

Simplified Soy Wax Batik

by Susan Brubaker Knapp

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Host and quilt artist Susan Brubaker Knapp

Materials

- Line drawing of a pattern or design
- White PFD (*prepared-for-dyeing*) fabric
- Transparent fabric paint (*I used Jacquard® Dye-Na-Flow®.*)
- Soy wax chips (*I used Yaley™ brand, look in candle-making section at craft stores.*)
- Tjanting
- Small paintbrushes with fairly soft bristles
- Small bowls or a multi-compartment paint palette for mixing colors
- Plain white candle (*I used an emergency candle.*)
- Matches or lighter
- Ceramic plate
- Masking tape
- Expired gift card or scraper
- Batting, slightly larger than your piece
- Backing fabric, slightly larger than the batting

Note: Tjantings come in different sizes, with spouts of different diameters. I used a small one for my pieces. Think about the scale of your design when choosing a tjanting. Small, delicate designs would be overwhelmed if you use a tjanting with a large-diameter spout.

Traditional batik can be a complicated, messy process, but it creates a distinctive look. This version simplifies the technique by using soy wax rather than beeswax. Soy wax is easy to remove—there's no need to boil the fabric to get the wax out. And instead of dye, my technique uses a product that acts like dye but is actually very thin paint. It's not difficult to learning to use the *tjanting*—a wood and copper tool from Java used to make traditional batik fabric.

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepare the pattern

1. Draw or trace your image (or use my drawing of the Luna moth) and enlarge it to the size of your piece.
2. Press a piece of white fabric large enough for the drawing. Also press a small piece of fabric to test the tjanting and for eliminating large drops or globs of wax.
3. Tape the drawing to the underside of the fabric with masking tape.

Prepare the tjanting

1. Fill the opening of the tjanting with soy wax chips. You may need to crush them up so that they are small enough to fit.
2. Light the candle and place it on a ceramic plate to catch wax drips from the tjanting. A tall, thin candle like an emergency candle is best because drips fall on the plate and not into the candle.
3. Heat the tjanting until the wax is liquid and drips from the spout. The outside of the tool may turn black from burned wax. This is easily removed with a clean, dry rag after the tool has cooled.

Note: I find the wax sometimes turns a light green color when it sits in the tjanting for a while; it may be that the copper from the tool is causing a chemical reaction that turns the wax green. I have not found that this affects the coloration on the fabric.


Trace the pattern

1. Hold the tjanting either like a pencil or in your whole hand—whatever feels best.
2. Place the spout on the fabric and trace the design. Pull the spout in a steady line. If you trace quickly, the line of wax will be thinner than if you go slowly.
3. Trace all the lines in the pattern.
4. Reheat the wax periodically as it cools, and refill the tjanting with wax as needed. If you trace directly on the lines from your photocopied pattern, the wax makes the fabric more transparent and the dark lines show through. If you can't see your lines well, occasionally reach between the fabric and the paper so that you can check that your wax lines are heavy enough.

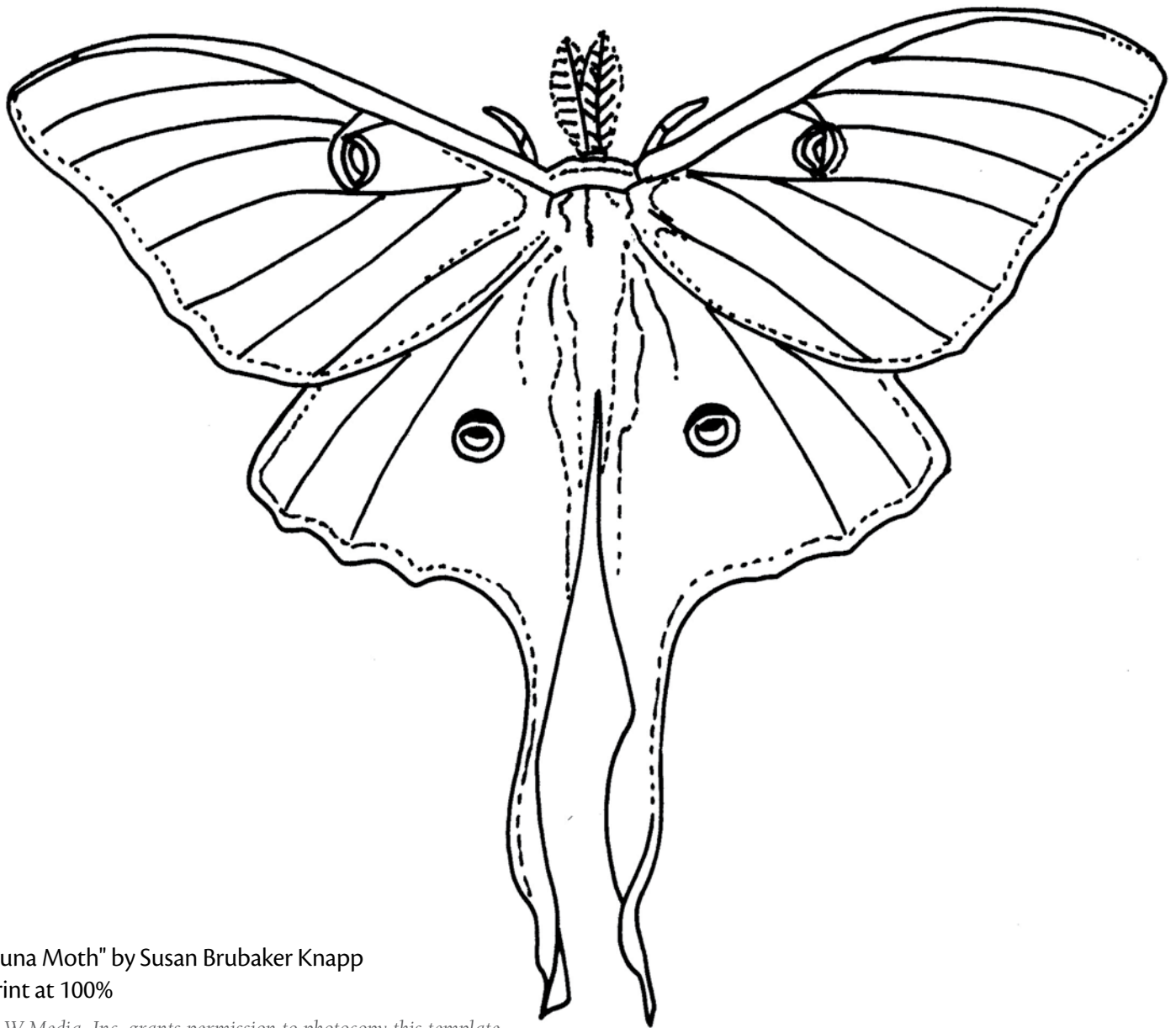
5. Add drips of wax that mimic a bit of sparkle in the design. Fill the tjanting with wax, heat it, and then tap it gently over the area where you want the wax to drip. Or simply touch the tool to the fabric to make dots.
6. Allow wax to dry. Remove pattern and tape from back of fabric.

Paint & finish

1. Pour paint colors in a bowl or palette, and mix to reach desired colors. If you are creating pastel colors, try not to add too much water, as it makes it very difficult to keep colors from running beyond the wax lines.
2. Test colors on a scrap of fabric to see how they look. Remember that colors will dry lighter than they look when they are wet. You may wish to dry a test strip to see the final effect.

3. Using a small paintbrush, paint inside the wax lines. It takes some experience to know how close you can paint to avoid having the paint bleed under wax. The more water you add to create tints of colors, the more the paint will bleed.
4. Allow the paint to dry. Scrape off the excess wax with an expired gift card.
5. Place a layer of paper towels on your ironing surface. Place the painted fabric face up, and cover it with another layer of paper towels. Iron on high heat to remove any excess wax.
6. Layer the piece with batting and backing fabric, quilt and finish as desired. 

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"Luna Moth" by Susan Brubaker Knapp
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