

The Private Wardrobe Office

Founded By Lucretia Sandu

ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL STEWARDSHIP FOR THE PRIVATE WARDROBE

Documentation | Evidence | Preservation | Continuity

London

GN 006 — Wardrobe Documentation Explained

Published by: Private Wardrobe Office

Edition: First Edition

www.lucretia.world | contact@lucretia.world | 07810083999

Introduction

Documentation is the foundation of effective wardrobe stewardship. It transforms a wardrobe from a collection of possessions into an organised, traceable and manageable collection.

While clothing is often viewed through the lens of style or consumption, documentation introduces structure, accountability and continuity. It provides a permanent record of the collection, enabling informed decision-making throughout its lifecycle.
This guidance note explains the purpose of wardrobe documentation and the role it plays in the management of significant private collections.

What Is Wardrobe Documentation?

Wardrobe documentation is the systematic recording of information relating to every object within a collection.

It establishes a reliable record of:

- Identity
- Description
- Ownership
- Location
- Condition
- Preservation history
- Movement history
- Maintenance history

Together, these records create a complete documentary history of the collection.

Why Documentation Matters

Without documentation, a collection becomes increasingly difficult to manage as it grows.

A documented collection enables:

- Accurate inventory management
- Immediate object identification
- Efficient retrieval
- Preservation planning
- Collection analysis
- Continuity across residences and generations
- Informed acquisition and maintenance decisions

Documentation provides confidence that every object can be accounted for at any point in time.

What Is Recorded?

The level of information recorded should reflect the significance of the object and the needs of the collection.

Typical records include:

- Unique Identification Number
- Object description
- Brand or maker
- Category
- Material composition
- Colour
- Size
- Acquisition details
- Current location
- Condition status
- Preservation classification
- Photographic record

Additional information may be recorded where it contributes to the long-term management of the collection.

Documentation Throughout the Collection Lifecycle

Documentation is not created once and forgotten. It evolves alongside the collection.

Records should be updated whenever an object is:

- Acquired
- Relocated
- Worn following significant events
- Altered
- Conserved
- Archived
- Reinstated
- Deaccessioned

Maintaining current records ensures the collection remains both accurate and reliable.

Supporting Preservation

Documentation plays a central role in preventive preservation.

Historical records make it possible to:

- Monitor gradual deterioration
- Identify recurring maintenance requirements
- Track conservation treatments
- Review storage conditions
- Schedule inspections
- Inform preservation decisions

In this way, documentation supports the physical care of the collection as much as its organisation.

Supporting Collection Management

Documentation also enables the efficient day-to-day management of the wardrobe.

Reliable records support:

- Seasonal rotations
- Wardrobe relocations
- Multi-residence management
- Travel preparation
- Insurance schedules
- Valuations
- Archive management
- Collection reviews

By reducing uncertainty, documentation improves both operational efficiency and decision-making.

A Living Record

Documentation should be regarded as a living record rather than a static inventory.
Each update contributes to the history of the object and strengthens the continuity of the collection.
Over time, these records become an important source of information, reflecting not only what the collection contains but how it has evolved through acquisition, use, preservation and stewardship.

Conclusion

Wardrobe documentation is not an administrative exercise; it is an essential component of collection stewardship. It provides the structure through which garments and accessories can be preserved, understood and responsibly managed over time.
A well-documented wardrobe is more than organised—it is accountable, traceable and prepared for the future. By establishing comprehensive records and maintaining them throughout the life of the collection, owners ensure that their wardrobe remains an enduring and intelligible collection rather than an accumulation of possessions.