Marbling Finished Goods with Mercedez Rex

Chapter 1 - Marbling Finished Goods

Overview

(bright music) - I had been working with surface design and textiles when I first discovered marbling. From the moment I pulled my first print, I was smitten. I immediately wanted to marble everything, curtains, shoes. To my delight, I discovered that once treated with alum, marbling works on any porous surface. I'm Mercedez Rex, artist, color lover, and surface designer. In this workshop, I'll show you tips and tricks for marbling finished goods. We'll begin with the pre-treatment of your items, and I'll show you how to marble a one-sided item, two-sided item, and 3D object. I'll teach you some classic marble designs, and then we'll mix things up. I even introduce the use of a straw. I'm so excited to share with you how easy it can be to add one-of-a-kind marbled pieces to your home and wardrobe. (bright music)

Materials

- In this class, I'll walk you through marbling finished goods. We'll look at a one-sided, a two-sided, and a 3D object. Here's what you'll need. We'll be preparing all of our items with alum. To begin, you'll wanna mix a gallon of water with 1/4 cup of alum in a bucket. You'll also be working with a larger portion of your carrageenan size. Use one gallon of warm water and mix two tablespoons of your carrageenan powder. For containers for our 3D object, you'll need something large enough to hold the object that you're marbling. So I've got this tub 'cause it's large enough to support the terracotta pot I'll be using. I've got a cup of water for cleaning any dirty brushes. I have an array of Jacquard brand marbling paints. These I've custom blended. I've got a palette here to load up any paint that I want to apply via my broom straw brushes. For tools, I'll keep it fairly simple. I'm just going to be using my bamboo stylus. I've got a rag on hand for cleaning dirty paint nozzles and a safety pin nearby for clearing any clogs. I'm using a larger tray today. This one's 18 by 24. Great size to have on hand, will allow you to really expand the realm of projects you can take on. For our 2D objects, something that has a front side and a backside, you'll wanna have cardboard, or this is called plastic cardboard. You need an object that you can insert in the inside of your two-dimensional object to keep your surface taut and also to help you keep the backside dry while you're printing the front side. The finished goods I'll be demonstrating are a silk scarf. For two dimensional objects, I'll show you a crop top, and also this canvas pouch. And then our 3D object will be terracotta pots. Each of these items needs to be prepared with your alum solution. I tend to mix up the full gallon of alum and soak these items for 20 minutes. For larger items, you can apply the alum with a foam brush. And of course, I always have my newspaper strips on hand for clearing any residual paint from the tray. Before you begin, make sure that all of the items you're working with that have been pre-prepped with alum have been allowed to completely dry.

Silk scarf

- Silk scarves are an integral part of my product line. I have a background in textile design, so marbling on silk scarves was a natural choice. I absolutely love the way silk takes up this process. Before beginning, make sure your paints are well-shaken. Acrylics tend to settle, so just give them a good shake. And then before we start dropping paint, be sure to run a newspaper strip along the surface of your tray to clear any dust that may have settled and to break up the surface tension. I'm

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starting with gray. As I'm dropping paint, I'm mindful to get just single drops at a time. You wanna let your color saturation build through layering colors rather than going really heavy with your drops. I am mindful at the rate at which I'm laying down my paint, because the longer I give it to spread, the more the drop of paint will kind of take over the space. So if I wanna keep my drops kind of confined, I wanna move quickly in my paint application. This one needs a little more mixing. And I am gonna go back through and add a little bit of a kind of ecru color on top, just interspersing this. And now I'll make a Gelgit pattern using my bamboo stylus. For this one, I'm just dragging my stylus. It is touching the bottom of the tray and running it from top to bottom. The trick with marbling is knowing when to stop. When I work at home, I often film time lapses, partly because they're so enjoyable to watch, but also because sometimes I take a design too far and I can see the moment where I should have stopped. In this case, I'm gonna keep going. This is a single Gelgit, but I want these colors to mix a little bit more. So I'm gonna keep going. And now I'll turn and run my Gelgit at a 90 degree angle, running my stylus from side to side. And at any point, you can stop, right? When you've ended, you see you've got a pattern that's visually pleasing to you, stop. I'm gonna keep going. Let's just see what happens. I want these colors and my lines to get a little finer and keep mixing. And I'm really, I'm just, I'm looking and I'm gonna go one more time. And with each pass, my lines get finer and finer. The colors start to weave more and more. Okay. I think as a finishing touch on this one, I will add some stones on top. And this is just a fun little element you can intersperse. You can always experiment with layering on your prints, on your designs. And this just gives us a little extra dimension and a second layer. That's fun. And I'm happy with this. I'm ready to pull my print. I'm ready to print this on my silk. If you're working at home or you've got a buddy nearby, it's great to use a second set of hands for this step 'cause you'll need to grab all four corners. But I'm gonna show you a little trick if you're working alone. So I've got these two clips with long, large safety pins attached at the ends, and I'm gonna clip them to my tray. These may need a little adjusting once I get my silk in place. So I'll get my silk in position. It's important to note that this silk has a front side and a backside, and the backside is denoted by this rolled hem. So I wanna make sure that the front side is the side that I'm laying down on the surface of my marbling liquid. And I will attach the safety pins right here through the corner of my silk scarf. And these little pins are gonna act as my second set of hands. So now I'll grab the far corners. If needed, just adjust your clips so that your silk scarf can be fully extended. Now I lift up and over, releasing my corners as the silk comes into contact with the tray and guiding down your pins. Once the silk is completely covered, you can release your safety pins. After your silk is completely saturated with paint, you can lift off of your marbling water. Allow to drip. And we'll rinse in the sink or a bucket of water. Because my fabric has been pretreated with the mordant, I'm not at risk of the design running off in the water. So give it a good swish and make sure that any residual paint runs off in your bucket. I will let that drip a bit. And then let's take a look. So I am pretty happy with this design. I will point out I missed the pattern in the corners a little bit, and that came from the clunkiness of laying it down with the safety pins. The clips are a good solution if you're working home alone, but if you've got someone to help you lay the silk down, four hands are always better than two. Hang your silk to dry, clear your tray, and let's make another one. For my next pattern, I'm gonna do a stone, and to do that, I'll use the brushes. So I'll choose my color set and load it up in the palette here. For this one, I'm feeling just kind of drawn to a warmer color palette. There'll be some earth tones in here, but overall I wanna keep it just kinda warm. And let's do this kinda pinkish ecru. Okay. So for the stone pattern, I'm rolling my brushes in the well of my palette, and then I'll just wanna move across the entire surface pretty evenly, holding my brush between my forefinger and my thumb and

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tapping downward. Again, you can start light with your color and just build by adding several layers on top of one another. The silk is in the danger zone. I'm gonna slide that out. I think it's too soon for that coral. Let's do something a little more muted, this dusty rose. I felt like the dusty rose was a better choice for a couple of reasons. I think I wanna give it a chance to pick up some color saturation. So I wanna introduce it a little earlier into my design. And because overall this palette is kind of feeling just a little more earthy, I think the shock of the pink at the very end will be enough to give me a color pop. And I've got a rust. It's interesting the way the colors kinda come through on the surface is often different than how they look in the bottle, and then different again from how it's gonna look once we transfer it onto the silk. So let's just see what happens here. Wow. Okay. Coming in with my ecru, which is probably gonna look almost white on the silk with just the slightest color. I had a little pink kinda jump ship and land in my tray earlier than I anticipated. That's okay, because this silk isn't gonna take up the entire space of my tray. So that was a mistake and I'm not worried about that. Yeah, see here the coral's coming in last and it's gonna come through lighter and paler than it would if I had introduced it earlier in this design. Okay. That terracotta is kind of lost in my mind in the very background. Let's add it in one more time and just kind of compare how the paint sits when, you know, this'll be the first color that I did and then also the last color. So they'll definitely look like two different colors. Yeah. Wow. I'm curious how that's gonna translate on this silk. Also, I'll just mention, and this may be difficult to see, but we can take a closer look after I print. That terracotta was the first color that I introduced and it started to shatter or kind of crackle on the tray. And that comes from having the paint sit on the surface for longer. So something to be aware of. We can take a closer look at that, but I'm ready to pull my print on this one. So I'll get my silk back in position and I've got a little, especially with a stone pattern, be mindful of your workspace. I'm gonna clean up my paint that splattered and made its way beyond the tray so it doesn't interfere with my silk. Time to clip in. Safety pin to either corner. Once you're clipped, grab the opposite corners, lift up and over. Drop into your tray. There my safety pins were able to meet the corners all the way there, and I can release the clipped corners. Lift your silk out and then rinse in your sink or nearby bucket. I've just rinsed my silk in clean water. Let's take a closer look. The thing I mentioned earlier with the terracotta, that original paint that I introduced to the tray, and this shattering effect can be seen sort of in the cracks and in the background. It comes through as this crackle effect, and that's a result of the paint being on the surface for a little longer. Another element of this one that surprised me, but I've run into a few times when working with fabric that's been pretreated with alum, I can see that I actually had a little bit of alum left in my tray. This is maybe difficult to discern for someone who's just beginning, but there's a little, there's areas where I think my paint wasn't allowed to spread as organically as it typically does because there was a little bit of residual alum left in my tray from the first silk that I laid down. And the way to avoid that is just to be very thorough in your cleaning between prints. Overall, though, I really like the colors in this one, and I think I got some pretty cool effects.

Canvas bag and crop top

- Now I'll show you a two-sided piece. I'm using a crop top because I live in Austin, Texas and it's a real staple of my wardrobe, but the techniques I show you in this section will apply to any two-sided object. So if you wanna use a T-shirt, just keep in mind that you need to choose a tray or container large enough to house your piece. The key for working with two-sided pieces is to insert a rigid board into your shirt. So I'm doing that for a couple of reasons, one, I wanna keep my piece taut because any wrinkles in the fabric will interrupt our design. And secondly, I wanna make sure to

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keep the second side of my piece dry while I'm dipping my first side. So here, I've got this piece of plastic board, you could also use cardboard. This is nice because it's reusable and I bought this in a large sheet and cut it down. You can see it's bigger than my crop top, but I want it to be a little bigger because I'd rather have my pattern stretch and have my shirt be really taut, stretched around the board. You can see I've used this before, I've got a little ghost of a print from the last crop top I did here. So just stretch that snug. You'll want your piece all ready to go so that once you've got your print loaded on the surface, you can grab it and dip. So that's ready. I'll begin as always, by taking a newspaper strip and running it along the surface of my size, nice and flat, really parallel to clean up any dust that may have settled in between printing sessions. And then start dropping your paint. I'm gonna make a Sumi-e pattern for this one, but you can of course make any design that speaks to you. If you're looking for more ideas or examples, check out my Creativity Through Marbling course. Typically, the Sumi-e pattern is made by laying drops of paint in essentially the same spot, kind of creating this bullseye pattern. I wanna be just a little looser with my application this time, so I don't mind if I get a few wayward drops along the way. And keep in mind that your tray here, of course, is larger, so work until you have a good saturation. I am really drawn to a rainbow, so it's kind of difficult for me to move away from that, but I'm trying to throw in a few surprises here. Go back in with my plum. This to me looks like pretty good saturation. I'm aware also that that the size of my piece is slightly larger than half the width of this tray, and I'm wanting to make both sides of my design in one tray. So I'm gonna go a little heavier with my paint, thinking that it'll give me extra saturation. So when I pick up the design on half the tray and my, the leftover design can spread and take up the remaining area and I'll be able to have enough paint to print. So I'll do a few more rounds here. I always say that knowing when to stop is really half the battle, especially with this design. It's like mesmerizing to watch, you kind of get hypnotized doing this one, right? Okay, one more, one last lap, last go. Okay, now just for fun, I'm gonna introduce a straw into this pattern. Let me allow these last drops of paint to really spread, pop the bubbles. So straw's gonna come into the picture here and I'm just gonna blow lightly along the surface and we'll watch as the design kind of morphs and shifts. I think I mentioned in my last session that there was a little bit of residual alum on the tray, I'm seeing that again here. And it's difficult to see until you've got paint on the surface of your tray. So I'm gonna point it out. There's a little residual alum from my silk scarf, and I've got a little trick to help eliminate some of that. So what I've done is I've taken a little piece of my newspaper strip that I use for clearing the tray, and I've created a little rolled piece of newspaper and I'm gonna insert it into my tray here. And that is a very cool trick, so I'm almost glad that happened because I call this one "the Eraser," and I see another spot here, so I'm gonna do the same thing. And a few more places. Okay, so the straw trick is really psychedelic. Have fun with it, start slow. (upbeat music) Okay, great, I'm pretty happy with this, this isn't even from alum, but I just wanna clean up that little negative space. And I'm gonna use the same technique with my rolled newspaper strip just to eliminate a little bit of that white space. Pushing straight down kind of draws the two paint areas together. And one more time. That's great. Okay, I'm ready to pull my print and put it on this crop top. Here's the truth; I've had varying results with this, and it turns out that there's just a host of variables that come with printing on all fabrics. Some cottons print better than other cottons, this has never been washed or worn, I think that sets us up for higher probability of success, but let's see what happens. Here we go, moment of truth. Okay, so here we go. When you're dipping and you've got this stretched board, we don't need to be so worried about avoiding air bubbles because this is actually one of these times where I wanna let my fabric sit on the surface for a little bit longer. I have a feeling that may give us higher probability of this print soaking up and

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taking to the fabric, so let's give it just a moment here. And when I lift, I'm gonna lift from this side so as to encourage my pattern to stretch and move towards the end of the tray where I've just pulled my print. Shazam! Okay, cool. We look pretty good, I missed a little corner here, but overall, I'm happy with this. Now, you've got a wet front surface, so you might wanna let some of your size drip off, but be careful to not rotate too quickly 'cause any drips that I get on the backside will impact where the design is able to stick. In other words, keep your backside dry. And repeat, flip and dip. Let's let it sit for a minute, y'all. I'm not pushing it down, I'm just letting the fabric make contact, and let's let the fibers soak this design up. Give it a few minutes and let's see how we did on our backside. Pretty good, heck yeah. I'd say that's a success. So now we've got a little bit of a mess on our hands, this just like the silk, will need to be rinsed in clean water. Okay, let's take a closer look. I'm really happy with this overall, the one thing I'll point out is, unlike the silk, I see a little bit of mottling here and unevenness in the way that the paint absorbed. And I've run into this a number of times. So if you end up with something like this, don't be discouraged, do experiment with different fabrics because my experience has been that some fabrics work better than others. Let's flip it, it's pretty good. Overall, I'm happy with the design and the color. Yeah, I'd wear that. I recommend that you hand wash all of your marble designs in a mild detergent to help preserve the integrity of the pattern. Hang your top to dry and we'll move on to the canvas bag. And now I'll insert this plastic board into my treated canvas bag to protect side two from my printing on side one. Now this is snug, this is a snug fit, which is what I want. See that it's really snug. You can't really make it bigger than your bag, but it is a really tight fit, and I do that because I want my surface to be pulled taut. There we go. Just, I wanna point out something that feels really obvious, this tray is quite a bit bigger than the piece I'm gonna be working with. So if you've got a smaller tray, the canvas bag is a perfect project to work in a smaller tray. I will begin, as I always do, by running my newspaper strip along the surface of my tray. Let's start dropping paint. (upbeat music) Even though my bag is quite a bit smaller than this tray, I need to fill the entire surface with paint. But that'll give me a lot of room to choose which area I think looks the coolest, so something to keep in mind. I wanna do one more lap with stones from a brush. I feel good about the saturation of color here. I'm gonna introduce my bamboo stylus into the mix. And in this case, I think I'll just do kind of a whimsical freestyle pattern, letting the stick kind of dance and move along the surface of the water. Ooh, yeah, this is fun, it is kind of fun to have a large area to work with because so much of this process is just kind of surprise and not knowing what's gonna happen. So for me, I see a couple of areas that I'm really fond of right here, this frame, I think I'll pull one of my prints from here and then, whew, a little bit of a toss up. I like what's going on up here, I like what's happening over here, let's dip our pouch. Yeah, I'm gonna start down here. And I'm not concerned with air bubbles so much when I'm working with fabric. Kind of a corner to corner drop in, let's let it soak for a moment to absorb our paints and then lift. Ooh, wow, well, how about that? I got a few air bubbles. Let's do side two. Interesting, well, it's often a surprise for me with fabrics. I got a little big for my britches there and thought that air bubbles wouldn't be an issue. They're certainly not an issue with silk, but I guess the canvas, I had a little trouble with that there. Considering that I had some air bubbles, I think I'll just kinda shimmy and rock my piece back and forth in an effort to maybe avoid those air bubbles. And let's see what we get on side two. Pretty good. Again, I'm noticing a little bit of mottling that we just didn't see with the silk. I'll remove my plastic insert and rinse this in fresh, clean water. I have so much ink left in this tray, it'd be a shame to waste it. Something that's kind of fun to do that we haven't explored yet is not clearing your tray in between prints. I'm gonna add a couple of drops of paint and just see what happens, and then pull a print of this one. So I'll just go back through and add right on top of

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what I've already got here. This one's extra interesting because there was areas where I drip dropped the excess size into the tray, but it's so uniform, that it's actually just kind of adding to the design. No rules. Let's take our stylus through here, just kind of for fun, just for fun, play. And that's it, it doesn't have to be more than that. I wanna pull a print and I just so happen to have this 18 by 24 newsprint available. I will grab opposite corners of my page and guide a corner down, making this U shape and releasing the two sides that were held by my fingers, this looks great, let's see what happens. Stylus to aid me in lifting the paper out and I'll drag just over the edge of my tray to remove any excess size. Oh yeah, let's take a look. Gorgeous, how fun, so that's just, something you can explore if you've got extra paint is just not clearing in between sessions. And while we're at it, why don't we take a closer look at the canvas bag? In comparison, the colors are a lot more muted on the bag. I'm happy with it overall, but I am just noticing this mottling that happened here. And I think that just comes with different fabrics, so something to watch out for. Experiment with leaving your bag on the surface for a little bit longer, like I wonder if this could have been avoided, had I allowed my paint more time to soak into the fabric.

Terracotta pot
- It was pretty exciting to figure out how to marble a 3D object. When I first began marbling, I wanted everything in my house to be marbled. And marbling on terracotta pots is a great way to introduce marbling into your home design. So I'll begin, as I always do, by clearing my surface, running a newspaper strip along the top of my marbling liquid. As you can see, for a 3D object, we'll need to work with a tub that has a little bit of depth. Be sure to choose something that can support and withstand about the depth of your object. So, these pots have been pretreated with alum I was able to submerge in my bucket, but if you're working with larger objects, feel free to brush your alum on. Working in a smaller space is interesting. You don't need as much paint. However, because we're working with a 3D object, I'm going to load up my surface with a good amount of paint because this paint will have to stretch and wrap around the sides of my pot. That blue needed a little extra shake. I am going to attempt to minimize that kind of shattered paint by adding extra paint to those drops. And I'll come back in here with a few more drops of a darker color. And now you have options. You can always take a stylus through your design, but I think I'm going to go ahead and leave this in a Sumi pattern. I'll grab my pot and I'm going to lower down, now, this is one of these times where I've got to kind of think about where I want the design to meet my pot. And I'm really liking some of these areas where I've got several colors, right, as opposed to this one's only got three colors, so I'm going to focus here. Ooh, it's hard to decide. Okay, I'm going to focus here and drop down. And now I do have the option to go back in and add paint to this area. I'm torn, but let's do it. Let's just see what happens when I do. And I like that now my paint has swirled a little bit, so I think for contrast, I'll reintroduce my pot, ooh, in this area. Let me get my excess liquid out of the way. So, I'm being delicate here. I do need to support the bottom of my pot, but with this design kind of wet, I want to be careful. And I'll re-dip. And there we get a little contrasting design. Avoid touching this painted surface with your fingers until after you've rinsed. Here I have an area where I had a little drip from my first dipping that impacted the ability for the terracotta pot to absorb paint right there. So, just be mindful of drips and wetness. Be sure to rinse your pot in a bucket of fresh water. Now, I've got a lot of paint left on the surface here, and I've got options again. You could decide to build on top of this. I could decide, I kind of like the way this looks, and I might dip my second pot in here. That'd be kind of fun, to create sort of a series. I'm going to start fresh and clear what's left in my tray. Ooh, I almost want to let a little bit of that sneak in. Let's do it. So

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for this next one, I'll do minimal color. Essentially, I'm just going to do black and white for the minimalists out there. Ooh, but then we'll know that we have that little bit of color left over. That'll be fun to see how that comes in. And on this one, I'm going to do a gelgit pattern. So for that, I'm using my stylus, and I'm just starting, connecting the top and the bottom of my tray, running my stylus back and forth, top to bottom. Ooh, with marbling, always the challenge is knowing where to stop. Like, I like that. But I imagined the stripes kind of wrapping this way around my pot. So, I'm going to do a second round here. Okay. And now I'm ready to dip. So for this one, again, it's not going to cover my full pot. So I have a couple of choices. Either I need to dip the front half and then flip it and dip the back half. But I'm going to give myself a little runway on this one. Start on this end, and I'm going to roll, dip, and I submerge my pot, and then roll it. Ooh, perfect. The thing I love about this is it's got that little bit of the terracotta leftover. So you know this was hand-dipped. I think it kind of gives that away. Okay, I'm going to rinse this in my nearby bucket. I want to let these dry a little bit before we take a closer look. But I'd also like to show you a few examples of other marbled-finished goods. Here are the scarves from our first project, along with a few that I've made in previous sessions. Here's a look at a crop-top I've made previously that I was really pleased with. Some additional canvas bags. Here's a smaller sized silk. This is great if you've only got a smaller sized tray. They make them in this kind of pocket square size, fantastic for gifts. And then down here I've got marbled leather coasters. So leather takes this process really, really well. Highly recommend. And then last item here is a wooden marbled Easter egg. So, it works fantastic on wood. In fact, I've done a dresser drawer. Could also do this on shelves. Finally, a few terracotta pots from previous sessions. Love how this one turned out. Really bold patterning. In this case, I did something similar to the first pot I showed you where my pot made contact with the tray initially here, and then for the backside, I did a second dip and allowed for that natural swirling that happened from the submersion and removal of my pot to allow my paint to mix in this really wabi-sabi way. And then captured the second pattern on the back. And then here's just another example. This one's kind of subtle, but I really like how it turned out. And again, I think it's kind of fun to leave that little terracotta pot sneak peek underneath so people think, "Wow, yeah, that was hand-printed." Here's a closer look at the ones I did in today's class. This one turned out so cool. Even on the inside. Almost makes me want to use this as like, something to hold kitchen utensils or, I don't know, I want to showcase the fact that the interior turned out so cool. And then I think it was a great choice to do the horizontal wrap on the gelgit. I love how that turned out. And then finally, this mini pot also turned out very cool with that contrasting pattern, the stark, bold sumi up front, along with the natural swirl that occurs from dipping the pot. As you can see, this process works on a myriad of different surfaces. I encourage you to try out different things. See what works. See what doesn't work. Not everything will work, but the journey is half the fun.

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