

# Historic Quilts: Advice on Home Cleaning and Repair

## The Quilt Museum and Gallery



Cleaning and repair of historic textiles can be problematic, and in many cases the Quilt Museum will only have collection items cleaned and conserved by professional textiles conservators. However, we do some basic conservation within the museum, and outlined below are some useful guidelines and links on cleaning and repair.

### Cleaning

- **Vacuuming** - the appearance of textiles can often be improved by surface cleaning using a vacuum to remove dust and dirt. Place netting (or the foot from a pair of tights) over the nozzle and gentle vacuum the surface on a low suction setting where possible.
- **Dry Cleaning** - Many historic fabrics will not be suitable for dry cleaning, and the harsh chemicals used in the cleaning process can damage the fabrics. In many cases, it is better to live with the stains rather than risk further damage.
- **Wet Cleaning** - Great care must be taken when undertaking wet cleaning. Historic textiles should never be machine washed as vigorous motion and modern detergents damage them. Ideally all fabrics should be hand tested for colourfastness. Use a bath and immerse the quilt in a gentle conservation detergent. Ensure it is properly rinsed, and spread out flat to air-dry.

#### Cleaning Supplies:

Gentle detergents and specialist stain removers can be purchased from:

[www.restore-products.co.uk/ecommerce/](http://www.restore-products.co.uk/ecommerce/)

Dirt and stains are difficult to remove, and they are also part of a quilt's life and history. Think of them as adding character!

### Repair

#### Simple netting:

- Small areas of damage can be covered with monofilament netting or silk gauze, to prevent further fraying and loss of wadding.
- This can be purchased from [www.restore-products.co.uk/ecommerce/](http://www.restore-products.co.uk/ecommerce/)
- Cut the netting slightly larger than the damaged piece and gently sew over the damaged area using fine thread.
- Different colours can be bought or dyed to match different areas so that the netting blends in with the original colours and design

#### Professional Conservation:

- Professional textiles conservators have the equipment and specialist training to be able to clean and repair textiles to a high standard.
- Their services are often expensive, but it is worth getting a quote if want more extensive conservation work to your family treasure.

#### Find a Conservator

The Institute for Conservators (ICON) has an online database of conservators searchable by discipline and geographical area. To find a conservator, go to:  
<http://www.conservationregister.com/>