



Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Preparing Your Own Canvas vs. Buying Pre-stretched



Stretching and priming your own canvas gives the broadest choice of materials, surface and proportions, as well as the satisfaction of having total control over your materials. That said, prepared grounds today come in a huge variety of sizes and surfaces. The craftsmanship and quality of pre-stretched canvas is now at least the equal of what most artists can achieve in the studio, with the added benefit of eliminating time, labor and space needed for in-house preparation.

Purchasing professionally prepared canvases and panels is nothing new. Artists have been relying on colourmen and art supply dealers for literally hundreds of years to deliver ready-to-use painting supports.

Preparing canvas in-studio is more common today than at any time in the past several centuries. In fact, it's now considered by most to be a fundamental studio skill, a way for the artist to be involved in virtually all aspects of the craft. More than 60 years ago Utrecht played a significant role in reviving this craft through the availability of high quality materials and technical

knowledge to easily prepare canvas with excellent, permanent results.

Stretching your own can be very affordable when done in volume. Gesso in particular is significantly less expensive by the gallon compared to pints. In-studio preparation does require advance planning and space to work, plus canvases need time to dry and cure before use.

Pre-stretched is often the best choice for artists working in small studios as well as those who need to devote 100% of studio time to painting rather than preparing supports. There's certainly no shame in using professionally prepared canvases and panels- artists from Vermeer to Picasso and beyond have chosen to work on prepared supports rather than making their own.

All practical concerns aside, above all else it's important to select or make a support that's appropriate for your pictorial objectives. Either approach can bring out the best from your materials, skill and creativity.