

## NUMBERING YOUR COLLECTION

Below are listed the most appropriate methods for numbering the many different collection items with museum codes and/or catalogue numbers. Inappropriate numbering can damage collection items. The following guidelines can help prevent such damage. Remember, if in doubt, ask a conservator!

### GLASS

If possible the mark should be placed at the rear, near the base. Lids can be numbered on the inside of the rim.

- Using white spirit or petroleum spirit on a slightly moistened cotton bud, swab the surface gently. Allow to dry for one minute
- Apply a base coat (see page 4)
- Write number using waterproof drawing ink (white lettering is to be placed on clear glass items in order to minimise visibility whilst on display)
- Apply top coat (see page 4)

### LEATHER AND FUR

Depending on the type of article you are numbering, it is possible to use either of the methods listed below.

**Acid-free tags** or woven cotton tape loops can be numbered and tied onto the article.

**Direct labelling** should be on the inside surface only in an inconspicuous place.

To mark the leather or fur item:

- Use ethanol or uncoloured methylated spirit on a slightly moistened cotton bud, swab the surface gently. Allow to dry for one minute.
- Brush on a base coat, allow to dry (see page 4)
- Use a non-clogging waterproof drawing ink to write the number on the base
- Brush a top coat and allow to dry for half an hour (see page 4)

### METAL

Select an area on the object that is unobtrusive. Painted or decorated areas should be avoided, and flat corrosion-free area selected if possible. The numbers of large items should be accessible without lifting. In composite items, the sub number of a component should also be visible without dismantling the item if this is possible.

To mark the metal item

- Use ethanol or uncoloured methylated spirit on a slightly moistened cotton bud, swab the surface gently. Allow to dry for one minute.

- Brush on a base coat, allow to dry (see page 4)
- Use a non-clogging waterproof drawing ink to write the number on the base
- Brush a top coat and allow to dry for half an hour (see page 4)

## PAINTINGS ON CANVAS

**Framed** - Paintings should be marked on the back of the frame with permanent ink

**Stretched** – Paintings should be marked on the part of the canvas that has been folded to the back of the stretcher with permanent ink.

**Loose** – Paintings should be marked on the back of the painting at the very edge of the canvas with permanent ink.

## PAPER

### Books

As for all paper a **soft pencil** (B) should be used. The number/code should be placed on the inside front cover at the bottom, near the spine. If the covers and end papers are marbled or there are detailed or important art works, then the first available plain page should be numbered.

Scrapbooks, sketchbooks etc should be numbered on several pages as they are often cheaply bound and pages may separate from the binding. All loose papers or sheets should be numbered.

### Prints and Drawings

**Soft pencil** – a B pencil is good - on the edge of the back of the paper. Don't press down when writing because you might leave grooves in the paper.

DON'T use biros, other ink pens and markers on paper items. Many of these inks, particularly felt-tip pen inks, can spread and cause unsightly staining.

### Photographs

When it is necessary to label a photographic print, write in soft pencil – a B pencil is good – on the edge of the back of the print. Don't apply pressure because this can leave indents in the photograph and can fracture the emulsion.

Sometimes it is necessary to label negatives. This must be done with extreme care. It is best to use permanent ink. The information should be recorded on the very edge of the negative, outside the image area. It is very difficult to write on the shiny side of the negative, so write on the duller side: this is the emulsion side of the film.

### Stamps

Stamps should not be numbered directly. Mounted stamps are numbered on the back of the mount. Storage envelopes in which stamps are stored should also be marked. There should be thorough photo documentation of each item.

## PLASTIC/VINYL

Acid free tags or woven cotton tapes can be numbered and tied on to the article. Alternatively, numbers on plastics or vinyl collection items should be placed towards the base and to the rear.

- To pre clean, brush the surface gently with a clean, soft, sable brush.
- Brush on base coat. To write on the item use either black or white waterproof drawing ink (see page 4)
- Apply a top coat (see page 4)

## TEXTILES

The catalogue number should be written on cotton tape either in pencil or in permanent ink. Stitch the cotton tape on to the textile with only one or two stitches at each end, using fine white cotton thread.

It is helpful to stitch the number in the same place for each type of textile. This way, you will know exactly where to look for the label and you will avoid excessive handling while searching for the number.

For example:

- For flat textiles, always stitch the label at the bottom left-hand corner at the back of the textile; and
- For costume, always stitch the label at the back of the collar on the inside of the garment.

It may not be possible to stitch a label to all items, for example, fan shoes or hats. Label these items with acid free cardboard tags with string attached. NEVER place adhesive labels directly on textiles – the adhesive will stain the fibres and make them brittle.

It is very useful to clearly label the outside of all storage boxes and rollers. This allows you to see what item is in each package without having to handle the textile.

## WEAPONS

Numbers should be placed close to the butt end, of all items in fairly inconspicuous positions. Swords and knives should be numbered under the hilt. Items are often of composite materials. Individual material types should be numbered as described within this info sheet, if this is required.

## WOOD

Numbers on wooden collection items should be placed towards the base and to the rear.

- To pre clean, brush the surface gently with a clean, soft, sable brush.
- Brush on base coat. To write on the item use either black or white waterproof drawing ink (see page 4)
- Apply a top coat (see page 4)

## DIRECTIONS FOR BASE AND TOP COATS:

**Base Coat:** The base coat provides a well-sealed surface so that numbering will not be directly on the item. Paraloid B72 (available from Zetta Florence) will provide a well-sealed surface so that numbering will not be directly on the item.

**Top Coat:** Paraloid 67 (available from Zetta Florence) can be used as the top coat. The top coat is a protective, sealing coat which should ensure long term survival of the lettering.

**Alternative:** An alternative to these professional methods of coating is to use clear nail varnish.

**Note:** Write the catalogue number on to the Paraloid or nail polish with one of the following: nib or fountain pen with waterproof India ink; Rotring drafting pens with Rotring technical drawing white or black inks; Artline Drawing System 0.1 or calligraphy felt tip pens.