

Salt Mountains and Controlled Salting – The End Results

A few interesting pointers for ALL to see and learn about, no matter when you're exploring these designing techniques, or whatever the weather on the day (or night!)

For everyone to know, even if you haven't attended the Web Workshops or seen my YouTube presentations ... yet!

The images in these notes were taken the morning after the Advanced Web Workshops (morning and afternoon) on a very wet day in Toowoomba – Thursday 25th February 2021. Happily the weather did settle down a bit as the day went on. When I was working with dyes all those years ago, there's NO WAY I would have considered working with salt on a wet or potentially stormy day, knowing that Sodium Chloride – the salts associated with cooking, or pool salt – will draw in moisture from the atmosphere and keep 'wetting themselves', so when working with dyes the effects simply will not form. I'm sure we all know the frustration of our salt shakers clogging in wet weather.

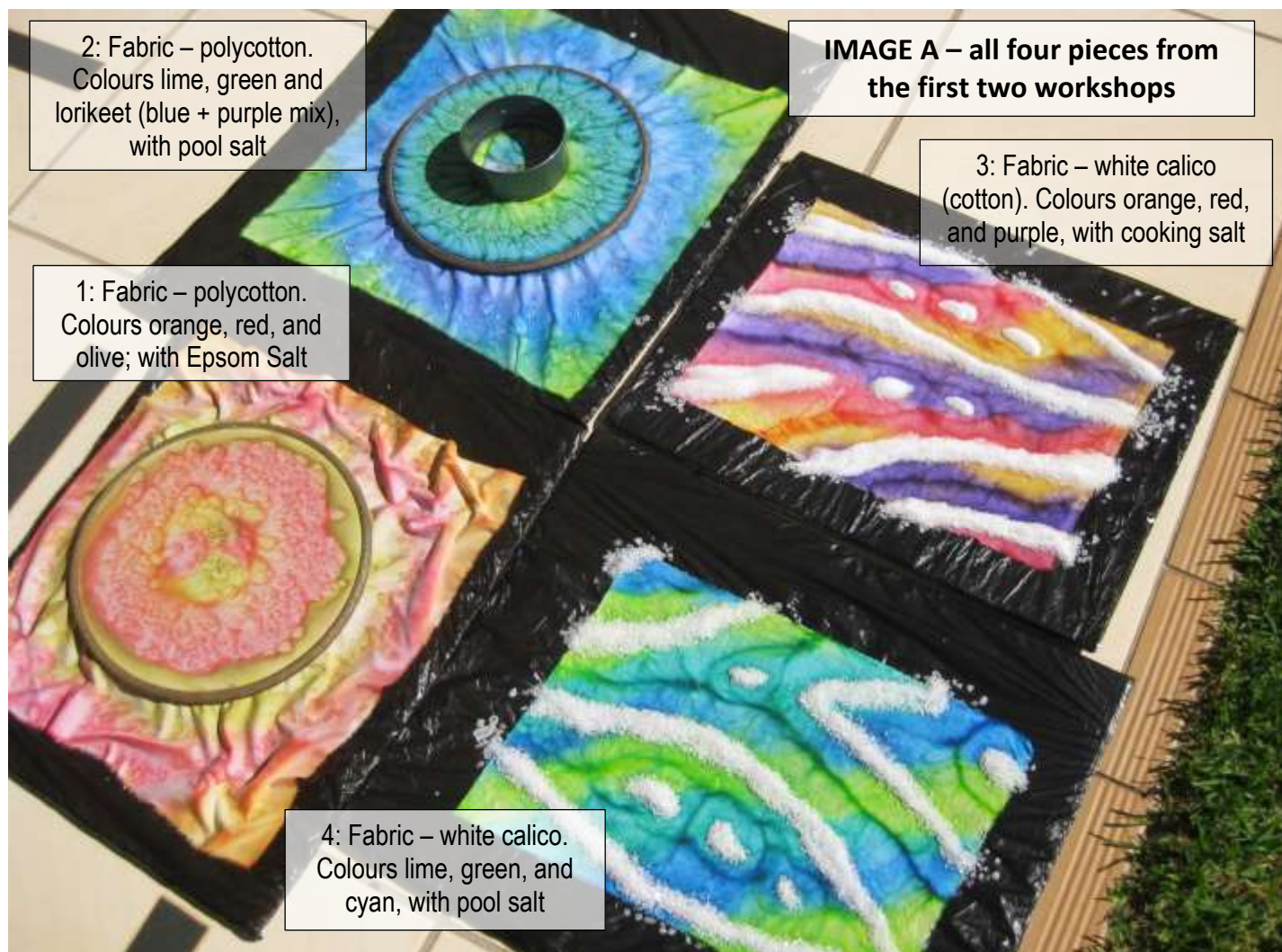


IMAGE A – all four pieces from the first two workshops

2: Fabric – polycotton.
Colours lime, green and loriikeet (blue + purple mix), with pool salt

3: Fabric – white calico (cotton). Colours orange, red, and purple, with cooking salt

1: Fabric – polycotton.
Colours orange, red, and olive; with Epsom Salt

4: Fabric – white calico.
Colours lime, green, and cyan, with pool salt

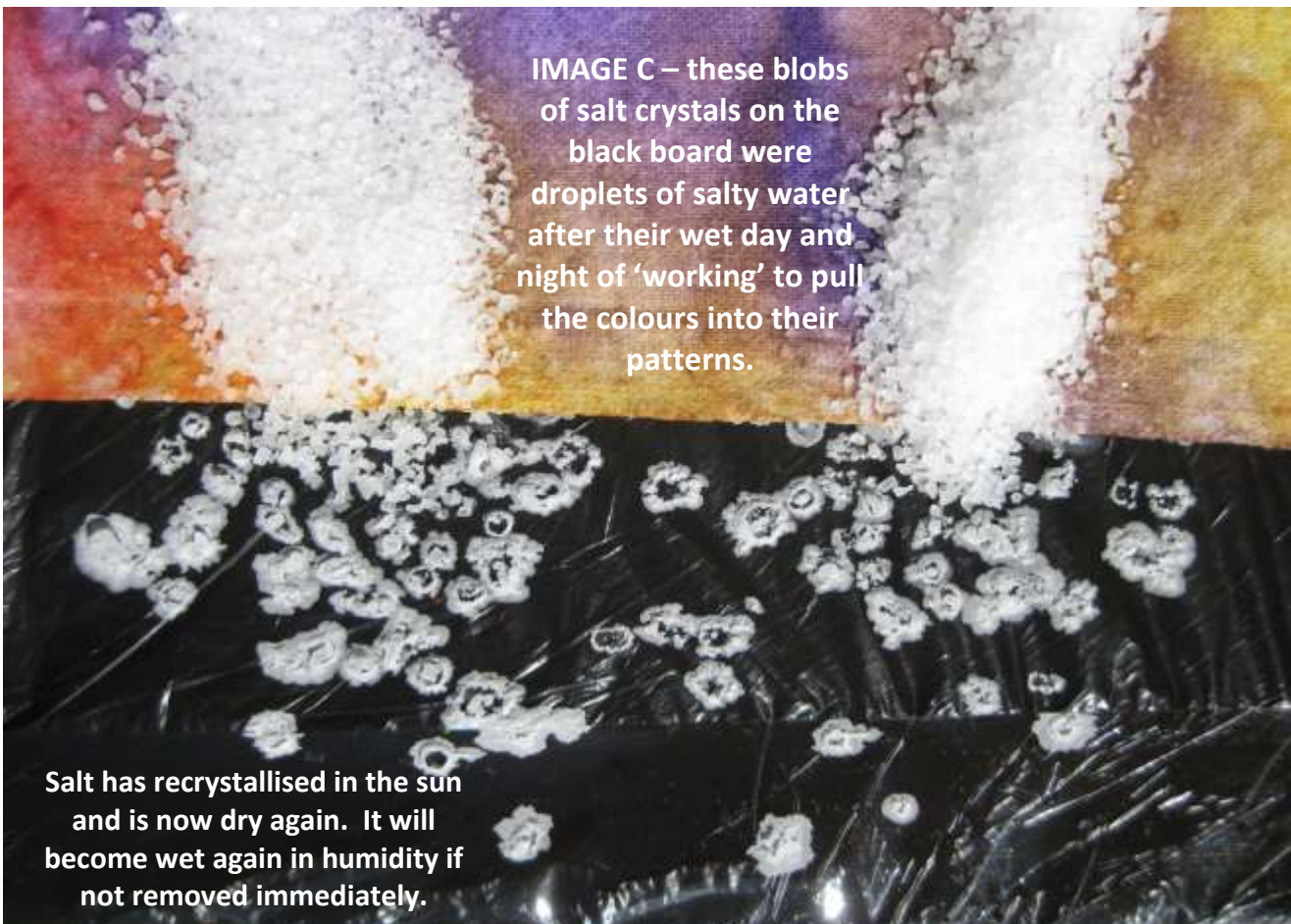
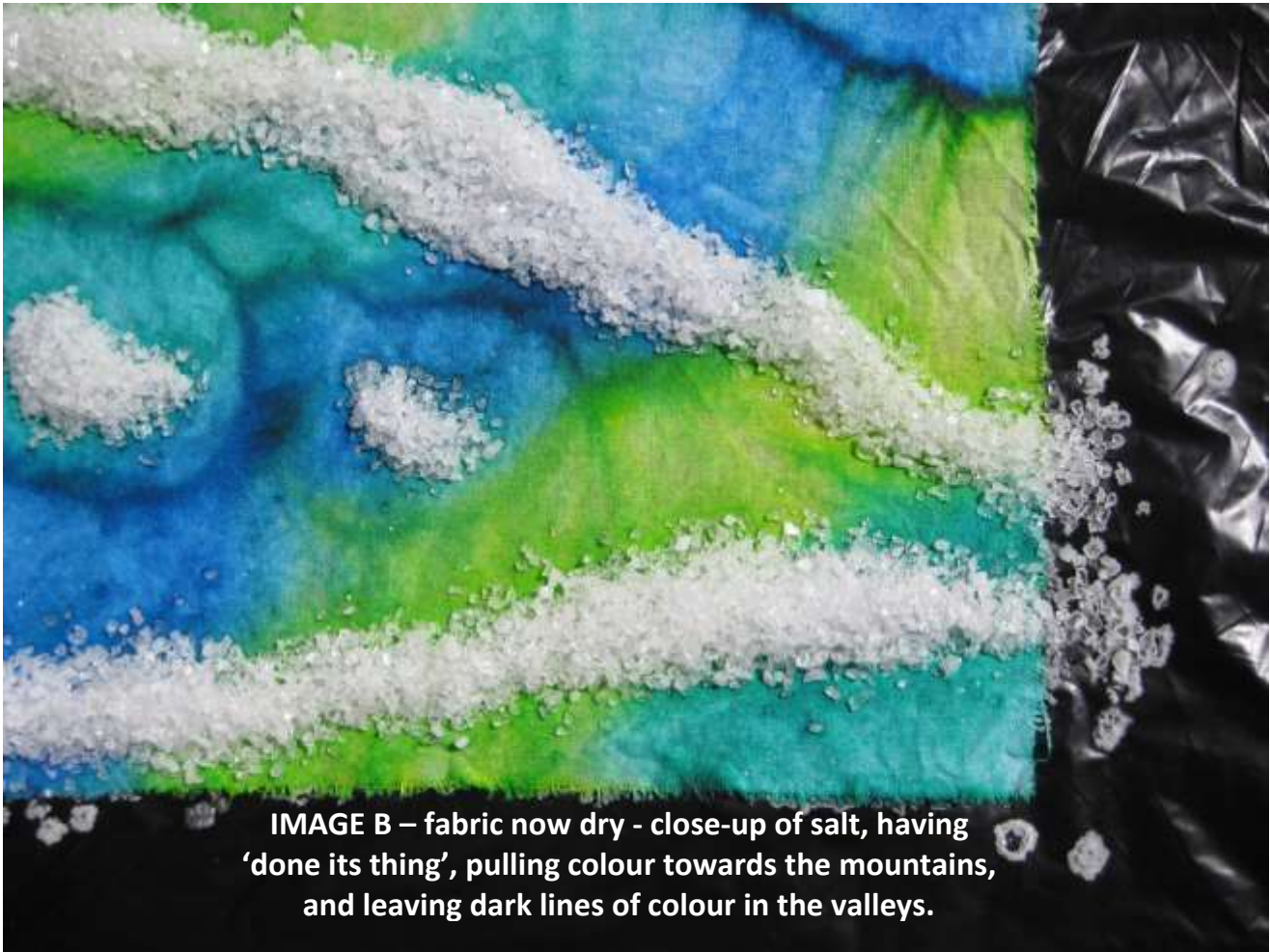
Those different salting techniques we explored made for a fun workshop! Yes I think we all love working with salt. But let me remind you that salt can get where you didn't even think you had put it, so ...

- a clean work environment is important - try not spread salt over your work cloth, or you may create salt markings where you do NOT want them
- make sure your hands are salt free – wash them as soon as you've finished handling the salt or salty equipment
- wash all items used during salting techniques as soon as you have finished with them – wash in warm sudsy water, rinse in clean water and dry them thoroughly (especially metallic objects)

After the workshop, I left the samples in my Studio to 'dry' as best they could overnight. It was not raining but the humidity was still very high. By bedtime, there was some movement of colour, as is expected in these techniques. Next morning, I eagerly went to see the results and found ... SOGGY WET SAMPLES ... but the SALT HAD WORKED its MAGIC as expected! All I then needed to do was to put the creations in the sun to dry. Here you see them happily drying on my back patio. Mmmm, that's the beauty and simplicity of working with our Liquid Radiance colours ...

**Liquid Radiance is a paint formulation that performs *like* a dye in the fabric – BUT IS NOT A DYE.
When Liquid Radiance is DRY in the fabric, you CANNOT MOVE IT or REMOVE IT.**

Make sure you catch up with these techniques on YouTube if you haven't attended the Advanced Web Workshops via Zoom with me.



NOW LET'S LOOK AT **IMAGE A**, SHOWING ALL FOUR FABRICS – from centre left, clockwise [see first page]:

- 1 and 2 are examples of “Controlled Salting” – can we really control salt? Well, no – but by the methods we use in this techniques, adding some sort of a weight to the centre of the fabric, it gives the designs a regularity that is just amazing.
- 3 and 4 are examples of “Salt Mountains” where lines of salt are heaped or poured onto the fabric, pulling the colours to form amazing designs.
- 1 and 3 were done in the morning workshop session while it was raining quite heavily outside.
- 2 and 4 were done during the afternoon workshop – not raining but still very humid, so there was very little drying in the atmosphere.

IMAGE B: The fabric is now dry after being in the sun for about ½ hour. The heat from the pavers on the patio has increased the heat so hastened the drying time! Fabric is no longer soggy, and is ready to have the salt taken off it. [But I couldn't desalt it then as there was another workshop session to prepare for.]

IMAGE C – and an IMPORTANT WARNING! All the white ‘blobs’ you see on the black plastic at the front of the image were clear puddles before putting the fabrics in the sun. **Desalting and thorough rinsing is VITAL when designing with salt techniques** so the saltiness does not invade your sewing machine, ironing board, or anything else in your home. If salt is just brushed off your fabric and not rinsed out, the saltiness where the salt was sitting will of course remain in the fabric and continue to draw in moisture from the air in damp or humid weather, continually wetting itself.

RANDOM COMMENTS about SALTS – hope you find these helpful:

- Epsom Salt (Magnesium Sulphate) compared with ‘food’ or pool salt (Sodium Chloride) – I refer to Epsom as my ‘goof-proof’ salt. It will work on even the wettest day and dries quickly as it does not absorb moisture from the atmosphere in the same way as the ‘food’ salts do.
- Pool salt is less refined salt than table, cooking, or rock salt. It is NOT suitable for eating – but great for use on fabrics, and really economical. A 20 kilo bag of pool salt will cost about the same as about 1 kilo of rock salt. Don't want to have to store 20 kilos? Of course you can use rock salt instead.
- Why do I enjoy using pool salt? Besides its economy, it usually comes as random sized crystals which create interesting markings. One never knows what one will find inside a new bag of pool salt until it is opened!
- Epsom Salt hints – I buy mine from the health food shop because it is usually packaged in see-through bags. When buying from supermarkets, it is usually in cardboard boxes so it's impossible to see the size and quality of the contents. Epsom salt can ‘go off’ (that is, become powdery) in hot conditions. Do not heat Epsom salt in the oven if it is damp when you remove it from your fabric and you aim to reuse it on other projects.
- Sodium Chloride salts can be dried in the oven if they are damp after removing them from your fabrics. Pop them in a baking tray and into a hot oven for about 20 minutes, then allow them to cool completely before putting them back in an airtight container.
- Remember that the SIZE OF THE CRYSTALS will determine the SIZE OF THE MARKINGS they create in your fabric. The fineness or coarseness of the weave of the fabric also plays a part in forming the markings. The bigger the crystals, the bigger the markings, the finer the crystals, the finer the markings. Simple!
- Wanting irregular sized salt but only have rock salt in the pantry? Put that salt in a plastic bag and hit it with a hammer – gently please so you don't break it up too much.
- Other salts that are used in cooking – salt flakes, ‘fancy’ salts – are different forms of Sodium Chloride and will create their own unique markings when used with Liquid Radiance.
- Table salt is very fine and will work best on finely woven, evenly woven fabrics like silk, cotton and polycotton batiste, and some really fine polyester fabrics.
- Remember the ‘Gently Bentley’ rule when working with salt. Every grain of salt will draw colour to it; so if too much salt is sprinkled on, the markings will usually be ‘spotty’ and not as interesting as if there is ‘room to move’ between the crystals of salt – whichever salt you are using.



DESALTING and RINSING:

When fabric is completely dry, remove salt by scraping it towards the centre of the fabric – less messy that way! Form a 'V' in the fabric and pour it back into its container. If it is damp from the atmosphere, dry in the oven before returning it to its container. NOTE: Even after drying my fabrics in the sun, the clouds and rain came back and the fabric became moist / clammy again! BUT ... the colours were dry from being in the sun earlier. It was safe to rinse them at that point.

For heavy salting techniques rinse at least five times to completely remove all traces of saltiness. You may notice traces of colour in the rinse water, especially in "Salt Mountains" technique where there is LOTS of salt used and colour residue remains at the base of the mountains after salt is removed. It is important that this surface residue comes away from the fabric. The fibres will have absorbed all of the colour they can hold, and you will have mopped out any excess ('enemy')! Peg fabric on the line to dry, then iron it to maximise the life of the colour in the fabric.

FABRICS FROM FIRST TWO WORKSHOP SESSIONS – rinsed and ironed – in same positions as IMAGE A



BELOW: Close-Up of salty dots that remain at base of mountains when salt is removed.

INTERESTING! I was unable to remove the salt as soon as the fabrics had dried in the sun. Another workshop was happening ☺. By the time I did remove the salt, the fabric was clammy again. The salt had absorbed more moisture from the humidity !!! However, the fabric HAD BEEN dry in the sun, so it was perfectly safe to finish desalting and rinse the fabrics. Ah the pleasures – and benefits - of designing with our LR colours! **Enjoy! ...**

Anne

