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## Divinely Inspired

Silk chuppahs by Corinne Soikin Strauss add artistry to weddings

By Kathleen North



Some things about weddings are timeless, while others are unique to each couple. Exquisitely hand-painted, Corinne Soikin Strauss' silk chuppahs are both.

Few occasions transcend time like marriage, when a new beginning is marked by age-old rites. Weaving these concepts together seamlessly, personalized chuppahs give couples a way to honor tradition without neglecting their unique story. This is one reason Soikin's contribution is appreciated by so many worldwide, from clients and artists to religious organizations and museums.

The miracle of finding love is Soikin's reason to celebrate all marriages.

"In this crazy world, if you can find a partner, it's fabulous!" says Soikin, who first designed a chuppah for a lesbian couple 18 years ago. Unhindered by convention, she was among the first people to customize chuppahs as an art form. Now an award-winning painter and founder of the Corinne Soikin Strauss Artist's Studio, she creates individualized pieces for couples.

Soikin discovered her calling 25 years ago. In a dream one night, she was painting a cloth. As it hung from four trees, she was captivated by its colors reflecting in snow. Describing it to a rabbi friend shortly thereafter, he immediately recognized it as a *chuppah*. True to the art spirit, she followed this inspiration with zeal. Today, she creates chuppahs by steaming dyes onto silk charmeuse fabric, a step that ensures the art can withstand inclement weather during an outdoor ceremony, and long after.

A traditional part of Jewish nuptials, the chuppah's meaning is refreshingly suited to

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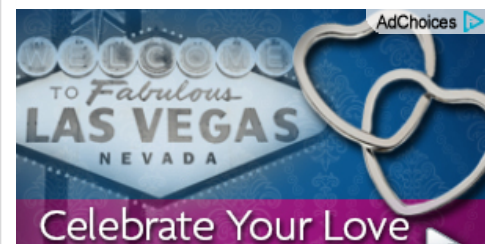


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interfaith and intercultural ceremonies. Forming an elegant frame, the chuppah is a cloth canopy stretched over a couple during the exchange of rings and vows. Deliberately made without walls, the chuppah represents not only the couple's unity, but a spirit of hospitality and openness toward all. Symbolic of the home a couple is beginning, it transitions gracefully into any couple's wedding.



"The chuppah is a place where both people can bring together their backgrounds and symbols in an artistic and meaningful way," Soikin explains.

After working with a couple to determine what best reflects their union, she incorporates their chosen symbols into watercolor sketches. Normally, her process takes six weeks from

the time a couple approves their design. While interested parties are welcome to schedule a visit to her East Hampton studio, no personal meeting is necessary. To stay true to the couple's spirit, she is guided by a photograph of the pair.

Strengthened by tradition but enlivened by the souls beneath it, Soikin's chuppahs make a perfect banner to commemorate the joining of two lives. Better still, her newlyweds get a head start on decorating with a beautiful tapestry directly from their ceremony.

"To know that I have helped create an heirloom for them to keep as a memory of the most meaningful day of their life has continued to keep me at it!" Soikin says. Chuppahs often continue to play a sacred role in family life through babies' naming ceremonies, vow renewals and other sacred occasions.

For more information, please contact Corinne Soikin Strauss by calling 631.537.8008, sending an e-mail to [Corinne@chuppah.com](mailto:Corinne@chuppah.com) or by visiting [www.chuppah.com](http://www.chuppah.com).

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