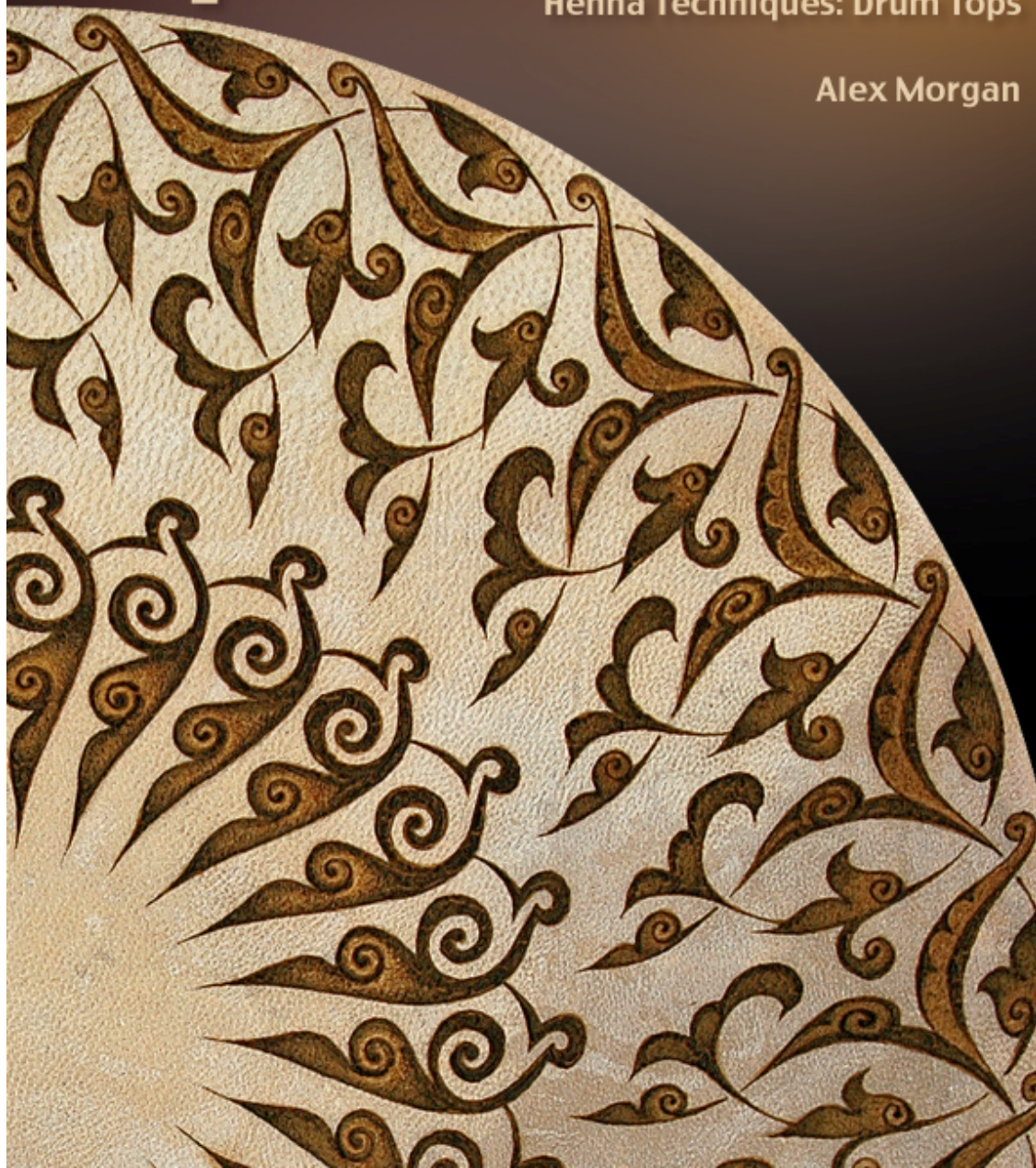


SPELLSTONE

Spain

Henna Techniques: Drum Tops

Alex Morgan



Alexandra Linda Morgan

©2008 - 2011
All rights reserved.



Cover Art: *Spanish Arabesque drum* by Alex Morgan ©2011 All Rights Reserved

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Artists may freely use these patterns as inspiration for their own ephemeral hand-drawn artwork.

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Henna, Body Art, Patterns
Published by: TapDancing Lizard LLC

TapDancing Lizard
4237 Klein Ave.
Stow, Ohio 44224 USA

Morgan, Alexandra Linda

Spellstone SPAIN

CONTENTS

Introduction

- 1 Henna
- 2 Mixing Henna
- 3 Drums
- 4 Tools and Mark Making
- 5-6 Shading Techniques

Projects and Pictures

- 7-10 Spanish Arabesque
- 11-13 Love Birds
- 14-16 Flamenco Pattern

Henna



Henna; Lawsonia inermis, photograph by Roy Jones

Henna is a natural plant dye derived from the ground leaves of the plant *Lawsonia inermis*. The crushed, powdered leaves are mixed with an acidic liquid such as lemon juice and the resulting paste can be applied to the body, hair, textiles, wood or untreated leather to leave a stain. On skin henna gives a temporary red-brown stain that wears away as dead skin cells are shed, see right. On hair, wool, silk, leather and wood henna gives a permanent stain.

Many of the patterns in this book are circular for application to drumheads.



A small henna daisy on the hand of a child

Mixing Henna Paste



1. Lemons, 2. Premium quality henna powder, 3. Table sugar

Henna is applied as a paste. To make a henna paste for use on a drum or wood you require:

- a) Premium quality henna
- b) Lemon juice, fresh* or bottled
- c) Sugar (optional)

Freshly squeezed lemon juice must be strained to remove bits of fruit pulp before you make the paste. Tiny bits of fruit pulp can cause clogging when applying henna with a fine tipped cone.

In my mix I use one level teaspoon of table sugar per 50gms dry henna powder. I dissolve the sugar in the lemon juice. Sugar is not essential to the paste, I find it helps the henna paste stick to the drum and prevents cracking but if too much is added it can make the henna difficult to remove from the leather.

Quick Start Mixing Guide

1. Dissolve the sugar in lemon juice.
2. Add the juice to the powder a little at a time to bring it to the texture of mashed potato.
3. Cover the paste with cling-film and rest it for 8 – 12 hours at room temperature.
4. Add more lemon juice until you have a smooth glossy paste about the texture of toothpaste.
5. Rest for 8 – 12 hours at room temperature.
6. Cone up and freeze the excess paste if you have more than you need for your drum.

*Freshly squeezed lemon juice must be strained before mixing. See web resources on page 6 for more information and links.

Drums



Frame drums with goatskin heads.

A henna stain on a drum top can be any shade from a pale warm orange/brown to a deep rich coffee colour. The tone will depend upon the amount of available dye at the surface of the leather. Henna stains immediately so be confident in your mark making. The colour/tone of the stain also changes and develops with time. A henna stain will continue to change even after the paste is removed and this process can continue for months.

Premium quality henna will contain enough dye to achieve a dark stain on leather. Controlling the dye to give pale tones requires a good understanding of the way henna works. A pale tone can be achieved by thinning out the henna with water and using a brush or by a brief application of paste that is removed after a moment. Most staining occurs at the start of the process

while the paste is damp, so precise timing can be essential to working with multiple applications. A deep layer of henna applied for a brief time will give a darker stain than a thin application for a longer time. A thick application of henna left in place for a long time will give a very dark stain. If you find you don't get the depth of colour you were hoping for, even after waiting for the full colour to develop, you can boost the depth of tone with another henna application. Be aware that you risk blurring lines if you do this on fine delicate work. When working on a drum I leave henna in place for 3 -12 months. In a warm humid climate the henna stain will develop faster you can adjust the time scale to suit you own working conditions.

Frame drums never have a perfect shape or texture. These beautiful differences make each piece unique and special.

Tools and Markmaking



Tools left to right: Brushes, Aquarelle graphite pencil, Ceramic mixing palette and Henna cones

Marking up

You can work freehand on a drumhead but for radial repeating patterns it is best to plan the artwork carefully and provide yourself with guides. This will ensure the placement of the pattern is even and balanced.

To begin you need to locate the centre of the drumhead. If you have a good eye you can place the centre by eye, as drums are never exactly round. Alternatively use a long ruler or a straight edge. Place the ruler across the drum at its widest point so that you have two equal halves; make a light mark along the edge using your water-soluble pencil. Now turn the ruler through ninety degrees and divide the drum again at right angles to the first mark and at its widest point. This will give you four equal quarters and reveal the approximate centre of the drum.

When marking up for a radial pattern you divide the surface of the drum into pie slices and fit the repeats of the pattern into each section. See the project section, page 11, for a step-by-step guide.

Useful tools

Some of the tools I use are pictured above and are listed in full below:

Aquarelle Pencil, for marking up guides.

Cones, the main tool for henna application.

Brushes, for working henna washes and light tones within the design.

Palette, (or plate) used for watered down paste for brushwork.

Wooden cocktail stick, for scratching back into the paste. You can also use the tip of the cone without squeezing to remove paste in this way.

Shading Techniques



1. Wash and Brush-work

I use the henna cone to define the edge of the shape and then place a large blob of henna where the darkest tone will be. Using a soft damp watercolour brush I thin the henna outwards towards the lightest tone.

In the picture, the henna on the drumhead is darkest where the henna is at its thickest. When the stain has developed, the stain will reflect this being darker in the places where the henna was applied more thickly.



2. Impasto shading

In this technique I build up dense areas of henna paste using a cone applicator to stipple the paste, spreading it about with the cone tip to sculpt thicker and thinner areas.

In the picture, left, a cocktail stick was used to define the scrolls within the leaf blade by removing excess paste to sharpen the edges.



3. Scafrito

Scafrito is a term borrowed from pottery, it means to scratch back into the surface to create a design. A cocktail stick or the tip of a cone can be used to remove henna, which can result in a brighter line revealed in the stain. It is used in conjunction with impasto or other types of shading to sculpt the henna paste on the surface of the drum.



Double and Multiple Henna Application

The tribal drum, see left, was made by priming the background with an all over application of henna omitting the white area of the figure. The henna was removed after only a few minutes. When the drum-head had dried out a second application of scrollwork was laid in over the top of the stain.

The second application **must** be applied heavily and remain in place for far longer to give a distinctly darker tone.



Paste Removal

I leave the paste in place on a drumhead for at least three months and as long as twelve months.

To remove the henna I use a plastic card like an old credit card, to scrape the paste away.



Wipe

To finish, I use a soft damp cloth to remove the remaining henna dust. Over the course of the following weeks or months, the henna appears to darken. The final result after wiping is always quite different from the actual finished tone and colour of the stain, which manifest later on.

Project One: Spanish Arabesque I



Spanish Arabesque, applied in henna to an 18 inch frame drum with natural goat skin top. Photograph shows henna paste on. Darker areas have a greater depth of henna.

Notes

This eighteen-inch frame drum is shown on the cover and frontispiece of this book. The following pages describe the process of henna application to the drum-top and illustrate the main stages of the work. Information on mixing henna paste and the tools used to apply henna can be found in the previous section of this book.

The henna paste will be left in place on this drum for several months. Henna stains may develop quickly in warm humid climates. In general, the longer you leave the paste on, the darker the stain you will achieve. The thickness of the paste is also an important factor: wherever you have a thicker area of henna, the stain will be darker.

The pattern *Spanish Arabesque I* can be found on page 25 in patterns part I.



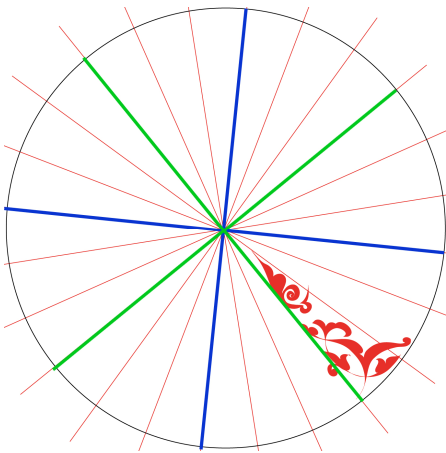
Step - by - Step

1. Pattern Selection

Here is the line art pattern for the Spanish Arabesque drum (Patterns Part I, page 25). The pattern has rotational symmetry using 24 repeats of the basic unit, which is highlighted here in red.

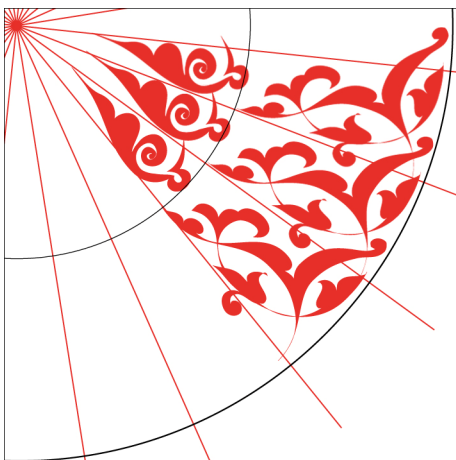
2. Pattern Construction

The central medallion of the design does not touch the main border. The motifs share the same symmetry so only one set of construction lines is needed for both parts of the pattern.



To translate the pattern to the drum top, lightly mark construction lines* on the drum using a water-soluble (aquarelle) pencil and a ruler or straight edge long enough to cover the widest part of your drum.

A radial pattern of 24 repeats requires guidelines spaced at 15 degree intervals. The easiest way to space the lines is to quarter the drum (*blue*) then divide into eight pie slices (*blue and green*). Each section then splits into three equal pieces (*red*) to give 24 segments.



In each segment of your guide draw one unit of the pattern repeat – use a soluble pencil so you can wipe away any mistakes.

**Note: If you don't want to have construction lines on your drum, make a paper template by drawing around the drum. Fold the paper into half and then quarters to find the centre. Do all the construction and sketching on the paper and then copy the pattern onto the drum using tracing paper and water-soluble graphite pencil. This process takes longer than a direct approach.*



3. Base Coat

Once the design is translated on to the drum, I use a watered down henna wash to paint the pattern.

The base coat gives me a permanent guide so I don't have to be concerned about the delicate pencil marks wiping away as I work. Even a very thin wash of henna, like this, will stain the drum top permanently.



This is how the drum looks after the henna wash was completed. This concludes the preparation phase and the final part of the henna paste application may begin.



4. Henna Paste Application

The henna paste is applied using a hand-rolled cone. Always work from the centre of the drum top outwards, so you don't have to rest your arm on your work.

Texture and tonal variation can be built into the design by varying the depth of henna paste applied, *see techniques*. For this drum I completed the central medallion first before starting the outer border.



Once the central henna is dry I place a clean sheet of paper over the drum to protect the finished henna and keep the drum top clean as the rest of the design is applied.

I begin each motif by outlining the edge of the pattern using a fine cone. While one set of lines dries, I go back to the previous motif and fill in the denser hennaed areas, building up the paste where I want greater contrast. The tools used on this drum were a fine lining cone, a cone with a larger hole for filling and a toothpick for scratching back into the henna.

Below: Finished henna application and cover art for this book.



© 2008 ALEX MORGAN

Project 2: Love Birds



*Love Birds pattern, henna on a traditional Iberian folk drum (9.75 inch) with goat skin top.
Photograph shows henna paste on. Artwork by Alex Morgan.*

Project Notes

The Love Birds* drum is a contrast to the Spanish Arabesque piece in that it has no symmetry. This is a pictorial design made primarily with tumbling scrollwork so it lends itself to modification easily. Originally conceived as round, it was straight forward to extend the pattern out at the corners to cover the traditional square shape of the Iberian folk drum.

The two birds that sit in the tree have typical medieval Spanish eyes and their wings are in the form of hands.

The tools used to apply henna to this drum slightly differ from those used for the Arabesque drum. In this case the shading is far softer. This effect is achieved using a brush and a little water to thin down the paste. The edges of the pattern are outlined using a cone, so the design will always have sharp, crisp definition and good separation from the background.

**Love Birds Pattern: patterns part I, page 11*



Step - by - Step

1. Pattern Selection

This is the artwork for the Love Birds (Patterns Part I, page 11). The pattern is a freeform design in the form of a tree of life.

When transcribing a freeform pattern, look for the key structural lines in the design (red) that help break it up into its constituent parts. The circular form is easily adapted to a square by extending the scrollwork out towards the corners.



2. Base Coat

The design is drawn onto the drum top using a water-soluble pencil. You can just see the pencil marks on the drum top, left.

When the sketch is ready I fill the bold lines of the pattern using a brush and watered down henna paste.



Here is a close up section of the finished base coat. It provides a delicate stain, against which darker tones can be set with an application of henna using a cone and brush.



3. Henna Paste Application

Using a cone, henna is applied to strengthen the pattern. I start by outlining the edges of the design with a fine tipped cone. The design is then filled in with a blob of henna smoothed out with a soft wet brush. In this way detail is added by varying the depth of the paste applied.



This close up shows the way the henna paste has been applied with thicker and thinner areas.



Here's the finished drum-top.

Project 3: Flamenco pattern



*Flamenco pattern, henna on a traditional Iberian folk drum (13 inch) with goat skin top.
Photograph shows henna paste on. Artwork by Alex Morgan.*

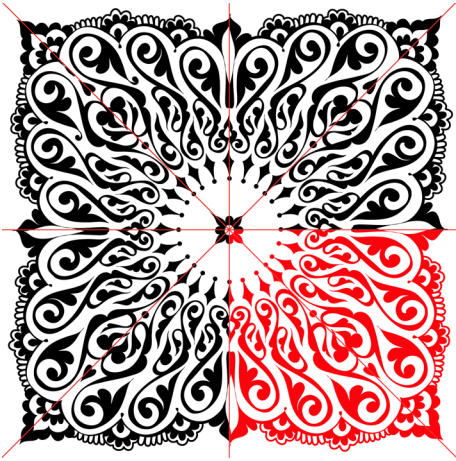
Project Notes

The Flamenco pattern was selected for this larger Iberian square drum. I enjoy the way the pattern starts out on a square and draws in to a circle. This has a pleasing effect of pinching the design in at the middle.

The Flamenco pattern* combines large areas of fill and shading with a delicate linework border. The star at the centre of the drum is heavily filled with henna, which will give a very dark stain and should provide a focal point at the centre of the drum.

This piece was worked using the softer shading technique used on the Love Birds drum. The pattern relies on straightforward construction, requiring only four guidelines.

**Flamenco Pattern: Patterns part I, page 33*



Step - by - Step

1. Pattern Selection

This is the artwork for the Flamenco drum, (Patterns Part I, page 33). This pattern has simple symmetry using four repeats of the basic unit of the pattern.

Mark up the drum with four construction lines, corner-to-corner and side-to-side. This will give you the centre of the pattern. Next, using the centre point, mark a circle for the medallion at the middle of the design and position the main pattern content.



2. Base Coat

When the pattern has been sketched out on the drum, block in the design with a brush and watered down henna.



3. Henna Paste Application

The paste is applied in the same way as on the Love Birds drum. First the design is outlined using a fine tipped cone. Then infilled with a blob of henna smoothed out with a soft wet brush.



SPELLSTONE Spain

Patterns from Medieval Spain

About the Author

Alex Morgan is freelance designer creating patterns for a range of surfaces. Working under the name 'Spellstone' Alex's artwork has been used on beautiful every day items as well as finely crafted instruments. She has designed a whole family of ornamented 'Henna' Guitars for [Luna Guitars](http://LunaGuitars.com) and also works with Honest Tea and Mehendi.com.



Spanish Lady Comb by Alex Morgan, exclusively for mehandi.com

Shop online at Mehandi.com for henna and bodyart supplies. Mehandi.com has the best quality, the widest product range, and expert customer support for your beautiful art!



Shop at EMPIRE 135 E. Main St. in Kent, Ohio, for your henna and bodyart supplies. Get free advice, demonstrations, & help with your bodyart projects.