

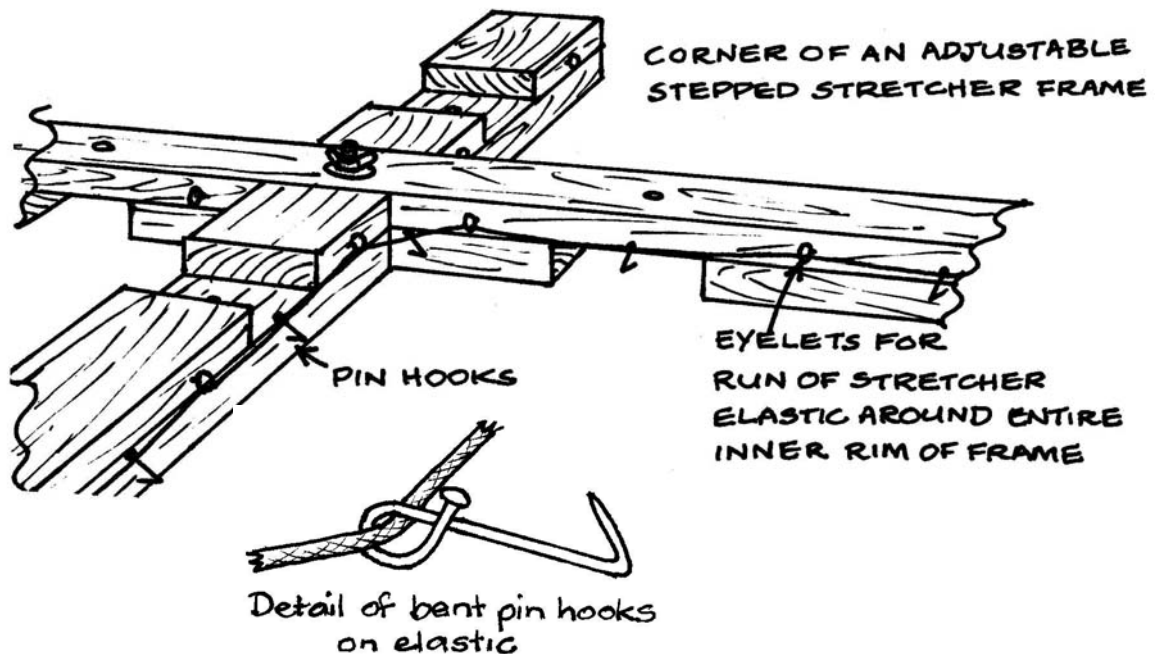
STRETCHER FRAMES: FOR SUSPENDING FABRIC DURING DECORATION

1. CHEAP MAKESHIFT SMALL STRETCHER FRAMES

For small one-off experimental paintings, a window can be cut out of an appropriately sized piece of stiff cardboard. The cardboard frame can then be sealed (so that it doesn't absorb dye) by sticking some shiny packing tape over areas that may come into contact with the wet colour. The fabric can then be stretched slightly and taped to the frame around its periphery. A line of gutta around the fabric edge next to the frame will prevent wet dye from releasing the tape's grip or colouring the frame.

2. ADJUSTABLE SIZE STRETCHER FRAMES

Adjustable frames are the most popular and versatile for suspending fabric during gutta application, painting and drying. This kind of frame is made of stepped interlocking timber sides. An elastic cord is laced through eyelets around the entire inner perimeter of the frame. Hooks made from dressmaking pins are attached to the elastic between each eyelet. (The pins are bent into hooks with long nosed pliers). This looks as follows:



An alternative to the continuous elastic cord, is to use separate rubber bands on each eyelet with a pin hook on each.

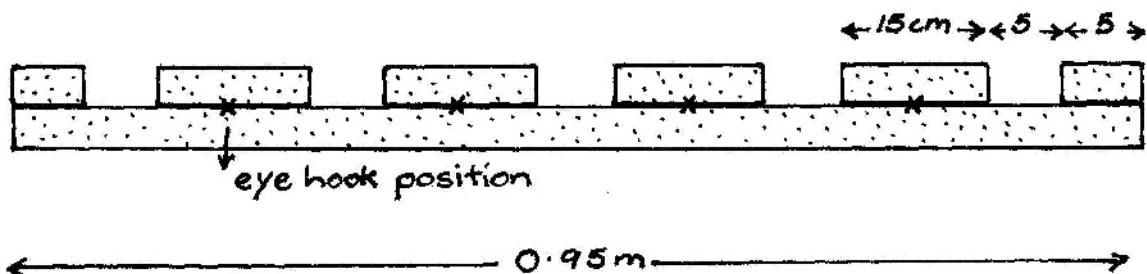
MAKING AN ADJUSTABLE STRETCHER FRAME

All you need is: wood glue, nails (galvanised gib clouts), screw in eye hooks (curtain wire hooks), hammer, timber dressed pine (approx. 5 x 1.5 cm) precut to the following lengths:

Frame for long scarves up to 2.35 x 0.65m	2 sides 2.55m long 2 sides 0.95m long 5m cut into short pieces(chocks) 15cm long 8 chocks 5cm long
Frame for square scarves up to 1.25m square	4 sides 1.55m long 5m cut into chocks 15cm long 8 chocks 5cm long

ASSEMBLING THE ADJUSTABLE FRAME

Nail and glue the chocks onto one side of each of the 4 side lengths of the frame. Start at one end of each side length with a 5cm chock. Nail and glue this chock in place on the end of the length. Then leave a 5cm space. Then nail and glue a 15cm chock on the side length. Then leave a 5cm space. Then nail and glue another 15cm chock on followed by a 5cm space etc. etc., until there is only room for a 5cm chock to be fixed on the other end of the length. Likewise fix chocks to all 4 sides starting and finishing with the short 5cm long chocks. The 5cm spaces between fixed chocks are most easily got by temporarily placing a chock side on in the gap as a spacer, then fixing the next chock hard against this spacer. Remove the spacer and proceed by duplicating this procedure. Eg the 0.95m side length should look like this from side on when it's finished



Screw the eye hooks in the middle of the inner edge of the frame half way along each 15cm chock. (At the positions marked with crosses above)

If you want to make the frame hold together firmly, when it's assembled for use, the sides can be temporarily bolted together, where they cross, at each corner of the frame. To do this holes will have to be drilled through the side lengths at the centre of each 5cm space. Use bolts approx. 5mm wide x 45mm long with wing nuts for this.

3. FIXED SIZE STRETCHER FRAMES

Professional fabric painters who regularly paint certain products require many frames of the same size. This allows them uninterrupted production continuity. The most economical frame for such painters is made from 6 mm thick hardboard with a window cut out. The frame periphery should be wide enough to ensure the frame's strength and rigidity. A 12 cm wide periphery is suitable for average frame sizes. The frames can be waterproofed by several coats of polyurethane. A layer of plastic packing tape over frame areas prone to colour contamination makes dye residue easy to wipe off. The fabric requiring painting, is lapped over the inside edges of the frame and fixed there by tape. The tape that I prefer for this is 25 mm wide 'Scotch 233' masking tape applied right around the periphery of the fabric as shown below:



The reason for choosing this particular brand of tape is that it:

- retains its adherence, to some extent, when it's wet
- retains its adherence when subjected to heat from the blowheater.

A line of gutta can be applied to the fabric perimeter to prevent the wet dye from getting under the tape and weakening it's grip on the fabric during painting and drying.

The advantages that this stretcher frame system has over conventional ones are as follows:

- Conventionally, fabric is attached to the stretcher frame with hooks and pins. This produces localised lines of tension in the fabric which upset the straightness of gutta lines if they're drawn close to the perimeter of the fabric. Straight lines become scalloped between the points of tension caused by the hooks or pins. This problem only really shows up after the fabric has been released from the frame. However, the even tension produced by a continuous strip of tape eliminates this crooked line problem and is an efficient means of attaching the fabric to the stretcher frame.
- This frame system is very flat (approx. 7 mm thick including the taped on fabric) so there are no protrusions hindering screenprinting screens from being lowered on top of the fabric while it's still attached to the frame. Print size, for this system, can be as large as the inside hole that the stretcher frame encloses. Screenprinting is performed with the fabric on the frame in such a way that the frame actually becomes a location aid for the accurate placement of the screen image onto the fabric. See INFO SHEET 5 for details.
- This frame's flatness and its freedom from protrusions means it's ideal for hand pipette application of gutta. The 7 mm depth is just right to keep the fabric being guttaed from

smudging on the back side. As soon as the pipette has lifted, the fabric springs back clear of the supporting screen mesh beneath. See INFO SHEET 3 for details.

- Heatsetting guttas is another instance when a flat lightweight protrusion free stretcher frame facilitates efficiency because it enables the fabric to be iron heatset while it's still attached to the frame. There's no need to remove it.
- The frame's 12 cm hardboard periphery gives an convenient airtight seal when it's placed on the blowheater table.
- Supporting this type of frame above any table surface, as is necessary during painting or air drying, is a simple matter. Just place the flat hardboard surround on blocks of a comfortable height.
- This kind of fixed size frame is the easiest to make, cheapest, most lightweight and space saving for storage of all frames available for fabric painting particularly when the intended decoration techniques involve production runs of:
 - Gutta screenprinting (INFO SHEET 5)
 - Polychromatic gutta work (INFO SHEET 6)
 - Conventional thickened dye screenprinting