

Christening Shawl: cleaning a treasured family heirloom.

Treatment

Written by Sophie Younger, 2020

A beautiful heirloom, this shawl has had generations of use and was required for another family christening. This delicate and large silk tuile or netting shawl was finely decorated with bobbin lace sprigs.



Time and use had caused the material and applied decorations to become discoloured and stained to the colour of 'weak tea' from the original ivory. This sort of discolouring due to age is a familiar sight in old textiles.

Washing textiles is a complicated business and can lead to disaster if care is not taken to support the material, regulate the pH and use suitable detergent, pure soap or water.

Textile fibres are very sensitive to pH, particularly whilst in storage and during wet cleaning because most cleaning agents are alkali. Washing can present a considerable 'shock' as textiles swell, are sponged and handled.



The shawl in a wash tray.

Localised bleaching was required to further improve the look of the 'tea stained' areas. Historic textiles cannot withstand commercial bleaches, so we use specially formulated bleaching agents and regulated the pH.



Dried flat and under a little tension.



Looking fresh after washing.



Project Context

Private Client

Commission 2020

