

Making a Banner or Canvas in the Middle!

In the early days of the church, the average person could not read and services were often celebrated in Latin. Images on the windows, walls and textiles depicted the stories from the Bible which were familiar to all. When teaching banner-making I discourage the use of lettering, and suggest that the viewers should be allowed to interpret the meaning for themselves.

The goal is to have a banner hanging properly, in good proportion for the space and in a style which suits the architecture. Good design is also essential, but this article is simply about the construction... once the embroidery has been finished.

1. Assess the space where the banner will hang, including the height of the hanging device. Draw it out on graph paper and work on your designs.
2. Cut the finished shape of the banner from canvas. This will be treated as the interlining.
3. On the background fabric of the face of the banner baste the outline of the canvas, and mark the centres. This will help you assess where the design items should be placed. This fabric should be at least 2 or 3 inches larger than the canvas on all sides.
4. When the embroidery is finished and well pressed, place it face down on a flat surface. Match the centre points of the interlining to the centre points of the embroidery. If necessary cut or clip the edges so that it folds neatly over the interlining and pin in place. Mitre the corners and pin in place. Turn your work over and check to make sure that the banner is neither too tight or too loose over the canvas.
5. Herringbone the banner to the canvas.
6. Every here and there, especially at points where there is something heavy on the front, take a stitch through the embroidery and to the back of the canvas. This prevents sagging as it hangs.
7. Prepare the tabs or sleeve in exactly the same manner, canvas in the middle, fabric outside. lining inside. Tabs should make up just over 50% of the surface... e.g. for a 40" wide banner five tabs would each be 4 inches wide. This prevents the sad sagging look which you see from time to time. You should always have an odd number of tabs so that you have a middle one.
8. Stitch the tabs to the canvas, using herringbone stitch. The two end tabs about one inch in from the edges. Middle one next. Centre the other two and stitch in place. I stitch them straight up first, fold and make sure they are level, and then stitch down. The canvas now holds the banner!
9. I slide the rod in to make sure all is well before I stitch on the Kasha lining.
10. The rod should go with the piece... I paint wood. It should not look like a curtain rod! The cord should be a colour that goes with the painted rod and the banner and be thick enough to look as if it can hold the weight of the banner. Some wooden knobs for the ends have grooves in which the cord can be tightly wrapped and stitched. Other times a flat piece of wood can extend to the edges of the banner, and the cord can be stitched into a screw eye which is hidden from view. Many is the time I have seen a piece of work not accepted in a juried exhibition because of a poor hanging method! Leave time for perfection.
11. Label on the back. Usually it includes 'To the Glory of God and in Celebration of or Memory of.....', 'designed and stitched by.....' and the date.

These directions re: the canvas for the middle of a stitched item can apply to any works which you want to hang properly for years to come!

Elizabeth Duggan Litch

Making a Banner or Canvas in the Middle!