



# SAVING YOUR Treasures

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## **Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center Nebraska State Historical Society**

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### **Slant Boards for Quilts**

There are several ways to prepare and mount quilts for display. One of the least intrusive ways is to mount it on a slant board which will provide complete support, reduce the strain of gravity against the textile fibers of the quilt, and minimize the handling of the quilt while placing it on exhibit. This method of display mounting is particularly effective for weak or fragile textiles and for exhibits with large numbers of similarly sized artifacts that are rotated on and off display.

Some slant boards are designed to be permanently mounted in an exhibit space. Others are made to be removable and portable. Slant boards are not difficult to construct:

#### **Materials:**

- 2-4x8 foot sheets of Medite® or Medex® medium density fiberboard **or** 2-4x8 foot sheets of aluminum honeycomb board plus additional material for a case, pedestal, or frame for the slant board.
- Alcohol-based wood primer and Low or no VOC acrylic emulsion paint (if using Medite®/Medex®)
- ¼ to ½ inch thick needle punched polyester quilt batting to cover the boards
- Clean, unbleached muslin to cover the batting
- Clean, white cotton velveteen to cover the muslin
- Cotton twill tape

#### **Procedure:**

1. Before beginning, determine the largest dimensions of the quilts that will be exhibited. If they are larger than eight feet square, adjust the dimensions of the board accordingly.
2. Build the support frame/case so that the slant boards will rest at an angle between 20-60 degrees from vertical. When designing the support, allow for the two halves of the slant board to overhang the edge of the support by one foot around the perimeter.

3. Prime and paint the board (unless it is aluminum honeycomb) and the frame/case materials. Allow two to four weeks of off-gassing time for vapor-based pollutants to dissipate.
4. Cover one side of each board with the needle punch polyester batting. Roll it over the edges, and tack it to the back of the board with stainless steel staples.
5. Cover the batting with the muslin sheeting, folding the corners neatly, and tack neatly to the back of the boards as above. Keep the tension even so that the fabric lays flat and smooth.
6. Mount the two batting and muslin covered 4x8 foot sections to the support.
7. Create a removable velveteen cover. Cut strips of velveteen approximately nine feet long. Orient the velveteen so that the nap of adjoining pieces faces the same direction. Seam the selvages together until you have a cover approximately nine feet square. Create a one inch casing around the perimeter and insert the twill tape. The twill tape will be pulled to tighten the cover in place. If you don't want to use a casing, you can install grommets and thread twill tape lacing through them.
8. Slip the velveteen cover over both sections oriented so that the nap of the velveteen points upward. Pull the twill tape in the casing or grommets tight so that the velveteen lays flat on the front, smoothing and fold the fabric around the corners. Tie the twill tape and slip any excess length under the edge of the cover.
9. When a quilt is placed on the velveteen cover, each fiber of the pile, oriented upwards, will act like a tiny support to keep the quilt from sliding down the slanted surface. The pile fibers help distribute the weight of the quilt over the entire surface of the quilt rather than on one edge or on a hanging mechanism.
10. If the quilt is heavy or the slant is extreme, it can be additionally secured to the slant board by cutting small rounds of clear 4-5 ml polyester film (Melinex®/Mylar®). (The rounds can be made with a hole punch.) Push fine gauge, round head stainless steel pins through the centers of the rounds and then push these pins through the quilt, velveteen, muslin, and into the batting. Do not use excessive pressure and be sure to push the pins between the fibers of the quilt and not through the fibers. Space the pins equidistantly across the surface, using as few as possible to hold the quilt securely in place.
11. Vacuum the velveteen cover between quilt rotations and wash it when it becomes soiled.

Slant boards dramatically reduce the potential for damage to quilts on display. They are not always practical, but when they can be used they are effective and will help preserve the textiles displayed on them.

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