

Product Spotlight



Dye-Na-Flow: Does This Paint Act Like a Dye? Carole Parker*

Are you intimidated by mixing up your own dye? Do you only have your kitchen as a workspace? This might be the product for you -- within limits.

It's supposed to be a paint that acts like dye. Jane Dunnewold, author of "[Complex Cloth: A Comprehensive guide to Surface Design](#)", loves it. It's thinner than most fabric paints, so it spreads more readily. It's [Dye-Na-Flow](#) from Jacquard Products.



Is it as great as some say? That depends on what you want to do with it.

Testing Procedure

I did an experiment to test the capabilities of Dye-Na-Flow. I wanted to see if it really spreads like dye, and what would happen with different treatments.

1. Wet two pieces of fabric.
2. Kept two pieces of fabric dry.
3. Bunched and bound all four pieces like I would for resist dyeing.

4. Tried one wet and one dry, single color.
5. Tried one wet and one dry, multiple colors.



I used 100% cotton, medium weight, not sheer, but not heavy. Does the fabric affect outcome? Yes and no. The paint won't change, but the fabric's feel may change.

Single color on wet fabric. The picture below shows some spread and some diffused edges. You also see concentrations of color where it was applied.



Single color on dry fabric. The edges are sharper in the picture below, and it didn't spread much from point of application.



Multiple colors on wet fabric. While there was some blending, it wasn't much. The colors stayed pretty separate and did not spread much, but you did get diffused edges.



Multiple colors on dry fabric. While there was a little blending of color, the picture below shows that the colors stayed mostly sharply separate with sharp edges. The white area is closer to the center of the fabric ball, so the color stayed mostly on the surface and did not penetrate much.



Dye-Na-Flow With Other Stuff

As I mentioned earlier, Dunnewold loves Dye-Na-Flow fabric paints. She claims that it penetrates fabric as readily as dye does. I'll differ with her on this point.

You can generally use fabric paint on any kind of fabric. However, I've found that if you want the color to spread, it spreads better on thinner fabrics than thicker ones. It will spread on a thicker fabric, but either takes more paint or more water on the

fabric to get it to spread. If you don't want the paint to spread, keep the fabric dry, especially if you want sharp boundaries

At a recent Peninsula Wearable Arts Guild (PenWAG) workshop, many of the student samples had a definite right side/wrong side look. The colors are pretty, and like most any other paint, you can mix colors. Also, the techniques that Dunnewold covered were flat fabric techniques.

They're great techniques, and I now have more tools in my fabric coloration and embellishment tool kit, but they do seem limited to flat fabrics for best effect. That's not too much of a surprise since Dunnewold is a surface design artist rather than a wearables artist or a costumer. Her work is mostly hung up on walls for display.

Dunnewold especially likes using Dye-Na-Flow with Soy Wax. I hope to finish these projects soon and have photos available for a *Virtual Costumer* article in the not-too-distant-future.

Conclusion

Dye-Na-Flow is fun stuff, but it is not fiber reactive dye. Like other fabric paints, it can be put on any fabric, so you don't have to worry about fabric limitations like you do dye. If you found some absolutely beautiful polyester fabric, you can paint it with the

Dye-Na-Flow where you would not want to muck with dye.

Despite what Dunnewold says, I don't feel that it penetrates fabric as well as dye, at least, not if you're trying for an effect that is other than flat. You can thin it and not lose color intensity of the paint, which is nice. It's a safe color source since it's non-toxic, and it's an easy way to start coloring fabric if you're just starting out.

I can recommend Dye-Na-Flow because it's fun stuff to use, but it's not totally like dye in its penetration of fabric. It's readily available in some of the local craft stores, and you can buy it in quantity. You can mix it like any other paint, and like other fabric paints, it's easier to put on.

It takes longer to cure than dye, however. Where dyes are chemically set right away, Dye-Na-Flow can take two weeks to cure by air-drying, or a couple days when heat set with an iron. A chemical from Dharma Trading can shorten the cure rate, but that's something else you have to buy and add to the Dye-Na-Flow.

I give this product a thumbs-up, as long as you understand what it can and can't do.

See Carole Parker's article on the Montreal Centre for Contemporary Textiles elsewhere in this issue.