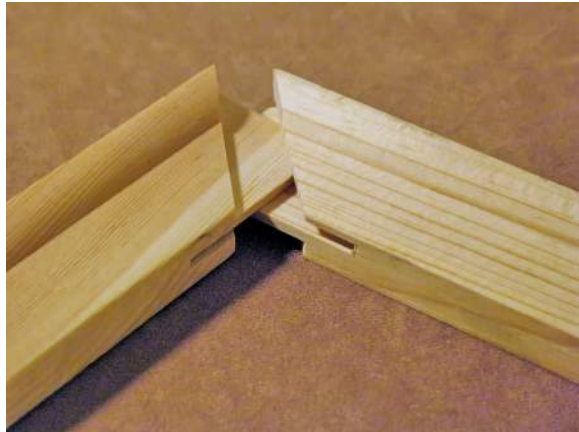




Utrecht Art Supplies

Ask the Expert: “Should I glue the corners of my stretcher bars?”



Ask the Expert: “Should I glue the corners of my stretcher bars? They fit pretty tightly, but it seems like the joints could still move.”

Unless stretchers are being used for bracing behind hardboard or wood panels, we generally recommend against gluing joints to preserve the full function of the product.

Manufactured stretcher bars are designed to allow expansion through the use of keys. If the joints are glued, that function will be lost and the stretcher chassis becomes a “strainer” instead. (Most handmade canvas “stretchers” are actually strainers with fixed corners.)

Some artists prefer a rigid chassis because with glued joints, the frame stays tightly in square. A big disadvantage to this approach is that the only way to tighten canvases on fixed strainers is to remove staples/tacks and re-stretch. Keying out is generally easier and less risky, so we recommend

inserting keys in every canvas, just in case they are needed later.



To keep corners in square without a glue bond, insert several staples across each joint. Staples should be removed before displaying finished art.

“The keyed stretcher, with wedges to force the corners open and so tighten the canvas when necessary, is the only proper one to use.” -Daniel Burleigh Parkhurst, from “The Painter in Oil”, 1898

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