

# Suminagashi / Floating Ink Paper Marbling

By Jessica Henricks

## Supplies – Basics in bold

- **Tray** - Watertight, bigger than paper, stable, over 2” tall, clear or white
- **Water** - Room temperature, tap is fine
- Ink

Black - <b>Liquid Sumi Ink</b>	\$10.79 for 12oz.	Blick Art Materials, San Francisco
Colors – “Boku Undo” Marbling	\$16 for 6 colors	Magnolia Editions, Oakland

Alternative inks: Higgins Drawing, Pelikan, liquid acrylic paint

Clear dispersant - <b>Photo Flo</b>	\$9.15 for 16oz.	Adolph Gasser, San Francisco
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Alternatives include dish soap, nose/hair grease and conditioners

- Brushes – at least two, ideally one per color

<b>Japanese Sumi brush</b>	2 for \$1	Ichiban Kan, San Francisco
	\$4 / ea	Blick Art or Paper Store Japantown

- **Paper** - Absorbent, fits in tray, long fibers/doesn't disintegrate in water

Suncraft	\$1 / 50 sheets	Lakeshore Learning, San Leandro
Japanese Sketch Paper Pad	\$9.29 / 48 sheets	Blick Art, San Francisco

Many options – even office paper works

- Other

### **Ink trays**

### **Newspaper Strips**

Paper towels

Drain / rinse / transport tray (a cookie sheet works well)

Brush rests

Paper for under wet prints

For groups, designate areas by writing names on paper

Latex gloves

Smock

Hand fan

## Resource

The Ultimate Marbling Handbook by Diane Maurer-Mathison

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**Goal** - To float ink on the surface of water to create a pattern, then capture it with absorbent paper

## Hints

- Water should be 1" – 2" deep and at room temperature
- Remove dust and old ink from surface by dragging a half submerged newspaper strip across water
- Don't dip the brush in the tray, just touch it to the surface
- Scrape/wipe excess ink from brush and shape brush tip into point
- Lay paper onto surface of water in one even motion to avoid bubbles and pattern disruptions
- After just a moment on the water, pick up the paper by firmly grasping one corner.
- Rinse excess ink from paper by placing on flat tray under running water
- When it stops working (sinking or non-spreading ink)
  - Wipe brush on towel and reload with ink, taking care to remove all excess ink
  - Add ONE drop of dispersant to the ink. Mix well
  - Skim the water
  - Get new water
- Experiment
  - Over-marble by dipping the same sheet a second time once dry
  - Use water or "frisk" to resist ink from areas of marbling
  - Marble wood, other paper, fabric, or anything absorbant

## History

from <http://www.suminagashi.com/>

Suminagashi is the ancient Japanese technique of decorating paper with inks. It is believed to be the oldest form of marbling, originating in China over 2,000 years ago and practiced in Japan by Shinto priests as early as the 12th century. Suminagashi (sue-me-NAH-gah-she), which means literally "ink-floating" involves doing just that.

Japanese Sumi-e inks were originally used, dropped carefully to float on a still water surface and then blown across to form delicate swirls, after which the ink was picked up by laying a sheet of white rice paper atop the ink covered water.

The practice of Suminagashi remains much the same today, although now artists also use acrylic paints that flow and spread over a liquid water surface. Combining the knowledge of fluid mechanics with artistic talent, the artist controls the floating pigments through the viscosity and surface tension of the water to create images suggestive of mountain ranges, landscapes, clouds and animals before printing them on a sheet of paper. The Europeans had their own version of marbling also called Ebru or Turkish-style marbling.