



The Private Wardrobe Office

Founded By Lucretia Sandu

ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL STEWARDSHIP FOR THE PRIVATE WARDROBE
Documentation | Evidence | Preservation | Continuity
London

SOP 008 **Preservation of Hand-Embellished Garments** **Version: 1.0**

Series: Preservation Standards

Prepared by
The Private Wardrobe Office

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1. Purpose

To establish the standards for the long-term preservation of hand-embellished couture garments, ensuring structural integrity, aesthetic quality and longevity through controlled handling, environmental management and routine condition monitoring.

This procedure applies to garments featuring hand-applied embroidery, sequins, crystals, beads, pearls, feathers, metallic threads, appliqué, lace and other delicate decorative elements.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- Haute Couture
- Couture show pieces
- Bespoke evening wear
- Archive garments
- Hand-embroidered jackets and coats
- Beaded dresses
- Feathered garments
- Garments with fragile decorative finishes

3. Preservation Classification

Each garment shall be assigned a preservation category based upon:

- Material composition
- Construction complexity
- Embellishment density
- Structural vulnerability
- Historical or sentimental significance
- Replacement value
- Frequency of wear

4. Preservation Standard

All garments shall be preserved using preventative conservation principles that minimise physical stress, environmental deterioration and unnecessary handling.

The objective is to preserve the garment in its original condition while maintaining its readiness for future wear, exhibition or archival storage.

5. Responsibilities

The Wardrobe Manager is responsible for:

- Conducting routine inspections.
- Maintaining accurate condition records.
- Ensuring appropriate storage methods.
- Coordinating specialist conservation where required.
- Recording all maintenance and interventions.

6. Preservation Procedure

Steps	Action
1 Condition Baseline & Risk Assessment	Upon entering the collection: • Inspect all embellishments for looseness or movement. • Record existing wear or damage. • Photograph significant details. • Document construction techniques and areas of structural tension.
2 Handling Authorisation & Procedures	Always: • Handle garments with clean, dry hands. • Support the garment from its structural seams rather than decorative surfaces. • Avoid lifting garments by straps, embellishments or lace. • Minimise unnecessary movement.
3 Preservation Storage Requirements	Storage shall be determined by the garment's weight and construction. Where appropriate: • Use padded conservation-grade hangers. • Heavy garments should be supported horizontally or with additional weight distribution. • Protect embellishments using breathable cotton covers. • Never compress decorative surfaces.

Steps	Action
4 Environmental Controls	Maintain stable storage conditions: • Consistent temperature • Stable relative humidity • Limited light exposure • Protection from dust • Adequate air circulation Avoid direct sunlight, excessive moisture and prolonged artificial lighting.
5 Post-Wear Condition Review	Following each wear: • Allow garments to rest for 24–48 hours before storage. • Conduct a visual inspection. • Remove surface dust where appropriate. • Confirm embellishments remain secure. • Update the condition record.
6 Inspection Intervals	Inspect every three months, or before and after any significant event. Inspection shall include: • Missing beads or crystals • Loose embroidery • Broken threads • Fabric distortion • Weight stress • Feather condition • Signs of oxidation or tarnishing • Storage support integrity

Steps	Action
7 Conservation Treatment & Specialist Intervention	Repairs shall only be undertaken by qualified couture ateliers or conservation specialists. No adhesive products or temporary repairs are permitted without documented approval. All interventions shall be recorded within the garment's conservation history.

7. Documentation

Maintain:

- Condition Baseline Report
- Preservation Classification Record
- Conservation History
- Inspection Register
- Environmental Monitoring Record
- Specialist Treatment Register
- Wear & Movement Log
- Photographic Record

8. Quality Assurance

A preserved couture garment shall demonstrate:

- Stable structural integrity.
- No preventable embellishment loss.
- Accurate documentation.
- Appropriate storage support.
- Complete maintenance history.
- Immediate readiness for use or display.

9. Exceptions & Escalation

Where a garment's construction requires bespoke conservation measures beyond this procedure, individual preservation instructions shall be prepared and retained within the garment's permanent record.

10. Review & Revision

This procedure shall be reviewed annually or following:

- Acquisition of exceptionally fragile garments.
- Significant conservation treatment.
- Changes to storage facilities.
- Best practice updates in textile conservation.