

Curator: Dr. Michael Marendy - Senior Curator of Textiles (Cultures and Histories Program)

Topic: Preserving our clothing and textile heritage

My name is Michael Marendy and I'm a free-lance textile conservator currently employed by the Queensland Museum to re-pack the entire textile collection that's owned by this museum.

Currently we're using three methods of packing the textiles according to what they are. The first method is flat storage because they're extremely fragile. These are put in polypropylene boxes which are archivally safe and they're usually padded out with acid-free tissues or we have a group of volunteers who come in and make these wonderful bodies that we fit the garments around. This bodice that we're looking at belongs to a ball gown that was made in Brisbane by Brisbane's leading costumier, Mrs. Janet Walker and it was worn to a ball at Government House in July 1892.

The second way that we store textiles is by rolling them and we develop this technique especially because we've got a limited amount of space in the store. It accommodates ten rolls. The textiles are actually rolled onto polypropylene tubes which have been covered with cotton stockinette. The textile is then laid out flat and rolled around acid-free tissue paper and then it's very loosely tied with cotton tapes.

The third method that we use is some sort of hanging system. The easiest way to do it is just to put them straight on to a coat hanger. If the garments need additional support, we make up a hanging body. This garment is in very good condition. It was designed and made by Gwen Gillam who was one of Brisbane's leading dress designers in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Before Gwen's death she donated many garments that she actually made and wore for herself.

If the garments are not in good condition, they have to undergo conservation and this black Edwardian gown which is laid out here on the table is currently undergoing conservation for an exhibition that is going to be held later in the year. It's made out of silk taffeta and unfortunately over time a lot of the silk has split and so we have to add new silk fabrics as stabilisation fabrics to enable us to exhibit the garment safely.

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