

HANDLING AND CARE OF TEXTILES

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Textile-Workshop, Bogd Khan Palace Museum, Feb. 24-28, 2014

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As we already heard yesterday, textiles are susceptible to damage from many sources: environment, pollution, insects, mould, but also from handling.

Careless handling is one of the greatest causes of unnecessary damage to textiles.

However, it is perhaps the easiest to prevent.

But good handling practice is based on staff training. That's why we are here.

The following lecture gives you some general advice for handling and moving textiles and will show some handles in detail, which we will practice together afterwards.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HANDLING:

- Handle with care
- Avoid over manipulation
- Plan ahead
- Get help in case of need

The best advice is to handle textiles with care and avoid over manipulation.

Always presume that the textile is unique, irreplaceable, and fragile.

A large textile is not necessarily stronger than a small one, but it is often more cumbersome!

Don't touch the textile until you know precisely what you are going to do and how you are going to do it.

Get all equipment ready and prepared beforehand.

Be sure you have as many people as are needed – no more and no less.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HANDLING:

- No drinks, food
- No pens, felt-pens
- No smoking
- No chewing gum
- Never lean on a textile
- Don't leave things on an object

No drinks, food, pens or felt-tips ...should be brought into rooms housing textiles.

Use only pencils when working with textiles (ink stains may be permanent).

Even a glass of water is dangerous: a water stain can disfigure a textile.
Leftovers of drinks and food can attract pests.

No smoking.

No candy, gum, or lozenges should be chewed while working.

Never lean on a textile or leave things, such as pencils or notebooks on an object.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HANDLING:

- Have clean, dry hands
- Wear white cotton or latex gloves
- Don't wear bulky or loose clothing
- Wear aprons or work coats
- Remove jewellery

When dealing with historic or important pieces, clean and dry hands are important.

After coffee or combing your hair, wash your hands.

The natural secretions from your skin attach themselves to the fabric and dust will collect on this base.

The textile will become more soiled more quickly and cleaning will be required.

Cleaning a fragile or antique textile is expensive and difficult.

Washing one's hands takes only a minute; use soap and water, avoid „handwipes“ or hand lotion.

It is a good idea to wear white cotton or latex gloves.

Not only to protect items from hand perspiration but also to protect yourself from present pesticides.

Roll up sleeves ...and do not wear bulky or loose clothing that can catch a textile. Butcher's aprons that cover the front buttons on one's shirt or a work coat are recommended.

Remove jewellery such as rings, bracelets, watches and dangling necklaces or anything that could catch or cling to a textile or its surface.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HANDLING:

- Clean, flat surfaces
- Suitable underlays, covers
- Tags for identification of items
- Separate table for paraphernalia
- Good lighting

Clean, flat surfaces ...should be used when examining or storing a textile. Avoid allowing any part of an object to dangle over the edge of the table top.

Dust cloths or acid free tissue paper should be laid down before starting. Keep all objects covered with adequate amounts of acid-free tissue or a clean cloth when not in use. This prevents light damage and the deposition of dust on the object.

Make it obvious when there is an object beneath a tissue.

Cards, pencils and examination paraphernalia should be placed elsewhere, on a separate table.

A comfortable table height and good lighting provides an ergonomic workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING:

- Plan actions in advance
- Identify hazards
- Assess level of risks
- Take action to eliminate or
- Reduce risks

There will always be a need to move objects, e.g. for putting on display, photography and research. Occasionally whole or parts of collections need to be moved for re-location or in an emergency.

Many moves take place when other pressures prevail (e.g. exhibition deadlines) and other staff or contractors need space.

When planning moves, it is basic practice to identify hazards and assess the level of risks to objects and to take action to eliminate or reduce risks.

Therefore it is important to plan the route, including any rest stops and clear it of obstacles.

Look where you are going!

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING:

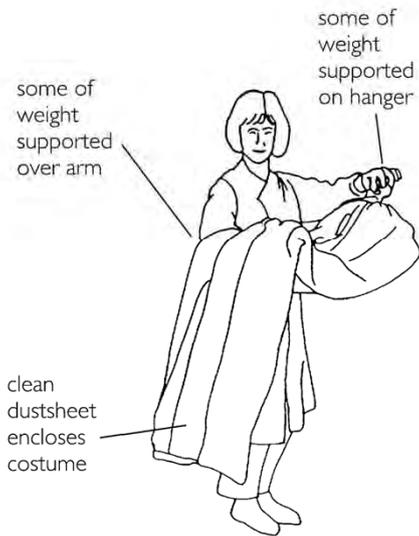
- Provide solid support
- Prepare surface to lay on
- Use trays, trolleys and containers
- Keep boxes and rolled textiles
- Make sure you have sufficient help

Textiles are flexible and do not retain their shape.

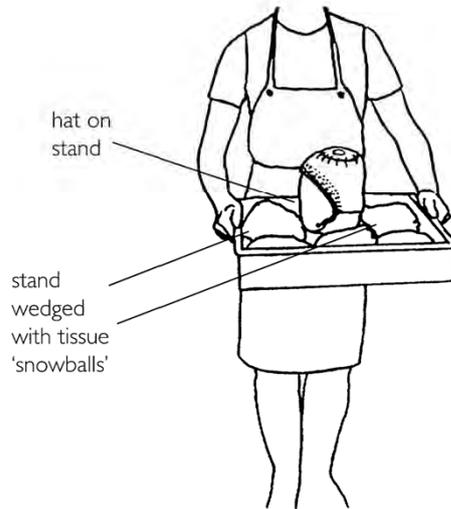
So provide a solid support before moving them and make sure they are well protected.

Ensure there is a prepared surface on which to lay it when you get there.

short distances



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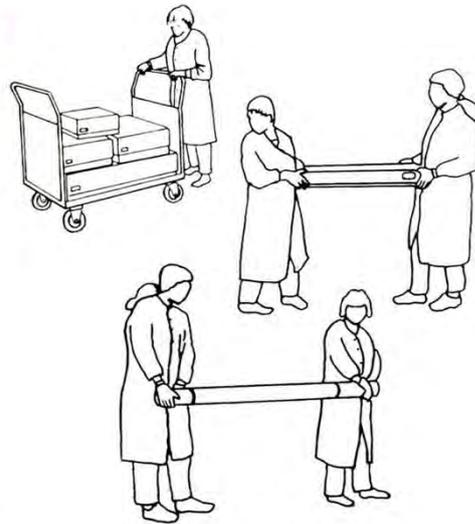


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Garments can be carried short distances wrapped in a dust-sheet, supported on a coathanger and over the arm.

For other 3-dimensional items like accessories use trays restrained by padding with tissue or foam.

long distances



For long distances use a trolley to move, lift and turn around objects.

Keep boxes and rolled textiles level and do not stack them.

Objects being moved to another building should be in containers fitted with lids.



cloth racks



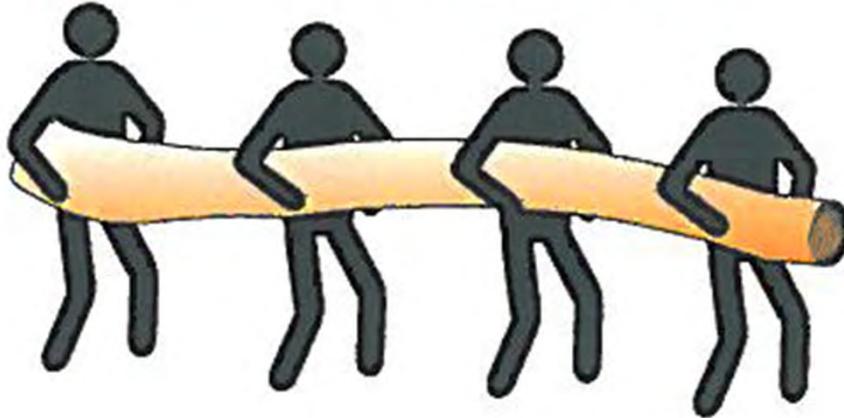
trolley

Choose containers that pass easily through doorways.

Cloth racks and trolleys should be fitted with swivel castors and tyres that damp vibration.

moving carpets

pro 2m² eine Person!



Get help before attempting to move large, heavy carpets and oversized wall hangings.

Have enough people to assist by opening doors etc.

using a work board

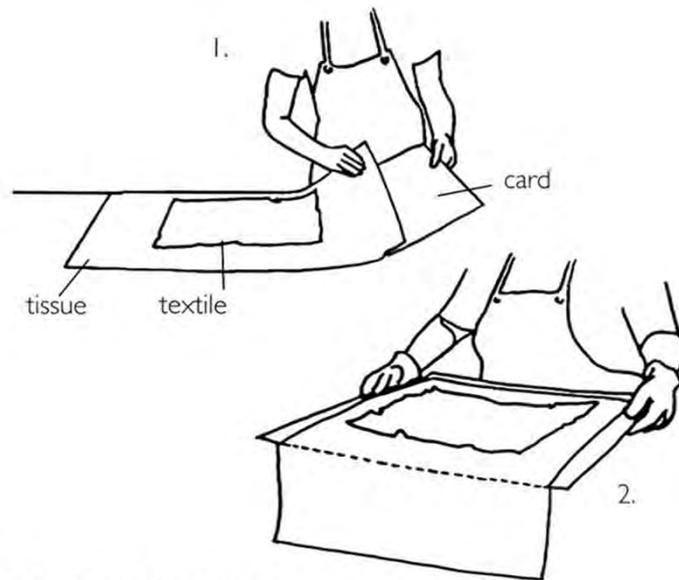


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Often, a work board is useful.

Not only as a clean surface for inspection or research, but also to move, lift and turn around items.

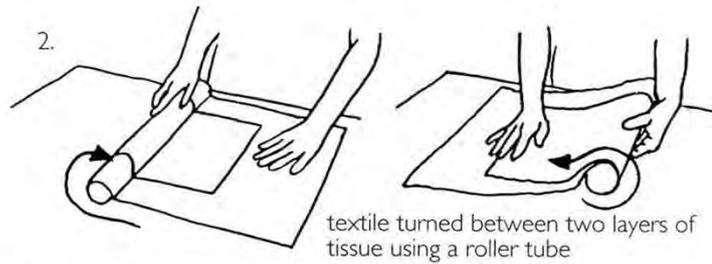
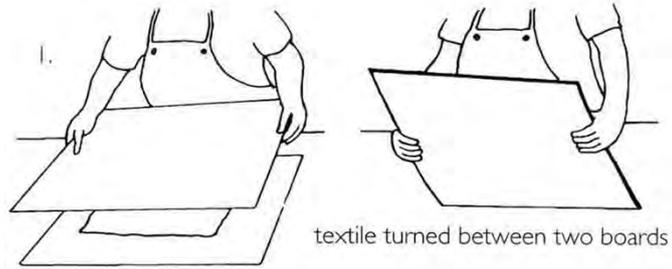
lifting on a support



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Shortly we will practice how to lift a 2-dimensional textile on a support...

turning 2-D-items

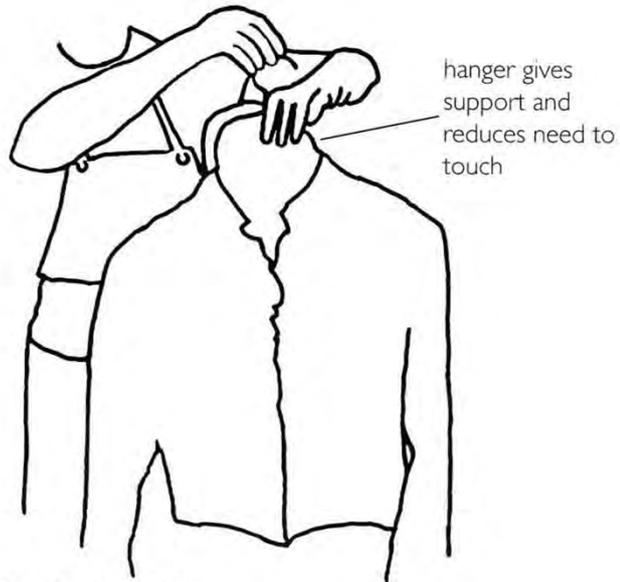


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... and turn it between two boards.

Another safe way to turn 2-dimensional items over is by using a roller tube.

turning 3-D-items



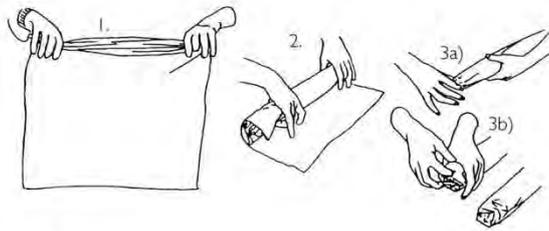
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To lift and turn over garments use a hanger, which gives support and reduces need to touch.

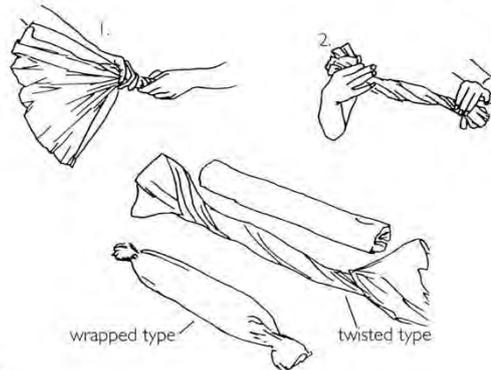
stuffing items

to prevent abrasion

to maintain a 3-dimensional shape



tissue „sausages“



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For storing costumes or other items, some „stuffing“ or interleaving may be necessary to maintain a three dimensional shape or to prevent abrasion between textile surfaces.

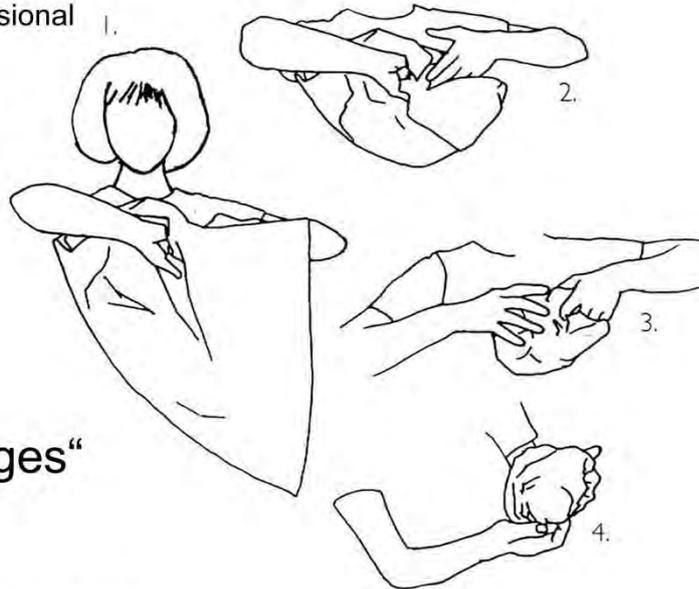
There are two methods of crumpling tissue paper as sausages ...

stuffing items

to maintain a 3-dimensional shape

to prevent abrasion

tissue „sausages“



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... and snowballs.

Be careful about rough edges, so don't use it for very fragile textiles. To avoid those edges you can cover the snowballs and sausages with fabric material.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TISSUES:

- Acid-free, neutral pH (for general textile or costume storage)
- Acid-free, buffered to an alkaline pH (only for cotton or linen textiles)
- Different weights and forms.

In the course of time most tissue paper will become acidic and brittle with age.

The acidity will transfer to adjacent objects, causing these objects to become weaker and possibly discolored.

Acid-free tissue papers are specially processed to remove such contaminants.

Some acid-free papers are, in addition, buffered to an alkaline pH.

These buffered papers are considered acceptable for cotton or linen textiles, but potentially harmful to silk or wool objects.

Therefore it is suggested that a neutral pH, unbuffered acid-free tissue paper be purchased for general textile or costume storage.

For quilts, coverlets, and the storage of other flat textiles an 18 pound weight paper is useful. For „stuffing“ or interleaving a lighter 12 pound paper is suggested.

These acid-free tissue papers can be obtained as flat pieces or on rolls.

A roll of paper is economical and easier to store than flat sheets if a quantity of textiles needs to be packed for storage or if the textiles are

large.

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

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