

Stuffed Art

In this project, a creation is drawn directly onto a piece of canvas, which is then sewn together, stuffed, and made into a three-dimensional object. Children are fascinated by watching their flat, two-dimensional drawing turned into a softie they can snuggle up with. This is a perfect project for a child who is beginning to sew by hand or as a collaborative project between the artist (child) and the sewer (adult).



Ezra's drawing of a "Chicken Cow" becomes three-dimensional when he stuffs and sews it.

What You'll Need

- Canvas or duck fabric in a light color, two pieces for each stuffed object, in a size of your choosing
- Embroidery floss in colors of your choosing

- Fabric pens, found at your local craft store (Be sure to use a permanent pen, not one that is intended to wash away.)
- Scissors
- Pins
- Embroidery needle
- Stuffing (I prefer working with natural materials such as wool or cotton—see Resource Guide—but any craft stuffing will do.)

What to Do

1. Using the fabric pens, you and your child can draw your “creature” on one piece of the fabric.
2. When the drawing has dried (usually almost instantly), cut the fabric following the creature’s drawn outline, leaving about a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch space all the way around the edges.
3. Lay this piece of fabric over the second piece *wrong sides together*, pin in place, and trace the cut piece onto the second piece. Cut the second piece to match.
4. Now you or your child can begin sewing along the sides of the creature, in the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch space that was left along the edges. Keep the stitches fairly small to be sure the stuffing will stay in. Your stitches should be no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length. Continue sewing all the way around the creature

until there is only a 2-inch opening, leaving the needle and thread still attached.

5. Stuff your creature with the stuffing you've chosen. Use only a few small bits at a time to prevent lumpiness, and continue stuffing until the creature is of desired firmness. (The stuffing process is always my children's favorite part!)
6. Once it is stuffed, continue the sewing where you left off, closing up the 2-inch opening.
7. Snuggle, show off, and love your new stuffed art.

Machine-Sewing Variation

If you'd prefer a seam for your edges rather than the exposed raw seams given above, you can also create your stuffed object on the sewing machine. From Step 3, place your fabric right sides together to cut the second piece. Pin in place. Sew with your sewing machine along the edges, and leave the opening as instructed in Step 4. Turn right side out and stuff. Close the 2-inch opening by hand sewing.

Embroidery Variation

This project can also be a fun way for children or adults to embroider. Using a wash-away fabric pen instead of a permanent one, create the drawing in the same way. Before cutting around the outline, though, place the fabric in an embroidery hoop and embroider along all the lines of the drawing. Continue following the remainder of the instructions