

# How to Silk Paint Banners:

## A full Achievement for an SCA Pelican



by Lady Dairine mor o' uHigin and  
Mistress Morgana

Though silk was used in many ways during the Renaissance and banners were often painted with heraldry, so far, we have not discovered any evidence that Serti painted silk banners were used in period to display heraldry. Heraldic banners were usually painted in oil tempera on linen. When made of silk, they were applied or embroidered. However, brightly painted silk banners have become popular and are an excellent way of displaying heraldry in the SCA that is in keeping with our theme.

The Serti (closing the fence) technique of silk painting requires using some kind of resist to create a barrier to keep the dye from running into surrounding areas. Resists can be waterbased gutta, acrylic, or rubber (latex) gutta, or wax (batik) based. It needs to be applied with a bottle fitted with a small tube so that the resist can be extruded like decorating with cake icing. This creates a thick enough barrier to stop the flow through the fibers and from flowing over the line.

In this lesson I guide Mistress Morgana in creating a banner of her full achievement of arms. That means that her arms are displayed with the helmet, mantling, cap of maintenance, crest, supporters, motto, and dependent awards. There is so much heraldry that it could make a whole lesson by itself, so we will leave that to those more learned in these matters.

### Materials and Tools

Most of these items can be purchase at [www.dharmatrading.com](http://www.dharmatrading.com).

To do this project you will need—

- ✂ 35" by 35" Habatoi (10mm) scarf
- ✂ Dye-na-flow Silk Paint in as many colors as you wish
- ✂ Black and gold acrylic craft paint
- ✂ Round watercolor brushes
- ✂ Cheap Sumi (bamboo) brushes
- ✂ Eyedroppers
- ✂ Small squeeze bottles with metal tips
- ✂ Small plastic cups or lids
- ✂ 40" long 3/4" wooden dowel
- ✂ Synthrapol detergent



For stretching the cloth—

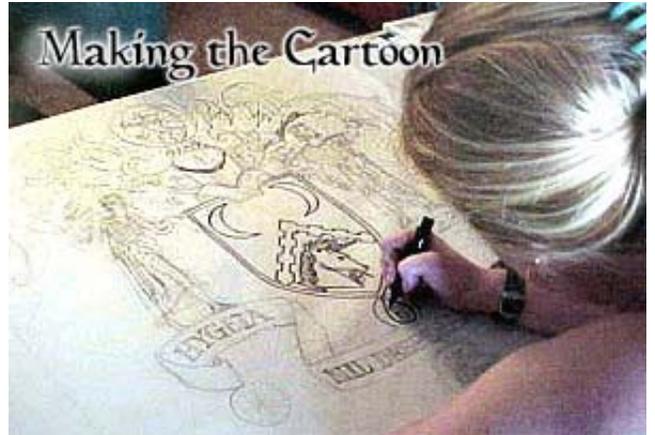
- ✂ A wood, PVC, or metal frame 48" by 48"
- ✂ Rubber bands
- ✂ Binder clips or tacks (optional)
- ✂ Masking tape
- ✂ Straight pins

Habatoi is a type of silk and 10mm refers to how many threads per millimeter. Your colors will be brighter on higher thread count silk. Dye-na-flow is paint that behaves like a dye but is much easier to use. You can set the "dye" with heat from an iron or dryer. Real dyes need very hot steam heat and additional "mordants" to set the dye.

Dye-na-flow is nearly as bright as a real dye, comes off your hands with soap and water, and is less expensive, too.

### Preparation

Step 1. Wash your silk scarf with Synthrapol detergent. This product is formulated to remove all traces of grease from the fabric and make it more accepting to the dye. Use one capful to a sink full of water and agitate for a few minutes. Rinse all of the soap out of the silk and hang to dry. Silk dries very quickly.



- Step 2. Iron the cloth smooth and set aside.
- Step 3. Draw your design full size on a large piece of paper. This is called the "cartoon." If you like, use pictures enlarged with a computer or photocopier. Tape all of your elements together to form the design then trace and refine the cartoon. Wash your hands of any pencil or ink smudges before handling the silk.



- Step 4: Tape the cartoon to a table or other flat surface. Lay the silk over the cartoon and position it carefully. Tip: mark the center of the cartoon and where you want the center on the silk as a point of reference. Tape the corners of the silk to the table, stretching the fabric as you do. Tape down the sides without stretching the fabric out of shape. It needs to be taut or the silk will slip around as you trace, but, if you stretch it unevenly, the tracing will be misshapened when released.
- Step 5: Trace the outlines onto the silk with a No. 2 pencil. (Regular wooden pencil) Remove the tape from the silk.

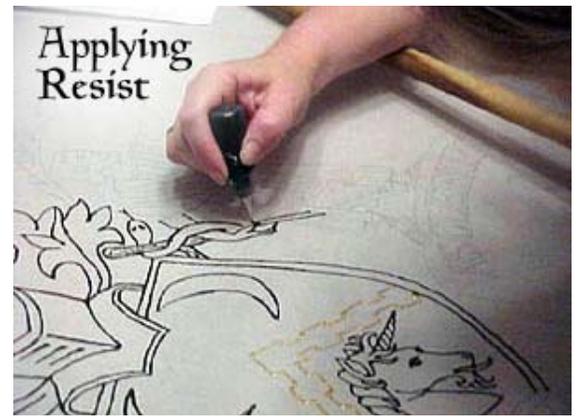


### Stretching the silk

Step 1: You will need a lightweight frame about 10 inches bigger than the silk. In this case we made a frame out of perforated angle iron purchased at Home Depot in 6 ft. lengths. These were cut in half and assembled with wing nuts and bolts to create an adjustable frame. You can also use PVC pipe or wood to make a frame. Place the frame on a table or saw horses at a comfortable height. Attach rubberbands at 2 inch intervals all around the frame. This can be done by tying them on the frame, looping the bands through the holes in the frame, snagging them over pushpins, thumb-tacks, nails or binder clips. It's up to you.



Step 2: This part works best if you can have two people working together in tandem. Put straight pins in each corner of the silk. Loop the rubberbands closest to the corner of the frame to the corner pins on the silk. Put more pins in the silk along each side across from the rubberbands. Working across from each other, loop the rubberbands over the pins until the silk is completely stretched. Check the tension. Make sure that the lines are as straight as possible. Add or subtract rubberbands as needed to "true up" the tension.



### Applying the Resist

Step 1: With the silk stretched you are ready to start applying resist. Fill your squeeze bottles 3/4 full with acrylic paint. Test the pressure needed to draw a smooth line by practicing on a paper towel. The line or "bead" should be as big around as the center of the letter "o". It should look like shiny string and not have any gaps. If you make a mistake or smudge, you can't erase or UNDO, so don't make mistakes. If you do, the best thing is to ignore it because any attempt to fix it will result in more horror. If the tube is getting stopped up, don't force it by squeezing. Take off the metal tube and poke a straight pin through the opening until all the obstruction is gone. Put a straight pin in the tip of the tube whenever you aren't using it to keep the opening



clear. To prevent smearing the wet acrylic paint use a maulstick to elevate and steady your hand over the work. We used the dowel that later became the banner rod. Avoid putting your fingers on the silk. Work from the center outward and take breaks from time to time to let the resist dry. Acrylic takes about 30 minutes to dry.



Step 2: Go back and look over the work often to see if there are any little gaps where one shape meets another. If the areas are going to be different colors, the gap must be filled.



### Applying the Colors

Step 1: To prevent accidents, set up your dyes on a table away from the silk, nice furniture, good carpets, and pets. Shake the Dye-na-flow jars before using to mix the colors. Half fill an eyedropper with the color you want to use and squeeze it into a small plastic cup, like a contact lens cup or a waterbottle lid. Hold the dye close to the work to decrease the chances of dripping dye as you move your brush to and from your dye reservoir.

Step 2: Leave unpainted the areas that are to be white. If you want

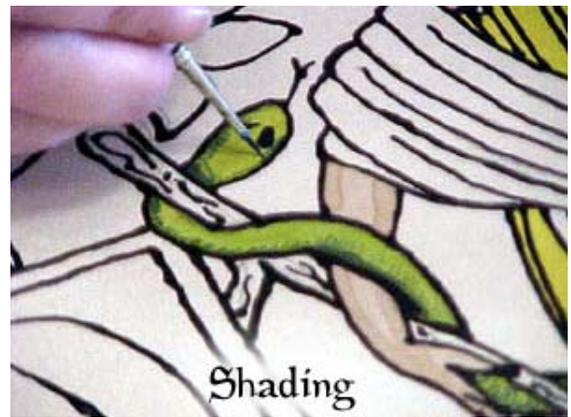


protect the white areas, you can outline or cover them with clear waterbased gutta. We used gutta for the whites of the eyes and the shine on the heart. Use a hairdryer to speed the drying of gutta or dye as you work.

Step 3: Use the bamboo brush for larger areas. For small areas and details, use small watercolor brushes. Clean the brushes between each color. Wash your hands often. Start with the lightest colors like yellow. Load the brush and lightly touch it to the fabric. It will flow from the brush and spread to the resist. If the whole area isn't filled with color keep painting until it is. You will quickly develop a feel for it. Paint each area first with a light or medium tone then add shading.



Step 4: For shading you can use the same color, a darker tone of the same color, a complementary color or an adjacent color.



In other words, anything that pleases you, just don't use black. It is too harsh for shading except over grey. For light skin use the color "ecru" as a base and "brass" for shading. Use "brass" to shade warm whites and "azure blue" or "turquoise" to shade cool whites. Mix colors and layer them for special effects. We used "brilliant red" to shade "golden yellow" in the crest. The helmet was shaded with "pewter."



Step 5: Shading in dry areas that have been painted can be very detailed. The dry Dye-na-flow inhibits the free flow of the dye making it possible to use techniques like crosshatching if you use a small brush. If you want to inhibit flow completely, use a product called No-Flow.

Step 6: After shading the mantling, the ermine spots were added. If they had been done first, the shading wouldn't have been possible.



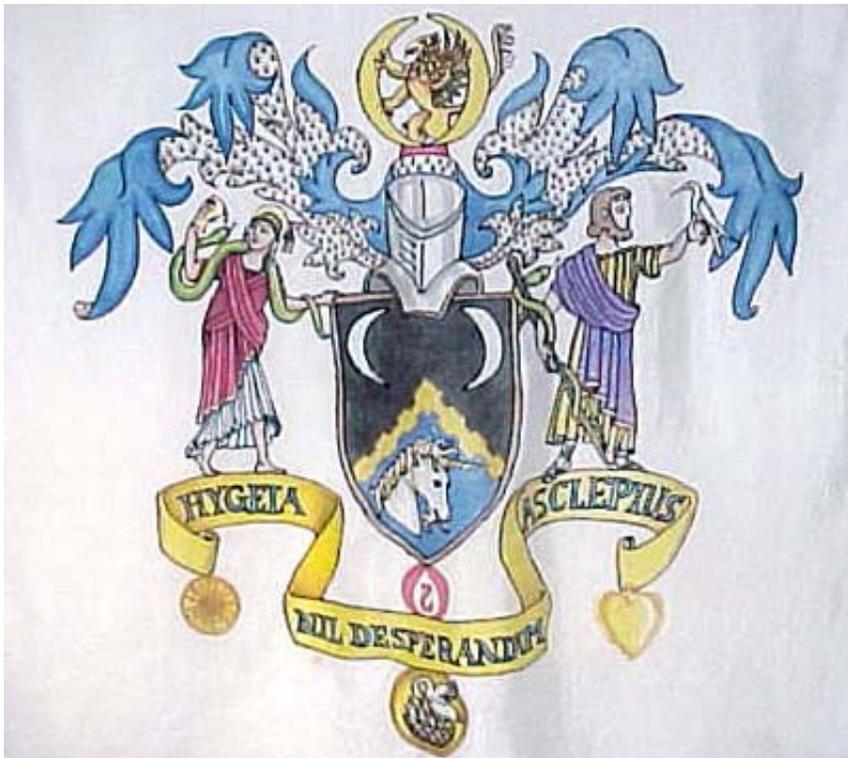
### Finishing

Step 1: When you are sure that you have completed everything. Allow the silk to dry for 24 hours then remove it from the frame. Iron it with an electric iron set on the Silk setting with a paper towel over the art to protect your iron from the



acrylic paint. Iron it for 3 to 5 minutes per square foot. Then throw it in a dryer on high for about 20 minutes.

Step 2: Wash the silk in Synthrapol again to get out the excess dye. Rub, do not scrub the clear waterbased gutta areas to remove the resist and reveal the white cloth. Synthrapol will keep the dye particles in suspension and keep them from redepositing on the silk. Hang dry and iron again. Sew a channel for a banner pole and if the edges are not hemmed, hem them. If you are making a large banner that is outlined in resist, you can do without the hem because the resist will behave like fray check. After the black acrylic paint gets brittle you can pull it off the banner if you want and only the color will remain.



### **The Finished Banner**

The crest of two crescents tops a cap of maintenance above a silver great helm sitting on a shield bearing per chevron sable and azure, a chevron embattled Or between a decrescent, an

increscent and a unicorn's head couped contourny Argent. The motto "Nil Desperandum" means "Never Despair" and the two supporters are Hygeia and Asclepius, both associated with medicine. Asclepius holds a Caduceus (serpent rod) and Caledreus (medicine bird). The crest is an Opinicicus which is related to the griffin and associated with barber surgeons. The awards are for Master Chiurgeon, Order of the Pelican, Light of Atenveldt, and Keeper of the Solar Heart.

### **About the authors:**

Lady Dairine mor o' uHigin was born the daughter of an Irish pirate during the 15th century and was shipwrecked off the coast of Wales in her teens. After many adventures she settled down in southern France and opened a successful souvenir shop near an important shrine. The constant traffic of pilgrims and merchants brought her into contact with many of the greatest minds of the early Renaissance including those involved in maiolica, printing, and illumination.

Gael Stirlor is the owner of Chivalry Sports, which can be found on the web at <http://www.Renstore.com>. All of her lessons in maiolica, illumination and silk painting can be found at <http://Gutenbergscribes.com>.

Mistress Morgana Quarry is a member of the Order of the Pelican. She was taken hostage while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and now studies Persian dance and costuming while awaiting her rescue. She has served as shire Seneschal and Kingdom Chiurgeon and has also worked as a scribe.

Michelle Allcott-Mills, MC, EMT-B is the owner of Safety on Site Training of Phoenix, Arizona. She teaches classes in the use of AED (defibrillators), CPR, first aid, blood borne pathogens, back safety, and ergonomics. Her website is <http://www.safetysitetraining.com>.