

Cheesecloth Imagery on Textiles

Add texture, interest and drama to figurative imagery with Mary's unique method of using simple cheesecloth. This not only makes portraits easy to do (think color-by-number!) but is also great for animals (like dogs, cats, horses) and for textural landscapes. Black and white imagery is dramatic, but you will explore ways to add color to both the background and cheesecloth.

Through exercises, slide shows, and demos, Mary leads you through her easy techniques for creating with cheesecloth. First you create two simple projects, a landscape and a portrait, to learn the fundamental methods, and then with Mary's guidance, adjust your selected reference photo to create your own personal composition.

MaryPalDesigns.com or MaryPalTeaches.com

A. SCULPTING SUPPLIES:

- Dura-Lar® polyester film – must be clear (not matte) and .005" thickness ; 4 sheets of 20 x 25" (about \$2 ea.) and a minimum of 4 sheets of 9 x 12". Available at most art supply stores, including Dick Blick, Jerry's Artarama, and Amazon, and can be bought by the individual sheet, in pads of 25 or even on rolls that are easily cut to size. This is an amazing product with dozens of uses and if new to you, you will become a convert!
- Three packages of plain white cheesecloth (available at grocery, dollar or hardware stores or sometimes on a bolt in fabric stores) the loosest weave you can find [Grade 10, not 90] (this is not scrim; the threads should move easily)
- 400 mL plain white PVA glue like Elmer's® white school glue or craft and hobby glue; (PH Neutral is okay but dries a bit stretchy) but not Weldbond®, which is not a PVA)– [PVA glue is white glue for fabric and wood and dries clear]
- 4 Sharpie® markers (other brands tend to smear, so stick to Sharpie® if you can):
Red: 1 Ultra-Fine or Fine tip and 1 Medium or Chisel tip (basically one very thin and one thicker)
Blue or Green: 1 fine-tip and 1 thicker
- Small sharp scissors you don't mind getting glue on
- Smallest rotary cutter you own with spare blade – 18 mm is ideal! and truly worth buying
- Paintbrushes: a variety of thicknesses and points for painting on fabric and be sure to include at least one good quality #2 round, one ¾" flat, and one 2-3" flat for sculpting
- Plastic containers with lids – two medium-sized (2 cup), 1 small (1/2 cup)
- Plastic tarp or tablecloth to cover your table; small trash bag; reusable dish cloth; wooden skewer or two; apron or old clothes and comfy shoes
- Tape: masking or clear

SESSION 2

Friday to Wednesday, March 7 – 12, 2025

Mail: 1669 Hollenbeck Ave #344, Sunnyvale CA 94087-5402 | Phone: 925-222-5509

Email: info@emptyspoolsseminars.com | Website: emptyspoolsseminars.com

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B. SEWING SUPPLIES:

- Rotary cutting set: favourite mat, ruler, cutter
- Sewing machine, free-motion foot, basic sewing kit (pins, seam ripper, etc.), threads:
- Needles: #80 or #90 Topstitch needles and whatever needles you like to piece with
- Threads:**
Monofilament (“invisible”) thread – whatever your machine prefers; mine prefers nylon (Unique brand) over polyester but the differences are minimal so bring whatever you have
Your preferred sewing threads (cotton or poly) in black, white, and neutral and if you plan to work on a colorful animal, some appropriate colors
- 3 or 4 spare bobbins or pre-wound with black, white and neutral
- Fabrics:**
 - 1 ½ yds. solid (or at most, marbled) black or very dark navy/burgundy/brown background fabric that you can zigzag stitch on without it buckling – good quality cotton is usually fine or a heavy fabric like canvas or buckram, OR, if thinner cotton, bring stabilizer (any kind: iron-on, tearaway, pinned-on)
 - 1 yd. dark fabric for backings and facings

- 1 yd. plain white prewashed cotton to paint on and then stitch on (bring stabilizer if it is thin)

Finishers: Are you a “finisher”? You want to leave the class with 1-3 finished projects?

- ½ yd. of “frame” or “border” fabric with texture/patterning like coarse linen, burlap, or tone-on-tone in a neutral colour
- 2 yds. backing and/or facing fabrics (cotton is best), random printed or plain
- 2 yds. batting (whatever you use; my fave is low-loft Quilters Dream Cotton, Request)

Or Explorers: Or are you an “explorer”? You want to spend the class learning as much as you can about sculpting cheesecloth and plan to finish your projects after you get home?

- Bring lots of cheesecloth to play with. Dye it at home ahead of time (see link to video below) or bring coloring products to class. Each of your experiments may require an additional sheet of Dura-Lar, so keep that in mind when purchasing.
- But also bring at least 2 yds. of dark fabric for backgrounds, backings and facings, and at least 1 yd. of batting just in case you are inspired to finish a quilt or two.

AN IMPORTANT WORD ABOUT COLOUR:

- Cheesecloth:** All projects can be completed using white cheesecloth on a black background. However, as fiber artists love colour, I provide all students with enough green and brown dyed cheesecloth to make a tree on Day 1. If you think you would like to colour some of your cheesecloth ahead of time, you can dye it at home with Procion fibre-reactive dyes or visit my teaching website <https://www.marypalteaches.com/free-guide-to-coloring-cheesecloth> to see ways in

which you can use other products. Or bring them to class to experiment.

- Fabric:** You will learn how to paint a simple background on white fabric for your tree, but maybe you have the perfect fabrics in your stash that say “cloudy sky” or “rocky shore”- you can piece or appliqué them together for your background. Or bring fusible web and use that. I am happy to support you using techniques you are comfortable with ... I just hope you will try some of mine too!

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RECOMMENDED:

- Laptop and/or tablet and/or smart phone and/or memory stick
- A portrait photo (printed on paper any size up to 16x20") of a subject you would like to attempt in the class. Be aware that this technique is beautifully suited to older skin, but young children's smooth skin is extremely challenging to depict. Look for lined faces with character or textural animals (dogs, lions, horses, elephants) or landscapes (think windblown trees or frothy waves). I have a handout for you that explains the best photos to select. Prior to the class, you are urged to exchange emails with the instructor so she can assist you with the best way to adjust your chosen photo to make a good pattern; she is happy to do this for you and email it back to you. Then you just print it out at home or send to a copy shop, and bring to class.
- If you bring a laptop or tablet, load some black and white photos onto it, your own or copyright-free ones from Pexels.com or Pixabay.com and bring that to practise making adjustments during the week. (And I am happy to do this for you if the prospect gives you nightmares)
- Table-top sewing light and a multi-plug extension cord with surge protection. (If room in your car or suitcase)
- Tablecloth or sheet to cover your work at night

COMPLETELY OPTIONAL (just some suggestions):

- White cotton fabric to paint (cotton canvas is great or regular cotton with stabilizer) and your favourite textile paints (Setacolor, Jacquard, etc.) to add colour beneath your cheesecloth
- Tsukineko inks, Dye-na-Flo or Inktense blocks with zip-lock baggies, to dye cheesecloth (see link to my website, above)
- A small stretched canvas (9x12 or 12x12) and staple gun to try out a hard-mounted finish
- Glue stick for the appliqué stage ... but pins work just as well!
- Your reading glasses for close-up work and/or small tweezers
- Mr. Clean Magic Eraser® so you can re-use your Duralar® after drawing on it with a Sharpie®
- A notebook or mobile device for jotting down pointers; a sketchbook for trying out compositions

Bonus: Advance Information: Once registered, you are invited to email the instructor at marybpal@gmail.com, and she will send you some documents ahead of the class to help you select appropriate photos to bring. An important part of the instruction will be about selecting and editing photos suitable for cheesecloth sculpting.

Students, please contact me directly if you have any questions about the supplies listed.

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