CCI Notes 13/4

Velcro Support System for Textiles

Introduction

When displaying flat textiles vertically, they must have sufficient support to prevent stress-related damage. Large textiles are sometimes hung by sewing a set of rings to the top edge of the reverse side and slipping the rings over a supporting rod or onto hooks. This provides a non-uniform support that distorts the textile and that may become impossible to correct. Tacks, staples, or nails can also cause distortion, as well as tears and staining from metal corrosion, and therefore must not be used. However, a support system using Velcro eliminates these problems.

An alternative method of support for smaller, lightweight textiles is discussed in CCI Notes 13/6, *Mounting Small, Light, Flat Textiles.*

Velcro is a two-part fastening system consisting of "hook" and "loop" tapes. When pressed together, the hooks and loops interlock to form a strong bond. Velcro is available in widths from 1.9 cm to 5 cm. Choose an appropriate width based on the weight and size of the textile. Velcro is recommended for the following reasons:

- it distributes support evenly across the width of the textile
- it is fast and easy to install
- it can bear the weight of heavy textiles
- it reduces distortions in the textile
- it allows the textile to be detached from its display position quickly and safely, which is especially useful in emergencies
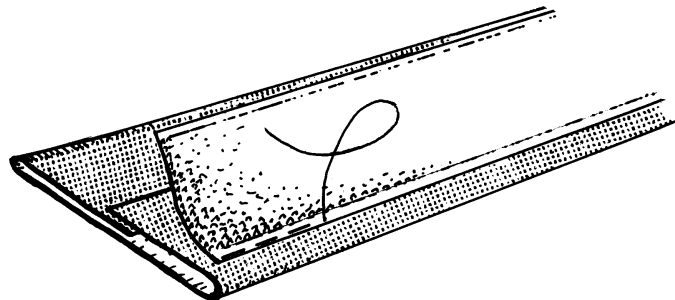

Figure 1. Sleeve for mounting Velcro.

Instructions

Step One: Cut strips of Velcro that are 2 cm shorter in length than the width of the top edge of the textile.

Step Two: Make a sleeve from cotton fabric that is folded to overlap underneath the Velcro strip (see Figure 1). The sleeve should be 0.5 cm wider all around than the Velcro. Iron the sleeve flat. Centre the looped Velcro on the sleeve and attach it by machine stitching along the selvedge and across the two ends.

Step Three: Place the looped Velcro mounted on the sleeve onto the top reverse edge of the textile (see Figure 2 for placement). Use a running or hemming stitch to sew it into position. If the textile has a protective lining, the stitches should penetrate both the lining and the textile to prevent sagging, but should be as unobtrusive as possible from the front.

Step Four: Cut a strip of wood (planed smooth on both sides) 1 cm thick and 0.5 cm larger all around than the Velcro. Seal the wood using acrylic latex paint. Attach the hooked Velcro to the wood using stainless steel staples at 1 cm intervals along the four edges.

Step Five: Insert screw-eyes into both ends of the wood. Hang the wooden support with the hooked Velcro in its display position. Mount the prepared textile onto the fixed support by pressing the hook and loop tapes together. Begin at the centre and work outwards toward the ends.
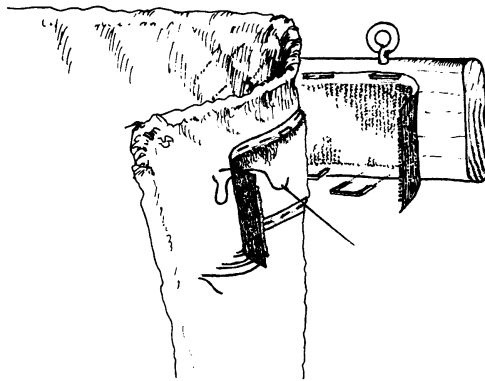

Figure 2. Mounting the textile.

Suppliers

Velcro and cotton or cotton-polyester fabric:
fabric stores

Stainless steel staples (Monel):
specialty hardware stores or construction supply outlets

Further Reading

Canadian Conservation Institute. *Mounting Small, Light, Flat Textiles.* CCI Notes 13/6. Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, September 1995.

Finch, Karen, and Greta Putnam. *The Care and Preservation of Textiles.* London: Batsford, 1985.

Landi, Sheila. *The Textile Conservator's Manual.* London: Butterworths, 1985.

by the staff of Textile Section.