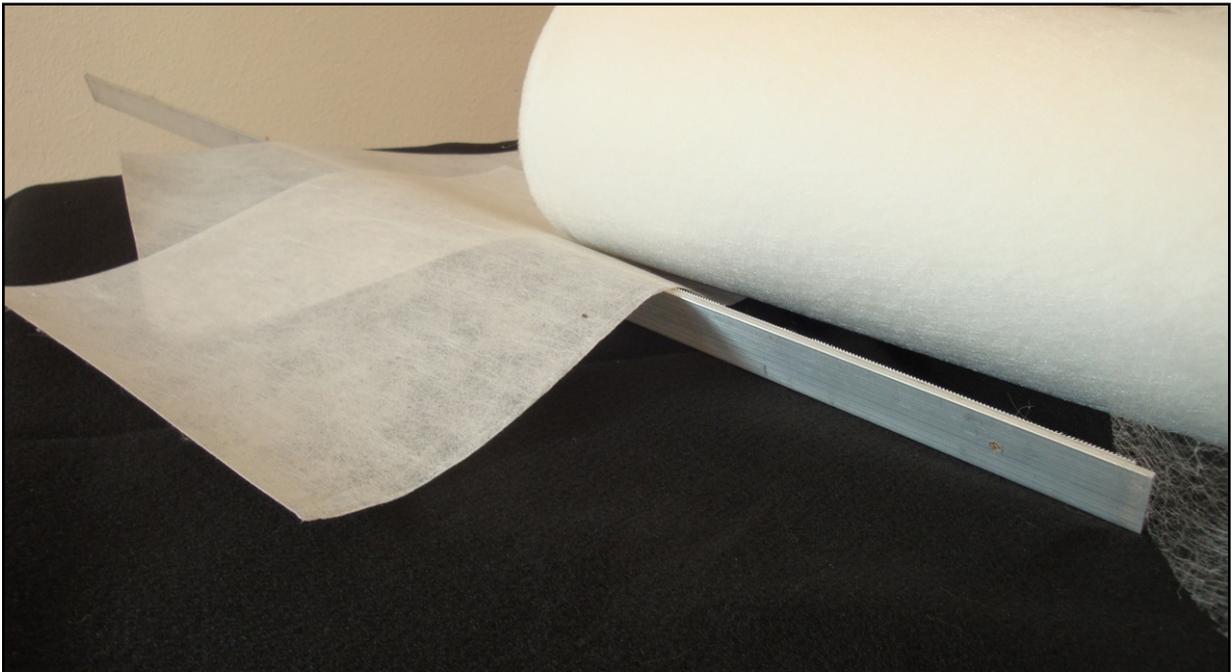


## Display Options: Preparing Aluminum Bars

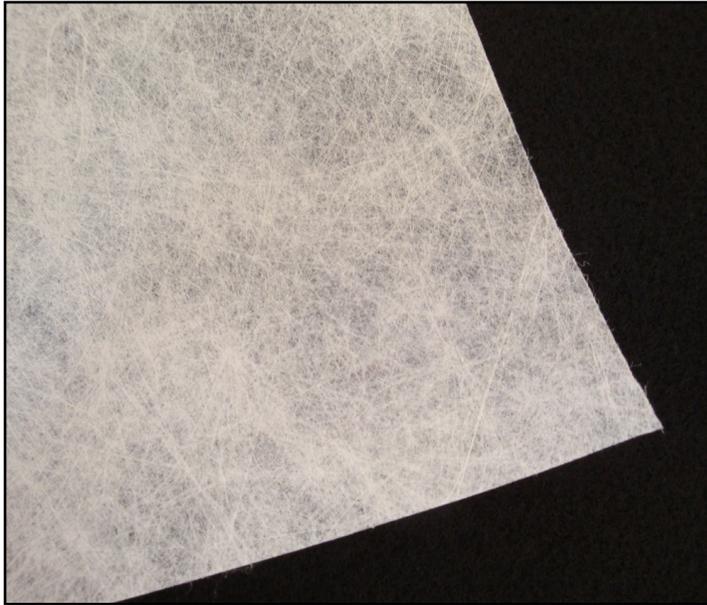
Aluminum bars are an excellent choice for hanging textile art work, including art quilts and mixed media pieces. Inexpensive, lightweight and durable, these bars lie completely flat against the back of the art work and facilitate flat, perfectly square hanging. The bars can be permanently attached to the work or attached using velcro, but in either case, use of the bars dictates how the piece will be hung no matter where it is installed. Nothing is left to chance. The artist is in control of how her work looks in any environment.



Aluminum bars are stocked at home improvement stores like Lowe's and Home Depot. If you intend to use bars on a number of pieces, look for a metal fabrication company that will sell you the aluminum in 12' lengths and also cut it to size. I use Westbrook Metals ([metal4u.com](http://metal4u.com)) and they ship to other locations. The aluminum bars are available in several thicknesses. I use 1/8" thick bars, but you may want a thicker bar. This will be dictated by the weight and size of the project you are hanging. You can see the bar I use in the above photo.

I back the pieces I am making with either Lutradur - an industrial interfacing, or EcoFelt. EcoFelt is a manmade felt composed primarily of recycled plastic bottles. It is very similar to the felt you are already familiar with, and is available at JoAnn Fabrics. You can also buy it on-line from JoAnn. If you can't find EcoFelt, any

acrylic felt is suitable. I choose a neutral color or black, for the backing of my pieces.



Misty Fuse is a state of the art fusible web and it is my choice for attaching the felt or Lutradur back to the artwork. Misty Fuse is available by the bolt from [mistyfuse.com](http://mistyfuse.com).

There is no right or wrong side to Misty Fuse. It melts when heat is applied and bonds the artwork to the backing.

Lutradur; available from [Pellon.com](http://Pellon.com)

Follow these Steps:

1. Position art work on a table with the front of the work toward the table. I use a padded table so that I can iron directly onto the fabric after it is placed on the work table. For instructions on building a padded work table consult *Art Cloth: A Guide to Layering* (Interweave 2010 and available at [complexcloth.com](http://complexcloth.com))
2. Cover the back of the artwork with a layer of Misty Fuse. It helps to pin the fusible to the table at one end, so that it won't float or shift out of position.
3. Use a teflon pressing mat to heat the fusible. Work gradually across the entire back of the artwork. I buy teflon mats meant for oven use at [harrietcarter.com](http://harrietcarter.com).
4. When the Misty Fuse is secured to the artwork, remove it from the work table and lay it aside. Spread out the felt or Lutradur and apply Misty Fuse to this surface just as you applied it to the artwork.

NOTE: Misty Fuse works best if it is applied to the backs of BOTH fabrics you intend to bond together. Applying the fusible to one fabric only may result in separation later - for instance, if a piece is rolled for shipping. It's a little like Contact Cement. The two parts bond permanently, and better, if the adhesive is applied to each piece prior to the final bonding.

5. When the fusible has been applied to both the art work and the backing, fuse the two pieces together. Put the backing on the table with the fusible side UP.
6. Carefully smooth the artwork on top of the backing with the fusible side DOWN. Smooth to be sure the piece is square on the backing and also wrinkle free, as once the heat is applied it will be almost impossible to separate the two fabrics from each other.
7. Start in the middle of the piece and steam out to the edges. I find it helps to smooth ahead of the iron with my hand, so I don't accidentally iron a crease into the surface.
8. Use the pressing sheet at the edges so you don't get fusible on the iron. Better NOT to use the pressing sheet when ironing from the middle out, as you won't be able to see the surface and may inadvertently press in a wrinkle.
9. Use a rotary cutter and a cutting mat to trim away excess backing and to square up the edges.
10. Always give the piece a final steaming - to both the front and back - to be sure all of the fusible has melted adequately. Use a pressing cloth on the back, or the felt may melt. I use a cotton pressing cloth at this stage, so that the steam can penetrate the pressing cloth.

This is a great system for finishing edges - very clean and flat and no raveling! The fusible secures the raw edge. If you want a decorative finish you can always stitch along the edge by hand or with the machine, or bead it. Endless possibilities!

## Preparing the Aluminum Bars

If you purchase aluminum bars from a home supply, you will probably have to cut them to size yourself. If you don't want to do the cutting, ask in advance whether this service is provided.



1. In order to cut the bars to size, you will need a table clamp and a hack saw.
2. The table clamp can be screwed to the table temporarily. Make sure it is stable before you begin cutting.



3. Mark the place where the bar will be cut with pencil. Put the bar in the table clamp and use the tightening screw to make sure the bar is stable.

4. Use the hack saw to saw off the bar at the pencil mark. Try to angle the hacksaw rather than cutting parallel to the floor and keep your hand a little loose. Let the tool do the job instead of forcing it.

5. I use a sanding block to sand down the rough edge of the bar. A file would also work.



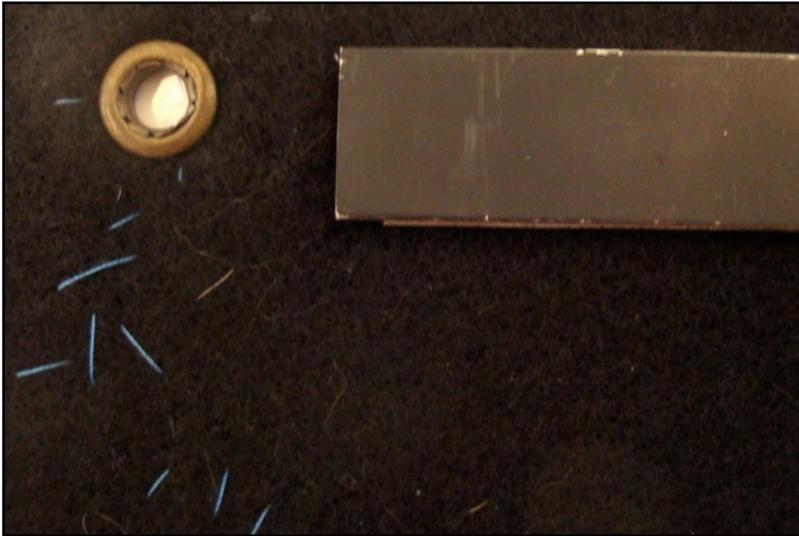
6. Spray paint the bar (if you wish) so that it matches the backing felt or Lutradur.



7. Drill the hanging holes in the bar before you attach the bar permanently to the back of the piece. Use an electric drill with a titanium drill bit. The hole can be any size. I usually use 1/8" drill bit. Put the bar on a piece of scrap wood to stabilize it. Drill the hole through the bar and into the wood. The hole should be about 1/2" from the end of the bar.

8. Attach the bar to the art work with E6000 adhesive. Put *tiny* dots of adhesive on the bar and then use a wooden skewer to spread the glue out. Apply glue between the holes and not all the way to the end of the bar. The ends need to be open so that the piece can be mounted with fishing line or small nails when it is exhibited.

9. Add a similar bar to the bottom of the art work to stabilize the piece and facilitate perfect hanging. The bottom bar can be cut, painted and applied to the art work exactly as you did for the top bar. But you won't need any holes.
10. If you want the bar to be removable, put Velcro on the back of the piece and also on the bar. Stitching the Velcro to the backing will keep it from puckering, which is what happens if you use glue to secure it. DO glue the Velcro to the bar, or it may peel off when you least expect it, due to humidity changes and other fluctuations in temperature.



Another hanging option is to install grommets in the corners of the piece. These are then used for hanging and the bar becomes the stabilizer. Grommets come in lots of colors and sizes. The picture on the left is the back of a piece with the grommet and bar installed.



No matter what the size or scale, this is a system that's easy to learn, affordable and the answer, if you've been looking for a presentation that is elegant but unobtrusive.