

DecoArt<sup>®</sup>  
MADE FOR MAKERS<sup>™</sup>

# WATER *M*ARBLING<sup>™</sup>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS





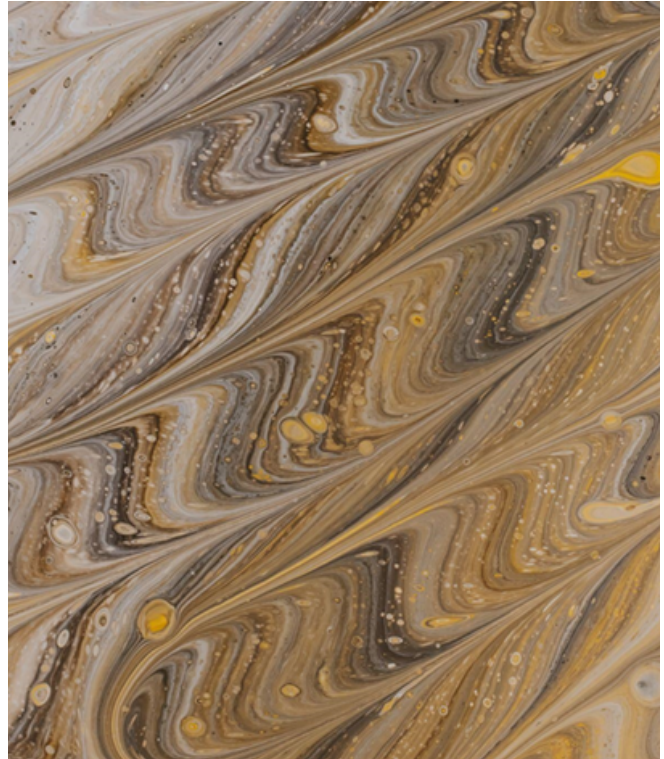
## Forms of Water Marbling

There are two primary traditions in the art of water-marbling. It is fascinating that this creative art form developed in two different areas of the world, in two vastly different cultures. Both were born from similar observation and inspiration, the beauty of the natural world.

### Ebru

Ebru is the ancient Turkish art of water marbling that originated in the Ottoman Empire. Primarily used as an art form for paper, Turkish water-marbled paper was a highly specialized craft. Patience, creativity, and a thorough knowledge of traditional Turkish culture are characteristics of modern ebru masters. Ebru artists use horsehair brushes and natural earth pigments to create these complex and colorful patterns.

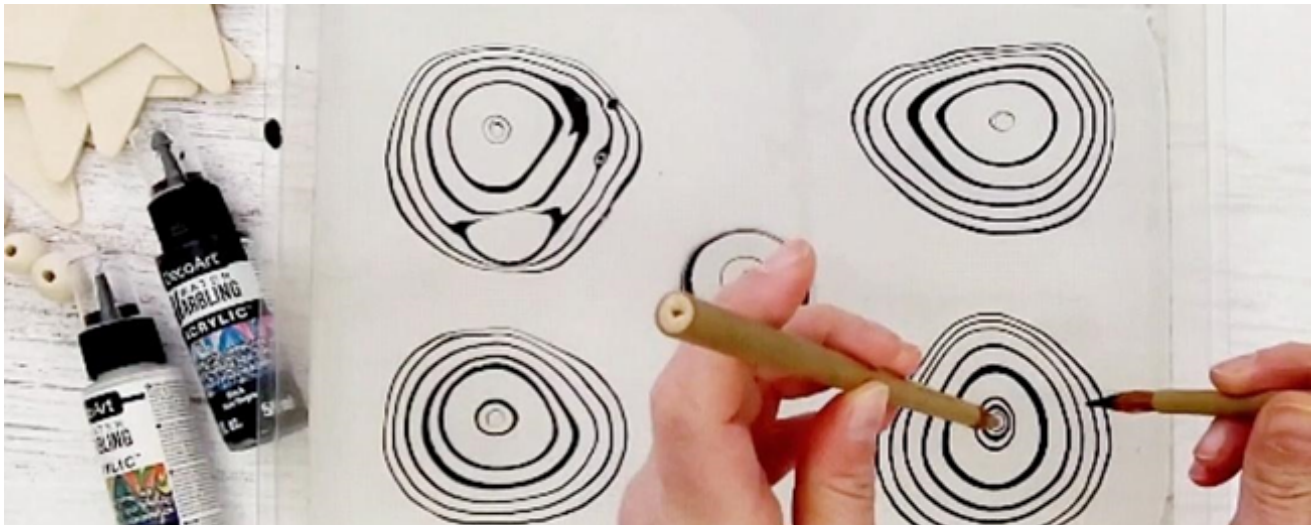
Traditional Ebru marbled papers were typically used for elite or official correspondence. Like snowflakes, every paper created with water-marbling ink is a unique creation, with endless variations. This enabled marbled paper to act as a signature of sorts, ensuring an official or royal document's authenticity.



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/Ja-FfnUY3S4>

### Suminagashi

Suminagashi or “ink floating” is the ancient Japanese art of paper marbling. It is believed to have originated around the 12th century from Japanese monks. Suminagashi papers are typically black and white and designed to closely resemble the striations observed in natural rock. These marbled papers were used in creating important documents, books, or as decorative papers around the home. Traditional Suminagashi patterns are made with oily black ink and “sumi” brushes.



“Sumi” brushes were used to gently add drops of black and white ink to a water’s surface to create rigid patterns. Additionally, Suminagashi artists would often gently blow on the water’s surface to create delicate swirly patterns. White sheets of rice paper would then be gently placed on the water’s surface, picking up the design and transferring it to the paper’s surface. Today, acrylic paints in a variety of colors are used to create colorful patterns reminiscent of this ancient art form.

## Water Marbling Terms

### Size:

Size is the thickened water solution on which you can water marble. The size must be created by using additives to create a solution with the right consistency for water marbling.



### Transfer:

The process of laying the water marbling paper (or another substrate) gently onto the surface of the size to imprint a colored pattern.



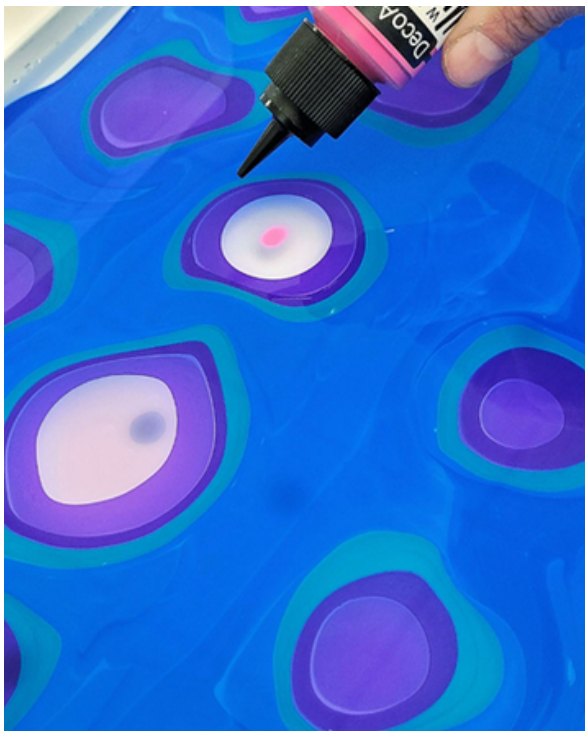


**Pouring:**

The technique of gently pouring paint onto the surface of the size.

**Dripping:**

The technique of dripping paint from the bottle directly onto the size in a controlled manner.

**Base:**

When creating a water marbling project, a base color is often used. This is accomplished by dropping small, even drops of water marbling paint or a gentle continuous stream down the center of the tray onto the size to create a consistent color across the water's surface.

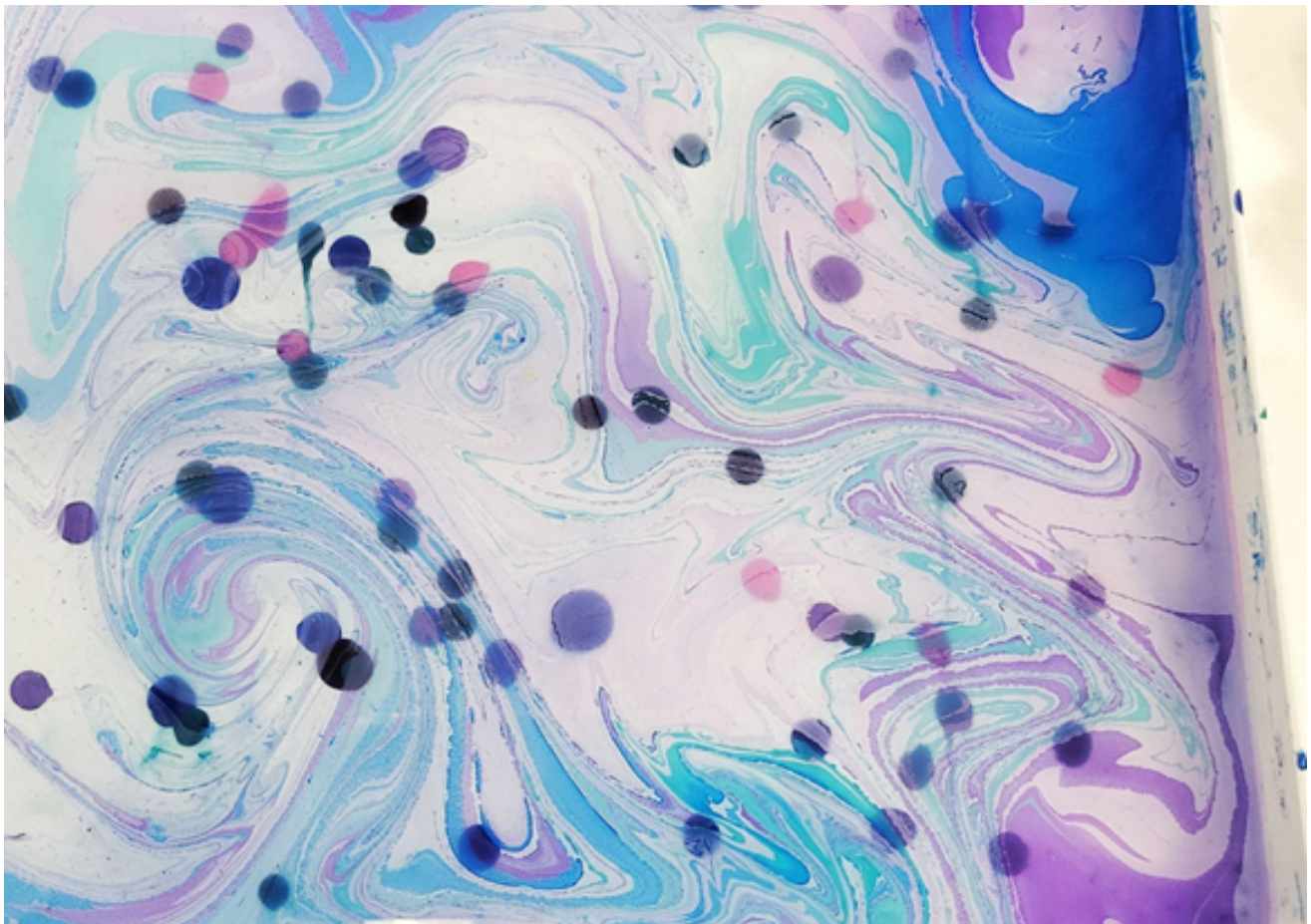


**Reluctant Spreading:**

This term describes the problem where the drop of paint stays concentrated in the center and does not spread out to form an even stone. This may mean that the tray is heavily loaded with paint or in other words “full”. In this case you should stop adding paint and take a print. Or, it could also be caused by size that is too thick. Clean the paint from the tray, and then add a little fresh size or water to the tray and try again. If that does not work, start again with a new batch of size.

**Sinking:**

Sinking occurs when too much paint is applied or if paint is applied too aggressively, causing it to sink through the medium and lay at the bottom of the tray. Avoid this by applying paint gently and close to the surface of the water to prevent breaking the surface tension. However, paint on the bottom of the tray will not affect your print. It is normal to have some drops sink.



(see the dark spots of paint that have sunk to the bottom of this tray, the water marbling paint continues to float and swirl on the surface of the size)



## Water Marbling Materials and Tools

### Rake:

A marbling tool made from a piece of wood with evenly spaced pins set about 2-3" apart. It is used to create patterns in the water.



### Comb:

A marbling tool made from a piece of wood with evenly spaced pins set about 3/8" apart. It is used to create patterns in the water.

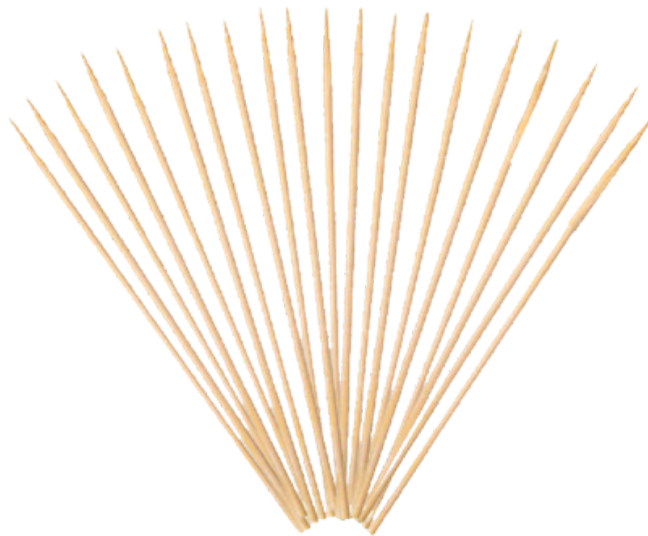


**Sumi brush:**

A type of Japanese brush designed to be used with “sumi-e”, the black ink used in the suminagashi style of water marbling. These brushes are dipped into the ink or paint and then lightly touched to the surface of the water or size to apply it.

**Marbling Stylus:**

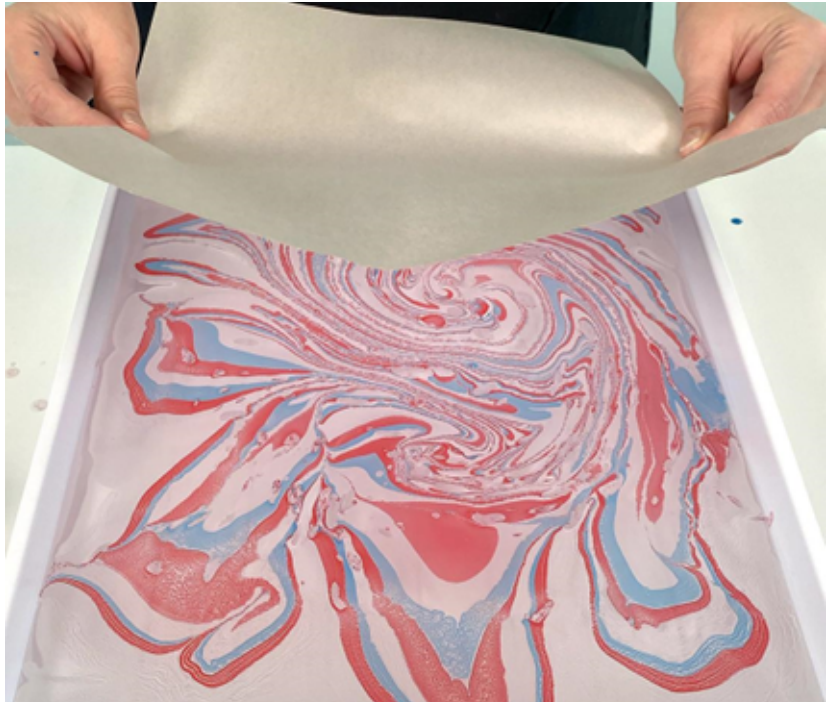
Sharp edged sticks, typically made of wood, that are used to draw through, swirl, or apply marbling paint to the size to achieve different designs.





**DecoArt Cleaning Paper:**

Specialty paper used to clean the surface of the size between prints. Floating the cleaning paper onto the size and dragging it across the surface will absorb any remaining floating colors to clean the tray and prepare for your next design.

**DecoArt Marbling Paper:**

Specially designed ready-to-use paper with a bright, white color and excellent wet strength that can be used to easily make crisp paper prints with clean, clear patterns.



**DecoArt Surface Prep:**

A natural powder used to treat surfaces such as fabric, to create more bold and lasting colors, and help marbling paint adhere to non-absorbent surfaces such as glass or metal. It will also prevent bleeding and promote crisp, clean prints. Some absorbent surfaces and papers do not need to be treated with alum, and some do. It is a good idea to test your surface to determine if this step is needed.

**DecoArt Water Marbling Magic Medium:**

An easy to use naturally occurring thickening powder that can be mixed with water in order to create the perfect size for water marbling. Size created with this medium can be used in 30 minutes to 1 hour after preparation and, if stored properly, can be reused for up to 5 days or more. It does not require refrigeration or other additives. Most household tap water works well, but if your water is especially hard, better results can be achieved by using distilled water. For best results we recommend using warm water.

Note: there are several options for creating a water marbling size that is thick enough to hold ink or paint on the surface for water marbling. Each of the methods have their own advantages and disadvantages.

**Carrageenan:**

The Carrageenan method uses a powder made from seaweed that will thicken water in order to create the size for water marbling. However, this powder requires intense mixing, often in a blender and needs to sit overnight before it can be used. Carrageenan spoils easily and must be kept refrigerated and then brought to room temperature when used.

**Methylcellulose:**

DecoArt's Magic Medium uses methylcellulose to enable you to easily create a size for water marbling. This method for creating a water marbling size uses a naturally occurring cellulosic powder to thicken water and allow water marbling paint or ink to float on the surface. Unlike carrageenan, this medium can be used in 30 minutes to 1 hour after preparation and, if stored properly, it can be reused for up to 5 days or more.



## Water Marbling Techniques

There are numerous water marbling techniques for you to try, more than we can list! Below are just some of the most popular techniques to help you build a base of skills and begin your water marbling journey.

### Stone Pattern

When paint is dropped gently onto the size and allowed to expand, it will often form a circle, which is called a stone. When multiple stones are used without any additional combing or swirling, the pattern created is referred to as a stone pattern. The stone pattern is the foundation for many other water marbling patterns.

To create the stone pattern, drop paint gently onto the size. This process is often referred to as “throwing stones.” You can drop paint within existing stones to create layers of color or beside one another.

### Stones:

The round shape that forms when paint is dropped gently onto the marbling water or size and allowed to expand. This will often form a circle, which is called the stone. Stones are the foundation for many water marbling patterns.



## The Gelgit Pattern

The gelgit pattern is the starting point for many other water marbling patterns. The term “gelgit” translates to “come and go” in Turkish. This pattern is often also called the “back and forth” or “zigzag” pattern.

To create a gelgit pattern, follow the steps below.

1. Create a stone pattern or Turkish base.
2. With the tip of a marbling stick or stylus, draw parallel lines through the tray moving back and forth in a zigzag pattern up and down the length or width of the tray.





## Wide Comb (or Arches) Pattern

The wide comb pattern is similar to the nonpareil pattern, except it uses a tool with teeth set wider apart, or rake that has wider spaced pins than a traditional comb. This means the arches created in this pattern will be larger.

To create this pattern, follow the steps below.

1. Create a base layer of paint, this may be created using a stone pattern or line pattern.
2. Using the Wide Comb, starting from the furthest part of the tray, place the tips of the comb into the water and pull towards you in one motion.
3. Alternatively, you may use a Water Marbling Stick in place of a Wide Comb. With the tip of the a marbling stick, draw parallel lines (in one direction) through the paint down the width or length of the tray.



## Nonpareil Pattern

The nonpareil pattern is a pattern that builds on the Gelgit Pattern. This pattern looks like a series of small arches and is often mistaken for the wide comb pattern. The main difference between the two is the use of the comb versus the rake, which has wider spaced pins.

To create this pattern, follow the steps below.

1. First create the gelgit pattern.
2. Next, using the water marbling comb and starting from a 90 degree angle to the last direction of your rake, place the tips of the comb into the water and pull it toward you in one motion.
3. Make sure you are pulling the comb towards you perpendicular to the zigzag (gelgit) pattern in order to create the nonpareil. It should look like small arches.



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/Ja-FfnUY3S4>

## Swirls (or Fantasy Marble)

Swirls or fantasy marble is a modern and free-form technique. To make swirls, slowly drag a marbling stick through a pool of paint in a winding motion. This type of marbling can be very freeing; simply follow your intuition to manipulate the water. You can start with stones, gelgit, or any other pattern before swirling.



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/D1cAVO4iw48>



## Flower Pattern

A more figurative marbling pattern, the flower pattern refers to the use of marbling sticks to manipulate the paint to resemble a flower.

Start by creating a base. This will become the background for your design. This type design works best when the tray is heavily loaded with paint. It creates more surface tension and creates a more stable base with less movement for drawing patterns. Then drip a single drop (stone) of paint onto the size. Dip the marbling stick into the medium outside of the circle, drag gently towards the middle of the circle and remove the stick. Wipe the stick with a paper towel and repeat until you have your desired number of petals.

You may also layer several drops of different colors within one another to create a multi-colored petal. Again, heavily loading the tray with a lot of paint will make it easier to create controlled patterns and shapes.

Marbling sticks can be used to create a variety of shapes, such as hearts, flowers, fish, and anything you can imagine! Experiment and see what you can create.



Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/bSSjxQzrINA>