

Care & Handling of

★ QUILTS & TEXTILES ★

Surprisingly, all of the following can be hazardous to your cherished textiles:

- virtually all forms of light -- sunlight, fluorescent, incandescent, etc.
- many environmental conditions -- especially heat, moisture & fluctuating temperature & humidity
- most methods of cleaning -- particularly dry cleaning
- contact with many common materials -- regular paper, cardboard, unsealed wood, metal, etc.
- folding, handling & use.

For suggested methods of handling, cleaning, displaying, storing & labeling your heirloom textiles, use these guidelines suggested by conservators & gleaned from the recommended websites that follow.

~ DO ~

Care & handling

- Handle with clean hands or cotton gloves.
- Provide controlled environmental conditions & gentle air circulation.
- Protect from light:
 - use low light for display
 - darkness for storage.
- Allow contact only with carefully chosen materials:
 - acid-free or archival materials
 - clean cotton sheets
 - washed unbleached muslin.

Cleaning

- Keep cleaning to a minimum.
- If you must clean it:
 - vacuum gently with a handheld vacuum without touching the nozzle to the textile.
 - cover the nozzle with a nylon stocking or cover the textile with a fiberglass screen.
 - use a lifting rather than dragging motion.

Displaying

- Hang on a sleeve or Velcro per instructions on the recommended websites that follow.
- Displaying quilts on an unused bed is an option --
 - avoid sunlight, heat, moisture & pets.
 - cover with a clean cotton sheet or washed unbleached muslin when not being viewed.
- Vacuum & take the textile off display periodically.

~ DON'T ~

Care & handling

- Don't expose to:
 - UV rays from sunlight or fluorescents which degrade fibers & dyes; exposure to light of any kind causes irreversible damage.
 - smoking, food, drink, dust, fumes, moisture, pets & pests.
 - plastic, metal, unsealed wood, mothballs, or paper & cardboard unless acid free.
- Don't place in attics, basements, kitchens, laundry rooms, garages, or unconditioned areas.
- Don't stack heavy quilts on top of each other.
- Don't place objects on the textile or on its container.

Cleaning

- Avoid washing your heirloom textiles unless you follow the procedures & cautions listed on the recommended websites that follow.
- Don't twist, wring or agitate if wet.
- Don't dry clean, steam or iron.

Displaying

- Don't hang by methods that will damage fibers, including:
 - clip-on metal hangers
 - tacking or nailing directly to wall.

★STORING★

- Work on a clean, dry surface.
- Use acid-free materials for storage. These should be changed every 2-5 years.
- If acid-free materials are not available, use
 - clean cotton sheets or
 - washed unbleached muslin &
 - wash yearly to keep neutral.
- Store flat with a minimum of folding & pressure.
- If storing flat is not possible, textiles may be
 - loosely folded & the folds padded with
 - acid-free paper or
 - washed unbleached muslin.
 - rolled around an acid-free tube wrapped with
 - acid-free paper or
 - washed unbleached muslin.
 - folded or rolled textile may then be placed in an
 - archival box or
 - a clean cotton or washed muslin cover.
- Store in a clean, cool, dry, dark area with stable climatic conditions (approx. 70°, 50% humidity).
- Periodically remove the textile & air it.
 - If stored folded, refold it along different lines to prevent creasing (approx. every 3-6 months).
- Label the textile & its storage container so others will understand its importance.

★LABELING★

- Quilts are works of art & deserve to be identified with as much information as possible:
 - maker's name, date, location, & photo, if available
 - owner's name, date, location
 - special details such as title, pattern, commemorative dedication, etc.
 - family history or genealogical information if a family piece, to help document & encourage preservation through the generations.
- Labeling can take various forms:
 - traditional techniques such as quilted, stuffed, embroidered, or inked.
 - modern methods including:
 - computer designed & printed with ink-jet printer on specially treated paper-backed fabric
 - photo transfer techniques
 - lettered on a piece of muslin using an acid-free, permanent ink pen.
- Sew the label on the quilt backing & the quilt will be ready to take its place in history.

★RECOMMENDED WEBSITES★

Alliance for the American Quilt / Center for the Quilt Online
http://www.centerforthequilt.org/query/query_careoldquilt.html

International Quilt Study Center & Museum
http://www.quiltstudy.org/about_us/questions_answers/care.html

Michigan State University Museum / Great Lakes Quilt Center
<http://museum.msu.edu/glqc/quiltcare.html>

Smithsonian Institution
http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmah/antqtext.htm

The Textile Museum in Washington, DC
<http://www.textilemuseum.org/care/brochures/guidelines.htm>

University of Nebraska
<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=680>