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## **Make a Paper Cherry Blossom Branch** with Mia Semingson of Two Hands Paperie

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### **Chapter 1 - Make a Paper Cherry Blossom Branch**

#### Overview

- Sakura is the Japanese word for cherry blossom and their blooming season is fast and fleeting. For this project, we will create cherry blossoms that can bloom in your home all year round. My name's Mia Semingson and I own a paper shop in Boulder called Colorado called Two Hands Paperie. These paper blossoms are so simple. It's a great project for people of all ages and all abilities. Using a basic origami fold, we'll then cut the shapes for the petals and then will dip dye them into various shades of pink. You'll learn two different styles of flowers. One is a three dimensional flower attached to a branch and the second one is just to enjoy the two dimensional shape. People travel thousands of miles to see cherry blossoms in bloom. You can capture that everlasting beauty in your own home.

#### Materials

- The materials to create paper cherry blossoms are fairly simple. You need absorbent paper for this project. I like to use Sumi-e painting and calligraphy paper, and that will need to be cut down into small squares. I like two sizes, three inches and four inches. You could also have a few extra sheets of paper just to test your dye color. You can also use a basket-style coffee filter, which is also very absorbent. The one paper you kind of want to avoid is just regular printer paper. It will dye and accept the ink, but it won't absorb and move the ink around. A pair of scissors is necessary. A protractor, a pencil, a bone folder, a few bowls for water, and also mixing ink. I'm going to use the FW Process Magenta acrylic ink, but you could also use watercolor or fabric dye to dye your paper. A measuring cup and just a spoon to stir. Some very thin wire. I'm using 30 gauge floral wire. A sturdy needle, a spray bottle with water, an iron, and some tea towels for ironing on. And the most important thing is, of course, a natural branch that you can find in your yard. You also need to protect your work surface from the dye.

#### Folding and cutting

- To fold the cherry blossoms using the square paper, you will need two sheets layered one on top of the other. Take the two sheets and just fold them right in half. You can use your bone folder to smooth out the fold. Then take one folded edge at the bottom and fold it up to align with the opposite edge. Open that fold up and do the same to the other side. I'm gonna turn my paper so that the x is at the top and I'm gonna grab the folded corner and basically place it where x marks the spot in the direct center and crease. Then I'm gonna take this edge at the bottom and fold it to here as a guide. Next, I'm gonna open that up and fold the opposite corner and use this edge as a guide, and then I'm gonna fold it back on itself to look like that. If you're using the coffee filter, take two layers of filter. I like to smooth it out with the bone folder just a bit. It makes folding a little more easy. Then just fold your coffee filter directly in half, and then I'm gonna just fold it in half again and just crease that corner bottom edge marking the center. If it's easier for you to see it, you can also add just a little pencil mark, and then I'm gonna take the protractor and align it to that center mark and mark 36 degrees. I like to flip it over and hold at that center line to make that fold along that 36 degree mark. Increase it. Now you have a guide to do all the remaining folds, so just take this corner and line it up with the opposite edge, and then just align the last two edges. To cut your blossoms, you're gonna trim off this excess paper at the top if you're using the square, and

then you're going to angle your second cut aiming towards the center. It's like you're just trimming a corner off. And then from this pointed edge, you're gonna angle the cut down. That will create the curved shape of your blossom. I'm gonna open it up and show you what it looks like. We're gonna do the same thing with the coffee filter. However, this is gonna make quite a large flower, so I'm gonna actually cut quite a bit off. You could decide to make larger flowers or very small flowers, but for the branch that I'm gonna create, I need something a little smaller. So again, I'm gonna trim the corner, aiming towards the center. Make sure you get all the layers at once, and then just curve your cut down to create the curved shape of the blossom. I will show this one again. Depending on how you curve your cuts and the angles, that will create the shape of the blossom. Sometimes I play around with those angles as I'm cutting if I wanna modify the look or the shape of the blossom itself. You'll need to fold and cut 20 to 30 blossoms to fill a small branch.

### Paper dyeing

- To mix the dye to color your paper, just use some plain water. I use about a quarter cup, but you just need a little bit. You don't even have to actually measure it out, but I think a quarter cup is a good place to start. One of 'em I'm not gonna add dye to. It's just gonna be plain water. You wanna mix up or shake up your ink, and for my first bowl, I'm going to add 10 drops, then five, and then a couple good squirts. You can obviously decide how strong you want your colors to be. Just give 'em a good mix before you start using them. (bowl clinking) (bowl clinking) With some scrap paper, I'm just gonna test the color to see how pink it's gonna get. I like to use a lighter pink and a darker pink, and then something much, much darker. (paper ripping) Nice and subtle. (paper crinkling) (paper ripping) Much darker. Grab one of your blossoms, and then you just experiment with how you're gonna place them in the bowls. Sometimes I dip them in water first, and the paper's super absorbent, so it'll grab the dye very quickly. I'm gonna start with the darker color first, then move to a lighter color. Add a little water. Every time, I do it differently. If you want very subtle shades of pink, use the lighter color dye first and then some water to move it around. The very tip, you may want it to be a darker color and have lighter color pink at the top, or maybe just a little touch of pink in the blossom. This paper is super absorbent, and if you're working with small pieces, it will often dye a good portion of your flower very quickly. Dyeing is the same whether you're using the coffee filter or the washi paper. (upbeat music) (upbeat music) As your petals are drying, it's important not to open them completely, but if you wanna splay them out on your surface to speed up the drying process. You can also get a tiny little peek of what the pattern or color is gonna look like. I usually allow the blossoms to fully dry from 12 to 24 hours before I begin the next step.

### Wiring

- To attach the wire to your dried flowers, use your needle to make a small hole at the base of the flower, poking all the way through all the layers. Take the end of the wire and insert it into the hole, leaving about two inches at one end, and then you can cut it directly from the spool. I'm using a very, very thin wire, and that's why I'm using scissors to cut the wire. If you're using a little thicker wire, you may want to use wire cutters for this part. Then I'm just gonna twist the wire a few times and continue punching holes and wiring the rest of my petals. Typically, I wire all my blossoms before I begin to open them, but let's take a look right now. As you unravel your flower, sometimes start with the outer layer, opening that first, then opening the center layer. Kind of bunching it up more in the center, not opening it completely flat, so there's kind of two distinct layers to the flower. Then you really get to see the dye pattern once you open them, which is definitely the fun part. You

have to be a little gentle as you open the petals because it can be easy to tear the paper as you're unfolding them. To attach your blossoms around your branch, you'll just need to wrap the wire around. You can attach 'em at different intervals, also facing different directions. Cherry blossoms grow in groups. They're pretty random, too, as far as how they look. You really can't go wrong in terms of placement. You can also split the wire in two and then kind of tie it around if it doesn't wanna secure easily. (cheery music) (cheery music continues) (cheery music continues) Now you can enjoy your ever-blooming cherry blossom branch.

#### 2D variation

- A second version for your cherry blossoms is to actually separate the layers, add some embellished cutting close to the point, kind of like a paper snowflake, but just adding some small details near the base. We still want them to look like a cherry blossom when they open. You can play around with the shape of your cuts. I like doing little diamonds and small circles. If you know you wanna make these ahead of time, you can also just fold one layer of paper and cut into your cherry blossom shape before dyeing. You can play around with the number of cuts you do. Every one will be slightly different. You can also iron them flat, protect your surface with a couple of tea towels, and then just lightly spray your pedal with some water. Lay it between the towels. And using just a warm iron, you can iron your pedal flat. Such a pretty, delicate shape, so it's nice to see them both ways, both two dimensional and three dimensional. When you have 20 or 30 of these cherry blossoms, 2D cherry blossoms together, it's fun to see how they all look and all the differences that they have. Now you've learned two ways to decorate your home with springtime all year round.