

Art Cloth Display Guidelines

The overall goal is to hang work so that there isn't any question in the mind of the viewer that the work being presented is art. This might sound simple, but it can be deceptively difficult.

For example, hanging work on a rod using curtain clips may reference curtains and even shower curtains, automatically downgrading the art cloth in the viewers' eyes because of this familiar reference.

Draping is problematic, also. One of the easiest display solutions for those who have no experience with art cloth is to drape the work over a table or chair or pedestal, pushing the presentation of the art cloth into the realm of being functional, referencing a tablecloth or a *throw*. The art cloth may have a functional aspect to it; however, the point is to make this a conscious choice or encourage the conscious choice, rather than leaving it to default.



artwork by Patt Wilson



artwork by Cathy Stechshulte

Display Ideas

Displaying Fabric as a Flat Panel

There may be times when the design of a particular piece reads best on a flat plane. A flat hem or sleeve may be applied with small, hand stitching. The sleeve should be no closer than a quarter of an inch to the edge. If the art cloth is long and/or heavy, the piece will hang better if there is also a hem or sleeve at the bottom, again no closer than a quarter of an inch to the bottom edge. Don't pull the stitches too tightly or the front of the art cloth will pucker.

To further avoid stitch marks on the front, use fine silk thread. Polyester and cotton thread, especially on a silk piece, will press into the cloth causing stitch marks on the front. Thread a flat piece of wood molding (available at all hardware stores...and they will cut it for you) that has been sanded, or a flat piece of Lucite or Plexiglas through the hem or sleeve. Have the flat piece cut one quarter inch smaller than the width of the art

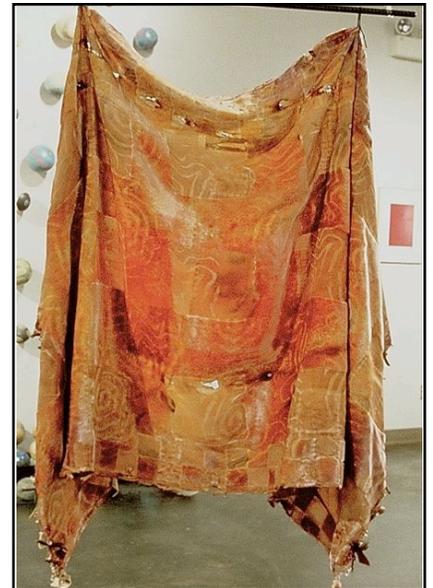
cloth, and if using Plexiglas, have holes drilled at the top outer edges. Screw eyes are then attached to the outer edges and are hung from the ceiling with mono filament. To encourage the wafting quality that can be so appealing if the fabric has room to move, hang the art cloth at least one inch away from the wall.

Never use a round dowel rod. It interferes with the flat surface and looks amateurish, especially when it sticks out at the sides of the art cloth.

Displaying with Drape

Attaching Monofilament to Thread Chains

This technique is particularly suited to art cloth made from silk. On the back of the art cloth and one-quarter inch from the top and side edges, fuse a half-inch square of the same fiber/same color used for the art cloth to each upper corner. These will be the anchors for a small chain stitch made into a small 1/4" loop in the center of the fused squares. Use silk thread the same color as the art cloth for making the small loops. A chain stitch is actually just a crocheted chain, the same stitch used for belt loops, only these will be much smaller. (A chain stitch made directly into the back of silk art cloth without the anchors would make holes in the cloth.) The anchor gives one a surface on which to make the chain loop without disturbing the front of the art cloth. Monofilament can then be secured through the chain loop and the art cloth hung from the ceiling so that it drapes slightly toward the center. Install the art cloth at least one inch away from the wall.



For a diagram illustrating the thread chain made with sewing thread and needle, see *The Vogue Sewing Book*, edited by Patricia Perry, 1970, p. 300

Attaching Monofilament to Magnets

Rare earth magnets may be ordered from Analytical Scientific, Ltd., 210-684-7373. Order LVT-99k3703 (they may try to sell you 3701 rare earth magnets, but these are too weak and small to hold more than one yard of silk broadcloth), which are 1/2" x 1/4" x 1/8" thick.

Order a dozen to obtain a quantity discount. This will be enough to display three pieces. Each magnet has a hollow center. The mono filament goes through the hole of the magnets used for the back of the cloth. Then sets of magnets are placed at the top outer edges of the cloth. The placement is easier said than done. A difficulty arises in keeping the two sets of magnets separate from each other when packing the cloth for shipment.

Make magnet covers from two cardboard squares—taped closed on two sides—and then slip each of the magnet corners inside its own cover. Print out notes stating the purpose of the cardboard covers and glue to each set of cardboard covers so the receiving gallery doesn't have a problem separating the two sets of magnets, and so the gallery returns the piece back to you as you sent it.



from left: artcloth by Elin Noble, Laura Beehler, and Katherine Sylvan

Install art cloth at least one inch away from the wall and hung from the ceiling so that it drapes slightly toward the center.

Hanging Along Walls vs. Hanging Out in the Gallery Space

Although fabric is more effectively hung slightly away from the wall, circumstances may make this impossible because of the nature of the exhibit space. If the fabric is going to be displayed hanging in space in a room, it should be as good looking on the back as it is on the front. If viewing the back is not desirable, then two pieces could be hung back to back but at least four inches apart.

If a space will not accommodate the hanging of work from the ceiling, then another alternative is to display work by draping it over a Plexiglas rod, which can be attached to the wall. A plastic fabricating company can make Plexiglas brackets to hold the rod away from the wall by as much as 8 inches.

A combination of pieces draped over Plexiglas rods, pieces suspended with some drape to them, and pieces mounted as in #1 so they hang perfectly flat, all contribute to a very effective installation.



If fabric must be hung directly on the wall, install flathead screws into a sheet rock or wood wall and use the small rare earth magnets to secure the fabric against the screws or attach the fabric to an aluminum rod and screw the rod into the wall. If you have selected the use of magnets for installation, it is relatively easy to hide the magnets in the folds of the fabric. The weight of fabric hanging on straight pins or push pins for the duration of an exhibit will make holes in the fabric and this is to be avoided.

If you are interested in reading more about the use of aluminum rods as hanging structures for artcloth, complete directions for this hanging method are found in another essay on this website.

Labels

Artists are usually asked to attach labels to a bottom corner of two- and three-dimensional pieces of art. With art cloth, the labeling must be more discreet. If art cloth is hung along a wall, the label can be attached to the middle of the top edge (hanging edge) of the cloth. In this way, it will be up away from the viewer and won't impinge on the ability of the fabric bottom edges to waft and drape.

Printing a label on organza that has been run through a photocopier (iron it onto freezer paper first) and then fusing it with fusible web creates a label that is very small, legible, and virtually invisible. If the art cloth is installed in the room where viewers may walk around it, then identifying labels should be removed altogether.



Please avoid tying the top corners of art cloths into knots and then slipping mono filament through the knots. Besides being unattractive and unprofessional, these bulky knots add an unwelcome decorative dimension to the piece and hide the surface imagery in the knot areas.

Also, avoid exposing art cloth to direct sunlight.

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