

Every picture tells a story...



A gift from nature

When the artist mixes the paint, lays his knives and brushes ready and stretches the canvas onto the frame, that canvas already has a long history behind it.

Noble fibres

The story of an artist's canvas begins with plant fibres.

Flax

This long-stemmed plant is harvested and then steeped in water. This makes it easier for the golden, soft fibres to be stripped from the woody bast. Flax is grown mainly in the district around the River Leie in the region where many famous Flemish painters have worked and where Claessens NV has always been based.



Cotton

The cotton thread is spun from the woolly hairs around the cotton seeds. Cotton grows mainly in the southern part of the United States.

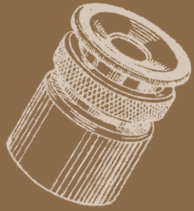


Top-quality raw materials

Artist's canvas is traditionally woven from 100% pure flax (linen), 100% pure cotton, 100% pure jute, a mix of linen and cotton or a mix of linen and jute. Nowadays, canvases are also made from synthetic raw materials such as viscose fibre and polyester.

Claessens NV principally produces canvas from flax. This provides the best quality and is by far the most durable. Of course, we work with the other materials as well and all canvases receive the same meticulous treatment according to traditional methods.



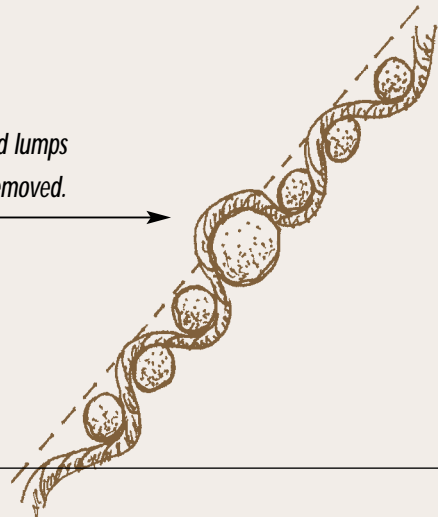


Meticulous inspection

When the cloth arrives at Claessens NV it is still raw and unprocessed. We first check it with great care for any weaving faults. Abnormally thick threads and lumps are scrupulously removed. The cloth has to be flawlessly smooth, as any unevenness might mar your painting.

Then, the cloth is shaved and dusted. Any final irregularities and bits of fluff are removed by machine, and the cloth is now ready to be treated.

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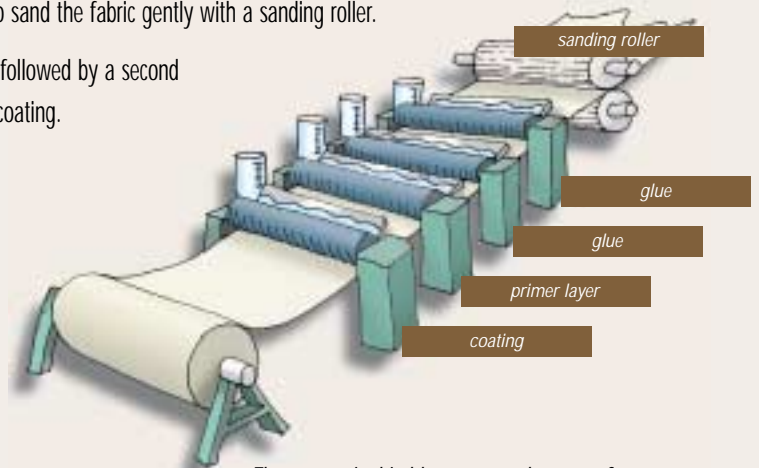




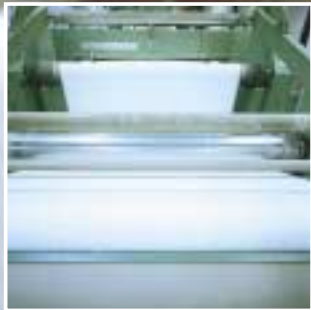
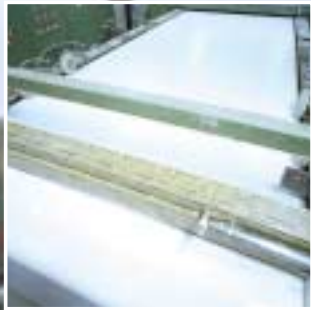
*F*rom cloth to artist's canvas

The treatment involves 5 stages:

- ① We apply a film of synthetic glue to the cloth. This protects it against the acids in oil paint and gives it a much longer life.
The glue also makes the cloth smoother and stronger.
- ② Next, we apply a second layer of glue, drying the cloth in a dry-air oven after each layer.
- ③ Then, we coat the fabric with a primer. The choice of primer is very important, for it determines how well the finished canvas will absorb the paint and thus for what kinds of paint the canvas will be best suited.
- ④ The next stage is to sand the fabric gently with a sanding roller.
- ⑤ The primer layer is followed by a second layer of paint: the coating.



The canvas is dried between each stage of treatment.



7



Claessens v.a.

3 *types of artist's canvas*

Painters work with a variety of types of paint. Each type of paint requires a specific coating. There are three types of canvas. An oil canvas is intended solely for oil paint. Absorbent canvases are intended for tempera. Universal canvases are suitable for both oil paint and acrylic paint. Each type of artist's canvas is given a specific treatment after glueing.

Three types, three treatments


For an "oil canvas", zinc white is used as the primer, bound with linseed oil. After that the canvas is put into a drying room for three days where it air-dries naturally.

After that, we sand the canvas again and apply a coating layer based on titanium white. The canvas then has to go back into the drying room for a further ten days.

"Absorbent canvases" are given two primer layers of chalk, bound with glue based on rabbit skins. Because this primer is water based, these canvases can be dried in the dry-air oven, where the water can evaporate more quickly.

"Universal canvases" undergo the same treatment as the absorbent canvases, but the two primer layers are titanium white based.



			
Primer layer:	Zinc white	Chalk	Titanium white
Coating:	Titanium white	Chalk	Titanium white
Suitable for:	Oil canvas	Absorbent canvas	Universal canvas
	Oil paint	Water colour	Acrylic/Oil/Tempera
Example:	no. 66	no. 266	no. 166

Our reference numbers are prefixed with a number that specifies the treatment. If these canvases are untreated they carry the number 0 (e.g. 066), universal canvases carry the number 1 (e.g. 166) and absorbent canvases the number 2 (e.g. 266). Oil canvases, in contrast, carry no prefix number (e.g. 66).

Traditional methods

Most of the treatments are done by machine, but according to traditional methods. For pieces that are wider than the standard size (210 cm), and for special types of artist's canvas, we will go so far as to perform the entire process manually. The maximum length of manually prepared artist's canvas is 40 metres.

Ready for use

When the canvas is completely dry, it is cut into 10-metre lengths, carefully rolled up, wrapped in damp-proof paper, packaged and dispatched to the customer. The story of the canvas has finished and the story of the painting can start.



Wide range

Artist's canvas comes in surprisingly many variations. The texture of the weave can vary from very coarse to very fine. Specific treatments produce specific variations. The range produced by Claessens NV currently contains more than 25 canvases.

Here's a selection:

- no. 66: oil canvas, 0% absorbent, suitable for oil paint only
 - no. 166: universal canvas, 50% absorbent, suitable for oil paint acrylic paint and tempera
 - no. 266: absorbent canvas, 100% absorbent, suitable for water colour only
 - no. 13DPS: oil canvas, with 4 primer layers and only then a coating
 - no. 12TS & 2TS: cotton canvases that can be coloured on the reverse to produce a linen effect. The front side is treated as an oil or universal canvas
 - no. 103 & 101: synthetic canvases (viscose and polyester) are not pre-treated with glue. They are given a universal primer layer only.
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*F*amily firm with respect for tradition

Up to the turn of the last century, many professional artists prepared their own canvases. As more and more amateurs took up the brush, the demand for canvas prepared by traditional methods grew. In 1906, close to the River Leie and in the middle of the Flax District, Victor Claessens founded a company to produce top-quality artist's canvas. To that end, he refined the tried and tested methods that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Almost a century later, Claessens NV is still operating in the original buildings in Waregem. The descendants of Victor Claessens have made a conscious choice to keep a small-scale approach to production and to honour the traditional methods for treating artist's canvas. Nowadays, much of the work is done by machine, but the core of the production process has remained unchanged. This respect for tradition and experience has made Claessens a household name amongst artists, stretching far beyond the borders of Europe.



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