



STEAMING HAND PAINTED SILKS

Silk dyes ie. Drimalan F, Silk Designer, Silk Express, etc., should be steamed to achieve the best fixation and most brilliant colours. Fixing dyes makes them permanent and resistant to washing, wear, and sunlight. There are 4 main ways to steam your silk to set the dye.

1. with a bamboo steamer on a wok or pot on the stove. Lay the silk flat on a piece of butchers paper or similiar, or cotton lawn. Roll it up, so no silk is touching silk, not too tightly and avoiding creases. Coil it around to fit in the bamboo steamer. Steam for approx 45 mintues.
2. in a pressure cooker. Lay the silk flat on a piece of butchers paper or similiar, or cotton lawn. Roll it up, so no silk is touching silk, not too tightly and avoiding creases. Wrap it once in aluminium foil but do not seal the ends, but do bend them slightly down. Place one of those “fan” vegetable steamers in the pressure cooker, and fill with water to under the bottom of the steamer. (you don’t want it bubbling up through it when the water is boiling). Coil the silk around to fit in the steamer. Clamp on the lid. Get up to the temperature when there is steam coming out the top. Turn down to very low and steam for approx 45 minutes.
3. in the oven (not microwave oven or fan forced). Lay the silk flat on a piece of butchers paper or similiar, or cotton lawn. Roll it up, so no silk is touching silk, not too tightly and avoiding creases. Pre-heat the oven to 170 - 180 C. Boil some water. Place the boiling water in a baking tray on the rack just above the element. Let this get back to simmering. Place the rolled silk on a rack higher up in the oven. (you can place a piece of aluminium foil over the silk roll if you wish - but this is the driest steaming method). Steam for approx 45 minutes keeping an eye on the water level, and making sure the wrapping paper/cotton is not scorching.
4. use a professional steamer (or pay some one who owns one, like myself).

Once steamed, unwrap the silk, rinse well in running water to remove any excess dye, and dry.

If you aren’t sure if the piece has steamed long enough, only unroll a little way, drop some water on the coloured silk and watch. If you get a classic wet on dry mark - the piece needs to be steamed longer. 45 minutes is about the minimum, and anything over 90 minutes means there is something wrong with your steaming.

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