

# Batik

## A Passage through Cultures

**Batik Textiles' fabric** is the multicultural melding of several uniquely skilled artists from disparate backgrounds and far distant localities. This process is initiated in San Diego and guided through its journey by Batik Textiles' designer, Lee Anne. Lee Anne, a longtime batik designer and veteran quilter, has worked with the Balinese making batiks for many years. In that time, she has developed many close friendships and considers Bali her second home.

About 10 months before a fabric line's premier, Lee Anne creates her designs and colors by envisioning a conceptual quilt. She then mentally extracts the quilt pieces and refines their motifs, colors, scale and tones into individual fabric sketches.

Modestly, Lee Anne relates, "I don't have any exceptional gift for this. I love color and just make what I like." Lee Anne likes bright, sharp colors and isn't afraid of any color combinations. She combines all her sketches for a line in a workbook to carry to her master dyer in Bali.

For each design, Lee Anne has to do a precise line drawing that is then made into a copper stamp known as a cap and pronounced, "chop" in Balinese.

The stamp holds the wax to be applied to the cloth during the batik process.

Cap making is an intricate art using the edge of an approximately 1/2 inch wide copper ribbon woven to form the motif.

Once the stamps are finished, Lee Anne travels 20 hours and 8,000 miles to Bali with her workbook to collaborate and work with her master dyer, Ketut, and his 60 production dyers for several weeks.

Bali is a small island (approximately 50 miles wide by 80 miles long) located within Indonesia, an archipelago of



10,000 islands. The Balinese are gentle, sweet, and quick to smile and laugh. Unlike the rest of Indonesia, which is Muslim, the Balinese are mostly Hindu with daily religious rituals and offerings and frequent festivals. They are soft spoken and lead simple but very happy lives in multi-generational homes.

Ketut, the master dyer, has many years of dyeing experience. He is highly skilled and talented in achieving just that right final color and tone despite layers of overlaying colored dyes. Unlike in the U.S. where people are taught “color rules” regarding which colors should be used together and sometimes-rigid adherence to the color wheel, Ketut is unconstrained and spontaneous in his color combinations with frequent startling and impressive color mixes.

Lee Anne’s direct, interpersonal interaction with this master dyer is critical. She fine-tunes the colors to obtain that desired perfect shade. This collaboration of cultures frequently produces unexpected but quite spectacular results that are better than the original envisioned colors.

After conferring with Lee Anne and studying her sketches, the master dyer produces responsive samples until Lee Anne is fully satisfied. Then only does a fabric go into production.

The ancient batik production process is fascinating to follow and instills a full appreciation for the precision and many steps involved in producing a single fabric. The completely hand done nature of the process with its occasional slight human imperfections develops that human connection between its creators and the quilter to whom it passes.

The first batik step is dyeing 15 yards or so of white fabric. Batik Textiles uses white poplin that has been mercerized and Sanforized with a high thread count of 133 by 72, a dense weave but imminently penetrable with a needle, a great appliqué weight. This first dyeing layer, whether a single color or multicolor will become the color of the stamp design.



This dyeing involves immersion in a large vat. If the fabric is to be multicolor, the dyed fabric will then be carried to beds of screen or plastic laid on the ground where a second application of dye is sprayed or poured onto the fabric in a prearranged pattern. The fabric then is hung on long lines in covered sheds to thoroughly dry.

After drying, the fabric is stamped with the design. The stamper works at a small table covered with oilcloth laid over a thick, dense piece of foam. He is a skilled craftsman who dips the stamp into a layer of molten wax and precisely stamps the fabric leaving a light layer of wax, all without dripping any wax indiscriminately onto the fabric.



After stamping, the fabric is ready to be dyed its final color. This, like the initial dyeing, can be multicolor or one

color. The stamped wax prevents this latter dyeing from penetrating onto the original dyed color(s). The dyers may also apply selected minerals or chemicals to the final dye layer to create special looks and effects, as opposed to a hand dyed, solid look. Again the fabric is hung to dry.

The final dramatic step is placing the fabric into a cauldron of boiling water that melts away the wax revealing the original dye color under the stamp. The wax floats to the surface and is skimmed off constantly and placed in forms to harden and be re-used. The fabric is then thoroughly washed in a series of baths. It is dried and sent to the warehouse.



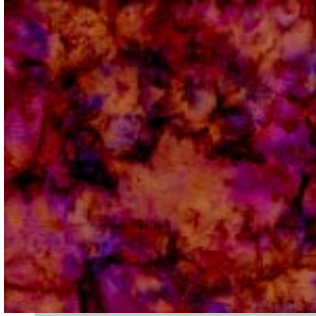
Lee Anne is a stickler for perfection and the final stage of the process is continuous quality control occurring in Batik Textiles’ Bali warehouse. Initially, before delivering any fabric to the dyer, their 15 warehouse workers examine the white poplin on a light table for quality and defects. After the fabric is stamped and dyed, it is again checked on a light table for

*Batik continues on page 8.*

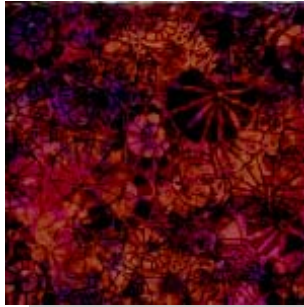
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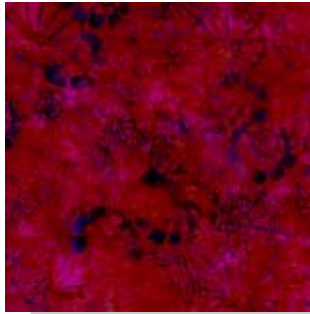
consistency of color and for any dyer created defects. If any problems are discovered in either quality check, the fabric is returned either to the supplier or dyer for replacement. The accepted fabric is then laid on long, continuous tables for a final measurement, hand bolted, and boxed for shipping by ocean container.



*First dyeing (Multicolor).*



*Stamped with wax motif.*



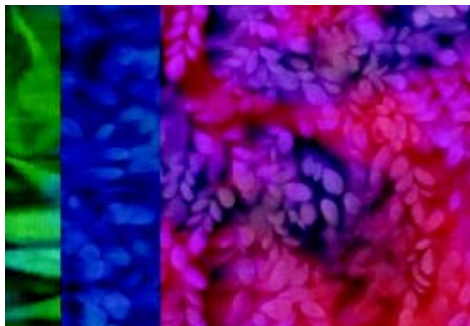
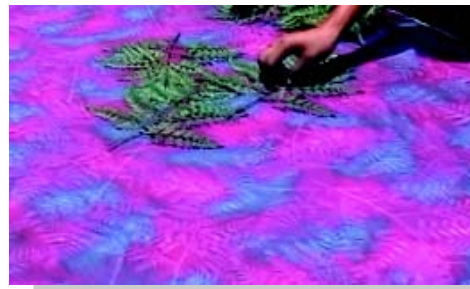
*After final dyeing with wax boiled out.*

The sun's intensity interacts with the dye to create a specific color. The area of the fabric which is shaded or partially shaded by the leaves that are not perfectly flat but three dimensional results in a different shade of color from the full sun areas. The resulting image is a soft, luxurious motif with a remarkable feeling of depth. This fabric has been extremely popular with quilters because of its natural, dimensional appearance.

The pictures to the left illustrate the batik process for a single fabric.

Batik Textiles uses another form of resist dyeing in its Bali Sun Prints™. In this ancient process, real leaves are used as the resist to form the design. The white fabric is dyed as in the batik sequence: single color, gradated or multicolor.

While the dye is still wet, it is immediately brought into the hot, penetrating tropical sun and the leaves instantaneously spread over the fabric by numerous workers. Because the fabric is 15 yards long, the placement of the leaves has to be rapidly accomplished to prevent one end of the fabric from being different from the other end. The sun's intensity is essential to the process and there is just a short window of exact overhead sun.



Batik Textiles is the only U.S. company producing this wonderful effect and now it is available in some rayons using larger leaves and spacing for distinguished garments.

A variety of leaves are used, including the Kelor, Intaran, and Damal. Batik Textiles grows these leaves on property next door to their dyeing facility. Because of the frequent rains, rich soil and humidity, these fast growing plants flourish without watering or maintenance.

Even when working in some of the world's oldest dyeing processes, innovation is still the word. Lee Anne has challenged the stampers with her new Batik border fabric arriving in the Spring of 2008. She designed the border fabric so it has both the focus fabric and a border

within every piece. The stampers quickly conquered the challenge with their characteristic Balinese spirit of a quick smile, a willing disposition, and acceptance of new ideas and people.

Batik Textiles fabrics are a product of a multicultural partnership providing employment for many Balinese while providing gorgeous and innovative fabrics to the world's quilters. Batik Textiles fabrics can be viewed at [www.batiktextiles.com](http://www.batiktextiles.com) or contacted at 1-800-775-5030, wholesale only. ☺