

The Art Centre

Batik

by Ikram Nosshi

In 1965 batik was yet another craft to be introduced to the children at the centre. By choosing batik, Ramses wanted to demonstrate that creativity could be brought out through any medium – particularly one that had not been present in Egypt before. A second reason involved the question of the pace of the work. In contrast to weaving, batik requires fast work. Its use of molten wax and phase dyeing presented a new challenge requiring planning and an altogether different faculty. Those who learned this technique had to be quick of hand and eye. In batik, the cloth is dipped repeatedly into different dyes which range from clear to opaque. Elements of the design which are of the same colour are drawn in wax before dipping the cloth into the next dye. Unlike weaving, batik demands that the child should have a complete idea of what he wants to represent before starting work. As with all the other activities at the centre, here too the artists do not make preliminary designs. The versatility of batik allows one to make tablecloths, furnishing fabrics and wall pictures. For practical purposes, chemical dyes are necessary for this technique. Today Yoanna Wissa Wassef continues to guide these batik painters who have achieved quite remarkable results over the years.