



Hanging Storage for Costumes

Introduction

Structurally sound costumes are often stored by hanging. Although this is an excellent space-saving storage method, it is not suitable for all garments. Costumes that are fragile, that are heavily decorated, or that have weakened shoulder seams due to previous incorrect hanging should be stored flat rather than hung. As well, avoid hanging knits and bias-cut costumes. Further information on storage can be found in CCI Notes 13/2 *Flat Storage for Textiles*.

Preparing the Textile for Storage

Before placing a textile into storage, examine it thoroughly for any sign of insect infestation or mould. If either of these conditions is detected, place infested textiles in sealed, clean, polyethylene bags and isolate them from the rest of the collection. Further information on insect infestation or mould is available in the following CCI publications: CCI Notes 3/1 *Preventing Infestations: Control Strategies and Detection Methods*; CCI Notes 3/2 *Detecting Infestations: Facility Inspection Procedure and Checklist*; CCI Notes 3/3 *Controlling Insect Pests with Low Temperature*; CCI Notes 13/15 *Mould Growth on Textiles*; Technical Bulletin No. 12 *Controlling Museum Fungal Problems*; and Technical Bulletin No. 26 *Mould Prevention and Collection Recovery: Guidelines for Heritage Collections*. If you have further questions, contact the Canadian Conservation Institute for advice.

Remove paper wrappings other than acid-free tissue, especially coloured paper from which dyes could transfer. Before discarding wrappings or attachments such as old accession numbers or dry-cleaning tags, examine them for information that should be documented. Retain and store separately the original packaging material.

Remove pins and staples. These put stress on the fabric and are almost certain to rust. Isolate any corroded

metal fasteners by covering them with acid-free tissue or with clean white cotton.

Textiles should be clean when stored. Soil invites infestation, which can endanger the entire collection. Unless textiles are in a very fragile condition, they can be safely surface cleaned by gentle brushing and by vacuuming through a screen. If necessary, white cotton or linen textiles in sound condition may also be washed (see CCI Notes 13/7 *Washing Non-coloured Textiles*). Whenever possible, give additional interior support to costumes; for example, put crumpled, unbuffered, acid-free (neutral pH) tissue paper in sleeves.

Preparing Hangers

To hang costumes according to museum standards, wooden or plastic hangers are often cut to size and adapted by padding to suit individual garments. The aim is to give support in such a way as to minimize stress on the textile.

It is best to work with a variety of wooden or plastic hangers. Use the style and size of hanger most easily adaptable to the garment. Clothing stores will often donate a few hangers for museum collections.

Do not use lightweight wire hangers. They do not adequately support the garment.

Pad the hanger with polyester or cotton quilt batting to round it to a wide and cushioned form with no sharp edges. This will allow the weight of the garment to be evenly distributed over the shoulder area (Figure 1). Then sew a prewashed cotton cover over the padded hanger. The cover can be machine stitched along the top edge, fitted over the hanger and padding, and hand sewn along the lower edge (see CCI Notes 13/10 *Stitches Used in Textile Conservation* for further information).

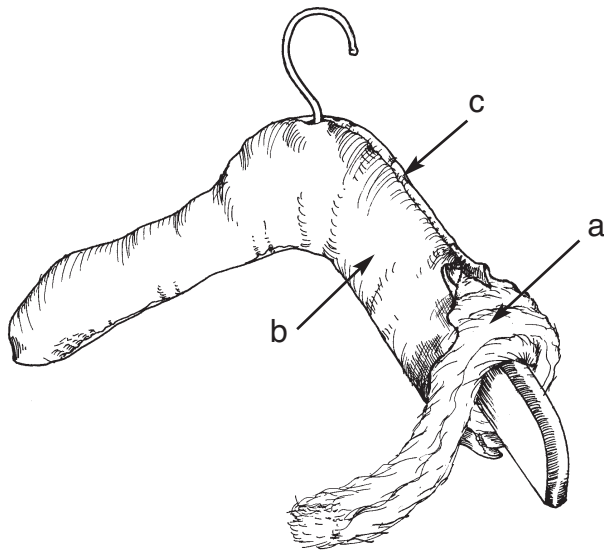


Figure 1. Padded hanger. a, polyester or cotton quilt batting; b, cotton cover; c, seam machine stitched.

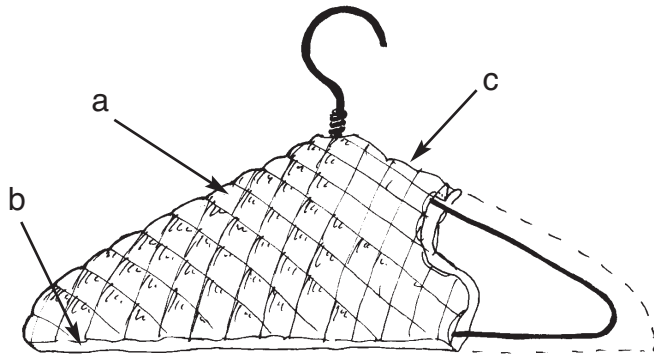


Figure 2. Padded hanger with quilted slipcover. a, quilted fabric; b, open along bottom edge; c, seam machine stitched.

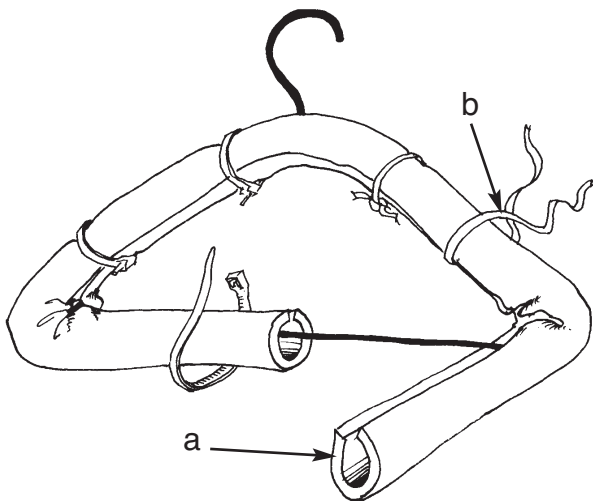


Figure 3. Padded hanger with pipe insulation. a, polyethylene pipe insulation; b, twill tape or nylon electrical ties.

Another option is to sew a slipcover of quilted cotton fabric to cover the padded hanger. This cover is machine stitched along the top edge; the bottom edge is hemmed, but left open, so the cover is removable for washing (Figure 2).

A further option for making a padded hanger is to cover the hanger with polyethylene pipe insulation. Cut a piece of pipe insulation the length of the hanger. Make a cut through one layer of the pipe insulation along its length. Place the centre of the insulation over the hook of the hanger and secure the cut edge over the sides of the hanger. Secure the pipe insulation in place with cotton twill tape or nylon electrical ties (Figure 3). Finish the hanger with a quilted slip cover.

Preparing a Padded Rod or Tube

Straight-cut garments, such as kimonos and ponchos, should not be hung from a hanger. Rather, store them flat or hanging from a padded rod or tube inserted through the sleeves. Pad the rod or tube in a similar way as the hanger: wrap it with polyester or cotton quilt batting, and then cover it with cotton fabric or cotton knit tubing (stockinette). The rod or tube should be a few centimetres longer than the total width of the garment including the sleeves at full extension. Methods for supporting the tubes are described in CCI Notes 13/3 *Rolled Storage for Textiles*.

Hangers for Skirts and Pants

Skirts and pants in sound condition can also be hung for storage. Always suspend these garments from the waist. A wooden clamping hanger can be adapted for this purpose. Line the insides of the hanger with polyethylene foam or multiple layers of microfoam. Secure the foam to the hanger with hot melt glue. Adhere white felt or a white velvet ribbon with hot melt glue over the cushioning layer to reduce slippage (Figure 4).

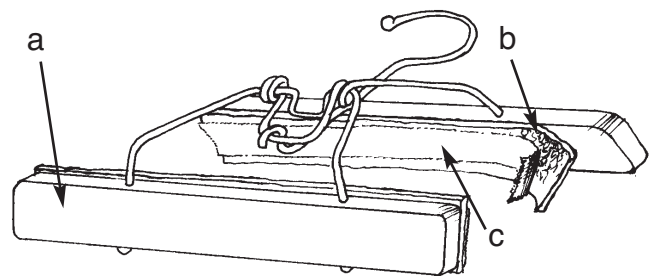


Figure 4. Skirt hanger. a, wooden pant hanger; b, polyethylene foam or microfoam; c, white velvet ribbon.

Note: To reduce the pressure from the clamping action, place a piece of 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in.) thick board between the walls of the hanger for several hours, before it is modified. This will serve to relax the clamping mechanism.

Supplementary Support

Give heavy, bulky, or awkward garments, such as period costumes with bustles, supplementary support from the waist (Figure 5).

- Lay the garment out flat on a table, and insert the specially prepared padded hanger.
- Cut two pieces of white cotton tape (1.5–2 cm wide) approximately twice the length from the waistband of the garment to the hook of the hanger.
- Sew one end of one length of tape onto one side of the waistband on the inside of the garment. Loop the tape around the hook of the hanger, and bring the other end back to the waistband. Adjust the length, and hand sew the second end into place. Repeat this procedure, sewing the other length of tape onto the other side of the garment's waistband.

Whenever possible, give additional interior support to costumes; for example, put crumpled, unbuffered, acid-free (neutral pH) tissue paper in sleeves.

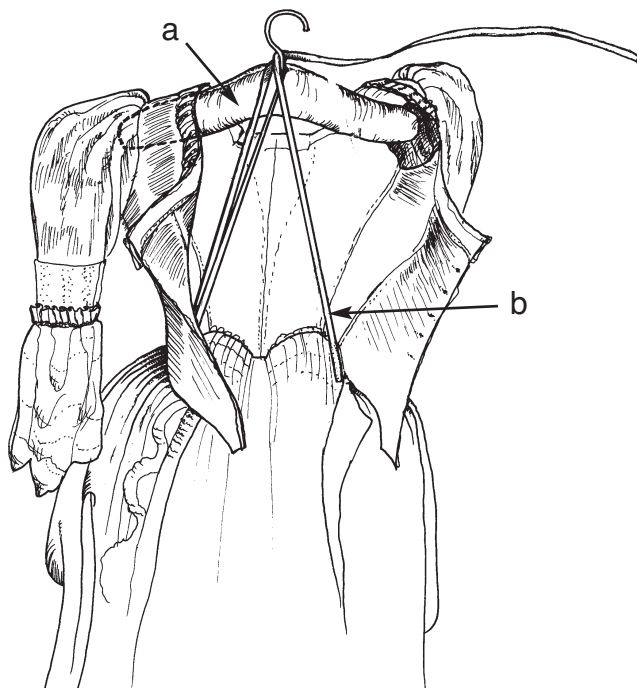


Figure 5. Using tapes for supplementary support. a, padded hanger; b, cotton tape attached to waistband.

Garment Dust Covers

Ideally, each costume should be protected from dust and light, and from contact with other garments, by a dust cover. This can be made from inexpensive fabric, such as prewashed cotton sheeting.

It is a good idea to wash garment dust covers periodically.

The patterns illustrated here may be adapted to fit a particular costume. The closed design is recommended for clothing that hangs near the floor (Figure 6). The open version is usually more convenient for shorter pieces (Figure 7).

The closed design is constructed as follows:

Starting 15 cm above the bottom of the fabric on one side and allowing for a 1.5 cm seam, machine stitch down to and along the bottom of the fabric and up the other side to the top. Stitch along the top, leaving a 2.5 cm hole for the hook of the hanger. Stitch 15 cm down the side. Turn the cover inside out, hem the side opening, and attach the cotton ties.

The open design is constructed as follows:

Machine stitch around the sides of the fabric, allowing for a 1.5 cm seam. Leave the bottom open and leave a 2.5 cm hole at the top for the hook of the hanger. Turn the cover inside out, and hem the lower edge.

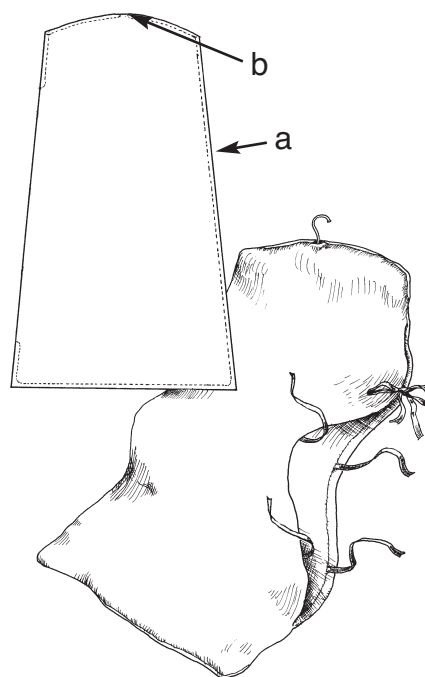


Figure 6. Closed dust cover. a, 1.5 cm seam; b, 2.5 cm opening for hook of hanger.

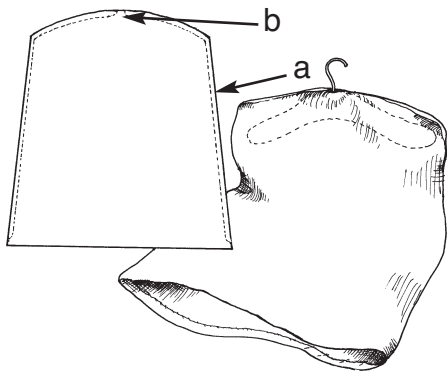


Figure 7. Open dust cover. a, 1.5 cm seam;
b, 2.5 cm opening for hook of hanger.

Storage

Garments should be stored in enclosed units. If open units are the only storage facilities available, enclose them with curtains made of prewashed cotton. Garments that hang from rods in an open storage area should be draped with sheets of cotton. Always hang garments at least 10 cm apart.

To limit handling a costume in storage, attach auxiliary accession numbers to the artifact. Paper or Tyvek tags can be suspended from the storage hanger for easy identification of the costume.

For information on other storage methods, see CCI Notes 13/2 *Flat Storage for Textiles*; CCI Notes 13/3 *Rolled Storage for Textiles*; and CCI Notes 13/12 *Storage for Costume Accessories*.

Suppliers

Note: The following information is provided only to assist the reader. Inclusion of a company in this list does not in any way imply endorsement by the Canadian Conservation Institute.

Polyester or cotton quilt batting, cotton sheeting, quilted cotton fabric, cotton tape, white velvet ribbon, white felt:
fabric stores

Hot melt glue:
craft and hardware stores

Cotton knit tubing (stockinette):
medical supply stores

Polyethylene pipe insulation, nylon electrical ties:
hardware stores

Unbuffered, acid-free (neutral pH) tissue paper:
conservation supply houses

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by the staff of the Textile Lab

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