



Loveseat refinished with Earth Safe Finishes

by Barb Keeling www.keelingskrafts.com

PAINTING THE COUCH

Dye'n to Recycle.

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I have painted a lot of things in my day, but painting a couch had not been one of them until recently.

I loved to paint. Not pictures, but walls and “stuff”. A coat of paint puts new life into things.

For the past 18 years we lived in the same place and recently decided it was time to paint the inside of our house. I am 77 years old and pretty darn sturdy for an ‘ole girl. I don’t do ceilings, but I am a ‘whirlwind when it comes to wall painting. Romping up and down a ladder isn’t as easy as it use to be but no less managed with fair amount of ease. With this ladder aerobics I rolled and brushed on new paint. My husband does not do ladders, so he took on all the trim. In a few days we had the living room and hall all done and that end of the house looks great. We put up new drapes and WOW without too much expense and time it was all new & sparkly. The problem with painting, everything looks fabulous afterwards, but anything in the areas that is even slightly shabby really looks terrible.

This is how painting the couch idea dribbled into my thoughts. I fully believe in recycling. I looked at our old denim couch sitting in the living room and realized it was not worn, just faded but it looks awful among the freshly painted walls and new drapes. Besides I love that couch it is so comfortable. Grandkids have slept there and it my favorite place to sit. It is hard to “kill” denim. But it fades like crazy. Budget did not allow income for couch recovery, so something else had to be planned.

What about painting the couch, I thought. I am a fiber artist and paint fabric all the time. My logic told me just because the fabric is over padding and covering a really old 8-foot couch should not be an issue. I am totally fearless when it comes to weird ideas. I always figure if it works in my “minds eye” no reason for it not to really work. However we are dealing with a huge piece of furniture. We two old folks are not able to shove this massive thing out into the carport to make it easier to paint. So they’re as another issue, painting while furniture sits on a wall-to-wall carpet next to newly painted walls. But then that is why plastic tarps were invented.

To minimize any possible moments of creative terror, I planned to start ‘couch painting’ on one of the pillows. If this artistic experiment did not work I could always bail out by simply covering the pillows with some neat fabric. I could do that! So there was an out, in case of failure. The pillows all looked awful, so faded. Basic couch painting seemed like a simple enough concept. Now the next move was to decide how I would do this project and what paint would I use to.

I am known for not thinking things through. This seeming “fault” has never slowed me down. I get an idea, think of the result, figure out what might work and just go for it. The middle part of “just go for it” sometimes requires some adjustments to work out messy-up-ees. But to me that is part of the creative adventure.

I have been working with a great company, called Earth Safe Finishes. They make the most wonderful paints. They are non-toxic; eco/green safe paints with no smell or chemicals and kind to “mother nature” and you. Their easy to use paints can cover pretty much “anything”. Figured their great dye/colorant, which comes in a small bottle with an eyedropper, might work well for my couch recovery project. It is extremely concentrated dye, mixes with water to create the color tones you want. My simple spray bottle and a paintbrush would be good painting tools. Since the couch was blue, figured I’d keep the “redo” blue and not complicate my life. So let the adventure begin.

I went out into the carport and setup a table to work on. Like a great chemist I dripped about 4 dribbles of blue dye into my 8oz spray bottle and added more or less 4” of water. Then I dumped in a capful of “fabric magic” to help the dye stick to the fabric, shook the spray bottle a little to mix the liquids. Ah the moment of truth. Couch’gate was about to start.

I sprayed an area on the pillow with this dye concoction. A blue blob appeared. I took my paintbrush to spread the paint along, but the paint went nowhere except where it landed. The blue-sprayed spot remained, motionless and uninterested in spreading anyplace. The denim pillow had grabbed & absorbed some of that first blast of dye and the rest ran down the pillow like a run away stream of liquid on a sidewalk. Results: spray blob of blue color on pillow and a puddle of not absorbed dye on the table.

I always try to see the positive part of things even when things are not going well. The good part was the blue dye was a great color for the couch. The bad part was this painting

process was not working. It was not an issue with the paint for it looked great, but it was not soaking in, which was a textile issue.

I was unshaken by this instant lack of success. I never mind artistic or crafty failures for they can inspire a new method for something else. In this case, I gathered I needed to give this project a wee more thinking before moving onward. "I hate that!"

I assumed it was not spread-able because the fabric was too dry and absorbed what was there so quickly there was no left over paint to spread. (why some dye was running off the pillow and not absorbing at all was a whole other issue.) I try to sort out one thing at a time.

Here is where creative logic and guesswork comes in. So, I fire up another spray bottle and filled it with just water. Sprayed the pillow first with water to get it wet. Then sprayed on the blue dye finishing up by using the paint brush and brushed the color along on the pillow. This method worked pretty well. I was impressed with my successful guesswork. Soon a great swell of "it is working", confidence set in. As I continued on, perfecting my new painting process, I found doing all that area the same blue color was really boring. I needed a color fix. There are endless possible colors in this dye so I began playing around with other colors on the pillows. Within an hour or so, I had turned these dreadful faded pillows into a smashing rainbow of overlapping colors. Way cool! I was very pleased.

Now I was excited. I put the finished pillows out in the sunshine to dry and took on the couch. I did the rest plain blue. The two seat pillows I could also do in the carport, which made it easy. Once I got to the arms and front of the couch I had to work inside being careful not to spray anything else, besides the couch. This was a little tricky, great care was needed for this part. As I was nearing the end of the entire project I found a label stuck down deep in the couch next to the arms. What it said was the couch was scotch guarded. In this situation not good news. Too bad I had not known that first. This explained why the dye had rolled off the pillow not absorbing into the fabric in some spots. In all the years of couch wear and tear some of the "fabric guard" was still there in some areas making it hard for the dye to soak in. Wish I had known that first. Oh well the couch was done. I let it dry for a couple of days.

When the couch was dry I could see areas that needed touchups. It looked great but I was being a little overly fussy. Dye color was not as even as I would like. Understandable with the scotch guard situation. I had a new idea for putting the dye on. I bought myself a small foam paint roller. Spraying the fabric first with a more even spray of water, then rolling the color on with the foam roller. The dye went on so much easier & better. A shame I didn't figure out this faster easier method sooner. In case I decide to do another couch I'll have a better plan. But no matter it came out great without knowing what I was doing.

Well the couch is all refreshed, recycled and given new life. It looks wonderful, artsy and not faded. Now that old favorite is likely to last another 10 years. Who knows we might last that long too.

Barb Keeling
Keeling's Krafts 'n Dolls
www.keelingskrafts.com
barbkeeling@aol.com