

OUT OF THIS EARTH

Earth Pigments, Soya & Cloth with
Claire Benn

Materials guideline list

Thank you for your interest in *Out of this Earth with Claire Benn*. Here, you'll find some pre-registration advice as an essential guide for what you'll need to complete this course. Once enrolled, detailed material lists with images and supplier recommendations will be accessible. Just to let you know, this document serves as a general guide. We encourage using what you already have before considering new material purchases. If you have any other questions about the course, please email: support@fibreartstaketwo.com.

A note from Claire:

“One of the greatest things about this process is its environmentally friendly nature. All of the products are natural (unless you need to use the occasional synthetic pigment), and left-overs can be put down the drain (into a mains drain, septic or evaporation tank) or, in the case of soya bean pulp, put on the compost heap.

I've also found working with pigments and soya milk relatively mess-free, and clean-up is easy. Personally, after years of rinsing out fibre-reactive dyes, the fact that the resulting cloth doesn't need to be washed out for me is a real bonus.”

Other methods and approaches exist. Ultimately, each individual needs to find their own path. Hopefully, these notes will help to get you started, draw your own conclusions and enable you to explore until you discover what you need.

Let's look at what you need to prepare in order to start the journey.”

Cloth:

- **Choose natural fibres:** Choose from linen, cotton (calico, muslin, quilter's cotton), hemp, silk, linen-cotton blends). These work best with soya milk and earth pigments. Pigments and soya milk will work on most synthetic fibres (with the exception of nylon) but as I only work with natural fibres, I can't really comment!
- **Pick one cloth type** if you prefer a simpler approach, but exploring different weaves (like linen vs cotton) will show you how pigments behave differently. Linen has a more open weave (pigments settle in and through easily), while calico/muslin/quilter's cotton have tighter weaves (pigments sit more on the surface).
- **Selvedge width matters:** A cloth with a 1.5m selvedge will give you 6 to 8 good-sized samples per metre.
- **Quantity:** 3 to 4 metres is enough to get started; 10 metres will carry you through the course and into your intentional work.
- **Start small:** Smaller pieces (around 60cm square) are easier to manage and work beautifully for early exploration.
- **Save your scraps:** They're perfect for testing colours and techniques.

Paper:

- Although this course focuses on cloth, most techniques can also be adapted for paper made from cellulose fibres (like rag or paper pulp); just be aware that denser papers may not allow pigments to sink through as easily.

Materials, supplies and workspace

Essential tools and supplies:

- **Soya beans** (organic or non-organic, 2kg is more than enough to start)
- **Broad, stubby brush** (bristle preferred for better body; you can trim a brush down to about 4cm if needed)
- **Sieve** or colander
- **Jam bag** or piece of polyester curtain sheer (about 50cm square) for straining soaked soya beans and pulp
- **Stick blender** or regular blender
- **Mixing bowls** x2 (steel, glass, or plastic)
- **Measuring jug** (2-litre size is perfect for making 1-litre of soya milk)
- **Measuring beaker** (Small and clear with a capacity of 200–250ml and 25ml markings)
- **Measuring spoons** (ranging from $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon up to 1 tablespoon)
- **Small rubber spatula**
- **Zip-lock bags** (two medium-sized for storing plain and damp pre-sized cloth)
- **Shallow tray** (white food prep trays, small baking trays, or kitten litter trays work well)
- **Small flat-bottomed pots** (50–250ml) with lids for mixing paints (plastic take-out containers are suitable)
- **Notebook** and camera for record-keeping



Workspace setup:

- **A sturdy table** to work on, have space to leave your cloth to dry flat
- **Space to hang** your cloth to cure (options include rigged lines, drying racks, clothes hangers with pegs, design walls, or stairwell bannisters)
- **4 to 8 pieces of smooth plastic sheeting**, acetate, or 3–5mm thick perspex, cut about 5cm larger than your sample size and/or a non-absorbent surface to work on. Past students have also said that Yupo paper also acts as an alternative to plastic or perspex.

Optional:

Tools for dry processing pigments:

- A fine sieve (available from scientific /laboratory or ceramic supply stores)
- Pestle and mortar
- Toughened glass plate and a muller



Choosing pigments and how to use your pigmented cloth

A message from Claire:

"It's always tricky for me to recommend a full-colour range as I could either leave out a colour that someone could love or include one that someone could hate!"

I do cover the use of synthetic pigments. This means you can invest in colours outside of the natural earth pigment range.

Once you've enrolled, we'll provide guidance on a starting palette and a list of supplier websites. Take a look at the suppliers and then choose a selection of pigments."



You can either order a starter set or choose colours based on your own personal palette. Keep in mind that different suppliers often name their colours differently, so it's a good idea to either stick with one supplier you like or keep clear records of where you've sourced your favourite colours. Whichever way you go, start small – ordering no more than 100g of each colour should be plenty to get you started.

Ideas for pigmented cloth:

- **Piecing (quilts):** The slight stiffness of pigmented cloth can help with stability when cutting and piecing. If machine sewing, check for dust build-up and change needles more often, as pigment can cause extra wear.
- **Collage and appliquéd (paper, cloth, mixed media):** Pigmented cloth can be collaged onto paper, or papers can be collaged onto cloth (use soft gel matte or fusible products)
- **Weaving:** Pigmented threads and cloth strips can be used for weaving and basket making. Some pigment shedding is normal but not usually a problem.
- **Rag-rugging:** Cut pigmented cloth into strips to use for rug-making projects.
- **Hand stitching:** Use threads from your stash or colour your own with pigment and soya milk. Expect a little pigment shedding during stitching.
- **Clothing:** Pigmented cloth can be used for garments once it's post-sized, cured, and gently washed. For a distressed look, a more vigorous wash cycle can be used.
- **Soft furnishings:** Like clothing, cushion covers and other soft furnishings need to be post-sized, cured, and washable.
- **Bags:** Canvas pigmented with earth pigments works well for bags, though expect some rubbing and wear over time.
- **Mixed media:** Once cured, pigmented cloth can be combined with other materials like acrylics and oil pastels for layered artwork.