Caring for Your Textiles

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Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection
Preservation = avoiding or minimizing the causes of deterioration (non-invasive preventive care)

Conservation = specialized professional treatment

HLATC recommends preventive care techniques. For treatment, consult a conservator.
Meet the enemies

- Environment
- Handling
- Inappropriate storage materials
- Improper display techniques
Light

- Damage is cumulative and irreversible
- Degradation and fading
- No light in storage
- Keep light levels as low as possible for display
Temperature and Humidity

- Temperature 65-70°F
- RH 40-55%
- Avoid fluctuations
- Keep away from heat sources
- No basements or attics!
Insects

- Carpet beetles, clothes moths, silverfish
- Attracted to protein based materials such as wool and silk, also starch in fabric sizing
- No mothballs or cedar
- Housekeeping is key
Storage

• Flat storage
• Rolled storage
• Hanging costumes
# Storage Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DON’T</th>
<th>DO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✗ Wire hangers</td>
<td>✓ Padded hangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Dry cleaner bags</td>
<td>✓ Unbleached muslin or soft tyvek covers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Gift wrapping tissue</td>
<td>✓ Acid free tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Cardboard boxes or tubes</td>
<td>✓ Acid free boxes and tubes or foil covered cardboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Wood drawers or cedar chests</td>
<td>✓ Metal shelving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plastics

- Use only safe, inert plastics
- Polyethylene or polypropylene
- Recycling codes #2, 4, 5
- Monitor over time for degradation

![Recycling Codes]

- 2 HDPE
- 4 LDPE
- 5 PP
Display

- Fully support textiles
- Use passive display techniques
Cleaning

Vacuuming is safest
- Low suction
- Protective screen

Avoid wet cleaning
- Shrinkage
- Distortion
- Matting of fibers
- Running of dyes

Avoid commercial dry cleaning
- Too harsh for historic textiles
Disaster Strikes!

- Water leaks and floods
- Smoke and fire
- Keep a collection journal
Monitor

- Check on your textiles!
- Inspect for insect or rodent damage
- Refold if necessary
- Use textile fading cards in display areas
Resources

• NPS Conserve O Grams
• Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) notes
• Midwest Art Conservation Center
• Chicago Conservation Center
• Appraisers Association of America
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- Saving Stuff, Don Williams and Louisa Jagger
- Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection
- University of Wisconsin Communications