



**Utrecht Art Supplies**  
**Studio Craft: Herringbone Canvas**



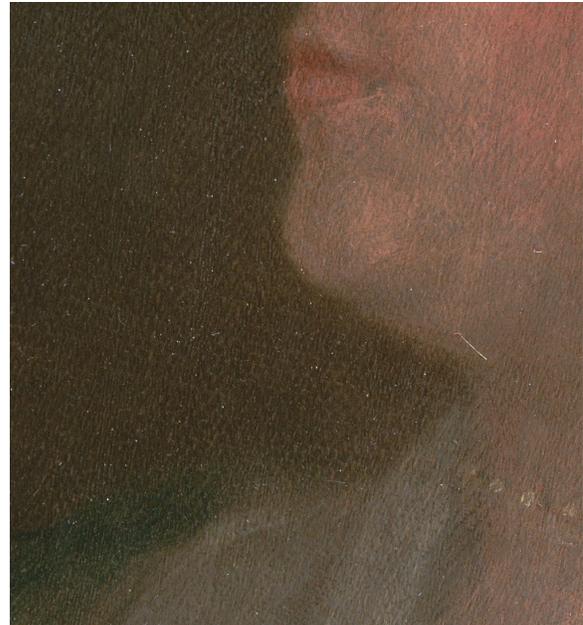
**Ask the Expert:**

**"What is the purpose/history of the herringbone pattern canvas? Should I buy that weave pattern over another? Is it because it doesn't relax or go slack as much as a traditional weave would? Can you provide any further information?"**

A: Herringbone is a pattern of twill weave cloth. Herringbone canvas was introduced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the career of Titian who was among the first artists to adopt the new type of fabric as a painting support. It's still used by artists today for its unusual texture, more aggressive than plain-weave fabrics like duck.

Reasons given for why historical painters might have selected herringbone canvas are largely speculative. Some artists probably chose it based on appearance alone, or because it was the best quality available. Still

others may have selected it because herringbone fabric came in wider bolts.



William Hogarth, "Anne Hogarth" (detail) ca. 1740

At the time it was introduced, because of innovative new loom designs herringbone fabric could be produced in wider dimensions than other cloth, eliminating the need for seams on large-scale canvases. Boucher executed at least one painting on twill-weave blue and white striped mattress ticking, which would seem an odd choice unless it was the best quality, widest canvas available.

Herringbone twill fabric releases wrinkles more easily than plain-weave cloth. We're not aware of any data regarding stretched performance of herringbone vs plain-weave (our best guess is that they are both about the same) but the texture of the former might hold the priming better than a smooth duck-weave linen.