



NATIONAL LIVING  
TREASURE 1997



FINE ART  
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# EDEN WORKSHOPS

## A BOOKBINDERS RESOURCE



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<http://www.edenworkshops.com>

If you are interested in gilding in particular please do check out our website at:

<http://www.gold-vault.com>

For nearly 20 years my wife Margaret & I ran a system of craft workshops devoted to the exploration of the Book Arts.

During that time we worked in almost total isolation and seclusion in the grounds of a very private monastery in rural England. We developed four book related skills; hand book binding, paper marbling and book edge marbling, printing & box making and took those skills to high levels of excellence.

In 1997 after nearly 20 years running the Eden Workshops we were voted a National Living Treasure by Country Life magazine for our contribution to the Book Arts.



In 2004 we decided to close our workshops and move out here to Southern France, I now concern myself with teaching and have the time to concentrate on aspects of the book arts that interest me.

Incidentally the Eden Workshops were named after our daughter Eden who is now 12 years old.

You can email me at home [richard.norman@aliceadsl.fr](mailto:richard.norman@aliceadsl.fr)

Or telephone me. 0033 (0) 555 60 09 63

## A New Look at Paste Papers

I put this manual together to help someone who wanted to set up small scale production of a unique type of paste paper.

I hope there may be something original here for those interested in making paste papers.

One item, the decorative engraved wooden blocks which are used in this process, can often be found in Oxfam shops, these blocks were used in India for stamping decorative designs onto fabrics, they are not expensive, perhaps £5.00 each

Ok...to make these paste papers you will need three tables, a bit bigger than the sheets size you are working with, I used a trestle table which after use I could fold up and put against the wall. You will also want to have a surface where you can put the various bits and pieces we will be speaking about later.

A densely woven blanket and a sheet of plastic to go over the blanket.

A rack where you will hang the papers to dry. I used garden bamboo canes and draped the papers over the canes to dry.

You will need a sponge, used to damp the paper before use.

Alum ...available from most chemists.

A paint roller and tray.

Acrylic paint.

A bag of *strong plain white flour*...not *self raising*. The type used for bread making is perfect, I used a brand called Mc Dougals but any will do.

A few wooden dowels about 8 inches long with a rounded end.

Assorted pots for keeping and mixing colours in.

That's all you need.

Ok...now I will run through the procedure for making the papers and talk about why I am doing certain things, then I will go over some of the variations in the recipes.

Ok so we have our three tables. Over one of them drape the blanket, depending on how thick the blanket is you may have to fold it double, what you want is for the blanket to act as a pad, quite firm, against which you will press the designs into the paper, next get your sheet of plastic and stretch it over the blanket and pin it at the sides ....I did think that a piece of neoprene rubber sheet would be about the best thing to use, but I never got around to getting it to try...as I say you want quite a firm surface that will give a little when you press the designs into the paper.

Next, mix up a solution of Alum...1 ounce to a pint of water is just fine, the Alum is going to act as a mordant to make sure that the colours take to the paper and do not peel off. Put the Alum into COLD water and slowly heat it up, stirring as you go until all the crystals of Alum have dissolved....if you try to take a shortcut and put the Alum in HOT water on cooling the Alum will form crystals and drop to the bottom of the receptacle, thus leaving you with plain water with no Alum in it...lot of people forget this.

Next make your paste & mix up your colours.

First the paste, you want the paste WHEN COLD to have the consistency of double cream ...quite thick, but not so thick that it will not run off a spoon...it should slowly run off the spoon.

As for the colours ..bearing in mind that I used a brand called Galleria which is a very thick acrylic, it will not run at all. I used to mix this brand 2:1 with water so that it ended up the same consistency as the paste.

Now we go to the papers. In practice you can work with about 100 sheets of damped paper, I could easily make more than 100 sheets a day ...compared to marbled papers of which I could make about 50.

Place a pile of papers on the first table...the second table is where you are going to build up a pile of damped papers... when all the papers have been damped we put them back on the first table and make a neat pile of them....the third table is where you will be doing the printing of the papers. Water can get on the floor so take this into account and put down newspaper if your floor does not like water being on it.

Most papers are distinctly two sided, this is useful as you want to remember which side of the paper you have Alumed, I used to get into a routine about this to avoid mistakes. If your paper is not two sided just put a light pencil mark in the corner of each sheet to remind you which is which.

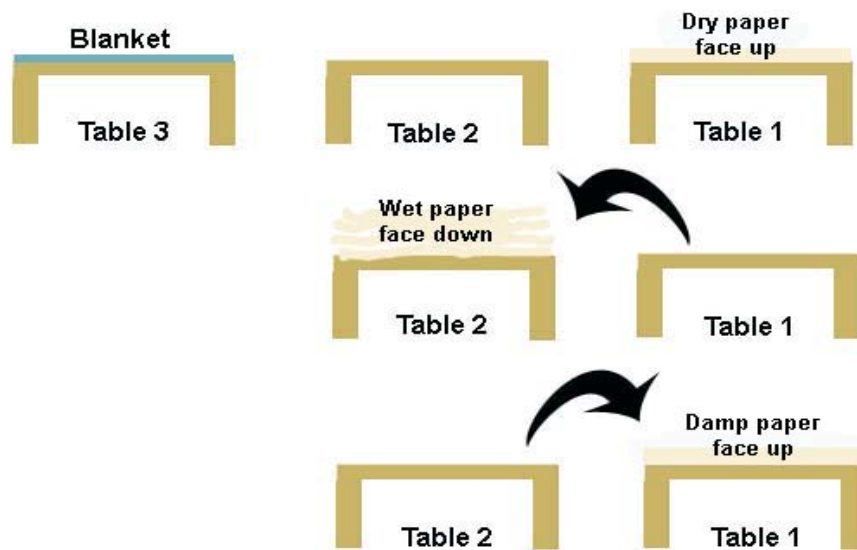
Ok we have our three tables, one with a blanket draped over it...one empty and one with a pile of dry papers on it. Get your saucepan of warm water and Alum and your sponge.

Take a sheet of dry paper and load the sponge with Alum water...squeeze out some of the water...you want quite a lot still in the sponge as you want to quickly "flood" the surface of the paper, there will be quite a lot of water on the surface of the paper, when it has been thoroughly covered, wipe off the surplus water and place the paper *upside down* on the second table, do not bother to try to smooth the paper out flat ...while the paper is absorbing the water it will want to expand...just continue with the rest of the papers. If I were you I would start with a pile of say 20 sheets just so that you will get used to handling the papers.

Eventually you will have finished Aluming the papers and on the second table you will have a heap of ruffled sheets...now the *bottom sheet*, that is to say the first sheet you Alumed, will by this time have finished absorbing moisture...so take the pile of sheets, and *turn them over so the bottom sheet is now on the top*.

Take this top sheet and lay it down on the first table taking care to smooth out any wrinkles and air bubbles that form underneath the paper, you may lay them Alumed side up or down as long as you remember which surface has been Alumed.

Ok, here is a picture showing how the papers are transferred from one to the other just for the sake of clarity.



Don't let all these instructions give the impression that this is a complicated process, it's not, but I want this instruction to be as complete as possible for you to refer to until the process becomes instinctive.

Ok now we come to a part that affects the colour tone and texture of the finished paper, all of these instructions you can vary to give the paper the colour tone and texture you feel is what you want.

First, a note about texture. The more paste colour you apply with the roller, the heavier your finished texture is going to be, but be aware that the heavier the texture the longer the papers will need to dry and the harder and less flexible the papers are going to be. Using a roller to apply the colour automatically gives the paper a textured finish, but it can be light or heavy depending on how much paste colour you apply to the roller.

Now a note about colour tone. The more paste you add to the colour the more washed out/faded/pastel /paler the colour tone will be. If you want splashes of very intense colour you can add the colour to the roller tray on it's own. See below:

If you want a mono colour paper, it could not be simpler, mix up your paste and colour until you have the tone you require then fill the tray that comes with the roller with the colour, just for the record this is the type of roller and tray I am talking about. Every DIY store should carry these.



Take a sheet of your damp Alumed paper...by the way the sheet should be slightly damp. not wet. damp, I used to finish Aluming the pile of papers, put a sheet of plastic over them to keep the moisture from evaporating, and leave it overnight...the papers were then perfect for use the next morning.

Take your sheet of damp Alumed paper and lay it on the table that has the blanket covered with the plastic sheet.

Apply paste colour to the roller...the more colour the heavier the texture remember.

Then roll out the colour over the paper, first apply the roller in one direction only, say up the long side of the paper, until the paper is covered, if you want to vary the direction the texture is going for decorative effect, simply apply the roller diagonally or across the paper.

Now take one of the wooden blocks and gently press into the paper, the design of the block will displace the paste colour on the paper leaving the background colour of the paper showing through. Once you have covered the paper in the design, lift it at the corners and place it in the drying rack...as I said I used bamboo garden canes and draped the papers across the canes.

I used to do one paper, the quickly wash of the surplus paste colour from the block in a bucket of warm water and shake it dry, this preserves the crispness of the design on each paper, otherwise, paste colour will build up around the design element and it will become fuzzy and indistinct.

Ok...told you it was simple...next we come to multi coloured designs, both formal and abstract.

Mono coloured designs as we have seen are very simple to execute, multi coloured designs are only a very little more complicated.

Ok, say you want a paper composed of two colours, each colour in the form of a band running up the sheet looking something like this...bear in mind with these methods you do not get any sharply defined lines they will be blurred and the colours will blend in to one another slightly. But say you want something like this.



Well it's very easy, mix up the two colours you require and pour them into the tray in bands, something like this:



Obviously if you decide on a formal pattern like this then you will have to take care to apply the roller in a fairly disciplined way. Having obtained the bands of colour running up the sheet, impress the designs and hang up to dry.

Most of the designs I opted for were abstract background colours, I liked the interplay of an abstract background and the disciplined impressed designs.

Abstract backgrounds are very easy. either apply the colour in bands as for the formal banded pattern and using the wooden dowels draw the colours out across the bands, something like in fig.1 below, or simply pour in a single colour and apply drops of colour on top, something like fig.2 below.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

That's about it, you can vary how you apply the paste colours in the tray to achieve different effects, something I had thought about, but not put into practice was the idea of changing the surface pattern of the roller. On the following pages you can see some of the ideas I had but did not put into practice, all of these ideas would lead to more and more complex patterns something you may or may not wish to explore.

Depending on the type of paint roller you buy, the actual covering may be quite thick or quite thin, with a thicker roller covering, if you take a piece of string and tie it tightly around the roller in the ways shown, you will achieve quite striking effects, as I say I had never tried it but I am pretty sure it would work.



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# THE GOLD-VAULT



There are currently three tutorials available which cover gilding onto almost everything.

<http://www.gold-vault.com>

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