

## **CARE & MAINTENANCE**

### *Synthetic Velour Draperies*

#### **STORAGE**

The best way to store your draperies is to leave them hanging in the space where they are used, if this is possible. This is especially helpful if the venue had moderate climate control, to prevent the drapes from getting too dry or too humid

If your draperies need to be taken down from their hanging position to be stored, the best way to keep them safe is to store them either in canvas hampers—slightly expensive, but very easy to move—or in canvas storage bags. It is extremely important that the hampers, or the bags, be of canvas or another natural fiber, so that they can ‘breathe.’ This will help prevent any buildup of moisture and possible mildew development.

Any metal, such as grommets and ring lines, which contacts a FR treated fabric is likely to corrode while in storage. Caution should be taken to tape metal parts to prevent contact.

#### **FOLDING YOUR DRAPES FOR STORAGE**

The best piece of advice that can be given about folding drapes is: don’t.

If that proves impractical, please keep the following thoughts in mind.

1. If you must fold your drapes vertically, do not fold them and then allow them to be subjected to weight, including, if possible, their own weight. Folding them over a bar is a sure way to crush the nap of the velour, and permanently mark your drapes. If they must be folded vertically, try to put a support, such as a cardboard tube, at the point where they are folded. The larger the diameter of the tube, the better.
2. If the drapes are to be stored in a hamper or a bag, try this to get them to a manageable size.
  - a. Lay the drape out flat on its back.
  - b. Start at the first seam in the drape; holding the seam at both the top and the bottom, pull that seam over to the third seam. (On very tall drapes, you may need someone pulling in the middle as well.)
  - c. Snug the drape so that the seams line up from top to bottom. On a drape with fullness, this will cause the bottom to be wider than the top. Don’t worry about that. You will now have three widths of fabric lying on top of one another.
  - d. Hold the seam at the edge of this pile and pull it two seams beyond that; now you will have five layers of fabric.



- e. Continue folding in this manner until you come to the final seam; take the remaining panel of fabric, or partial panel, and fold it back over the layers of fabric, to allow the back of the drape to be both on the top of, and the bottom of the layers of fabric.
- f. Starting at the bottom, roll the velour towards the top; keep the edges relatively even, and don't apply too much pressure.
- g. Leaving the top finish accessible, load the rolled drape into its hamper or storage bag. Do NOT stack heavy items onto a bagged drape, as this may cause crushing of the nap, and permanently scar the fabric.
- h. When you next hang the draperies, get them up a few days prior to any performances. Any residual wrinkling will "hang out" within a short while.

## PERIODIC CLEANING

The greatest concern of draperies hanging in a theatre, apart from damage, is the collection of dust on and within them, especially within the nap of heavier velour. To prevent this, keep the theatre as clean as is practicable.

Periodically, but not less than once per year, work to remove the dust from the draperies. Shake them out; you will see dust flying from the drapes. Then take a soft bristle broom, and sweep the draperies to remove even more dust. If you are going to lay the drapes onto the stage to sweep them, rather than using a ladder or lift to reach the tops of the drape, clean the stage prior to lowering the drapes, and lay plastic or paper onto the deck before laying out the draperies. It is highly recommended that you have one broom, or set of brooms, dedicated to cleaning the drapes, so that you do not inadvertently further soil the draperies with debris caught in the bristles of a floor broom.

Minor stains or paint marks can be removed with warm water; If you can still locate K2R spot remover, you can also use this in small, localized areas to remove stains. A commercial dry-cleaning fluid may be used to the same end. Caution should be used with any stain remover as it may affect the color of the fabric. Pretest a small, low visibility area first.

## MAJOR CLEANING

Occasionally, drapes may need to be completely cleaned. This is usually done by a commercial dry cleaner, such as Coit or Coyne; Rose Brand can also arrange this service for you.

If you choose to do this yourself, the dry-cleaning fluids will leave your drapes somewhat noxious for a few days, so hopefully you can let them air out in an unoccupied theatre for a week before adding performers and an audience. You may water wash your curtains in a machine or tub. Please follow these guidelines:



1. Ensure laundering machinery is free of burrs or sharp objects that can cause snagging
2. Wash with like colors
3. Do not combine with other products (i.e. towels, sheets, napery, etc.)
4. Do not overload machinery
5. Machine wash, warm (120 -160 degrees Fahrenheit)
6. Use non-chlorine bleach if needed
7. Do not use any fabric softeners
8. Dry with like colors and products
9. Do not overload the dryer
10. Tumble dry on medium (no more than 140 degrees Fahrenheit)
11. Promptly remove from dryer and hang the drapes
12. Excessive heat or leaving too long in an extractor or dryer will detract from the permanent-press characteristics of the polyester fabric. No ironing is required, but use iron on low setting if needed

## **FLAME RETARDANCY CERTIFICATION**

If the drapes are kept reasonably clean, the flame-retardancy will last as long as the drape does. If you find the flame resistance seems to be diminishing, cleaning should fully restore your curtains to the necessary FR standard. Unfortunately, many certifications will not last long as document durations are governed by your local jurisdiction. For instance, the City of New York Fire Department allows only a three year certificate before requiring re-certification. Field testing of your drapes and proper documentation of the testing is usually all that is needed. Check with your local authorities for guidance.

With proper care, velour drapes can maintain their beauty and usefulness for decades. And with little more effort, they can pass the most stringent of flame retardant tests for as long as they are used. Follow the suggestions above to help keep your drapes in their top condition. Give them a minimal amount of care and attention, and they will provide you with beautiful masking for years.