Workshop on Zentangle Materials

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The workshop focused on materials used in the Zentangle® method:
Which tiles and papers exist, how they differ, and which pens, pencils, blenders and tools are suitable for what.

1. Papers & Tiles

White Standard Zentangle Tile

- Size: classic 9 × 9 cm format.
- Paper: approx. 290 gsm, by Fabriano (Tiepolo paper), 100% pure cotton fibers (rags) providing a soft, bulky feel.
- Production: machine-made mould-made paper – the process imitates hand--made paper (screens are exchanged, which leads to slight differences in surface texture).
- Properties:
  - The surface gives way: you can emboss it with a fingernail or stronger pencil pressure.
  - Suitable for fine lines, shading and embossing, etching.
- Irregular, rounded edges:
  - Originated from Rick Roberts' famous "pocket-washing" story.
  - The rounded, irregular shape is now deliberately die-cut that way.

Other Tile Colours

Black tile

- White gel pen (Gelly Roll), white chalk pencil and grey tones are the main actors here.
- Ideal for strong contrasts and for experimenting with light and "eraser" effects (see below).

Renaissance tile (brown)

- Several paper generations:
  - very rough, sensitive first version (shading roughened up quickly),
  - smoother but slightly uneven intermediate version,
  -

current, slightly darker version: blends well, robust, pleasant for graphite and chalk. Tiles are gradually being converted to this paper quality.

- The colour tone allows drawing both into the light (white) and into the dark (graphite).

Grey tile

- Neutral midtones, great for working with white and graphite in combination.

Translucen-Z tile

- Clear, translucent tile that invites playing with overlays and light.
- the shadow pen show the color on one side and the metallic effect on the other

Special Formats

Bijou tile

- Small square tiles, great for quick exercises, experiments or series.

3Z tile

- Triangular tile, with edge length matching the classic 9 × 9 tile.
- Six 3Z tiles form a round mosaic and lend themselves to exciting layouts.

5×Phive tile & Phi tile

- 5×Phive tiles: larger squares that offer more space for patterns.
- Phi tiles: their own multi-part format – good for mosaics and modular projects.

Opus tile

- Large square; corresponds roughly to **3 × 3 classic tiles (9 pieces)**.
- Ideal for larger projects, classes and series; broader pens really pay off here.

Zendala tile (round tile)

- Round shape, often with printed “pre-strung” patterns (strings) in various levels of complexity.
- Important for class planning: significantly larger drawing surface – a Zendala takes noticeably longer than a standard tile.

Apprentice tiles

- Larger rectangular format with a smoother, but not totally smooth paper.
- Developed for children, seniors and anyone who needs more space and a more robust surface.
- Also available in black.

2. Pencils, Chalk & Blending Tools

Pencil (black barrel)

- Classic soft pencil (approx. B2) for:
  - drawing the string,
  - shading on all tile types.

Layout pencil (wood-coloured barrel)

- Softer pencil (approx. B6) for more shading:
  - hardly shines at all,
  - the core is soft and breaks easily in normal sharpeners.

White chalk pencil & blue pencil

- White chalk pencil:
  - For highlights on Renaissance, grey and black tiles.
  - Soft, opaque but fragile core.
- Blue chalk pencil:
  - For coloured highlights or accents on the grey tile.

Sharpener for soft cores

- A sharpener with a wider cone is recommended, e.g. a **General Pencil sharpener**:
  - Particularly suitable for:
    - white chalk pencil,
    - blue pencil,
    - layout pencil.
  - The flatter cone means the soft core breaks much less often than in standard sharpeners.

Tortillon & Estompe (paper stumps)

Tortillon

- Rolled paper, hollow inside.
- The tip can be pushed inward under pressure – with children it often gets “mushed” quickly.
- Ideal for fine shading with graphite and chalk.

Estompe

- Also a paper stump, but much more densely compressed and solid.
- Good for children and people who press harder, because the tip stays more stable.
- The blending is a bit coarser overall.

Handling “dirty” blenders

- If the tortillon tip is very dark:
  - That’s not a problem – you can use the existing graphite directly for shading.
- If you want it sharper or lighter again:
  - Sand it down with fine sandpaper (“tortillon sharpener”).
  - You are removing paper, so use sparingly – otherwise a hole appears quickly.
  - You can also use a safety pin or paper clip to gently push the tip back out from the inside.

3. Techniques on Black Tiles

White gel pens (Sakura Gelly Roll)

- **Gelly Roll 08** is the standard for lines on black.
- **Gelly Roll 10**:
  - broader tip,
  - very opaque white, especially visible on black, grey and Renaissance tiles.
- **Gelly Roll 05**:
  - very fine, subtle lines,
  - more of a specialty, used less frequently in comparison.

Darkening white – Koi Coloring Brush Pen

- Pen: **Koi Coloring Brush Pen, Light Cool Grey (XBR-153)**.
- Application:
  - Draw over dried white gel pen.
  - The more layers you add, the darker the area becomes.
  - Ideal for differentiating highlights and creating depth on the black tile.
- It slightly dissolves the gel ink (you have to decide if that bothers you or not).

- In the past a **Fabrico** pen in Cool Gray was used for this; the Koi has taken over this role.

“Eraser” effect with black ink

- On the black tile you can draw with **black Micron** (e.g. 08) over white gel pen lines:
  - The white is visually “removed” or narrowed.
  - This way you can:
    - add light reflections into white shapes,
    - strengthen front-back relationships (“Hollibaugh” effects),
    - make later corrections to white lines.

“Ghost Tangling”

(not to be confused with Ghost Tangling as an enhancer technique)

- Rub white chalk pencil over fine sandpaper or scrape it with a knife.
- Tap the chalk dust onto a black tile.
- Blend with finger or blender – soft, light-like areas appear.
- Then tangle on top with a black PN or Micron.
- Originally this was done with a **soapstone stick (“Zenstone”)** – this has not been available for a long time.

4. Fineliners & Gel Pens – Selection and Use

Black fineliners – Sakura Pigma Micron

- **Micron 01**:
  - classic Zentangle pen,
  - fine, even line for standard tiles.
- **Micron 03, 05, 08**:
  - increasingly thicker lines,
  - 08 is suitable for filling areas and for larger formats such as the Opus tile.
- **Micron PN (“Plastic Nib”)**
  - Plastic tip, very robust.
  - Depending on pressure: from fine to noticeably bold – very lively line quality.
  - Especially suitable:
    - for people who like to vary pressure,

- for beginners, children, people with a stronger stroke,
- on Apprentice tiles and larger formats.

White gel pens (again at a glance)

- 08 – standard.
- 10 – for maximum opacity on dark backgrounds.
- 05 – very fine, e.g. for details and delicate effects.

5. Apprentice Materials for Beginners, Children & Seniors

Apprentice tiles

- Larger rectangular format, smoother paper.
- Well suited if the 9 × 9 format feels too small or is motorically challenging.

Apprentice pens

- Previously: Pigma Pen 05 (same ink as Micron, smaller ink volume, therefore cheaper).
- Today: Micron PN is very common because:
  - the tip is very durable,
  - line width can be controlled via pressure,
  - the pen is generally very forgiving.

Blenders in the Apprentice context

- For children and seniors, solid estompes are often the better choice than tortillons:
  - less delicate tip,
  - less risk of “pushing in” the tip,
  - easier handling.

6. Formats & Class Planning at a Glance

- **Opus tile → area of 9 standard tiles**:
  Plan significantly more time, or intentionally use larger pens (Micron 03/05/08, Micron PN with pressure variation).
- **Zendala tile**:
  Because of the large round surface, a completely filled drawing is much more time-intensive than on the 9 × 9 tile. For classes, a clear plan for how much of the tile will be filled and a perhaps reduced selection of patterns is helpful.

- **3Z and Phi tiles**:
  Invite mosaics, series and combinable projects – great for group series where all parts can later be arranged into one large piece.