



Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Repairing a Torn Canvas

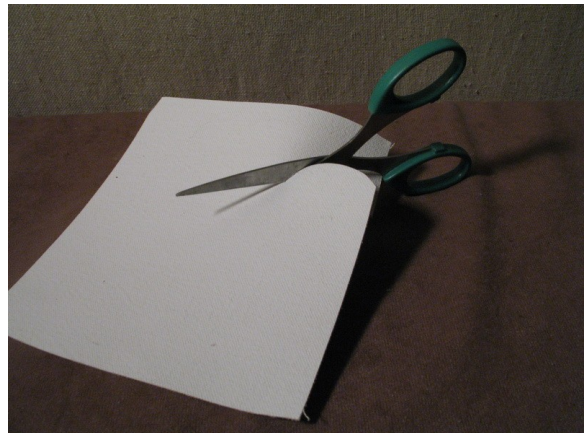
"I accidentally tore one of my paintings, and I need to fix it. What can I do to make the repair?"



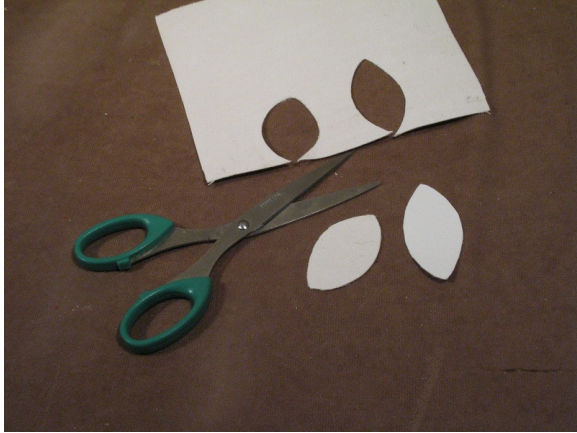
One drawback of fabric painting supports (canvas) is that they are relatively easy to damage. It's sometimes possible to patch minor tears in-studio, but this is not a conservation-quality repair, definitely not for antique or valuable art. The method outlined here is specifically intended for your own, recently executed paintings on acrylic-primed canvas. Anything else should only be repaired by a trained professional. In attempting to repair antique paintings or any pictures where you don't know for certain the sizing/priming, you risk causing further damage and loss of value.



Examine the painting and the damage; make sure you know for sure it's a recently executed painting on acrylic-primed fabric. Look for pulled threads, paint loss and chipping. A fresh painting or one that's already in progress will retain elasticity, making in-studio repair a possibility.



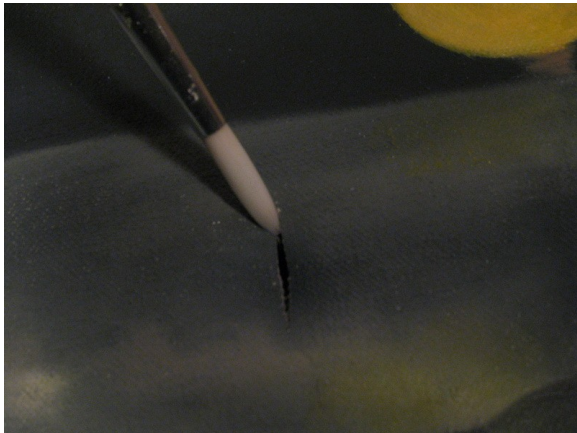
Begin by cutting a patch from acrylic-primed canvas. Primed canvas will have already shrunk to a degree, and will be less likely to further shrink than raw fabric



Cut a leaf-shaped patch a bit longer than the damage.



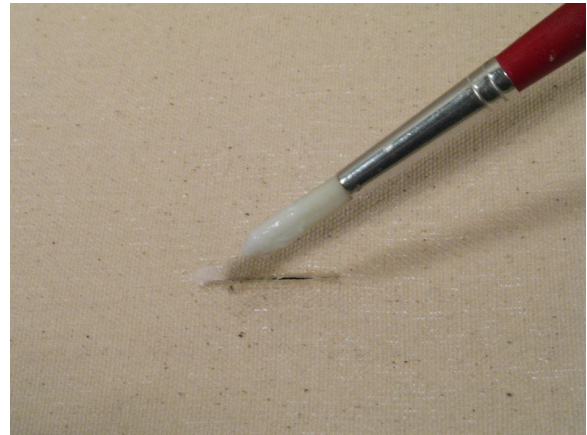
Use a brush and water (preferably distilled) to groom and control free canvas fibers at the tear.



Gently move the loose fibers toward the back of the canvas, wetting slightly to keep them together and out of the way while you fill and inpaint (later).



Turn the canvas over and finish grooming the fibers out of the way.



Apply Acrylic Gloss Gel Medium in a thin layer around the damage, extending a bit past where the patch will be located.

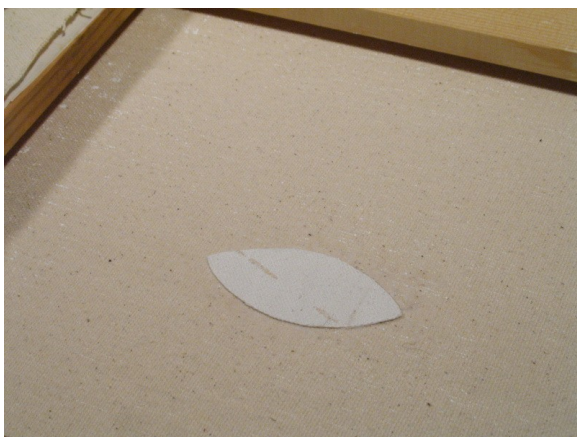




A thin application of Gloss Gel partially seals the canvas fibers, preventing them from taking up too much moisture from the subsequent patch adhesive, reducing shrinkage. This coat also improves adhesion with the patch (acrylics stick especially well to other acrylic-coated surfaces). Allow to dry.



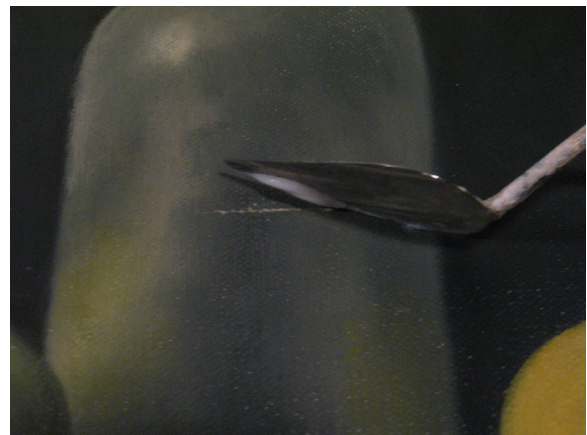
The same Acrylic Gloss Gel Medium can be used as the patch adhesive. Apply a generous, uniform layer of adhesive to the primed side of the patch.



Press in place over the damage, adhesive side down.



Quickly turn the canvas over and, using a damp cloth, remove any excess adhesive that may have extruded through the tear. Flip the canvas back over on a clean, flat surface and apply weight to the back of the patch (a hardbound book will do). Allow to dry.



The torn area will have a visible depression that will need to be filled before inpainting. Fill using the same acrylic gel medium, troweling carefully into the tear.



Wipe away any excess medium and allow the filler to dry. Apply more filler if necessary until the surface is level.



Dispense a palette of colors in the same type of paint with which the painting was executed, along with an appropriate medium to assist in color matching. (This step is a serious deviation from conservation repair, which is always easy to find and reversible. That's one reason why this process is only to be done by the artist on their own work.)



Use a fine-pointed brush to carefully dab in color. If necessary, load the brush and hold it very close to the repair area to check the color match first. Application in tiny dots allows minute adjustment.



Allow the repair to dry completely before varnishing. Before offering the work for resale, disclose the repair to your dealer/collector. It's better to offer a discount first than to give a refund later!

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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