleed. It is very black, very light fast and holds up to washing very well. It is my favorite for doing contour drawing on fabric.

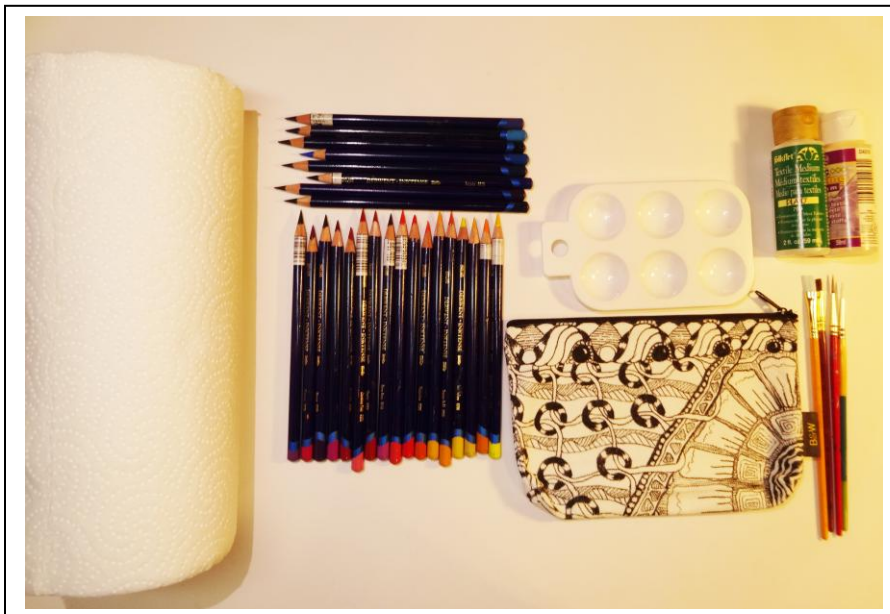
- Sakura's Identi-pen is my other go-to pen. The pen is larger than the Pentel and is a dual point pen with a fine and brush point. Both this pen and the Pentel are very stable and do not bleed
- Other pens include the Tsukineko Fabrico markers. These are a good pen but you need to have a light hand or they tend to bleed.



If you plan to use other pens than the above, test for permanency and bleeding. Do not skip this step if you are not sure how the pen will perform. A little time spent before you start will result in a much more satisfactory outcome.

Other Tools: There are a few other tools you will need when you start applying color.

- Brushes – I like using #2 - #4 round and flat brushes to apply medium to the color or to wet the color and apply directly from the pencil
- Paper towel – Always keep some sheets of paper towel around to dab off excess medium before activating the InkTense color. Less medium is better.
- Paint palettes to hold the medium and mix colors.
- Scraps of paper or fabric to try out color blends.



Tips for working with textiles:

We've already talked about stabilizing the textile. I've a couple other tips for working with textiles.

- Protect your work surface and your clothes when working with the Inktense Pencils. It is ink after all and will stain. I often will block off certain areas of a textile if I want to protect it with a painter's tape. And I use a craft mat to cover my work surface.
- Make sure the textile is clean and dry. I like using new textiles rather than used ones but that's me.
- If it is a 3 dimensional object, like a pencil case or something that would work better if not flat, it may work better to stuff the object with a waterproof material like plastic bags.



Draw: Now, draw the image you want on the item and heat set the pen drawing. Then you are ready to apply the Derwent Inktense Pencil.

Coloring with Derwent Inktense Pencils

Inktense pencils can be used like colored pencils, but their most amazing qualities come into play when the color is activated with water or another medium. Their colors become brilliant with a light of transparency like a very intense watercolor. But since they are inks, the colors are permanent once dry. The permanency of the Inktense color once dry is of a distinct advantage since it allows for color overlay of multiple layers such as a watercolor medium will not. Inktense allows for over washing or color building on top of the previous color. It is, however, also a quality to be cautious of. Unlike watercolor, Derwent Inktense color cannot be rewet in order to mix color later on. If you intend to mix or blend the colors while working with them, it needs to be done before the area you are working in dries.

Important Suggestion: I recommend making a color swatch sample board on some watercolor paper. Draw a rectangle with permanent ink for each Inktnense color and label each one. Color each rectangle with the appropriate Intense pencils. Leave half of the colored rectangle dry and activate the other half with water, so there you have a sample of how each pencil looks dry and activated.

Application:

Use of mediums: Inktnense colors are absolutely brilliant when activated. On paper, one uses water to activate the color. Water is not a good medium for activation on fabric as it bleeds into the fabric very easily. I much prefer other more controllable activation mediums.



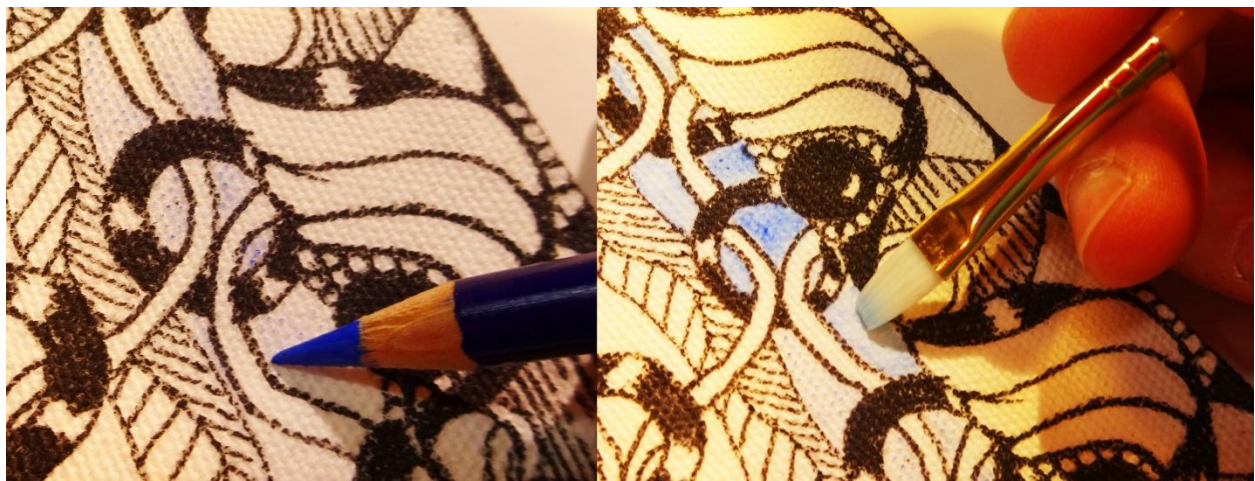
Textile medium – there are many manufacturers of textile medium and most of them work very similarly. I regularly use 3 or 4 different brands. It depends on what is available where you are. I use a flat #3 or #4 brush to brush on the medium after application of the Inktnense color. Use the medium sparingly, I dab off the brush on paper towel before I touch it to the color so as not to have a big blob of medium. It can bleed if you use a large brushful.

Clear Aloe Vera gel – there are many manufacturers of Aloe Vera gel. You need one without colorant and 100% Aloe Vera. It is brushed on and acts as a wet medium to activate the color. It is very controllable. You must, however, be careful to use it sparingly also. If you have puddles of it, when it dries, it can flake off with the color.

Both above mediums should be heat set. The Aloe Vera gel should be washed out after it is heat set. The acrylic textile medium will, depending on how viscous the medium is, slightly change the hand of the fabric. I tend to use the fabric medium as I can control the color blending a bit more dependably.

Inktense Pencils:

- **Dry on Dry Method.-** Using the Inktense pencils similarly to coloring with a colored pencil affords great control, using a dry pencil on dry fabric. One can color an area and then add additional colors as desired. After coloring, the activation medium is applied with a brush to make the color pop. I often use this method because I can easily attain very light colors as well as very dark colors. The biggest disadvantage to this is, the Inktense color looks very different when it is applied dry as compared to when it has been activated with a wet medium. So it is hard to know when you start, what color you are going to have before you activate the color. Therefore, it is of advantage to create your sample board with solid colors and have some scrap paper or scrap fabric around to try different color blends before committing pencil to textile.



- **Wet on Dry Method** – One can attain very intense color by wetting the medium prior to applying to dry fabric.
 - Wet a brush with the medium of choice and take the color from the tip of the pencil and then apply to dry fabric. This method allows you to see what the color is going to be right away and the color is usually very strong.
 - The pencil itself can also be dipped into the medium and then drawn onto the fabric. This is my least favorite method as it seems to waste a large amount of lead.Both of the wet on dry methods will leave a coating of medium on the lead and once it dries, one has to sharpen the lead again to use it.
**Be aware, , one must let the lead dry before sharpening as moistening the lead does weaken it until it dries.



- **Wet/Dry on Wet** – one can also wet the fabric prior to applying either dry or wet color with a brush and then apply the color with a brush into the medium, allowing for nice blends. This is the method I work with most often with heavier fabrics like the canvas pencil case that is the example used for this article. Canvas resists the wet medium and color more than lighter fabrics do so it's easier to lay down a layer of medium and then add color blends without bleeding.

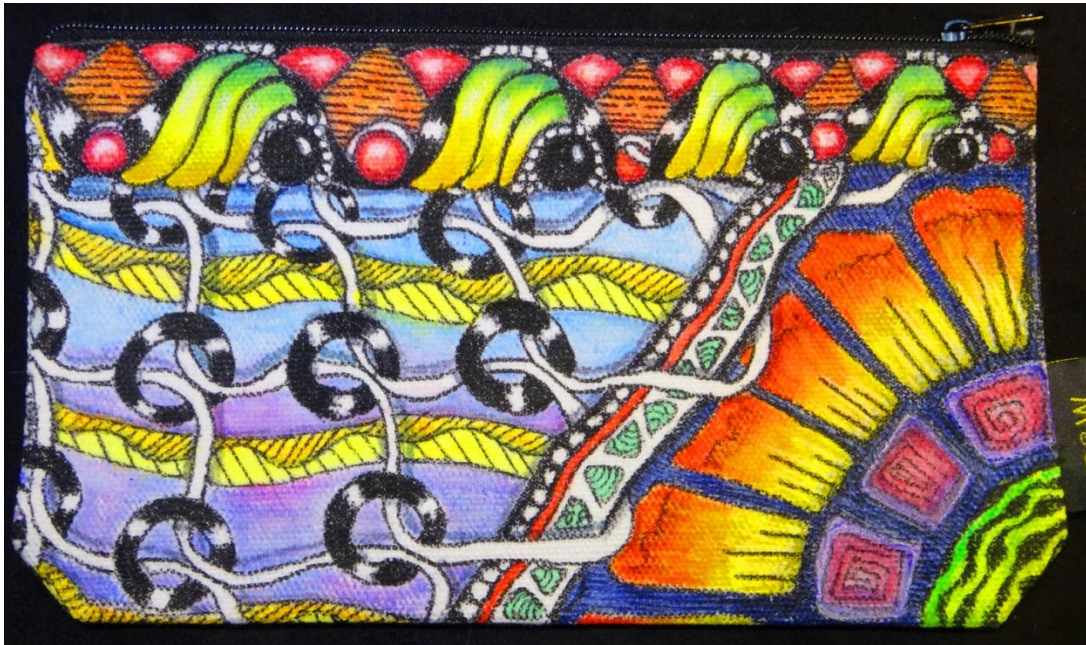
Finishing the textile–

In this style of drawing, shading is very important for the 3 dimensional effect.

For black and white parts of the drawing, I use one of the several grey fabric markers available. On colored drawings, I will often use a darker color in the analogous range of the main color of the area to shade.

To finish and care for the textile object, I heat set everything again and generally I'll rinse out or lightly wash the textile object. Although the colors will withstand machine washing, in order to prolong the life of the piece, if it is a piece that needs to be washed regularly, like a t-shirt, I will hand wash the piece and hang to dry.

I wish you the best with these techniques and would love to see what you have discovered and completed in your art journeys.



Other examples: I have embellished many different things; shoes, shirts, hats, sunshades, glasses cases, bags of many different sizes and shapes, pencil/makeup cases, onesies, bibs. Here are a few.

