



In this tutorial I'll be sharing with you instructions and tips for the three methods that I use for adding stippling affects to my repeat pattern creations. I hope you'll then have a go at using these methods in your beautiful works of art as well. ~Cindy

Stippling (for the purpose of this tutorial) is an ink drawing technique where you apply tone and texture in small dots. You can adjust the depth of tone and the roughness of texture by varying the density and distribution of the dots. Stippling can be used to produce both loose, rather heavily textured works, and extremely fine, high-detail pieces of near photographic quality. It is important to understand that, whatever the desired outcome in terms of how loose and sketchy or highly realistic the work may be stylistically, the key to value transitions with this technique is the placement of dots in proximity to other dots. If you draw a one inch square and place fifty or so dots inside of it, you will have a light value. Add another fifty dots to the square, and you will have a noticeably darker value.

As you add more dots, your value becomes darker. Thus, the smaller the nib used in a stippling work, the more subtle the value transitions that can be achieved. If done in a sensible manner, a fine nib can also be used adjacent to a large nib to effectively create bold tonal and/or textural contrasts within a composition. More on doing this in the second tutorial.

When it comes to adding tone, texture, and shadows – I tend to do so by starting with the lightest tone and working towards the darkest. And when it comes to stippling on repeat pattern art type pieces, I also like working in layers as this helps me keep the “flow” of my work consistent with the way I add patterns to a page. Admittedly, most people don't teach this method or even use this type of dot layering to accomplish their stippling. So you may decide this is not the way you prefer to do stippling either. Nevertheless I'm sharing my method in case it is a process that would match up with your personal drawing style too.

I choose the paper and the pens I use in my stippled projects while keeping in my how much realism and how many details I plan to include in the drawing. Generally speaking I reserve my detailed work for doing portraits, landscapes and other more realistic types of art. I'm not doing anything too realistic when I'm working abstracts, so I'm not overly concerned with extreme details in most my repeat pattern art projects. Typically I will use a common sketch paper or multi-media paper. Water color papers or papers with a painterly finish to them, in my opinion, don't do as well for stippling.

As for the pen - when high levels of detail are not desired/required, I usually use a single pen with a nib that's about a .03 or a .01 size.

Tutorial One-Single Pen Method:

Here are the basic instructions and a picture guide to how I do my layers when using my single-pen method on a pre-drawn shape.

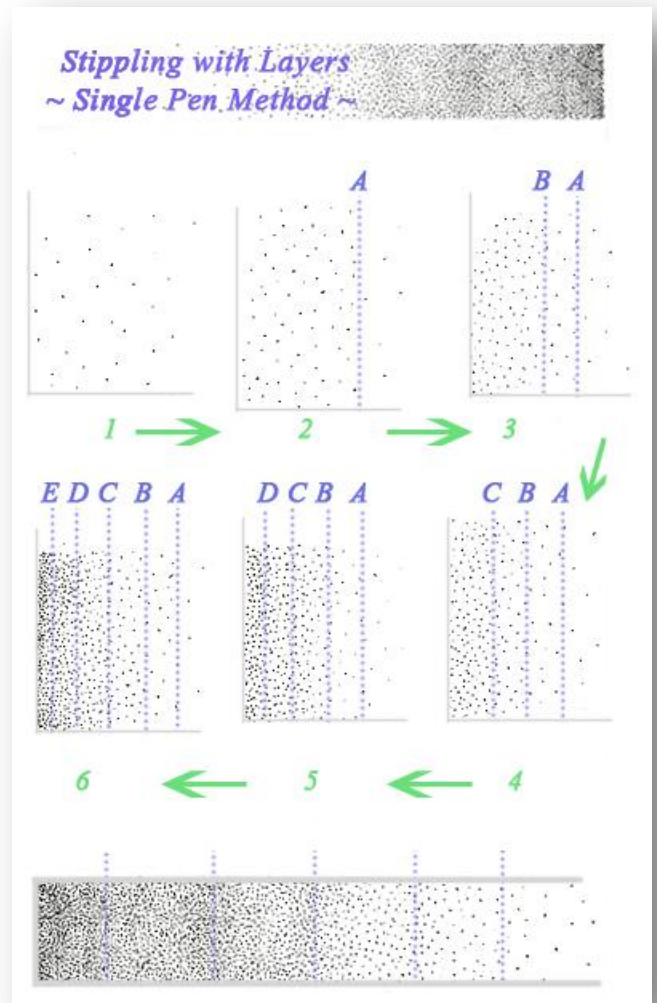
Working within the shape or section of my project where I plan to add value to, I dot in a very light layer. Meaning I cover the area with very few dots, spaced pretty far apart. This layer represents a "sketch" of my shape. In the example to the right the shape is a simple box.

On top of the dotted sketch I add my first layer of dots that will represent an increase in the tone of this area. In the example on photo my box has a light source on the right side of it. So my tones will be darker in the shadows of the left side of the box. Therefore my layer (A) of dots will only cover about two thirds of the box.

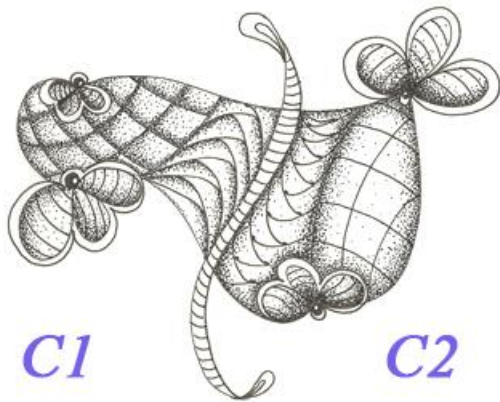
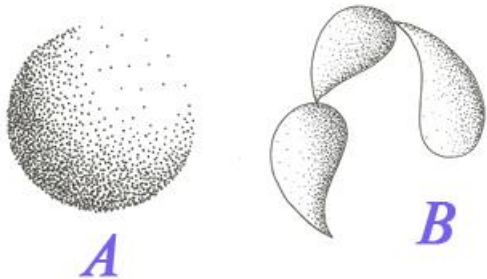
I then add another layer of dots leaving a portion of the A-layer showing on the right side where my light is coming from. In the diagram you can see I've shown blue dotted lines in my approximate cut off points for each layer. It's important to note that my dots are randomly placed in white spaces. I don't dot on top of previously drawn dots. Nor do I dot in lines, or circles. And each layer is like a blanket of dots that leave a consistent tone throughout the entire blanket/layer.

I continue to add layers in this same fashion until I reach the darkest side of my shape. If necessary I will go back and add layers of dots to increase the tone until the section is shadowed to my liking. I stay mindful of random dot-placement so that my layers don't show lines between them.

Sometimes it helps to start by creating a tone chart or tone scale, like the one shown at the bottom of my example page. The chart would include dotted layers ranging from the lightest to the darkest tones I plan to use in my drawing. This tone scale helps keep me on track to insure I don't get too carried away with my dotting while still adding enough to reach the darkest tones I desire in the project.



*Stippling with Layers
~ Single Pen Method ~
Incorporating into to Your Patterned Art*



Now I want to stop here for a minute and tell you that there are several ways I add stippling to an abstract repeat pattern art project. Sometimes I pre-draw my shapes using pencil and then erase the markings after my ink is thoroughly dry. See item A in the graphic on the left.

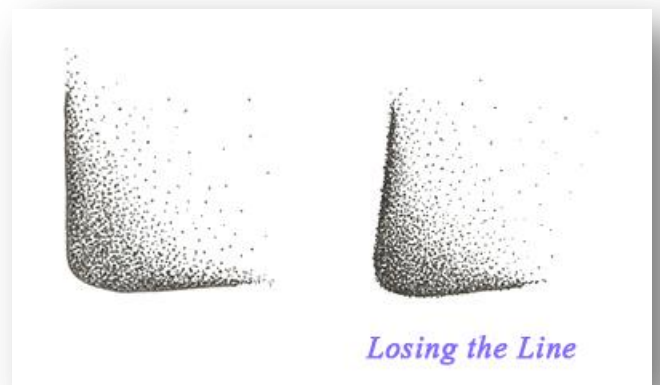
Sometimes I will draw my outlines in ink and then add my dots for simple shading – leaving the outline in place - like it shows in item B on the photo.

Sometimes I'll add patterns before I do the stippling and then stipple inside of each pattern piece. Such as what's shown in C1. Notice how each block of the grid is shaded using stipple dots.

And other times I reverse the process and add the stippling inside of larger shapes before I add the repeat pattern lines. Item C2 shows how things tend to look when I stipple before patterning. Notice how the tear-drop shape that holds the grid is shaded along all the edges, but the grid squares are not individually shaded.

And there are also times when I draw my overall design in ink, but then I want to hide the outline or at least soften it so it's not so obvious to the eye. The trick to hiding that line is simply add dots directly on top of the line so they fall partially to the right and left side of the solid outline previously drawn.

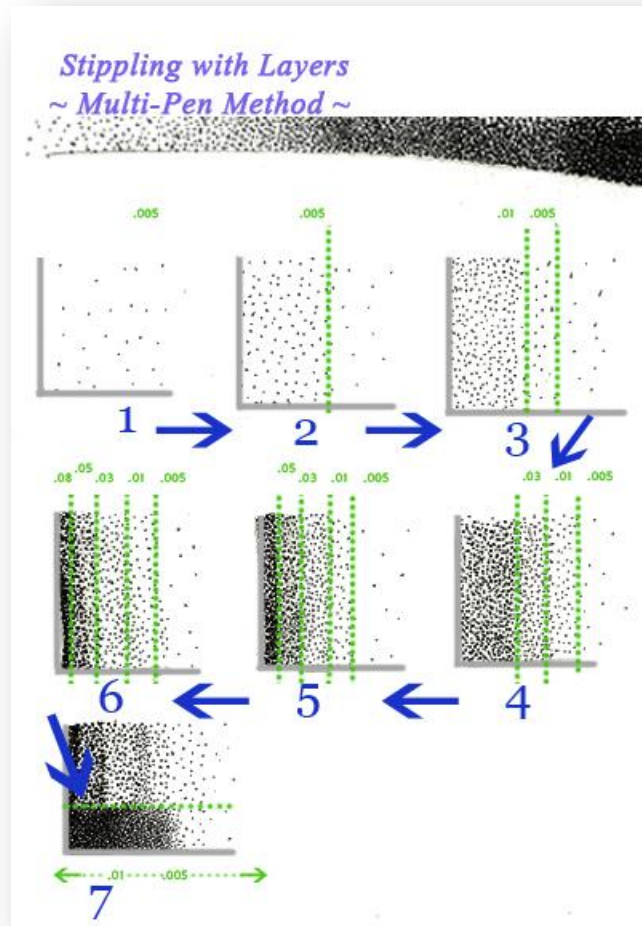
The picture on the right depicts a corner where I left the outline in place (on the left) and one where I've added dots on top of the outline to make the outline fade out and not be as obvious.



Tutorial Two-Multi-Pen Method:

I mentioned before that as you add more dots, your value becomes darker. Thus, the smaller the nib used in a stippling work, the more subtle the value transitions that can be achieved. If stippling is done in a sensible manner, a fine nib can also be used adjacent to a large nib to effectively create bold tonal and/or textural contrasts within a composition. Also by using multiple nib sizes you can capture a great deal of detail if that is what you wish to do on your project.

Here is the way I create stipple layers using a range of nib sizes to capture a bit more detail in my abstract line drawings and or to gain more control over the tone transitions.



Just as I do when using the single pen method, I like to work from light to dark. So first I lay down my sketch area using the smallest nib size and cover the entire space with tiny dots leaving plenty of white space to play with.

Next I lay down a layer using the same tiny nib size, but this time I work the layer smaller than the first layer. This new layer represents a darker tone and the beginning of my shadow. Up to this point I really haven't done anything different.

The next layer however, is put in using the next size up nib. In the example to the left you can see how I used a .005 pen to lay down the sketch area and the first layer of tone. Then I switched to the .01 pen nib. (Drawing #3)

For the next layer I use a .03 pen and again I make the layer shorter than the previous layers and continue building up deeper tones in my shadowed area.

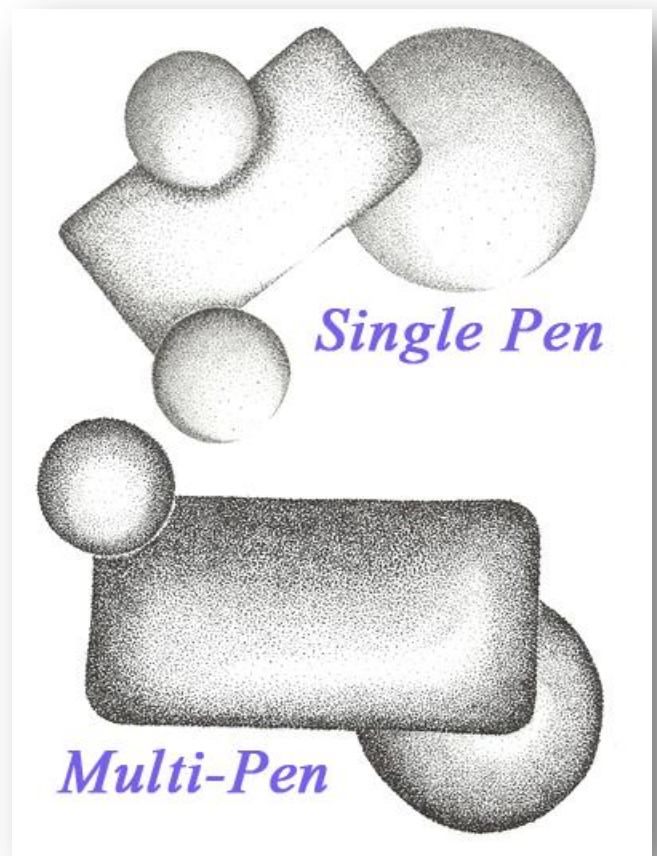
Then in drawing the blanket layers shown in #5 and #6 I used first the .05 pen and then for the deepest tone I used a .08 pen nib. Naturally the more a person practices this method the better they get at merging the layers and preventing "seams" between their tone changes.

I do have a little trick I use to help lose the seams. If necessary - after I finish laying down each layer I then go in with the two pens that have the smallest size nibs and work from light-to-dark and/or from dark-to-light tones adding dots as needed to blend the layers. (drawing #7 in the above display)

Looking at the results in a full size project may help you see the difference between the levels of tones I can get using the single pen and the multi-pen methods.

In the picture on the right my stacked elements in the top view were done using only a .03 pen nib. For the stacked elements in the bottom view I used the multi-pen method.

On the right you can see a little practice project I did and if you decide to play with stippling I encourage you to work through some practice sheets too. It's the best way to understand stippling and for learning how to develop your hand for layering dots.... This is true whether you opt for the layering methods I've described here or you choose to use a different method for your stippling.



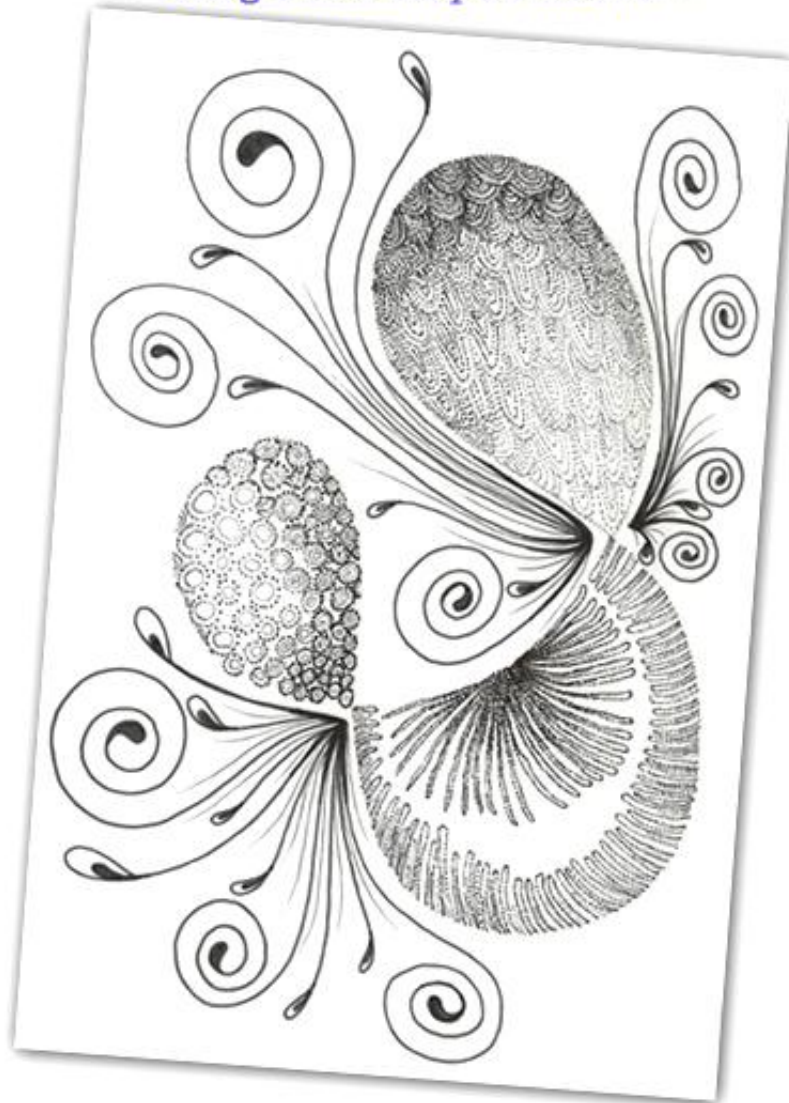
TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- When you're filling in areas of tone, do place your dots randomly instead of in rows because it will look computer generated and strange if you go in rows.
- Take a break periodically. This technique can be stressful on your hands and eyes! It gets easier as you get used to it, but particularly if you are new to the technique, take breaks often or you can get lost in your drawing.
- When stippling, try to hold the pen as upright as you can. Holding it at a slant will tend to give you small stroke marks or tadpoles (dots with tails on them). This will also happen if you don't take those breaks. Tired hands and eyes are not your stippling friend.
- I also think doing a stippled "value scale" (for something that has a variety of values in it) will also get you used to how to graduate the values in your work. And be prepared because getting something REALLY dark with stippling takes time!
- Periodically step back and look at your project from a little further away. From a distant view point you can sometimes see areas that need more stipple blending.

Tutorial Three-Stippling Basic Shape Patterns:

Now for those times when I'm feeling some extra creative juices and am in the mood for stippling - I may just get really crazy by dotting using lines to form shapes rather than layering randomly placed dots. The results look like the below:

Stippling with Layers ~ Using Basic Shape Patterns ~



Here are the steps I take to stipple in patterns, adding showing a range of tones to represent shadows along the way:

First I choose a very basic shape for dotting. The diagram on the right shows examples of some of the shapes I might use.

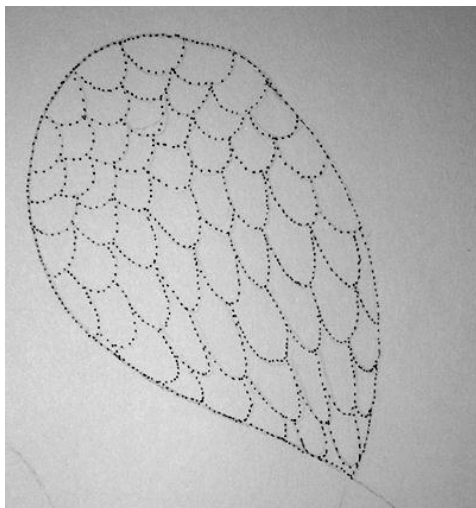
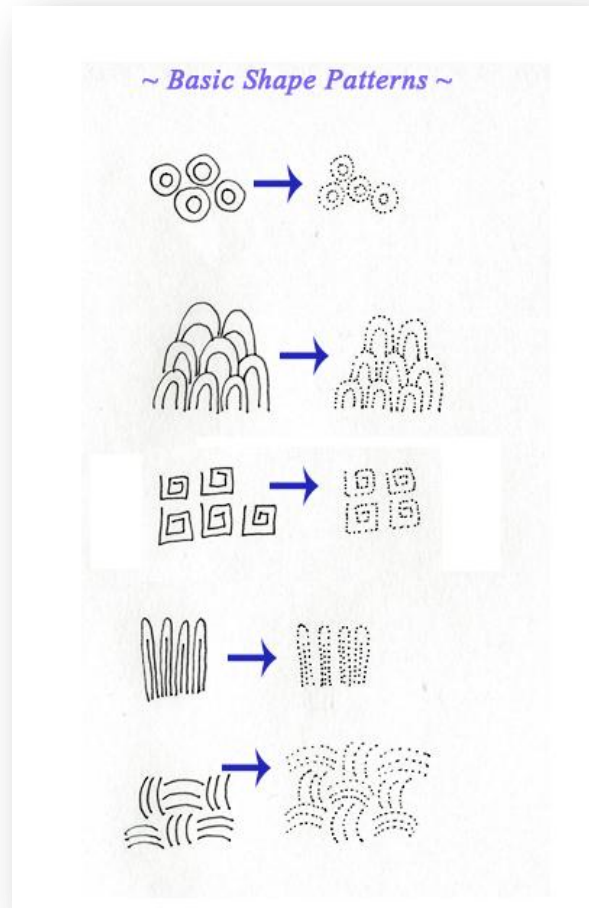
Typically I will use:

- A shape that includes very few lines.
- A shape that lends itself to creating a pattern by clustering it.
- A shape that I can make thicker by drawing it using larger dots and it can also be made lighter by using smaller dots.

So the first thing I do is draw the outline of my overall project. I use a pencil for this and will erase the lines after all my dotted ink is dry.

In the picture I presented at the beginning of this lesson I simply used a random string drawing for the base of my project.

After my string is drawn I then go about filling in each section with the dotted basic shapes. Usually laying in a single layer of outlined shapes and then adding more layers of filler lines inside each of the shapes as needed to create darker tones along the way.



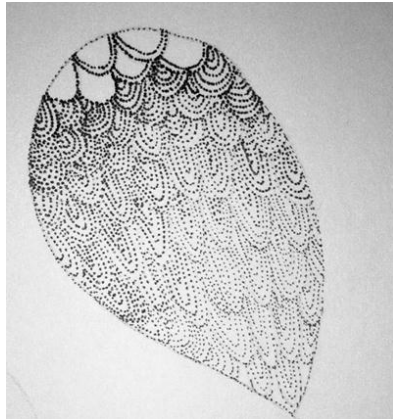
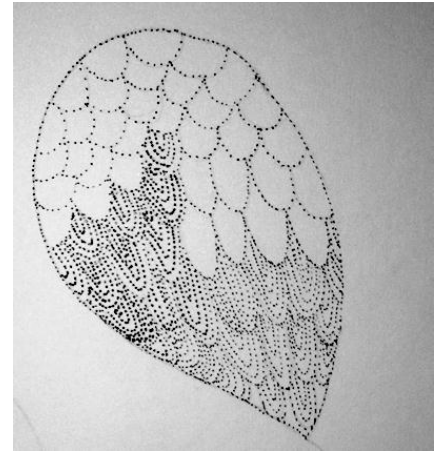
In the photo on the left notice how my dotted shapes are slightly different at one end of the space than they are at the other end.

Towards the bottom where they are longer and spaced further apart is where this space will be lighter. On the top portion where the shapes are smaller and placed closer together will eventually have darker tones to represent a shadowed area.

By the way - I sketched in these first shapes using some penciled guidelines before dotting them into place.

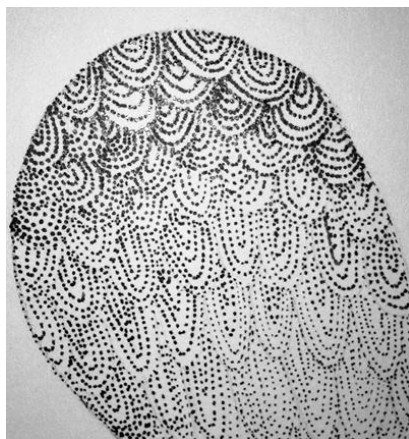
Next I layer some additional dotted lines inside each shape. In the section near the bottom I keep the dots further apart from each other and I use a small pen (nib size .01). See example on the right.

When adding these extra dotted lines in the mid-section I use a larger pen nib size .03 and I start placing the dots closer together. Notice how this area looks to be a darker tone than the bottom portion.



I continue working in this manner adding more lines of dots inside each shape – using larger pen nibs and placing the dots closer together. Refer to the photo on the left to see what I mean. This creates levels of tone that start to resemble a shadowed affect in my tear-drop area.

At this point each patterned shape has three or four lines of dots within it.

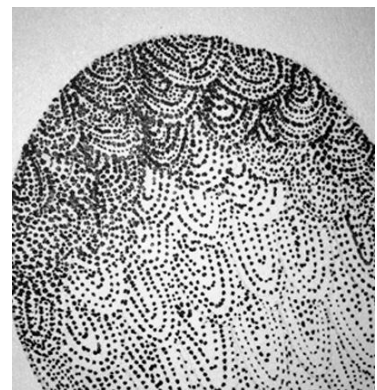


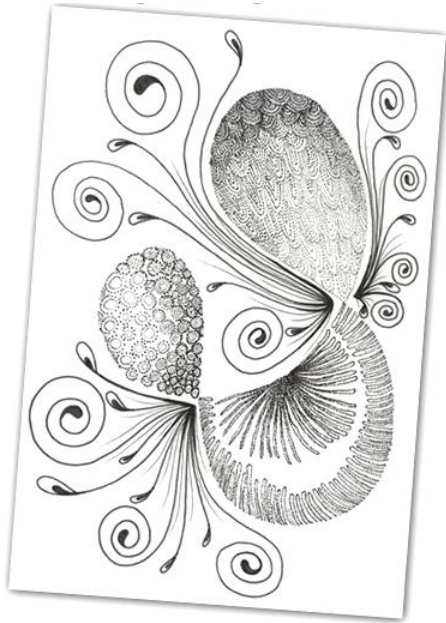
Refer to the photo on the left and you'll see that with all the internal lines drawn my tones in the shadowed areas are not quite dark enough.

When this happens I simply go in and add more dotted lines. If I really want the patterned shapes to still look like the pattern rather than a clump of dots – I will use a smaller pen nib size to maintain the shape of the pattern.

In this photo on the right you can see those extra lines of dots provided the deeper tone I needed

to pull off the shadowing affect I was going for on this shape. And by using the tiny .005 pen I was able to keep the curved shapes from turning into blobs of dots.





TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

To make darker tones do one or more of the following:

- Use a larger pen nib.
- Place the dots of the shape closer together.
- Draw smaller shapes clustered closer together.

To make lighter tones do one or more of the following:

- Use a smaller pen nib.
- Place the dots of the shape further apart.
- Draw larger or elongated shapes and if possible, don't cluster them as close together.

Visit the following sites for more examples of stippled repeat pattern art:

<http://lineweaving.com/forums>

<http://rainbowelephant.com>

Let me know if you have any questions or comments to add.

I would love to see your stippled art projects too!

~ Cindy Angiel