

# History of Stenciling (Stencil Art)

Source: [alabamachanin.com](http://alabamachanin.com)



The use of stencils dates back over 37 thousand years, as seen in Neanderthal cave art found in Spain. These paintings are outlines of hand prints; it is thought that Prehistoric man or woman would place their hand against the wall, and then blow finely crushed pigment (e.g. charcoal) around it. These stencils also included shapes from the natural world and daily life: animals, hunting scenes, and ritual all figure prominently.

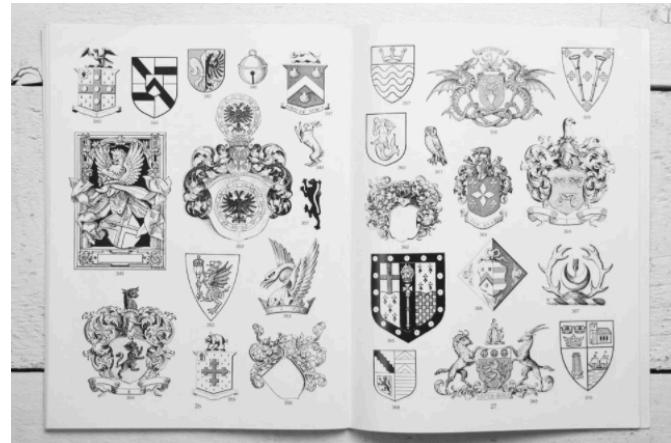


Over time, the use of stencils spread throughout the ancient world. Many of the detailed drawings and intricate (detailed) art found in Egyptian tombs or along the walls of the city of Pompeii were results of stencils. Stenciling was a simple and well-thought-out way to reproduce (make) the same pattern over and over again.

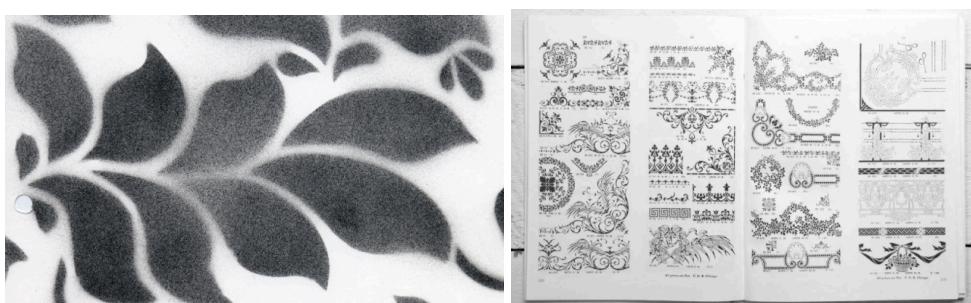
The Chinese were the first to develop a paper-based stencil, around 105 AD, and used the invention to advance their printing techniques. Soon, stenciling made the transition to cloth and colorful patterns were transferred onto garments. The Japanese improved upon the technique by bonding delicate stencils together with human hair or silk. Their method of dyeing fabrics with stencils is known as Katazome, and uses the paste resist method. With this technique, a paste (usually

composed of rice flour) is pushed through a stencil, defining a pattern on cloth. The places where the sticky paste adheres (sticks) to the cloth resists color in the dyeing process, therefore creating a negative stenciled design on the fabric.

Stenciling eventually spread to Europe, thanks to the trade routes from the East. The technique of stenciling became quite popular, and was used to add color to master prints. Stencils became handy in mass productions of items, including manuscripts, playing cards, book illustrations, fabrics, and wallpaper.



Immigrants brought the use of stenciling with them to the New World, and once again the technique was employed in a variety of ways and new styles were developed. Stencils were used as decoration in the home, on furniture, and in works of art. Stenciling once again became popular for architectural designs in the early 20th century. This stenciling style can still be found in public buildings, churches, and homes.



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With today's technology, it is fairly simple to produce stencils. Stencils are carefully composed (created) by design and graphics teams and then laser cut onto Mylar, making them durable and long lasting. Patterns are transferred onto fabric using an airbrush.