



Mounting Small Tapestries

Susan Martin Maffei

Today, with many artist/weavers producing smaller, domestic size tapestries for the wall, presentation of these works has become an important issue. Larger pieces that “hang” well can be suspended from a batten and Velcro strip attached to the wall. But for miniatures and in-between-sized works that look awkward in a picture frame and cannot hang on their own, what can be done? Developing a presentation specific to each tapestry can be as important as the work itself.

One possible starting place is to address the need to isolate the work from the wall by bringing it forward. Sewing the tapestry to a stretcher frame covered in fabric, or a block of plywood, or other sturdy material, covered in fabric can accomplish this. Putting a layer of cotton flannel between the fabric and the stretcher allows for an easier sewing space. Sometimes a second larger stretcher again covered with fabric can be added behind the first to isolate the work even further by creating shadows and giving the tapestry another platform to hang from, its own small wall if you like. This allows the small tapestry to fill its own space like a mural tapestry fills the wall and, in this way, it emphasizes the interesting relationship between miniature and mural. Because of their large size, murals encompass the viewer. Miniature works pull you close into an intimate space, thereby affecting the viewer in a similar manner.

In choosing fabric, color and texture can be difficult decisions. Should it complement, enhance or be strictly neutral? Should it be coarse, textured or smoothly woven? Plain or patterned? How big should the mount be compared to the tapestry, a 1” border, a 4” border? Each piece demands a separate evaluation.

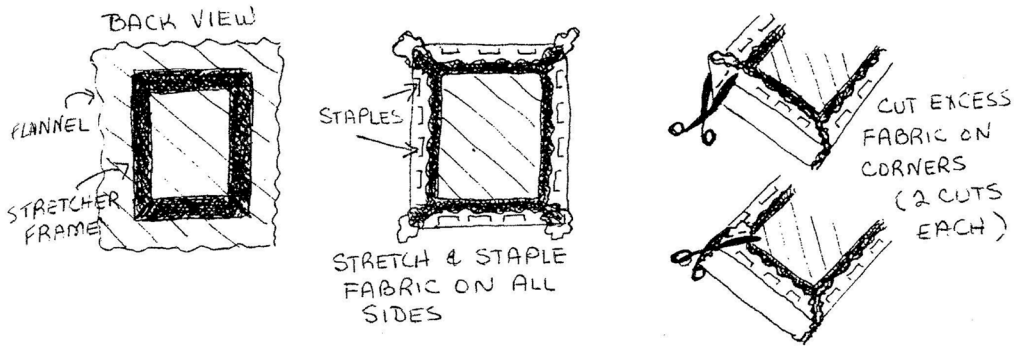
If desired, the mounted tapestry can be placed in a deep, or shallow, Plexiglas box, adding an element of protection with little or no maintenance. However, many artists prefer the intimacy afforded when nothing sits between the eye and the work.

Other solutions to mounting miniature tapestries are: 1) fixing the tapestry to the front of a sheet of Plexiglas, creating only a shadow as a surround, 2) sandwiching the work between two sheets of Plexiglas, allowing examination of both sides of the work or, 3) mounting the piece in a thick three dimensional box frame that is ten to twenty times the size of the work. Some other solutions that I have experimented with are adding thin slats of wood to the sides of the double fabric stretcher mounts; mounting on padded cloth and; embellishing with piping or lace trim. All of these methods were successful for the particular tapestry involved but would not necessarily have worked if another tapestry were substituted. In most instances the intent has been to present the tapestry as an object, to enhance its cloth character and to allow it to stand on its own as a woven image.

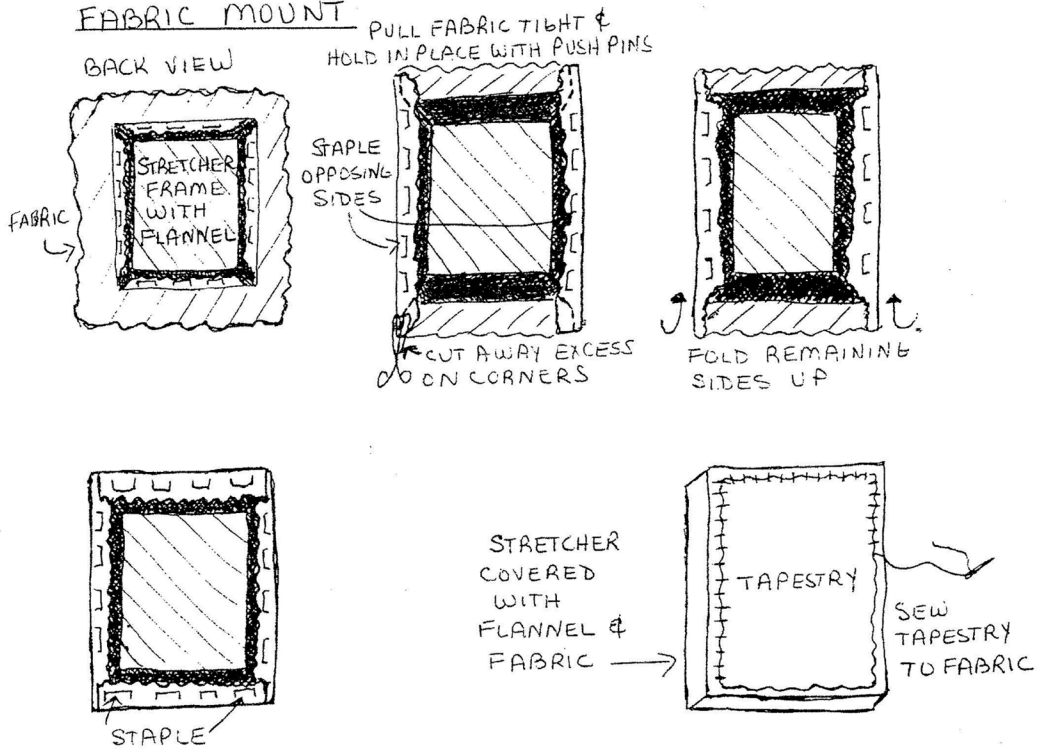
The personal methods mentioned in this article have evolved over a period of years and the search for improvement is on going. They are not final, absolute solutions because, unlike the history of painting and the picture frame, European tapestry has remained primarily a mural art. Smaller tapestries for the wall are a 20th and 21st Century phenomena whose identity and history are still evolving.

The following diagrams illustrate the basic method I use for mounting a small tapestry. This method was originally developed by galleries and museums for display of historical textiles and has been adapted for contemporary works.

FLANNEL MOUNT



FABRIC MOUNT



DOUBLE MOUNT

