



ROSE BRAND

CARE & MAINTENANCE OF COTTON VELOUR DRAPERIES

A. STORAGE

- a. 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.
- b. 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.’ Cotton Velours are made flame-retardant via the vat-immersion process; this means that chemical salts are dissolved into a dye bath, and allowed to impregnate the fibers of the velour. They work by attracting and holding water vapor from the air around them. Seal them into a closed container—plastic bags are the worst—and the humidity can’t escape at all, which can lead to the oxidization of the grommets, with resulting stains on your drapes.
- c. Any metal, such as grommets and ring lines, which comes in contact with a FR treated fabric is likely to corrode while in storage. Caution should be taken to tape metal parts to prevent contact.

B. 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.

- a. 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.
- b. If the drapes are to be stored in a hamper or a bag, try this to get them to a manageable size. Lay the drape out flat, on its back. 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.) 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. Hold the seam at the edge of this pile, and pull it two seams beyond that; now you will have five layers of fabric. 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. Starting at the bottom, roll the velour towards the top; keep the edges relatively even, and don’t



ROSE BRAND

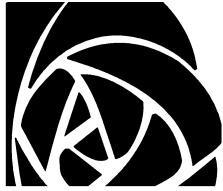
apply too much pressure. Leaving the top finish accessible, load the rolled drape into its hamper or storage bag. Do NOT stack heavy items onto a bagged drape, as this may cause crushing of the nap, and permanently scar the fabric.

- C. **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 a heavier velour. To prevent this, keep the theatre as clean as is practicable.
- a. 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.
 - b. Minor stains or paint marks can be removed with warm water; take care not to wet more of the drape than is absolutely necessary, as the moisture will also allow the flame-retardant chemicals to leech out of the velour, leaving the affected portion of the drapery non-flame retardant. (This part, in turn, can be topically treated with a flame-retardant chemical such as MG-702 to restore its flame-retardancy.) If you can still locate K2R spot remover, you can also use this in small, localized areas to remove stains; again, caution should be used, as this tends to remove the flame-retardant as well, and is itself highly flammable. A commercial dry-cleaning fluid may be used to the same end, although again it will necessitate re-treating at least the area cleaned to insure proper flame-retardancy.
- D. **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 provide this service for you. A standard service will dry-clean the draperies, and re-flame retard them; it is critical that this second step be available in the process, as cleaning them may remove all of the flame-retardant chemicals. The dry-cleaning fluids, along with the retreating for flame-retardancy, 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.
- E. **FLAME RETARDANCY.** A frequent question that we are asked is, “How often do I need to re-treat my draperies?” Unfortunately, no simple answer exists for this question.



ROSE BRAND

- a. **CERTIFICATION.** If the drapes are kept reasonably clean, and not subjected to extremes in humidity—either too high or too low, with the latter being more common and more dangerous—the flame-retardancy can last as long as the drape does. Unfortunately, the certification will not last as long; flame-retardant certificate durations are governed by the jurisdiction licensing the issuer of the certificate, and generally are around five (5) years. Any certificate issued by a company licensed in New York City, however, will be for one year only; the City of New York only allows a single-year certificate, despite the fact that the drapes may remain flame-retarded for decades after the certificate has expired. Various jurisdictions deal with this single-year certificate differently: some recognize that the drapes are likely to remain flame-retardant longer, and tacitly offer a grace period before requiring testing and/or recertification. Others will test them themselves, and so long as the drapes pass the field test and will allow the draperies to remain hanging without being retreated. Still others will ask for an independent field test to be performed, with the understanding that if the drapes pass this field test, a new certificate will be issued.
- b. **DRYNESS.** At some point, however, you may be concerned that your drapes are no longer sufficiently treated to pass a field test. A few things may have caused this concern. While this is not a recommended method, many persons still apply the “lick” test: if one licks the fabric, and tastes a salt, the drapes are probably still safe. At least where they were licked. Of greater concern, especially in very dry climates, or heavily air-conditioned venues that do not humidify their HVAC, is that the salts will simply become so dry that they will fall out of the fibers. If you believe that this may be happening in your case, shake the drape heavily. You will see some dust fly away, but watch for a white powder to billow out of the drape, and fall to the deck. Too much of the salts wafting out of the velour means that the drapes need to be re-treated (and the relative humidity increased to prevent a reoccurrence.)
- c. **EXTREME HUMIDITY.** The reverse side of this coin is too high a humidity. In cases such as these, an extremely high relative humidity, such as would be found in temperatures nearing 100 degrees, with corresponding humidity, can cause the salts to absorb so much water vapor from the air that they dissolve themselves in this water, and start to leech out of the drape. In extreme cases, you will enter your (stifling) theatre to find white stains and/or puddles at the bottom of the drapes, and white stains covering the nap of the fabric. Should an event this extreme occur, it is unlikely that you will be able to restore your draperies to their original condition; the drapes will need to be replaced.
- d. **PERIODIC RETREATMENT.** If your drapes have not been exposed to this extreme humidity, but do need to be retreated, you have several options. The first, as outlined above, is to send them to a commercial cleaner; check first to insure both that the cleaner in question can handle draperies on this scale, and that they will both re-flame retard the drapes,



ROSE BRAND

and provide you with certification that they have done so. The second option is to have an on-site service treat the drapes for you; often, if you have someone perform a field test on your draperies, they will also offer a re-treatment service, and certify their work when done. Finally, you can topically treat the goods yourself. The downside to this final method, apart from the work involved, is that you will not have a flame-retardant certificate for the drapes, which your jurisdiction may require, unless you then have the drapes field-tested by a licensed tester, after your treatment.

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 yea