

Alice Valdez

Batik



Batik, a Javanese term meaning "wax painting", indicates a system of motif application by dyeing finished cloth. The technique involves the dyeing of fabric in which parts of the cloth not intended to be dyed are covered with removable wax. The fabric is then immersed in dye, with the waxed portions resisting the dye. Working from white to black with as many varied colors as possible, each color is individually waxed, dyed, and dried, from the lightest to the darkest color. The process is repeated for each color, numbering as many as twenty three in Alice Valdez batiks.

The characteristic "Cracking", the interesting little veining of color, occurs when the congealed wax, which is hard and brittle, ruptures. The dye is then able to penetrate these cracks. This enhances the interest and comple-

ments the composition.

It should be emphasized that the beauty and value of batik depends wholly upon the personal touch, skill, aptitude for color and design, plus the talent of the artist. In batik, the artist must be capable of visualizing a complete picture of his idea before undertaking the first step. Once the process has been started, it is practically impossible to correct any mistakes in waxing and dyeing.

Although Alice Valdez is self-taught in batik, one can see the influence of Indian and Javanese techniques evident in her work. It is this combination of being

self-taught, plus bringing her past painting experience to this media that explains her varied and ingenious approach to batik, and the painting quality found in her work.

It is not surprising that batik has been converted to a fine art. Valdez' sense of design and color, plus her love of nature and Southwest culture join to create a modern idiom using an ancient art form- batik. Each batik becomes a personal observation of what Alice Valdez loves most. She constantly extends the boundaries of traditional batik by treating the cloth as if it were canvas, and the wax and dyes as if they were oils.

A master of fine art batik and a nationally recognized artist, captures in her work the ambience of the Southwest at its best - sensitive portrayals of the landscape and its people, their artifacts and life. She has been the subject of numerous magazine articles and one-woman shows. A piece of Valdez's work was chosen to represent the "Art of Albuquerque" during a special national campaign to introduce New Mexico's culture to the rest of the country. Subsequently this

piece was presented to President Bush for the National Archives. Valdez's work was chosen to be given to Bush because it really captures the spirit, the culture and the color of Albuquerque.

