

## SASKATCHEWAN CRAFT COUNCIL

### FIBRE

### CRITERIA

#### **A. FABRIC SURFACE DESIGN**

This category includes any article whose basic starting material is a ready-made material (fabric) which is then either altered or re-assembled depending on the concept of the craftsperson. The material itself may be dyed (tie-dye, batik) or cut apart and re-assembled (patchwork quilts, applique, wall hangings, etc.) and/or embellished by various embroidery techniques. Hooked and knotted rugs would belong in this category because the design of the rug is hooked on a heavy foundation material. Woven rugs would belong in the "Fibre Structures" section. Soft toys would also be included here. The craftsperson must be in control of the technique and the technique must be subordinate to the design.

#### **DYEING METHOD TECHNIQUES**

##### ***Batik***

The part of the fabric which is to remain free of dye is covered with a resist. The piece is then dipped into successive dye baths with the resist being added as each new colour is achieved. When completed, the resist is removed. The dyed colours should be uniform and clear and the design balanced. Crackle (the veining effect created when the dye seeps through cracks in the resist) is a characteristic of batik and inherent to it but should not be distracting to the over-all design.

##### ***Tie & Dye***

A method whereby areas of cloth are tied in knots, folded, sewn, or bound tightly before the cloth is dyed. The tying or binding prevents dye from penetrating those areas while the dye colours the unbound parts. The piece can be unbound, retied, and rebound a number of times in a number of colours. The reverse may be done where a dark piece of cloth is tied and bleached to create the pattern. This can weaken the structure of the fabric and should be a consideration in design.

##### ***Direct Dyeing***

The dyes are applied directly to the fabric possibly by brush, spray gun or squeeze bottle. This is often used in combination with batik. There is much freedom of expression in this method and great subtlety of colour is possible. Any fabric may be used as long as the correct dye is used.

##### ***Surface Printing***

Designs are transferred to fabric using stencils, woodblocks or silk screens and textile printing pigments of dyes. Printing techniques lend themselves to repetitive patterns and monoprints as

well as random designs. These can create large pieces of yardage with repetitive patterns or can be used in combination with other techniques (embroidery, etc.) on one-of-a-kind creation. The stencils or repeat patterns should be the craftpersons own design. Surface design on the item should not be dominated by technique.

### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

One recognizes that the character of hand dyeing is such that little discrepancies are almost unavoidable. However, carefully applied french dye should have a minimum of bloopers, if any.

1. Dyes must be properly set not to run and properly washed out (i.e. steamed/ironed).
2. All traces of resist (i.e. wax, starch paste, gutta latex) should be removed by boiling or dry cleaning, with the exception of some items such as wall hangings which can benefit if a certain amount of wax is left in to stiffen and give body to the fabric.
3. The pigments should be used so that they become part of the fibre of the fabric, without injuring or changing its texture.
4. Colour should be applied as uniformly as possible over entire pattern in accordance with technique used.
5. Textile inks must be used on fabrics that are non-toxic and colourfast.
6. The fabric and pigment used should be permanent to light, washing and/or drycleaning.
7. The cutting of stencils should leave a sharp, clean edge with no fuzziness or blurring.
8. In surface printing, registration should be exact.
9. Silkscreening applied to any medium must take into account the standards in that medium as well.
10. Standards for sewing and garment construction apply.

### ***Patchwork***

Is the seaming together of pieces of material (fabric, leather, vinyl, etc.) by which a design is created. Geometric patterns are often employed and a number of traditional patterns exist. If the craftsman has not designed the actual "pattern" used, the creativity comes in exploration of colour schemes, material combinations and the assembly of these patterns. Patchwork is commonly seen on quilt tops, but is adaptable to clothing other functional items (handbags, placements, etc.) and larger wall hangings.

### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. The joins and corners meant to meet should do so precisely.
2. Lattice strips and borders must be even and sewn in straight lines.
3. Grain lines should be consistent.
4. The whole article should be well pressed, unless the intent is otherwise.

### ***Applique***

Is the layering and attaching of material (fabric, yarns, etc.) to a backing fabric. The pieces may be attached by handsewing – the traditional method, machine sewing, gluing or tacking. The basic shapes are often embellished with other embroidery or accents such as sequins, yarns, furs, etc. for texture. The technique allows great freedom of design.

#### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. No shadowing should appear in either pieced or applique quilts.
2. All grain (fabric) lines both in the applique and the background must be consistent unless used for design purposes.
3. In hand applique, the stitches should be almost invisible.
4. If the item is intended to be functional, the fabrics and embellishments should be appropriate to its use.

### ***Embroidery***

Is the surface embellishment of a material with a variety of yarns and threads using an even greater variety of stitches and techniques ie: cross-stitch, canvas work, trapunto, etc. The work is done with a needle and may be either by; hand or machine. It can range from – a simple trim on a garment to a large wall hanging where the emphasis is on colour, design and textural variety. If the design is a traditional (ie: Ukrainian border designs) then the article would belong in the “Traditional” category and the design should be labelled as such.

### ***Quilting***

A quilt is a textile sandwich of a top, a filling and a bottom which are stitched or tied together. The top is generally considered the design surface and may be designed using any fabric technique – patchwork, applique, embroidery, batik, etc. and should be judged by normal design standards. Traditional patterns are often used, but no pre-cut kits are acceptable. The actual quilting is done by making small running hand stitches or machine stitching or tying through all three layers of material. Quilting can also be used in a number of other “art works” or functional items such as pillows, purses, vests, coats, etc.

#### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. The stitches should be even and should be equal on both sides of the quilt.
2. The slight relief created by the quilting should enhance the top design and be an integral part of the entire quilt.
3. No quilt pattern markings or knots should be visible on either side of the quilt.
4. The construction seams should be smooth and well stitched with harmonious thread.
5. The fabric should be durable and washable if it is meant as a functional cover.
6. Filler should be evenly distributed and suitable to technique used.

7. Other surface accessories (i.e. buttons, embroidery, etc.) should also be inspected (re: practicality).
8. Standards for sewing and garment construction apply.
9. Binding should be the same quality fabric as the quilt. It should be securely stitched; uniformly filled with filler; appropriate to the design of the quilt top; bias binding, if used, should be true bias; curved corners should flow smoothly without puckers; square corners should be perfect 90; when turned to the back of the quilt, binding stitches should be inconspicuous.

### ***Rug Hooking***

Hooking is a technique in which a hook (a variety are available) is used to pull or push either wool and/or strips of various materials through a heavy backing fabric, usually canvas or burlap, cotton or linen. The resulting loops may be long, short, cut to make pile, etc. and in combination with various fabrics can result in a wide range of textures.

#### **Standards**

1. A hooked piece should demonstrate a good knowledge of craftsmanship, balance of design and colour harmony.
2. Loops should be even unless craftsperson is striving for an uneven textural effect.
3. A floor rug should show loops of even height with durability a prime consideration. Floor rugs and wall rugs must be labeled as such.
4. There should be no cross-overs underneath.
5. All clipping should be done from the top.
6. Edges should be suitably finished.
7. Binding on rugs, fringing hemming, lining, stretching and framing for wall hangings, etc. must all be skillfully finished.
8. If rags are used, they must be used in a way that won't fray.
9. The use of latex is unacceptable.
10. All designs must be original – no kits are acceptable.

### ***Soft Sculpture (Stuffed Toys)***

This would include any combination of techniques and materials. All the basic concepts of three-dimensional design should apply. The toys however, must also be strongly made to endure hard use and small parts must be firmly attached. They must be clearly labeled (re: Federal Regulations). In short, they must be "child-proof".

Purchased basic patterns or commercially made clothing articles (ie: cotton T-shirts, etc.) are acceptable where the article of clothing is of quality and where the craftsperson's primary concern is "surface embellishment".

## **Garment Construction**

### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. Suitable fabric should be chosen for the garment considering drape and durability.
2. All seams should be properly finished according to the type of fabric used.
3. Garments should be neatly finished inside and outside with no loose threads showing.
4. Threads, bindings, lining, buttons or other notions should match the fabric being used unless a decorative contrast is intended.
5. All garments should be properly constructed without technical flaws.
6. Appropriate interfacing and linings must be used.
7. The article should drape and mold to the body as desired.
8. Linings should be incorporated into the article where necessary.
9. Sleeve length, neck openings, and general proportions should be appropriate.
10. Tailoring is most important – hems must be even, jacket fronts and sleeves must be of equal length, lapels and collars must lie flat, edges must be bound or finished as appropriate.
11. Accessories must be of a quality consistent to the garment (buttons, buckles, etc.).
12. All articles should be well pressed and finished.
13. The style of the clothing article, the fabric, the surface design, and the tailoring and finishing of the piece should be compatible and consistent, in that these are all part of a “greater” whole.

It should also be noted that some clothing articles, etc. have as their function “Art” first, and are not meant to be worn or used, just as some “rugs” or “quilts” are not to be used in the traditional manner, however, these articles must be labeled as such.

## **B FIBRE STRUCTURES**

This category includes any article whose basic starting material is a fibre yarn. The yarns used can be either handspun and dyed or commercially produced and can range in size from fine filaments to ropes. Also, any articles using the traditional techniques of weaving, knotting, etc. but done in any other material, such as plastic, videotape, leather, wood strips, wire, etc. Felting and paper are processes that focus the creation of a “structure” or “surface” rather than embellishing an already existing one and would be considered here.

Whatever techniques used, all fabrics have their inherent demands. Primary considerations are structural in nature (construction of the fabric). The fibres and techniques or weave used should be suitable for the purpose intended, i.e. rugs and upholstery materials should be strong enough to resist hard wear, clothing articles (ie: knitted baby outfits, woven shawls, macrame jewellery, etc.) should not be rough or too heavy.

Purchased patterns may be used where the craftperson’s chief concern is the actual fabric creation.

## **TECHNIQUES**

A number of techniques are employed in the creation of fabric; (a pliable plane of threads) which is then made into a variety of functional items (i.e. place mats, clothing, bags, rugs, etc.) or as artwork. A description of the basic techniques:

### ***Spinning***

Spinning is the process of twisting together and drawing out massed short fibres into a continuous strand. Yarns can be made from man-made fibres, wool, flax, cotton, plant fibres, hair fibres (i.e. yak) and silk or can be combinations of these to create textural or colour variety within the thread itself. All yarns, especially novelty ones, should be appropriate for its end use with consideration being made for durability, strength, feel, etc.

### ***Netting & Twining***

Netting uses only a single thread to create an open-meshed but very firm and strong fabric structure of an extremely expandable nature. It consists of simple meshes joined by knots and is usually seen in durable items such as bags, pouches, etc. On a finer level, it also includes filet lace, which is either left as simple netting patterns or is decorated with a variety of patterns darned or embroidered into it.

Twining is a method which has a "tapestry-like" surface and is created by encircling the warp with other threads would about it.

### ***Knitting & Crocheting***

These also use only a single thread, but create the interlooping of yarn by using either a hook or two (or more) needles. All yarns, especially textured and novelty ones, should be suited to the stitch, pattern, and the needle size used, and should be appropriate for that particular article. Attention should be given to: regularity of stitches and tension, elasticity of seams and the working-in of ends, as well as finishing, both inside and out, and casting on and off tensions.

### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. When using more than one colour yarn, the yarn not in use should be woven (or twisted with the yarn in use) on the wrong side every three stitches. Woven over every other stitch is best. There should be no long loops of yarn on wrong side.
2. Garments in more than one colour should show no puckering where yarns have been pulled too tight when changing colours, or should not show holes if yarn was not pulled tight enough.
3. Ribbing should not be too tight or loose.
4. Sleeves should not be too tight or loose or too long or short.
5. Sleeves should be set into armholes correctly with no puckering.
6. Seams should be finished in a neat, smooth fashion. Yarn must not be split when sewing up and sewing stitches should go between each knit stitch. The seam should appear like part of the knitting.
7. Button holes are to be completed neatly and must all be the same size.

8. Cable patterns should be consistent.
9. There should be an even tension throughout the garment.
10. The piece should be blocked correctly. No iron marks should ever show. Raised patterned work or ribbing should not be flattened.
11. There should be no dropped stitches or twisted stitches.
12. All yarns in a one colour garment should be of the same dye lot.
13. Care should be taken in making sure that ribbing on sleeves and bottoms of garments is lined up evenly when it is being sewed together.
14. An otherwise well-knit garment can be easily spoiled by too tight casting on, or binding off. Conversely, too loose is not good either.
15. Yokes should be smooth and not show holes where stitches have been picked up.
16. Articles must be clearly labeled "Machine Knit" or "Hand Knit".

### ***Knotting***

Includes any work made of knots and plaited threads. The range includes:

**a) Macrame** – a system of knotting which ranges from ornate surface patterns, such as a delicate fringe on a silk shawl, to large free-standing sculptures. If large articles are functional, "stretch-ability" and the structural soundness of the knots should be checked. All designs should be original.

**b) Lacemaking** – this subdivides again:

**i) Needlelace** – Composed of stitches and knots made with a single yarn with a needle.

**ii) Bobbin Lace** – is worked with several individual yarns each wrapped around a bobbin. The threads are twined, twisted, plaited, or crossed and cast around a set of marking needles to build a firm network of lace.

**iii) Filet Lace** – See "Netting" above.

**c) Tatting** – uses a single thread and is composed of knots, stitches and picots which form rings and semi-circles and is created with a shuttle and the fingers. Various designs are produced by different arrangement of these motifs.

### ***Weaving***

Is the interlacing of at least two distinct groups of threads usually at right angles to create a fabric. The structure of the material can be uniform and even or with various textures or textural patterns woven into the fabric itself. Emphasis of the structure can be heightened with contrasting fibres and the use of colour.

### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. The beating should be regular.
2. The edges straight and well done.
3. Weaving should be technically correct. The selection of the warp and the beat of the weft should be appropriate to the function of the article.
4. Fringes are acceptable only if the yarn will withstand the intended use and cleaning without deterioration (placemats, runners).
5. Because most materials will shrink to some degree, weaving should be washed and well pressed before presentation or sale (if applicable).
6. Sewing should be neat. Ends should be skillfully finished (i.e. braided, twisted or turned under and covered with tape or threaded back into the body of the rug).

### **BASIC CONSTRUCTIONS**

#### **a) Loom Controlled Weaves**

Fabrics planned and prepared for weaving on a loom, which helps organize the interlacing of the threads. The systems and the looms vary greatly in complexity, all resulting in a final fabric.

#### **b) Tapestry**

A simple structure in which the horizontal threads are packed so closely that the warp (lengthwise threads) is completely covered. It is pictorial in character with separate areas of colour being worked individually. A variety of techniques are used to interlock the areas. Colour and surface textures have great freedom with this medium.

#### **c) Pile Weaves**

This type of weave requires the hand forming of knots onto a back structure. Variety is possible through the length and colour choices of the yarns. It is sometimes done on a loom, but this greatly limits the flexibility of the technique. Persian rugs, high-relief wall hangings, etc. are examples of this technique.

### ***Leather & Furs***

Leather and furs used should be of good quality, properly tanned and insect free. They should be supple, without holes or bare spots. Fur should not be yellowed or easily removed from skin. Clothing should be made from garment quality skins. Natural lacings are preferred. Findings must be of good quality.

All cuts should be clean, crisp and continuous. Edges should be beveled or buffed where applicable. No marking lines or glue should be visible. Dyes should be of good quality, applied evenly, and tested for permanence. Reverse side should be clean (no dye drips). If waxed edge dye is used, it should be bugged to avoid rubbing onto clothing, and to prevent fuzzy



edges. Garments must suit the leather medium, be well constructed and finished, and be comfortably wearable. Curves and reverse curves should be clean, neat and flat, and show no strain. Thread should be compatible and strong enough for the technique used. Plastic lacing is not acceptable. Standards for sewing and garment construction apply.

#### **a) Beadwork**

Watch for puckering or looseness in the leather or the beads (i.e. beads too loose and hanging or beads too tight and material puckered). Beadwork should be backed with fabric if appropriate.

### ***Sewing & Garment Construction***

#### **Garment Construction Standards**

1. Garments must be comfortable, should not bind at any seams, and the fabric must drape properly.
2. Hems must be evenly and securely stitched and inconspicuous on the right side.
3. Interfacing and lining should be properly fitted and suited to the garment.
4. Threads, bindings, lining, buttons or other notions should match the fabric being used unless a decorative contrast is intended.
5. All garments should be properly constructed without technical flaws (appropriate interfacing, linings, etc. to help the garment keep its shape).
6. Standards for garment construction apply.

#### ***Fabric Toys***

If traditional designs are used, the design should be subordinate to the piece itself. The design of the toy should be related to its future owner and should be in keeping with the use for which it is intended.

#### **Standards (in addition to those above)**

1. There should be nothing on a toy that could be pulled off and swallowed by a young child.
2. Knots from embroidery floss should not show through the face material.
3. Thread should never be carried from one feature to another, as it will show through fabric.
4. Materials used must be clean, new fabric that is suited to the design.
5. Good quality thread compatible with the fabric.
6. Clean new synthetic stuffing material must be used.
7. Close stitching, reinforced at wear points.
8. Firm stuffing that will not sag.
9. Hair, trims, etc. that will not come off.
10. Glues should be good quality and invisible.
11. Seams should be finished.

Fibre Criteria  
August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004

12. Toys should not be made with any toxic materials and should be as fire proof as possible.
13. Clothing used should fit the toy.
14. If toy is to be played with, clothing is best if it can be removed easily.
15. Fastenings should be easy to manipulate by small hands.
16. All toys are subject to Federal Regulations regarding Handcrafted Toys.

There is a great deal more that could be said about well designed toys but hopefully all toy-makers will try to create playthings that are imaginative, pleasing to the eye and touch, and very safe.

**References:** Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada; "Handcrafted Toys and Gifts".  
A copy is available at the Saskatchewan Craft Council.