

The Art of Indigo & Shibori Fabric Dyeing

By Karen Elzinga

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Written by Karen Elzinga

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TIPS FOR SAFETY

Personal Safety – Chemical dyes can be hazardous to your health and due diligence should be maintained whilst in contact with dye.

Personal protection via gloves, apron and other protective clothing should be worn to avoid chemicals coming into contact with your skin. Dyeing should be done in rooms where ventilation is good to minimize inhalation.

Whilst in contact with chemical dye formulations:

Never use in areas where food is stored or cooked, if need be purchase a small camper stove they are very cheap from camping stores usually under \$16, and worth the investment.

Always use protective clothing.

When using chemical powders wear a dust mask to avoid breathing in harmful dust.

Always store your left over dyes securely where young children or animals can not get them.

Shibori and Indigo Dyeing

Ingredients list

-100gms Synthetic Indigo Dye in powder form

-100 gms Sodium Hydrosulphite

-50gms Caustic soda (Supermarkets generally carry this, if not then try hardware stores).

-Stainless steel pot (Large 5lt variety – Go to opp shops or tip shops).

-Bucket or a large tub

-Measuring cup (old one because you can't use it later for cooking)

-Gas stove (camping stores, large stores like k-mart and Bunnings have these very cheap)

-Wooden stick, pole, old wooden spoon (remember you can't use the wooden spoon afterwards)

-Fabric ...pre-washed linen, cotton, rayon, silk, the lighter the better so try for white.

-Strong thread that will not easily break (Crochet cotton or polyester thread is good and a needle that will fit it.

-String, twin, thread, rope, wool (anything strong that you can wrap around the fabric)

-Scissors, pins, masking tape, unpicker, and clamps or two identical shaped objects such as wood pieces that can be used as clamps.

Indigo dye is a compatible dye for Shibori resist processes. The dye itself does not penetrate the fabric but coats it helping to achieve good resist marks on the fabric. Indigo dye is a very ancient dye. The colour is amazing!

Shibori and Indigo Dyeing – Binding work

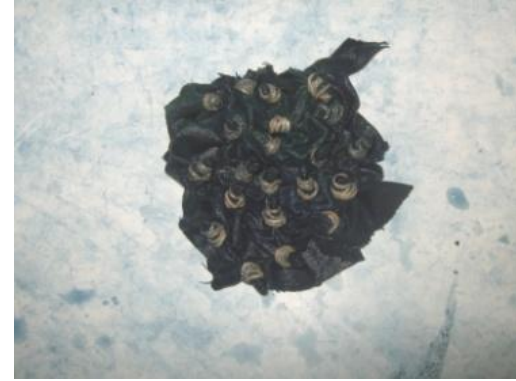


Bound your fabric with rubber bands, you get normally get larger packets from the newsagents.

You can do this dyeing with any sort of dye either natural or chemical



The more rubber bands you add the more circles you will get, so think about the size of your fabrics and imagine how many circles you need there. Adding to few and your end result may not be as successful as you want. Also make sure your rubber bands are really tight, if they are not tight enough the dye will find it's way in and your circles won't be circles.



Dip your fabric into the dye and leave until the colour is your desired colour

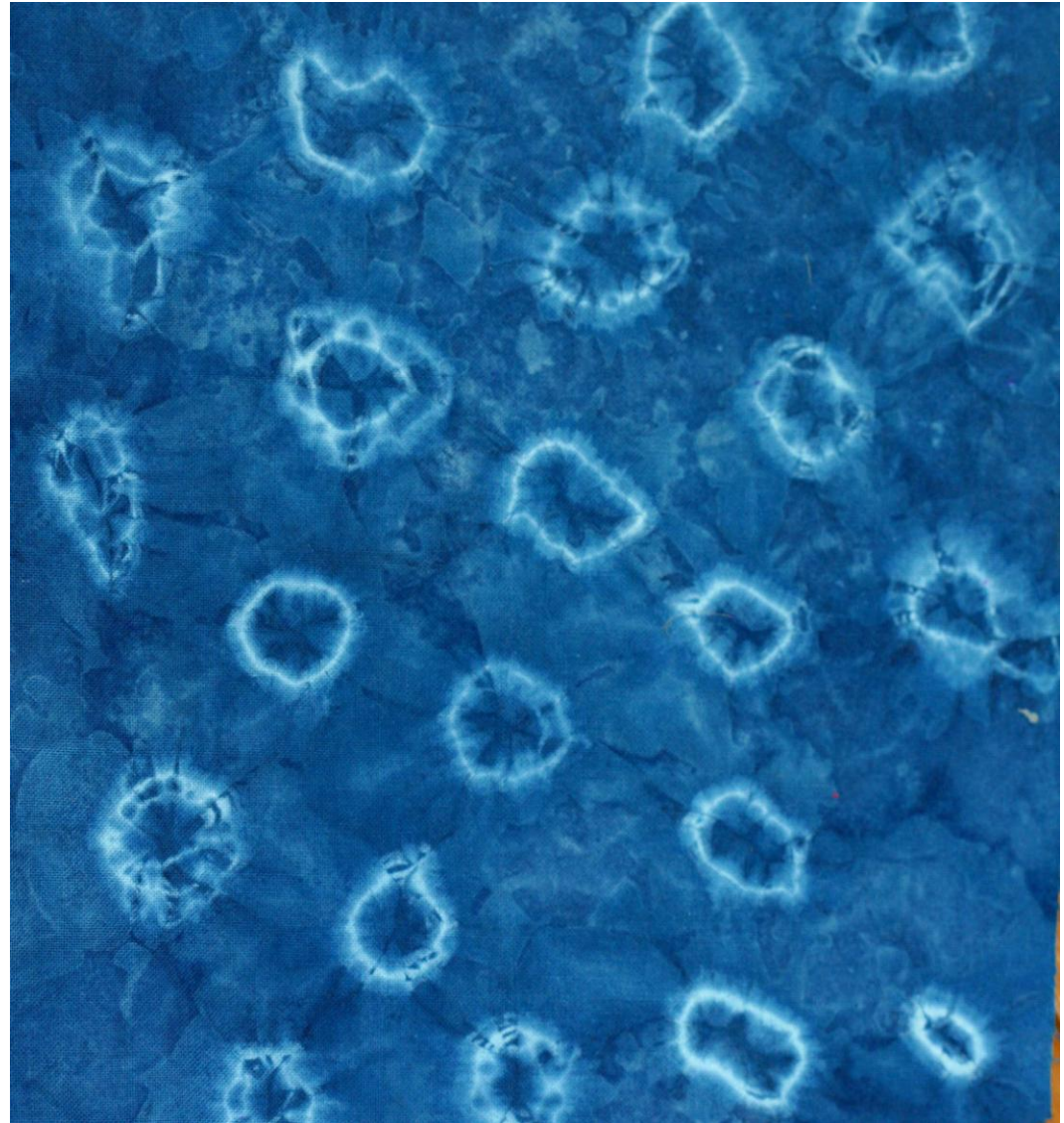
Let's see
the
finished
product

Dyeing using rubber bands

This is one of the easiest dyeing processes and the results are great...

The fun part is opening your fabric and seeing how your marks went. This one was opened straight away whilst wet.

Let's have a look at another one, but this time it will be left in the dye for a week and left to dry before unveiling, so you can see the difference in how different processes work.



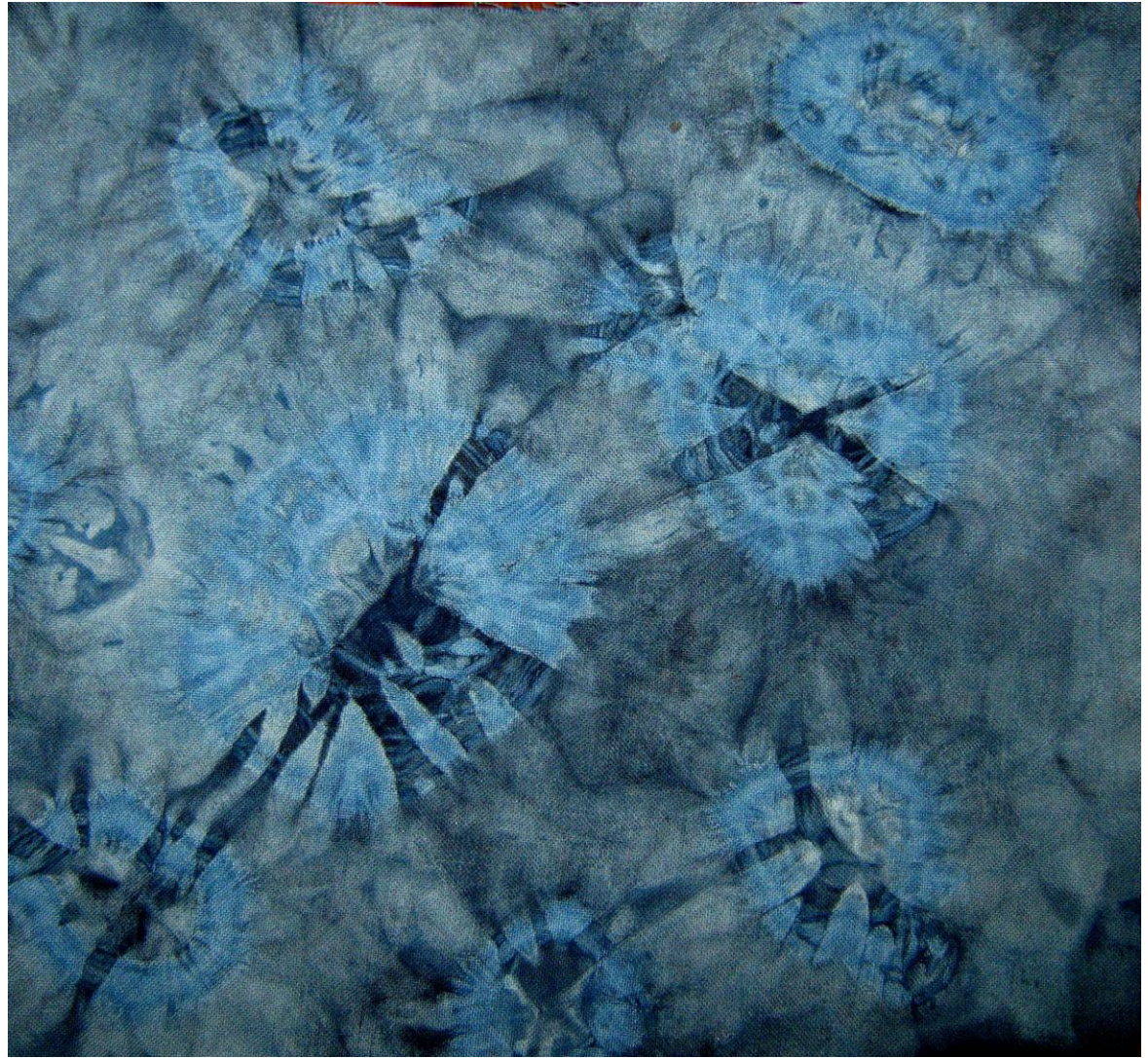
– Shibori and Indigo – Rubber Band Binding work 2



Bound with rubber bands

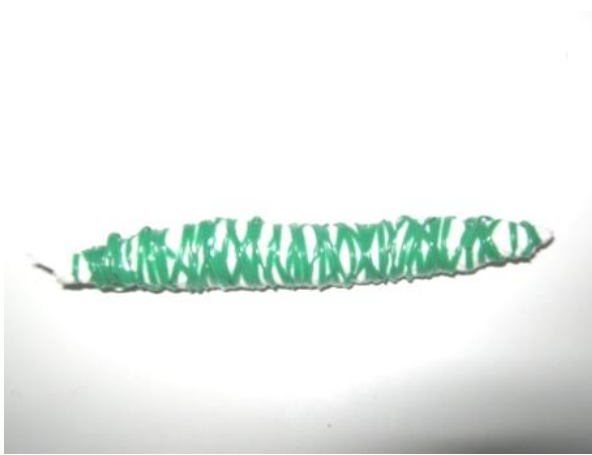


This fabric was left in the dye for a week and left to dry before opening, you can see a marked difference in the end result.



A completely different look.

Shibori and Indigo – Binding work - Wrapping



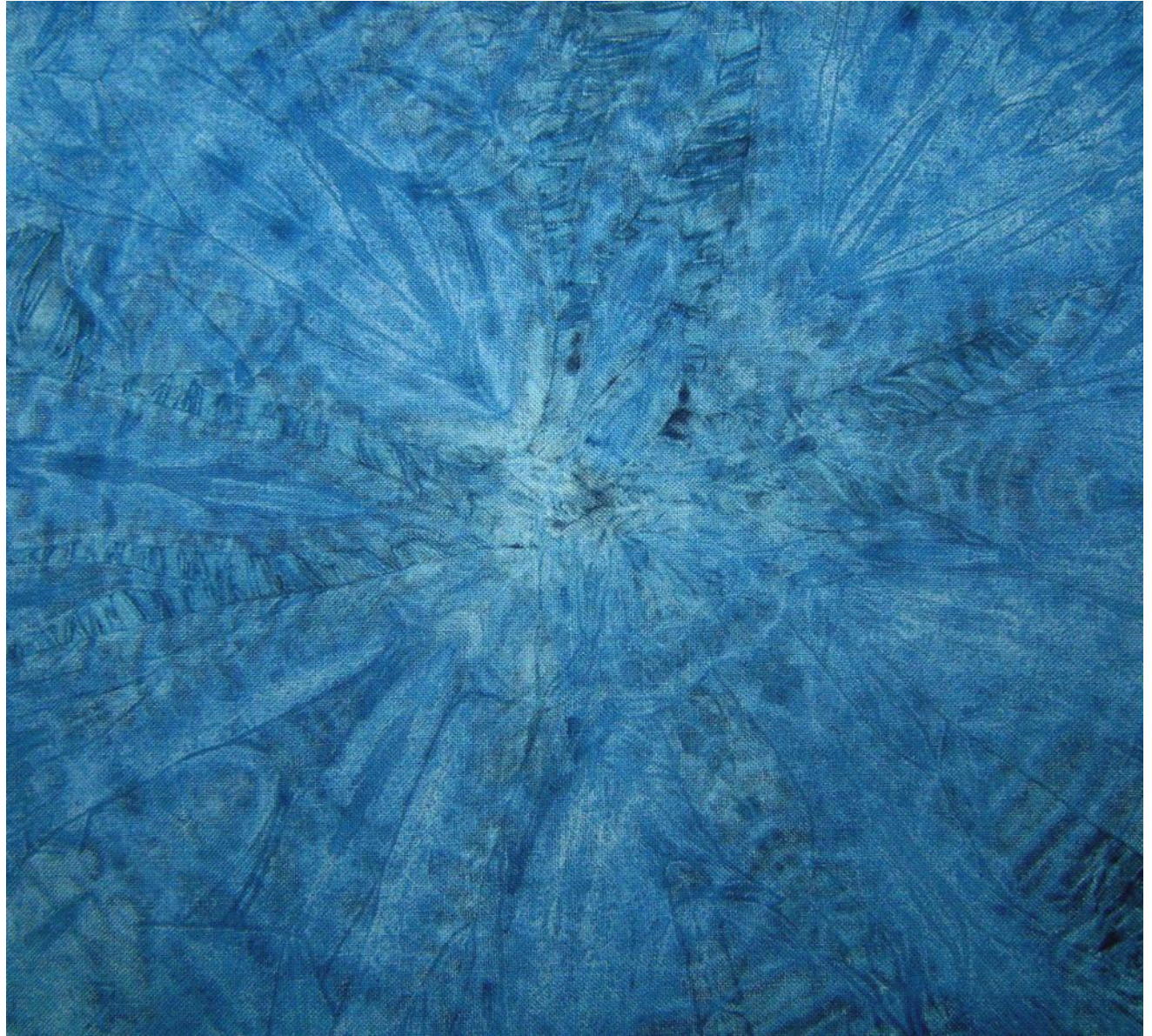
This work was left
in the dye for a
week and left to
dry before
opening.

This time we are going to do something a little bit different. Create a snake like shape from your fabric and wrap it tightly using twine, or string, wool, or light rope, in this example plastic coated wire has been used but you can use anything that is a length and strong enough to wrap tightly without breaking.

Let's see how it turned out...

Shibori and Indigo – Binding work - Wrapping

A nice effect



Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 1



Pleated fabric



Wrapped around a cricket stick and secure with string



After dyeing

Now let's try pleating the fabric

Take your fabric length and make a fold, now fold it back the opposite way, your fabric should end up looking a bit like you could play it like an xylophone.

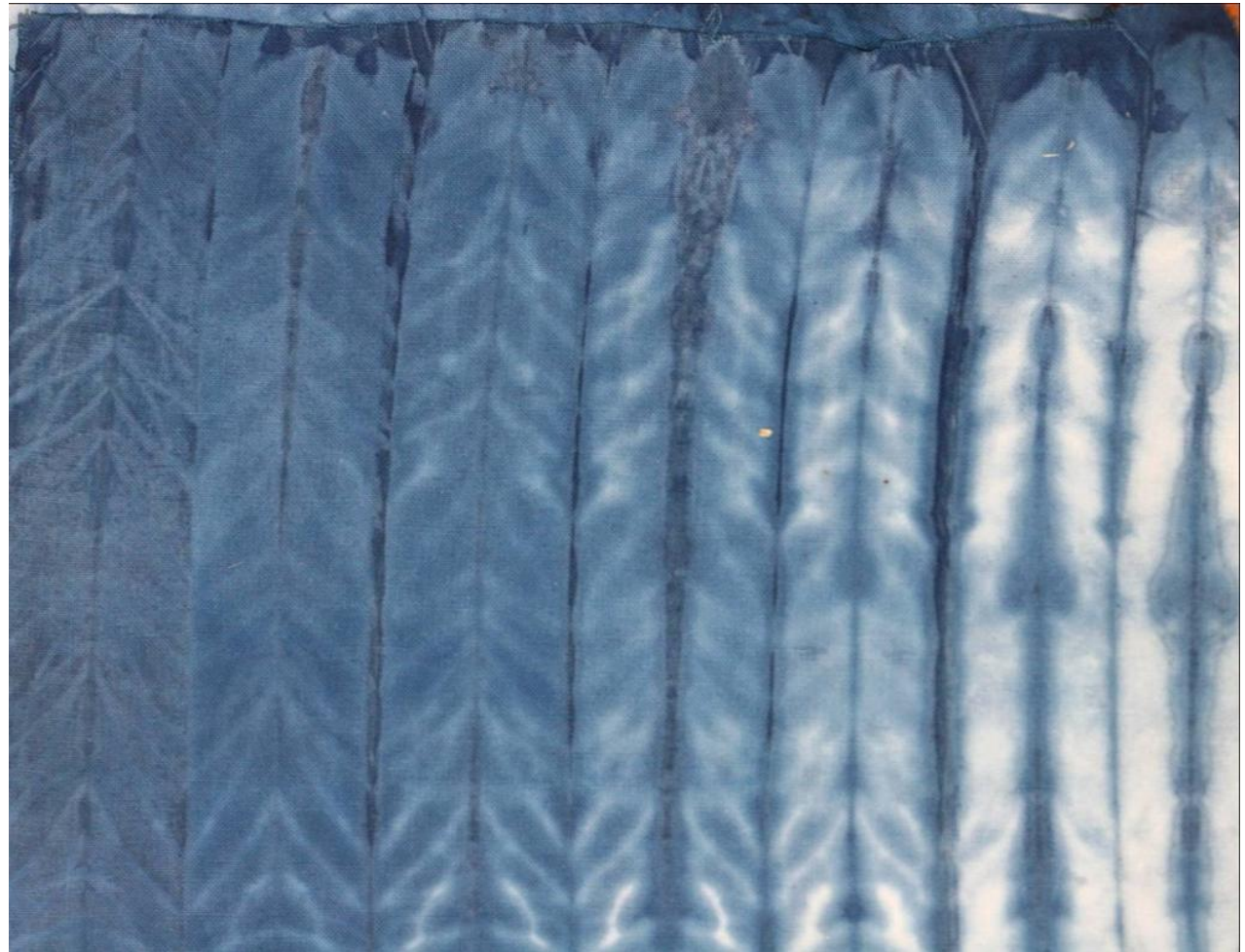
Once you have it folded back and forth wrap the folded fabric around a wooden stick, I found an old cricket stump, but you could use a wooden broom handle or even a good strong straight stick . Secure your fabric on with some twine or strong string.

Add it to your dye, you can experiment with how long it is left in the dye by doing a few different ones, remember how different the rubber band tests earlier looked when different time lengths were taken.

Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 1

Here is the first example of pleating, it reminds me a bit of a fence.

Let's try another one.....



Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 2



Pleated two sides



Four sides pleated to
give a diamond shape



Rolled up



Bound in plastic
coated wire



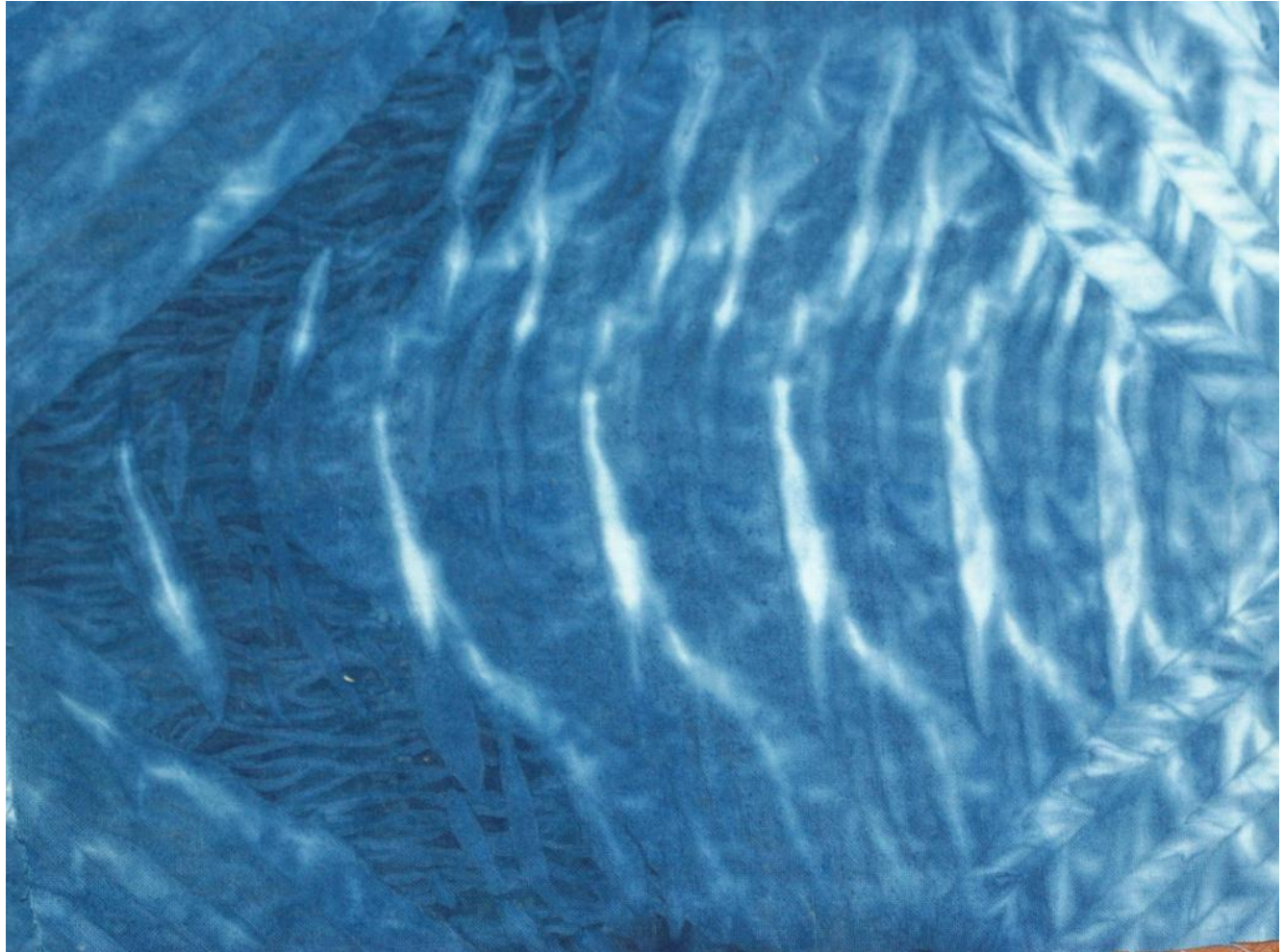
Dyed

Let's try something a little bit different this time by just pleating in the four corners so it becomes a diamond shape, then wrap this diamond around your stick and secure with string, twine or in my case plastic coated wire (bunnings) and add to your dye.

Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 2

You can see how those pleats have turned out in the corners but also that nice rippling effect in the centre.

Let's try another..



Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 3



Pleated fabric for a few turns



Changed pleating direction to diagonal



Stitched to secure fabric



Secured around a ruler

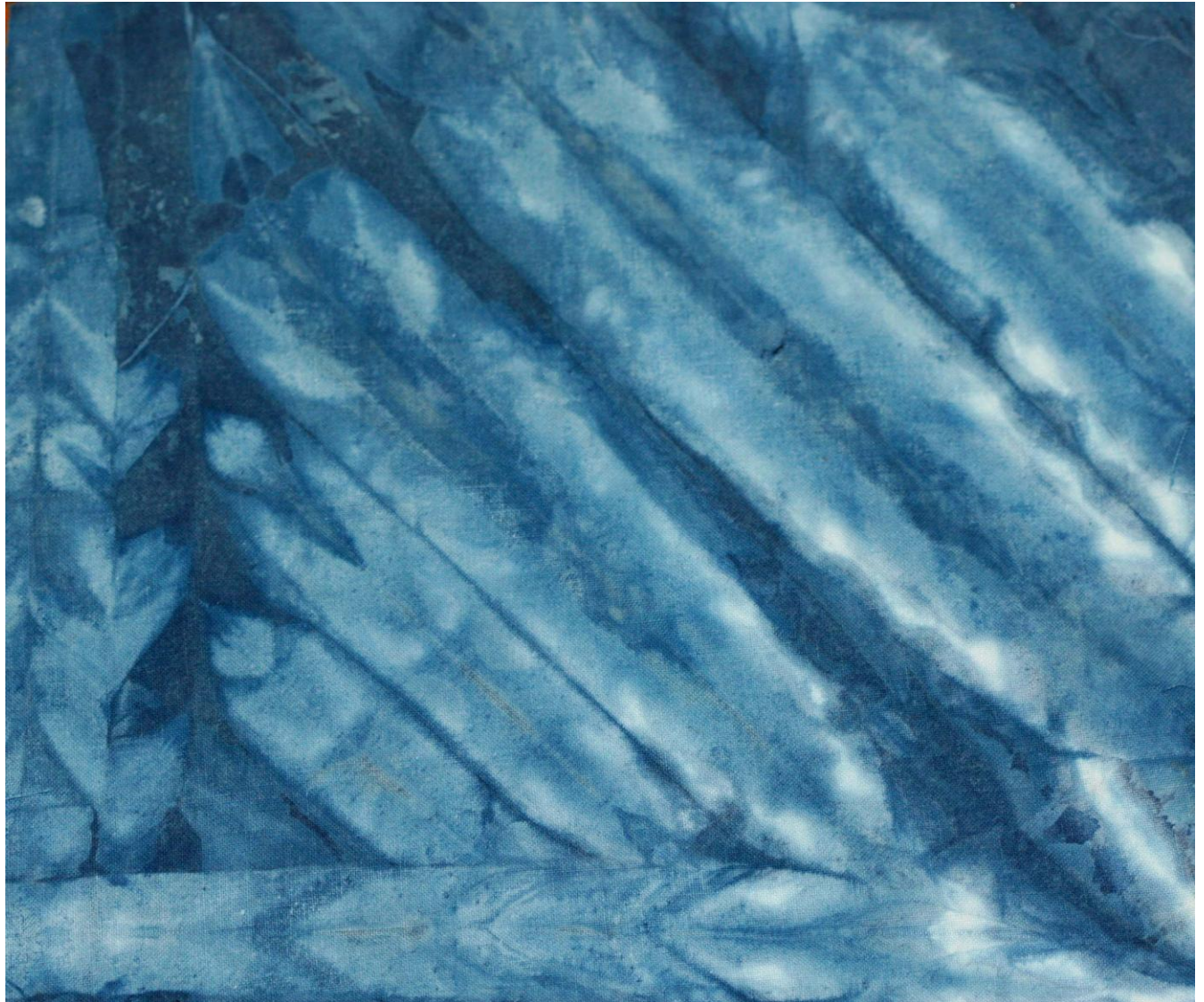


Dyed

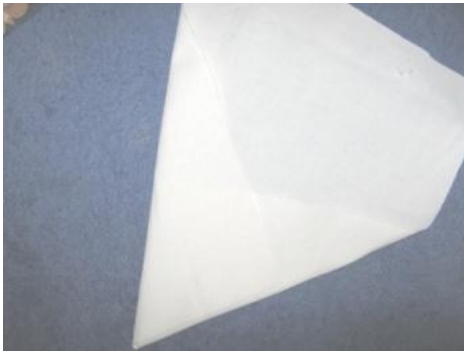
This time fold your fabric back and forth for a few turns and then change your direction simply by changing the direction of where your folding starting from a different side of your fabric, stitch your pleats into place with cotton and a needle and this time wrap around a wooden ruler and secure, I used a rubber band and dip into your dye.

Shibori and Indigo – Pleating work 3

Here's the work result, you can definitely see how changing direction works, you may think what's the purpose of dyeing in this way... Well this would make a great artwork backdrop, feature pocket on clothing, book cover and so forth.



Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 1



Folded fabric



Added wooden clamping sticks back to back of fabric and secured with rubber bands



After dyeing

Moving on to folding and clamping

Fold your fabric, in any way it doesn't really matter and add in some wooden items, in my example I found craft pop stick people and a butterfly so I went with those, but you could use anything that has a shape to it made from wood.

Add those items into your folds making sure they are secured within the fabric and into the dye you go.

Let's check it out.....

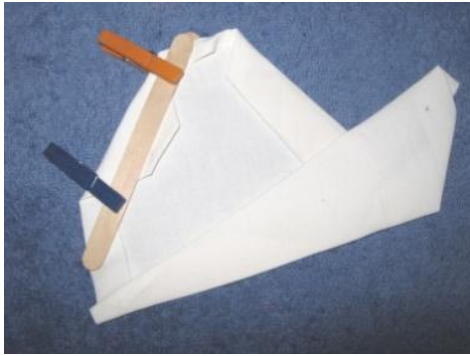
Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 1

Can
definitely
see the
butterfly
impression

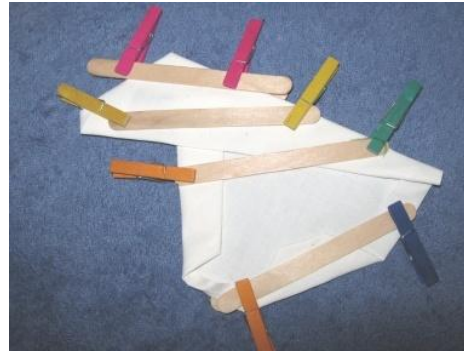
Let's try
another
one.....



Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 2



Folded fabric



Added pop sticks back to back on both sides of fabric and secured with pegs



After dyeing

This time you will require some wooden pop sticks and wooden pegs. Fold your fabric anyway you wish and add pop sticks across your fabric and peg the pop sticks into place securely. Gently add your fabric to your dye.

Let's see how it went.....

Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 2

Those pop sticks
made quite an
interesting
impression.

You guessed it
let's try one more



Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 3



Folded fabric into
triangle shape



Wooden clamps
were added to both
sides of the fabric



After dyeing

Fold your fabric in any way, I have done triangular folding patterns and clamp your folded fabric using two wooden timber pieces, one of either side of your fabric and secure together using string, twine etc. Carefully place into your dye bath.

The big reveal.....

Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 3

It's a really great effect using the clamps and those triangular folds are pretty awesome.

Coming up next is Wrapping but first let's just do one more....



Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 4



Folded fabric into lengths



Folded again into square



Square wood added either side of fabric



Secured with wire



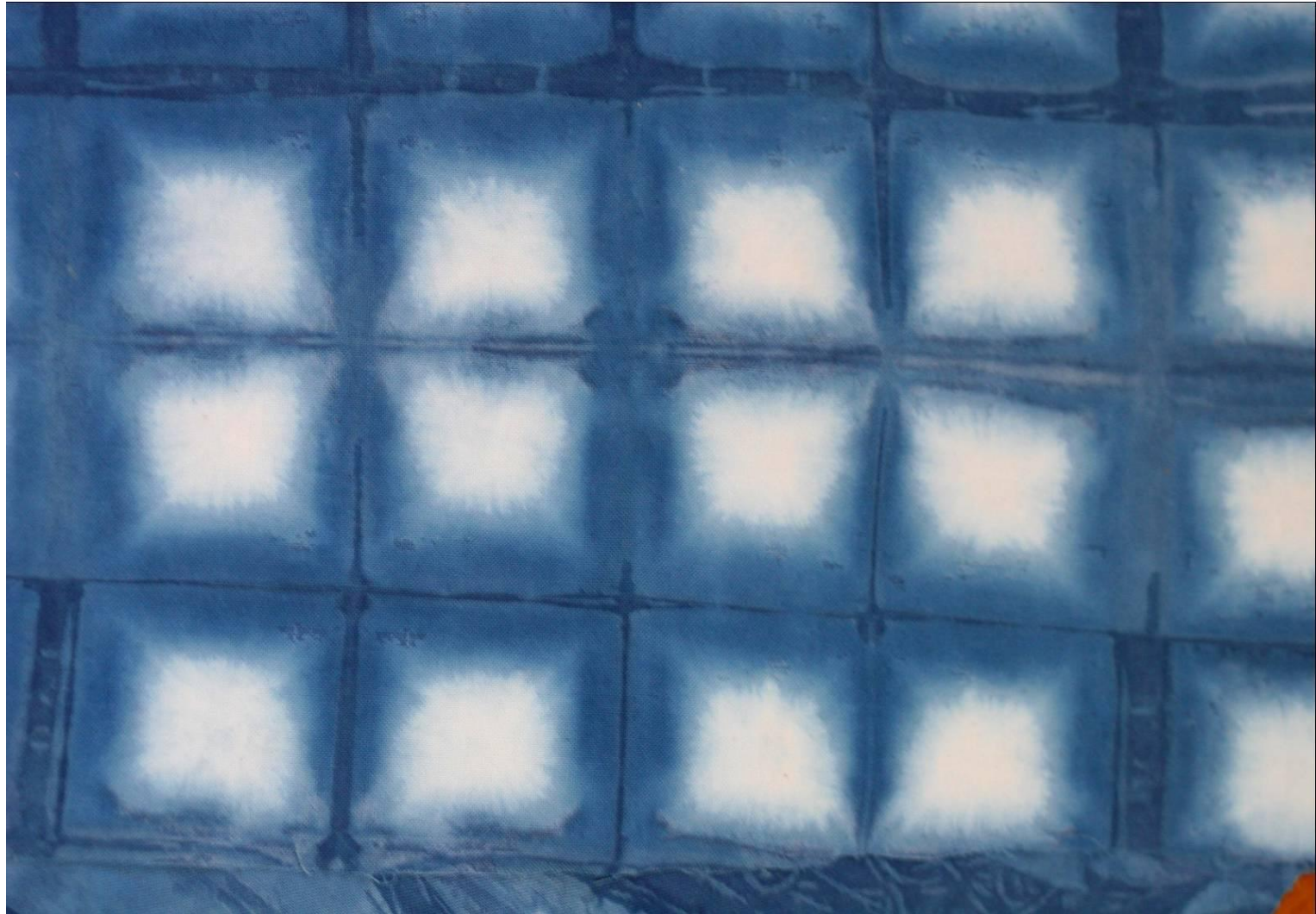
Dyed

Fold fabric into a length then fold to make a square, place on wooden clamps to both sides and secure fabric inside a bit like a sandwich, and place into dye bath.

Shibori and Indigo – Folding and clamping work 4

A really
cool
pattern

Moving
onto
wrapping
technique



Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 1



I scrunch wrapped the fabric around the cup



I knitted a few lines of twine, I wanted to see the patterning it makes



I wrapped the knitted twine around the fabric



I then wrapped more twine around to see the variation of line marking



After Dyeing

Wrap your fabric around a larger pole, pvc piping or in my case an old plastic drinking cup, here is where you can try different more unusual ways to explore line marking, using different thicknesses of twin could be one way or using different directions of securing the fabric on, it's all really about experimentation.

Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 1

I really like how this one turned out, it reminds me of the beach with surf board looking shapes and that knitted twine really added some special line marking.

Let's try another one....



Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 2



Rolled fabric



Twisted rolled fabric



Wrapped around
plastic cup and
secured with tape



After dyeing

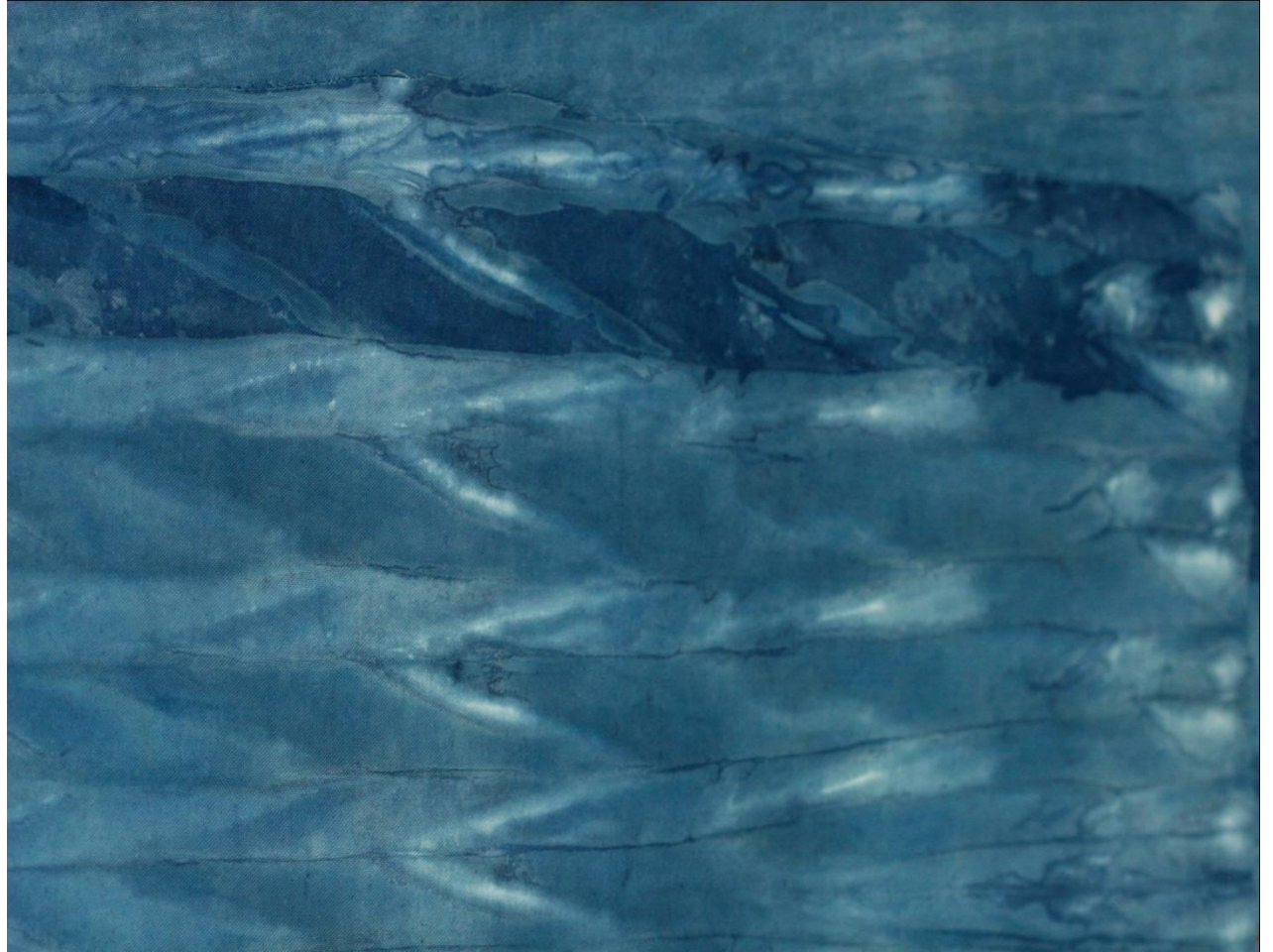
This one is a pretty simple one, simply roll your fabric and roll around your pipe or in my case plastic cup and secure with rubber band. Dip into dye bath.

Let's take a look....

Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 2

Not a technique to write home about but an easy one all the same.

Let's try another method....



Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 3



I decided to experiment by adding a plastic coated wire to the cup first. I want to see the effect it makes.



I folded the fabric and wrapped it over the wire



I then re-wrapped the fabric in more wire



I decided to push together the fabric so it was very crunched up



After dye bath

Really experiment with different way of working, be innovative and not afraid to make mistakes, it's how you will learn new processes.

Shibori and Indigo – Pole wrapping work 3

The wire produced some results, but not as much as I had anticipated, but it was still worth experimenting. Because now I know how to do it better next time. There are no mistakes in art, it's simply knowledge grown.



Shibori and Indigo –Combination process....experiment 1



Stitched lines



Stitched and gathered



Bound in rubber bands

For combination processes, your going to need access to a sewing machine or needle and thread. Start by sewing some large spaced lines across your fabric (gathering stitch if your using a machine). Gather up your fabric by pulling your thread, then add some rubber bands and fasten tightly to various sections of your fabric. Add to your dye bath.

Let's see the result.....

Shibori and Indigo –Combination process....experiment 1

Unpick your sewing when dry and reveal your mark making patterns.



Let's try another..

Shibori and Indigo Combination process experiment 2



Wrap fabric around a stick



Slip off the stick



Then pleat the
rolled up fabric



Bind in plastic
coated wire



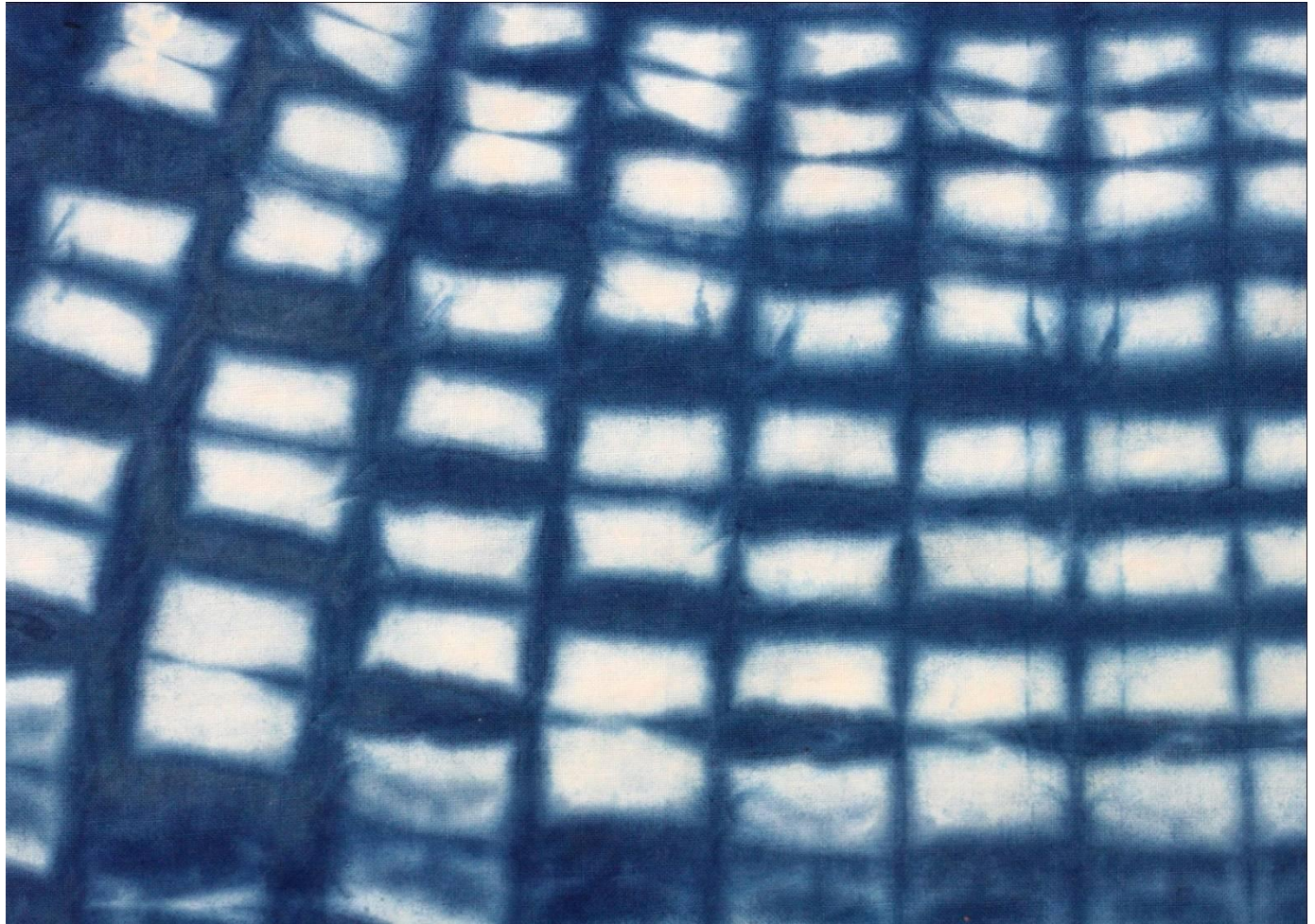
After dyeing

Combining different processes can really work to give you intense patterning outcomes, experimentation is the key to growth in art.

Shibori and Indigo Combination process experiment 2

This was a
very intense
pattern

Let's try
another
combination
process....



Shibori and Indigo -Combination work – Experiment 3



Air filled plastic bag



Cut ends of fabric into strips



Wrap fabric over plastic bag



Bind corners with rubber bands then pop the plastic bag to deflate it trapping fabric

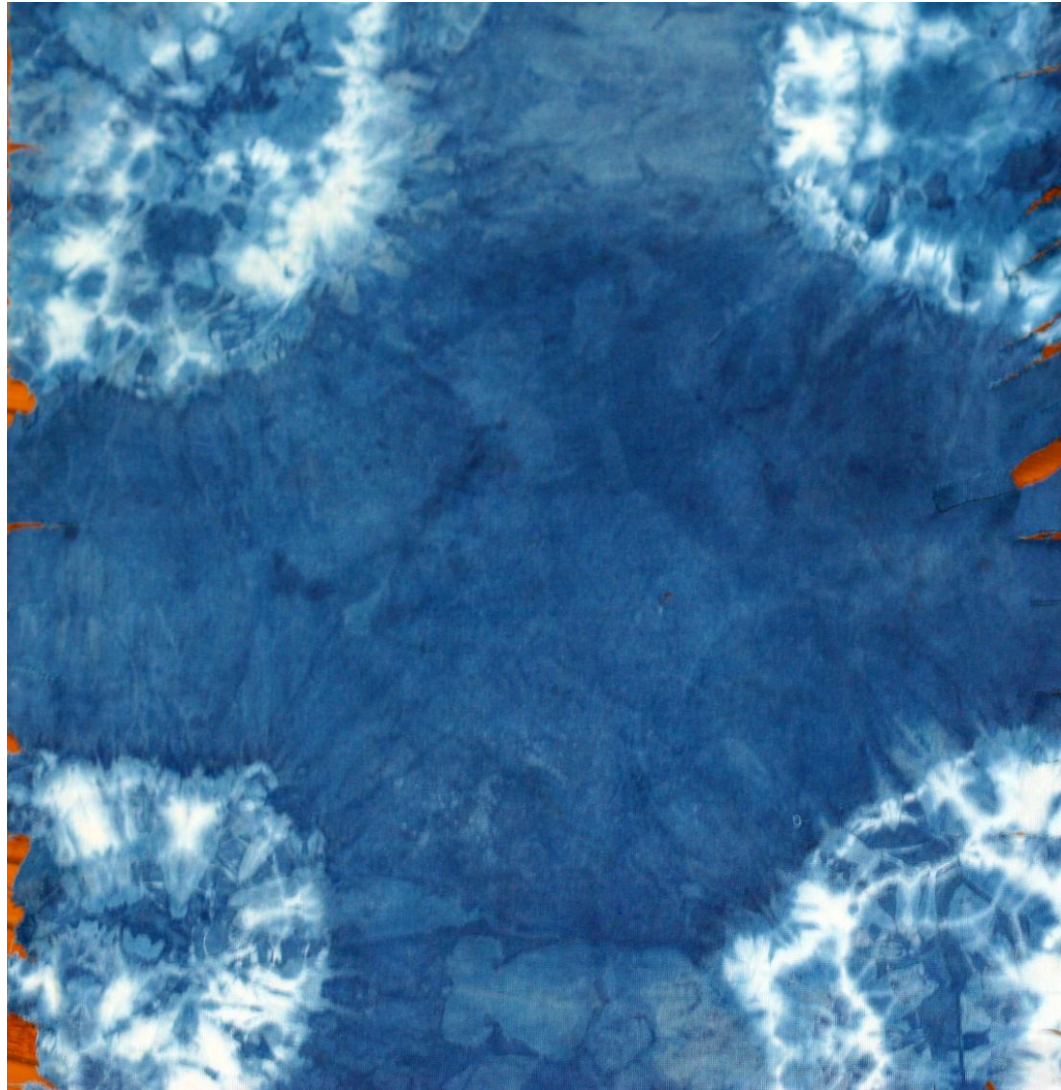


After dyeing

You'll find that the more you experiment the weirder your experiments will become, because your always trying to find ways to create that perfect impression and get that creative marking.

Shibori and Indigo -Combination work – Experiment 3

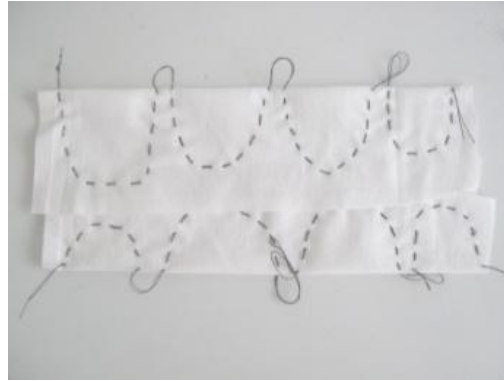
The results from weird experiments can really surprise and spur you on.



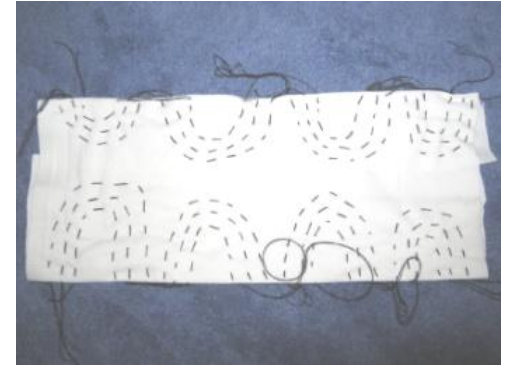
Shibori & Indigo –Sewing Sample 1



Folded edge and stitched
one side



Folded other edge and
stitched



More stitching rows
were added



Gathered up

We tried this earlier, but now we will delve into it a bit more, so start by folding one side of your fabric, you will need a needle and some strong thread, hand sew in lines a pattern onto the folded edge of your fabric. Fold the other side of your fabric and do the same to that side. Repeat the pattern 2 more times each side. Gather the string so your fabric bunches up and place into the dye bath.

Let's see the result...

Shibori & Indigo –Sewing Sample 1

A very intricate
weave of patterns

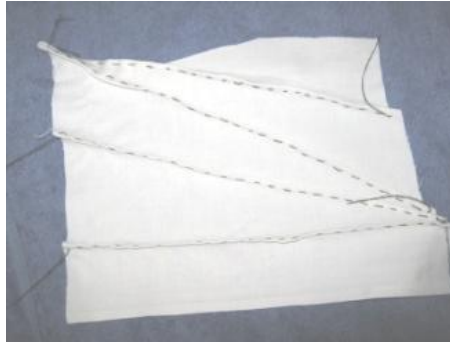
Let's try another
one



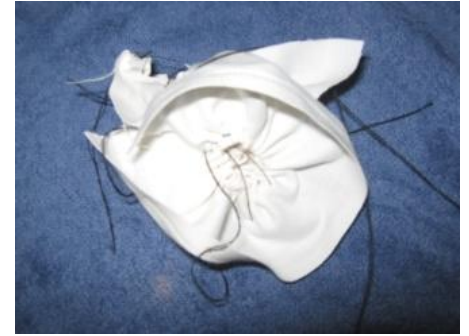
Shibori & Indigo –sewing Sample 2



Folded and stitched



More folding and
stitching in diagonal
directions



Gathered and ready
for dyeing

Try folding techniques and hand sewing a line right by the fold edge, gather your thread so your fabric is all bunched up and place into the dye bath. Unpick the sewing when dry.

Let's take a look.....

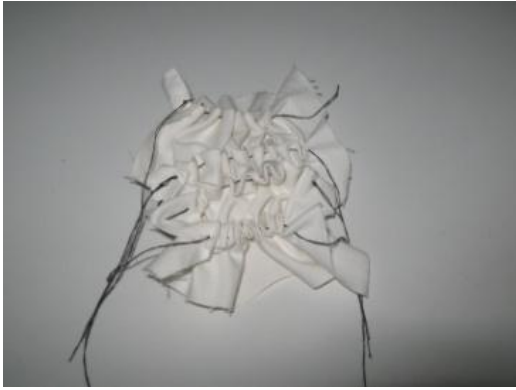
Shibori & Indigo –sewing Sample 2

Patterning
turned out
great it
reminds of
fern leaves.

Let's try
another.....



Shibori & Indigo –Sewing Sample 3



Try folding and hand sewing in many different ways you'll never get the same result twice.



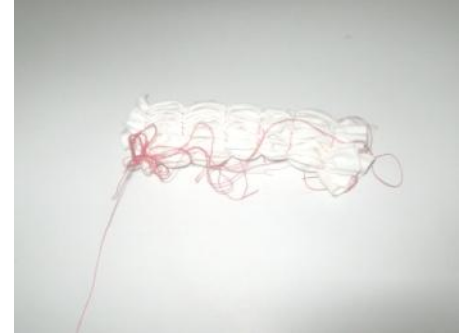
Shibori and Indigo – Sewing Sample 4



Stitched lines



Gathered the stitch



Completely gathered
and ready for dye



Dyed

Sew some machine lines across your fabric then individually gather each line up and add to your dye bath. Leave to dry before unpicking and taking out the sewing .

Let's have a look....

Shibori and Indigo – Sewing Sample 4

Some
interesting
marks
there.

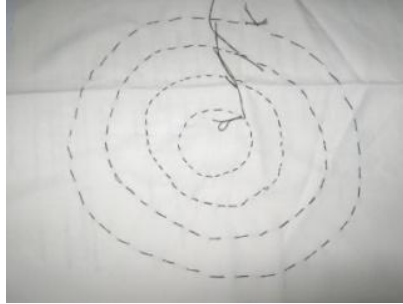


Let's try
another.....

Shibori & Indigo –Sewing Sample 5



Stitched circles



Added more circles



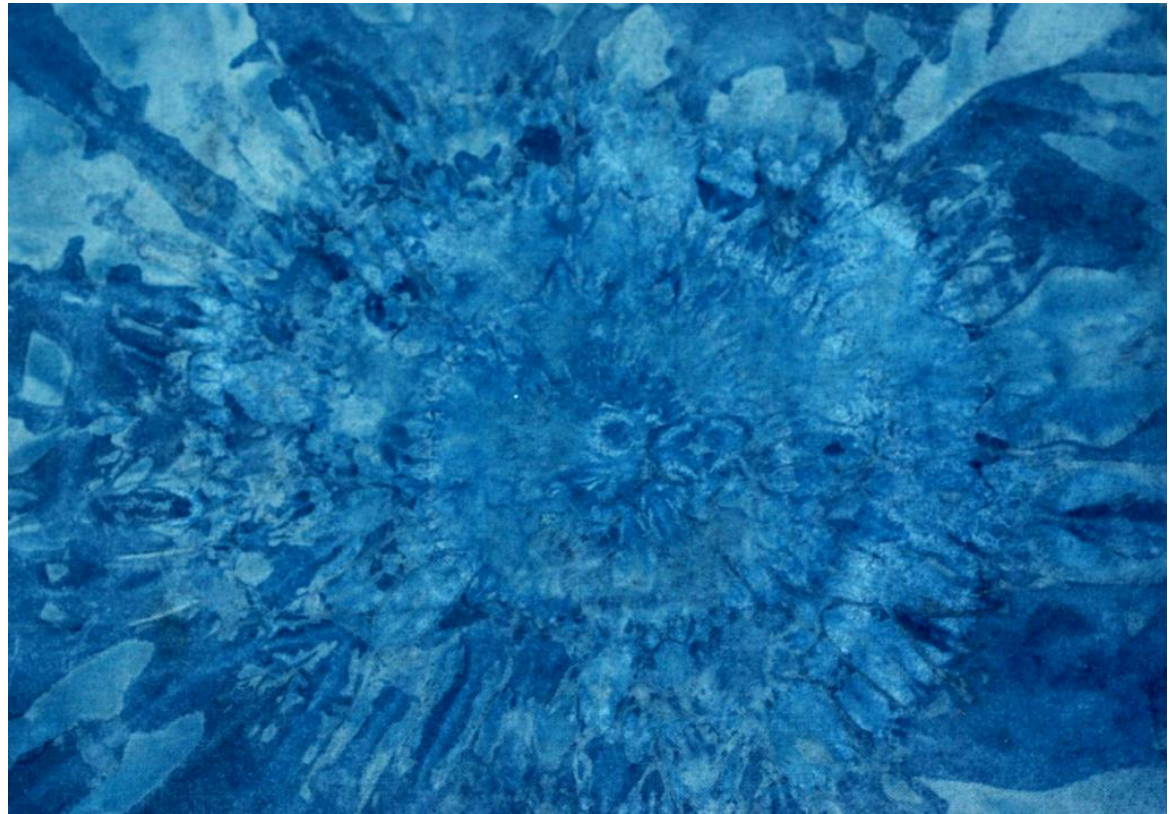
Gathered ready for dyeing

Start by hand sewing lines in a circular fashion, repeating those circles larger and larger, gather your thread so your fabric bunches up and place into your dye bath.

Let's have a look.....

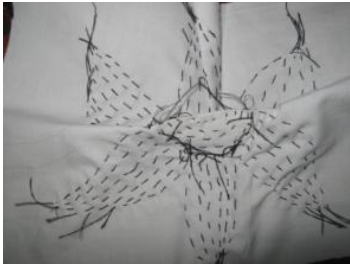
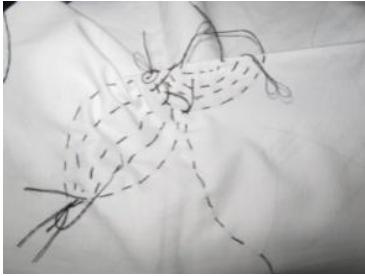
Shibori & Indigo –Sewing Sample 5

Some great markings reminds me of a giant sun.



The reverse side

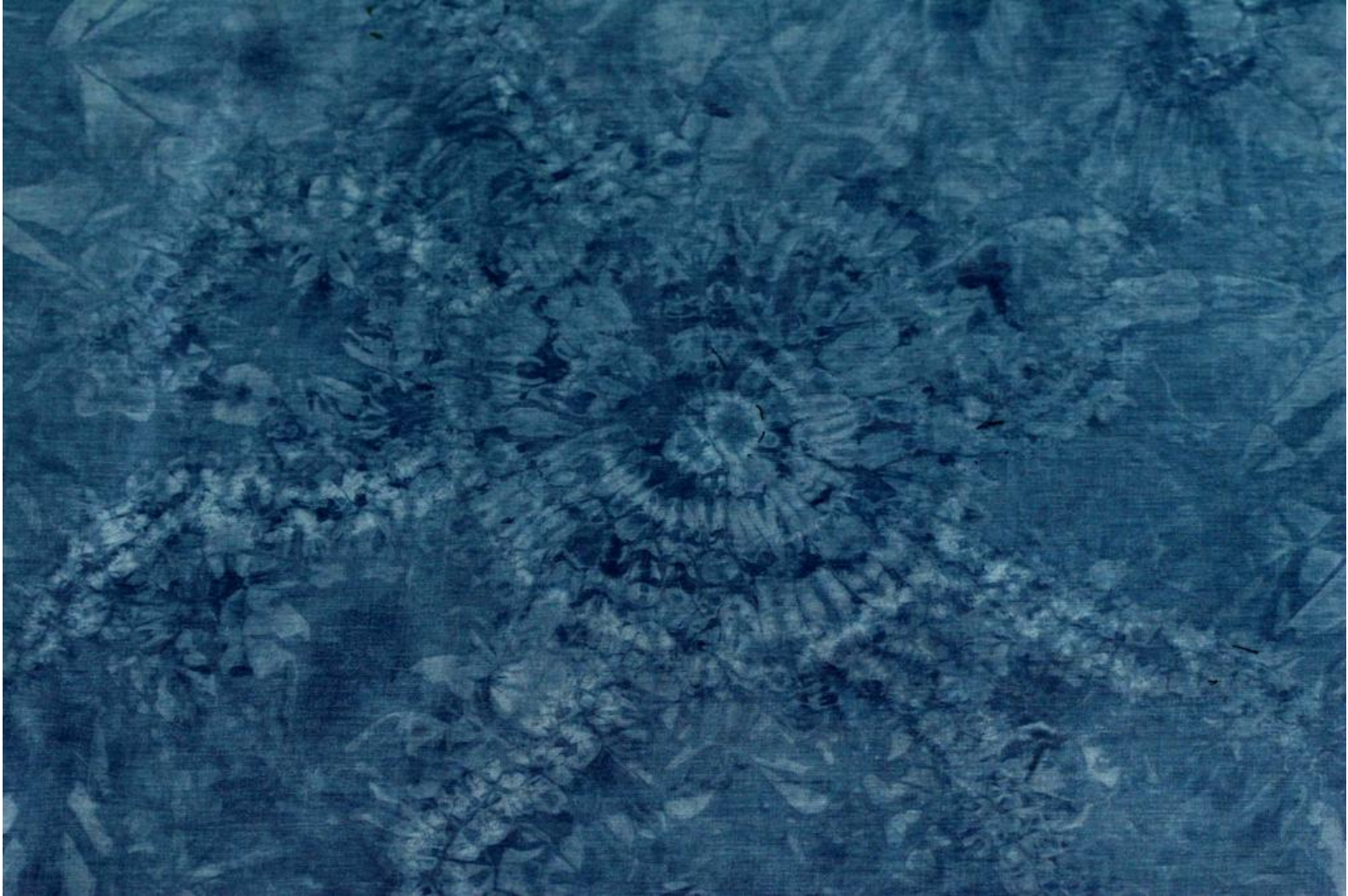
Shibori & Indigo -sewing sample 6



Creating shapes with your sewing can influence the outcome, try hand sewing a flower shape, then gather the thread and place into the dye bath.

Shibori & Indigo -sewing sample 6

Certainly
got the
look of a
flower



Clothes dyeing no 1 –T-shirt



Shirt



Rolled t-shirt up



Wrapped around a cricket wicket



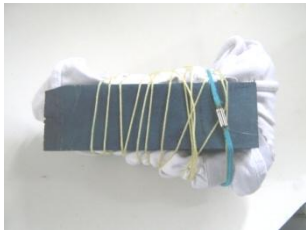
Secured with wrapping twine around the t-shirt



Clothes dyeing no 2



T-shirt



Folded into long triangles and clamped with wood bound by string



Dyed shirt



Clothes dyeing no 3 T-shirt



T-shirt



Bound with rubber bands



Dyed



Dyed and unwrapped



Clothes dyeing no 4 Basic sarong

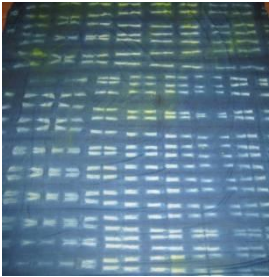
I was interested to experiment with a fabric that had shades of yellow on it and whether the indigo dye would cover it or change the colour to green. I was quite surprised to see that it actually retained its bright yellow appearance in the areas it was.



Pleated fabric



Folded again in pleat fashion and secured between wood pieces



Dyed fabric wet



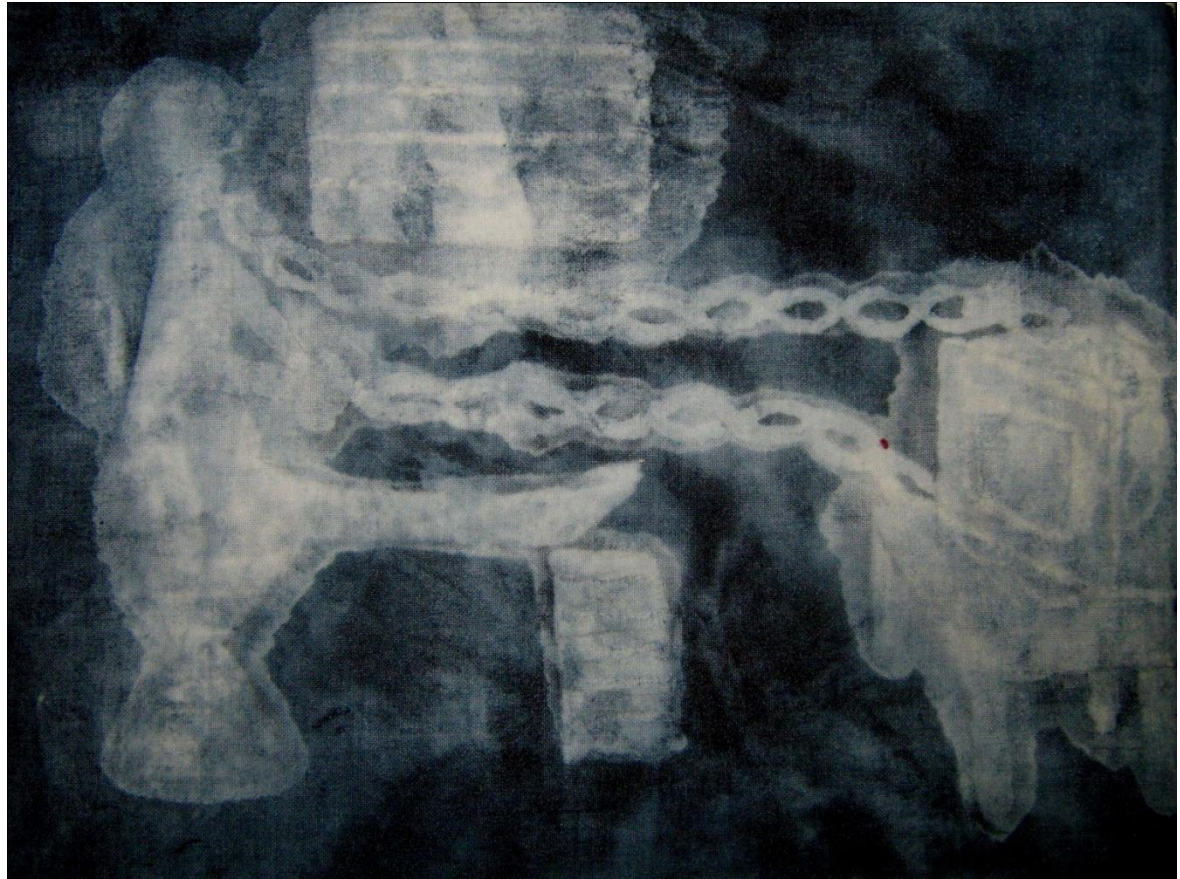
Experiemental work using flour & water paste



Applied the paste using a brush, then scrapped back sections



Dried cloth awaiting dye



This finished work is indicative of an x-ray view, the image is of a boy playing play station and as a mother feeling like he is chained to the television, he has his feet up on top of a box, window in the background. So you don't just have to rely on the chance that your dyeing will portray what you want, if you want to mesh dyeing art with art works then this is the perfect way to do it.

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