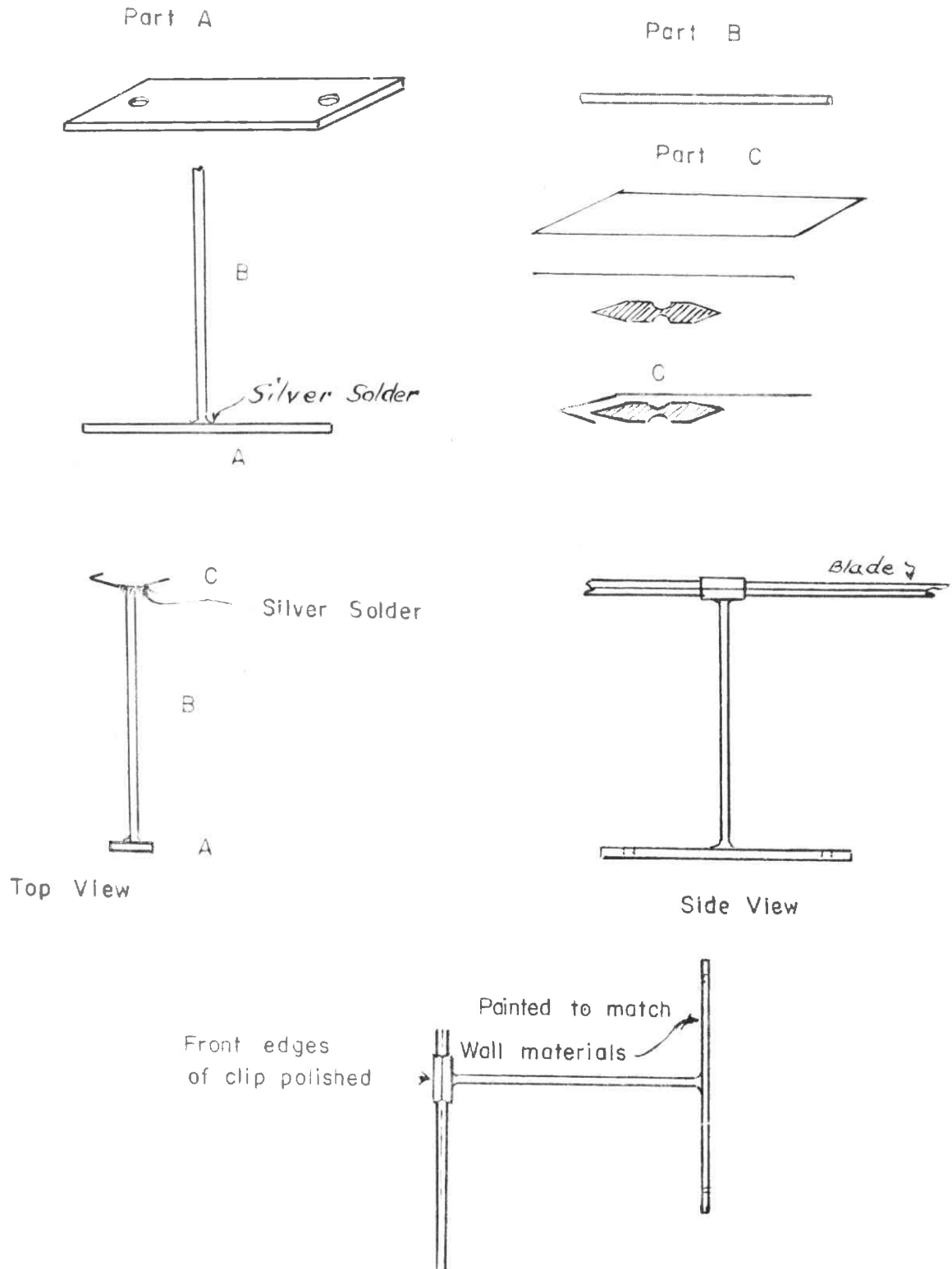


# No Visible Means of Support

Figure I



# No Visible Means of Support

by: John R. Phillips

The connotation of this title is more acceptable when it is applied to the design and construction of brackets for the proper display of works of art than it would otherwise be to those of us who lived through the great depression.

Nothing can detract more from the appearance of fine graceful works of art than poorly designed brackets of wood, brass, and in some cases, aluminum. Gun racks in hunting cabins are acceptable as they serve the primary purpose of storing functional weapons and not for display.

The supports of an art object should not detract from, but should enhance it by causing it to be the focal point. In order to do so, they must be as inconspicuous as possible.

For excellent examples of design and workmanship of supporting brackets, visit the Armor Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and examine the supports designed and built by Harvey Murton. The effect that Harvey desired to achieve was to have each object appear to be floating on air or have no "visible means of support." I was so impressed that I asked him if he would share his technique with me in order for me to duplicate them with my own collection. He graciously agreed and anyone wishing to enhance their own art objects need only to follow a few simple steps and be able to use some tools found in most home workshops.

The tools necessary are a Bernzomatic torch, silver solder and flux, assorted pliers, vice, center punch, hack saw, a hand drill and some small drills.

The stock needed is readily available and inexpensive and consists of iron rods from 1/8" to 1/4" in diameter, strips of sheet iron 1/32", 1/16", and 1/8" in thickness and varying widths depending upon the object being mounted. The 1/32" material that I use is the metal tape used to bind packing crates. It is flexible and solders easily.

The procedure to be followed in displaying, for instance, a rapier is as follows:

Since swords of this type are approximately 48" in length, two brackets should be made, one for the top of the blade just below the guard and the other to go about 5" from the tip. The length of the bracket will be determined by the dimensions of the guard. For example, if the sword is a cup hilted rapier and the radius of the cup is 2" the overall length of the brackets should be 2 1/2" allowing for a 1/2" clearance from the wall at the hilt.

When the material has been cut to size, it will be necessary to build a jig to hold the parts in place to facilitate soldering and assuming that each piece will be at the proper angle.



The first steps in preparing a bracket for a rapier would be to cut a section of soft iron 1/16" thick and 1/2" wide and 2 1/2" long; trimming off the corners adds to the appearance. (See Figure I.) Drill holes approximately 1/2" from each end to accommodate a screw 1/2" to 1/16", no larger is necessary for the average rapier. I use round headed screws which look neat and countersinking is not necessary.

Next, take a piece of the 1/32" "packing crate" material and shape it to conform to the cross section of the blade directly below the hilt.

A fit, tight enough to prevent the blade from hanging loosely, but free enough to permit easy withdrawal is desirable. Now take a section of the rod material (Part B, Figure I) and for an average size and weight rapier the 1/8" diameter will suffice, cut it to the length required to allow for the 1/2" clearance from the wall as aforementioned. Place Part A as shown in Figure I level on a stone or tile held in a vice and using the jig with an alligator clamp bring the rod to the center of Part A. Be sure it is perpendicular. Then flux and solder. Reverse the procedure when attaching the clip end on Part C to the rod. When finished, the mount should be cleaned and painted to match the woodwork to which it will be attached. The front edges of the clip, Part C, however, should be polished to match the steel of the blade. This front edge should be no wider than 1/4", less if possible.

When affixing the bracket to the wall, be sure and leave sufficient space between the pommel and the overhead to allow the sword to be inserted in the bracket. Rarely is more than 8 inches needed.

Figure II shows how the sword will look when hanging.

Figure II

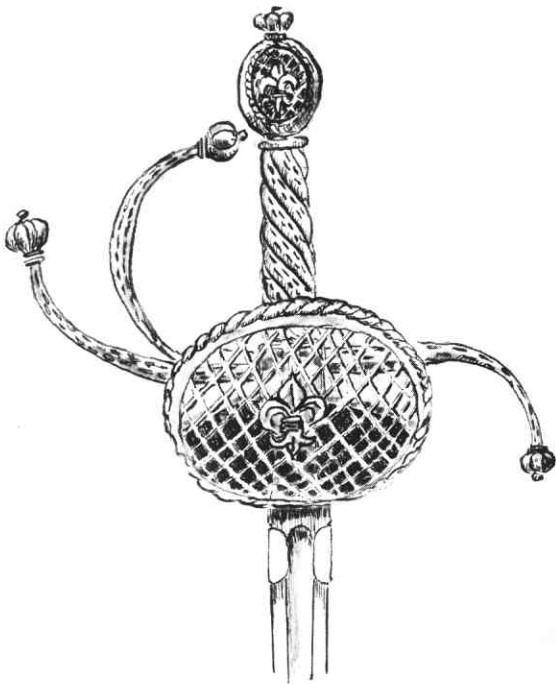
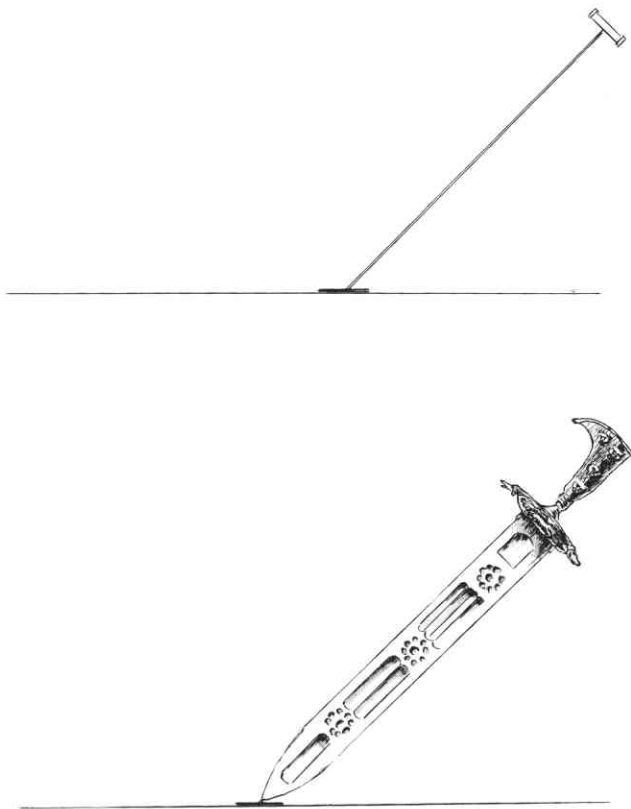


Figure III



The strength provided with this type of support enables swords to be hung not only vertically, but at an angle such as used in a fan type of display, and in the case of small swords or court swords, no lower support is needed.

Basically the same techniques can be applied to hanging any object varying only in accordance with the weight and shape of the object.

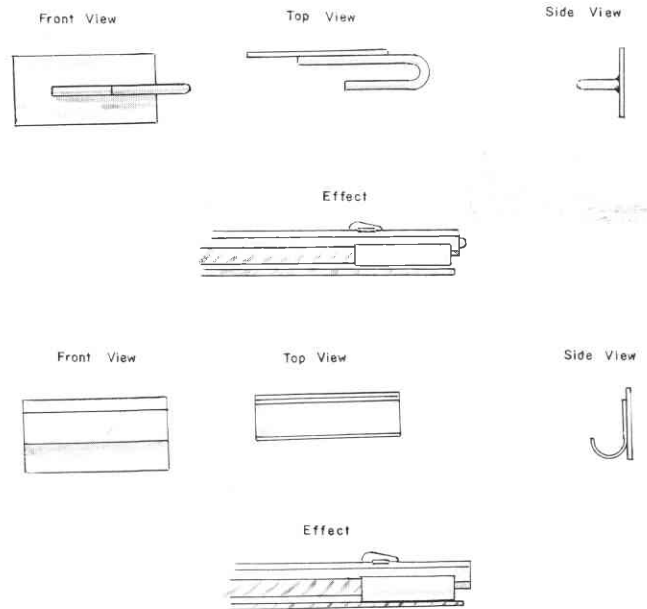
Referring once again to Harvey Murton's talents. He chose to display a somewhat heavy hunting sword at the Metropolitan by mounting it from the base of a wall cabinet. It does not touch the back of the cabinet and apparently does not touch the base either. See Figure III for how he did it. I assure you, the effect is fascinating.

Mounting heavy firearms by this method differs only in the design of the support and the weight of the materials used, bearing in mind that there should still be as little means of support visible as possible.

When a wall support for a Kentucky rifle is designed, it is done so with the object that its fine lines, unbroken by barrel bands, should be preserved. Since it is muzzle heavy, it requires a strong muzzle support. Two suitable examples are shown in Figure IV. Sketch B requires some sheet brass stock to match the muzzle cap.

In most instances the ramrod does not fit snugly into the recess of the muzzle cap and the brass support therefore can conform to the shape of the cap as to its length and height. This type of suspension can also be applied to the ramrod pipe; however, since there is rarely more than 1/4" on the side of the pipe, it could easily be jarred loose. As

Figure IV



far as the rear support is concerned, the most inconspicuous location for it is through the trigger guard just forward of the trigger and up to the bottom of the hammer. See Figure V. In some instances it can also be fitted forward of the trigger guard and to the rear of the frizzen spring. Hand guns can be mounted in a similar fashion.

If you wish to mount your favorite long gun or hand gun on a base, it can be shown to great advantage by using similarly constructed brackets as for the rapier.

Again, Harvey Murton's talent is evidenced in the way the magnificent Boutet double flint lock is displayed at the Metropolitan. Figure VI shows a wheel lock so mounted. Harvey added the additional feature of a mirror on the base enabling the viewer to see the fine detail on the underside.

The next time you visit your local museum, take particular notice of the manner in which the displays are mounted. You will see some very excellent examples and some very poor examples.

Make comparisons with the way your own collection is displayed. For further opportunities, examine the techniques used by the window dressers in the better department stores. I rarely pass Bloomingdale's in New York City without stopping to admire the expertise of their talent.

I firmly believe that a man with Harvey Murton's ability, with proper lighting and ingenious supports could convert a rusty monkey wrench into a work of art. Subtle lighting, either direct or indirect can be skillfully used to highlight an object. The source of light should be inconspicuous. Avoid clutter. Pieces should not be too close together or overlap. Long guns are not shown to advantage when vertically stacked in racks. For those of you who have the floor space and can mount cabinets that can be viewed from four sides the use of 1/2" plexiglass mounted vertically provides a four sided view of the object to be displayed. It is extremely strong, easily supporting heavy objects, is unobtrusive and does not warp. When in New York, notice the Colt display and the rapiers at the Metropolitan Museum.

Small blocks of plexiglass or lucite provide excellent bases for small objects such as sword pommels, gun locks, etc.

In summary, the object is to display your art treasures in such a way as to provide yourself and friends the most pleasure when viewing them. When done properly, they become an object of importance, their value is enhanced, and the excitement of possessing a fine collection is heightened.

Figure V

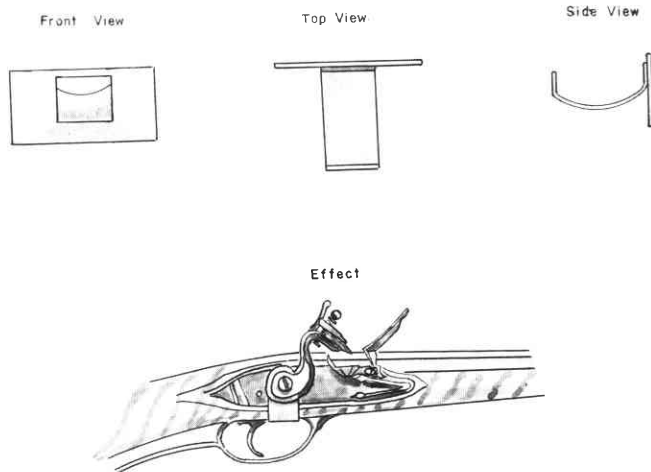


Figure VI

