

# Rozome on Silk

by Dorothy Bunny Bowen

*Rozome is the Japanese version of the wax-resist process known elsewhere as batik.*

*The earliest rozome examples date from the 8th century CE. For a wealth of information on rozome see the book by Betsy Sterling Benjamin, THE WORLD OF ROZOME, Kodansha international, 1996.*

*What follows is the method of rozome which I now use after studying with Betsy.*



Beeswax and paraffin.



*Acid dyes: I prefer to mix all colors from the basics: warm red, cool red, yellow, blue, and black. These dyes, unlike Procion MX fiber-reactive dyes, are set at the end of the dye process by steaming. This allows the artist to re-wax areas as soon as they dry, rather than waiting overnight for a chemical reaction. Acid dyes are not permanent until steamed.*



## Planning and preparation:

First a design is drawn with pencil or charcoal on the back of white kimono silk. Then the silk is stretched, and a mixture of soybeans and water called gojiru is applied as sizing. The stretched silk is then allowed to dry.

## Waxing:

A molten mixture of beeswax and paraffin is painted, spattered, stamped, or otherwise applied to any areas where the silk is to remain white. The image areas are first waxed on the back, where the drawing is, then once or twice more on the front.

*These are a few useful wax tools: roller, brushes, dauber, metal stamp, spatter brush. All must be natural bristle or wood, since synthetic materials would melt in the hot wax.*



## Dyeing:

The stretched silk is dampened and the lightest color of acid dye is brushed on with special Japanese brushes. These allow the artist to blend areas of color from transparent to saturated, allowing for wonderful luminous effects when layered.

## Repeat the above 2 steps up to 20 times...

Each dyeing is followed by a waxing: hot wax is brushed on to preserve the previous color wherever it is needed. Then the dyeing is repeated, each time building up to the darkest color. This may require 15 or 20 layers, but the acid dyeing goes more quickly than fiber-reactive dyeing (see batik on cotton) since the dyed areas can be waxed as soon as they are dry. In dry, sunny New Mexico, this might be several times a day!

*These are a few of the Japanese brushes used in rozome. The largest is a jizome or hikizome brush, used for blending large background areas of color. The next brush is angled ergonomically to make it easy to reach across yardage. The three brushes on the right are surikome brushes, used for blending smaller areas of color.*

## —Rozome on Silk, Dorothy Bunny Bowen

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*Blending the dye with the surikome brush.*

### *Finishing the piece:*

After all dyeing and waxing is complete, the piece is ironed between layers of paper, then rolled in clean paper and steamed for 3 hours to set the dyes. Any remaining wax is removed by the drycleaner, and the silk is washed, ironed, and sewn to acid-free foam core. The stitches are covered by an acid-free double mat, and the piece is framed under ultra-violet screening glass.

*Never hang fine art in direct sunlight!*



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Partnachklamm 1  
Rozome on Kimono Silk  
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