



AMERICA'S
BEST
CLEANERS

Couture

THE FINEST IN FASHION FABRIC CARE

Care

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Stain Removal

Misconceptions & Misnomers

BY DAN EISEN

As a garment analyst, I examine and test thousands of garments a year. I am astounded at the millions of dollars worth of fashion ruined by home stain remedies and amateur attempts at stain removal. The consumer is taught to remove stains using household products without regard to the delicate nature of some fabrics, trimmings, and dyes. High fashion fabrics are designed for fit, fine detail, beauty, feel, drape, and texture. High fashion demands the best professional care in order to maintain the look of the fabric and provide the consumer with long-term use. This is the reason why America's Best Cleaners are chosen to care for the best in high fashion.

My experience as a drycleaner and garment analyst has given me many opportunities to observe the effects of various home remedies that people have used that not only failed to remove stains but caused problems to the fabric as well.

Milk has been used by many people as a spot removal for such stains as ink and blood. As a drycleaner there is one incident that stands out in my mind which

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What is a Couture Cleaner?

What is a couture cleaner? How does a couture cleaner differ from a typical drycleaner? When you go to restaurants, buy a car, or buy clothing, you are aware of the various layers of quality within the various brands. You know what you are looking for. When you buy a car, the difference between brands and models is very apparent. The same for clothing and restaurants! But when you receive your clothing back from a drycleaner, you are receiving the same clothing you dropped off. The difference between drycleaners isn't always so apparent. So, let's take a look at a couture cleaner's tasks, and explore the two main differences that elevate their work to a craft, separating them from the typical drycleaner: Knowledge and experience.

Stain Identification

Some stains can be removed easily and others take a good deal of knowledge and chemistry. If the stain is misidentified, the wrong stain removal agents may be used to "spot" the stain, subsequently setting the stain or making it worse. Knowing which spotting agent to use is part of the experience and knowledge required of a couture cleaner.

Color Fastness

There are a number of ways to dye material. Some are top dyed, some are vat dyed, some dyes are water soluble, and some dyes are solvent soluble. An expert eye can determine the type of dye. When there is any doubt, the dye must be tested. This takes time, experience, and very specific knowledge, all of which the couture cleaner has.

Fabric Identification

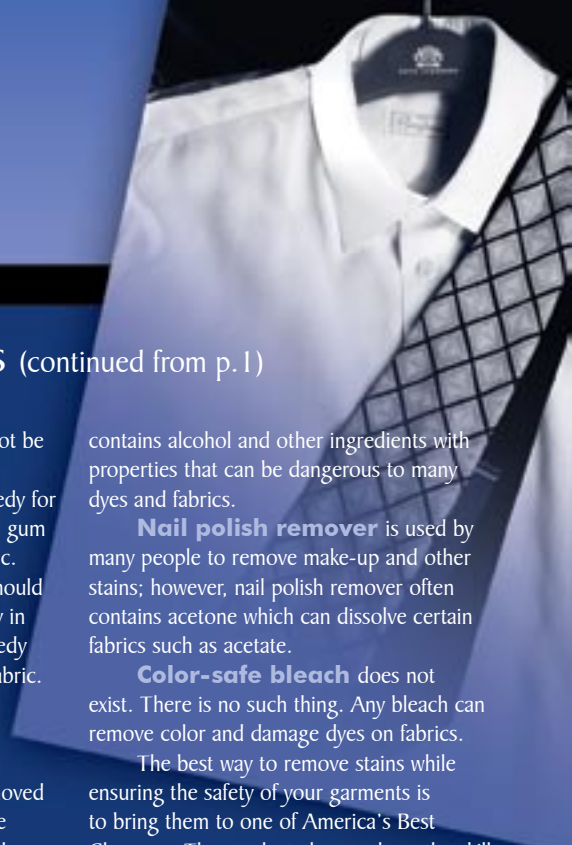
Not only are there many types of fibers—silk, linen, cotton, wool, and many types of synthetics—there are very fragile versions of these same fibers, such as angora, high count cottons, and dozens of types of silks and linens. In addition to the delicate nature of the fibers, there is the weave. Some fibers are woven, others are spun into twills such as gabardines, and some are cut and looped. Some synthetics are durable and some are very fragile. As in the case of most fibers, some shrink with heat others warp and some actually disintegrate. Couture cleaners can properly identify, handle, and clean all types of fabrics.

Embellishments

One of a typical drycleaner's biggest nightmares is embellishments. Many couture garments

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explains the danger of this substance as a spot remover: A customer brought in an expensive antique satin set of drapes which had been stained by ink. The customer had attempted to remove the ink by using milk. We treated the stained area and were successful in removing the ink; however, the milk had set and could not be removed. Milk is an albuminous substance that can set in fabrics and become impossible to treat. It should never be used as a stain remover.

Club soda is often touted as a successful stain remover by restaurant personnel and airline attendants. By popular belief, the bubbles in club soda provide some mystical properties capable of removing stains. Club soda has the same properties as water and nothing more. The bubbles do not act as a stain remover whatsoever.

Alcohol does provide some good stain removal properties; however, it is also an agent that will alter dyes and discolor fabrics. Many deodorants contain alcohol and most of us are familiar with the discoloring properties of this toiletry.

Lemon juice is advocated by some for the removal of rust stains. While it is sometimes effective, it should be noted that after a period of time, the lemon juice will

oxidize and may cause a stain that cannot be removed.

Ice has been advocated as a remedy for chewing gum stains. The ice stiffens the gum and allows it to be picked from the fabric. This may work in limited cases, but it should be pointed out that gum dissolves easily in drycleaning solvent—a much safer remedy than picking at the fibers of a delicate fabric.

Soap and water has been advocated for the removal of all stains; however, dry-based stains such as glue, paint, oil, and nail polish cannot be removed using soap and water. Many times I have encountered situations in which people have literally rubbed holes in fabrics in an effort to remove a stain. In some instances, soap and water can actually set or prevent the stain from being removed. This is due to the alkali content, which will oxidize stains such as coffee, tea, soft drinks, liquor, and fruit juice.

Hot Iron for Wax. Using a hot iron to remove wax from a garment is a sure way to fuse, melt, and damage most synthetic fabrics. Wax dissolves in drycleaning solvent and can be readily and easily removed by any drycleaner.

Hair spray can be an effective agent in removing ink stains; however, hair spray

contains alcohol and other ingredients with properties that can be dangerous to many dyes and fabrics.

Nail polish remover is used by many people to remove make-up and other stains; however, nail polish remover often contains acetone which can dissolve certain fabrics such as acetate.

Color-safe bleach does not exist. There is no such thing. Any bleach can remove color and damage dyes on fabrics.

The best way to remove stains while ensuring the safety of your garments is to bring them to one of America's Best Cleaners. These select cleaners have the skill and experience to handle almost any cleaning challenge. ✱

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Dan Eisen has over thirty-five years experience in the garment cleaning industry. He founded the East Coast School of Drycleaning, was Chief Garment Analyst at the largest garment lab in New York City, and has lectured on textile care at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Dan has trained museum curators in the art of cleaning and removing stains from antique textiles. He holds two patents on stain identification methodology and has cleaned garments for the rich and famous, including Princess Di.

Active Sportswear Trends BY SASS BROWN

Active sportswear has taken on a much higher profile in recent years. The dominance of young, exciting sports celebrities like Tiger Woods has raised these celebrities from sports stars to icons of style—a trend that is being mirrored in the urban-wear market. Many established designers are adding active sportswear to their stable of collections, such as Ralph Lauren's Blue Label and Prada Sport.

Active sports and performance apparel design has become one of the largest growth sectors in the apparel industry, as well as one of the most dynamic areas of design, with constant innovations and technological advances fueling designer's creativity. It is the active sportswear industry that has fueled the current explosion of urban and street wear labels with its innovations—from the original "puffa" jackets, which trickled down from

skiwear, to leisure suits, to yoga and skate and snow boarding clothing. Many current urban giants owe their existence to the innovation and design of active sportswear clothing.

Current technological innovations in this industry include seamless couture, the process by which knitting machines produce garments without the use of any seams. This innovation was originally used to create garments for speed skating, swimming, and skiing, as well as various aerobic and anaerobic sports. Now, this technology has trickled down to the fashion market, with companies like Calvin Klein utilizing it for seamless underwear as well as fashion tanks and T's. The technology behind compression knits, originally used for active sports such as running, has also filtered down to the fashion market where it is being used for shape wear and control wear in women's lingerie and

swimsuits.

Many more examples of high tech fabrications and production exist, inspiring designers throughout the entire industry to conceive of a myriad of uses. Keep an eye on fashion trends, and when it comes to caring for your finest garments, be sure to use one of America's Best Cleaners. ✱

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Sass Brown, a London native, is currently a full-time professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York in the Department of Fashion Design Apparel. Sass has created lines for many manufacturers, from urban clothing for London's trend-conscious teenagers, to her own signature collection of women's designer sportswear selling throughout Canada. Ms. Brown is also the Chair of the Bachelor of Fine Arts Fashion Show Committee at FIT.

What is a Couture Cleaner? (continued from p. 1)

have beads, sequins, feathers, painted leathers, suede, diamonds, metallic trim, cracked ice, glaze, etc. Each one of these trims must be handled differently regardless of the material of the underlying garment. Knowing how to properly handle and care for each type of embellishment is specific knowledge required of a couture cleaner.

Garment Construction

Some garments are very simply constructed, from one type of material. On the other hand, some garments are very complex. Let's consider what some would think is a simple garment—the suit coat (or sport coat). Suit coats have a basic overall material used for the outer layer of the garment. Underneath this outer material are many other materials: Felt under the collar, wiggan materials in the cuff, silk or synthetic linings in the sleeves and body of the coat, seam tape and padding in the armholes and shoulders, and different types of threads (some cotton, some silk, some synthetic, and others a combination). Some threads are heavy, some are thin. Then there is the interfacing—in less expensive coats, these are fused to the outer material to give it body as opposed to being sewn in, as with higher quality garments. Then there are the buttons, buttonholes, pocket materials, gores, additional interfacings, etc. A suit coat may seem simple, but all of these materials react differently to the cleaning process. Though most manufacturers try to anticipate the affect of the cleaning process on their garments, most don't plan for improper treatment. Improper treatment in the cleaning process sends chills up the spines of manufacturers. Couture cleaners have the knowledge and experience to handle the complexities of all types of garments properly.

Measuring Garments

When a garment arrives at a couture cleaner, if there is any possibility that a garment might change shape, stretch or shrink, the garment is measured. Measuring garments before and after the cleaning process is an important step for a couture cleaner, one that is often overlooked by the average drycleaner.

Cleaning Garments

Couture cleaning is both an art and a science. Couture cleaners have spent countless hours

in their trade, training, working side-by-side with garment treatment and care experts—a method of apprenticeship not appreciably different from the guilds of old.

Finishing Garments

Properly finishing a garment is also part art, part science. It takes years of experience to know how much heat and pressure to apply to the countless combinations of fibers and weaves that comprise a garment. A couture cleaner's pressing department employs highly skilled craftspeople. The pressing department's job is to restore your garment to the same neatly pressed look it had when you purchased it. This may sound easy, but just spend a few hours watching an expert finisher press a multi-layered gown with beads, sequins, and multiple fabrics, all reacting differently to the heat and pressure of the hand iron—only then will you understand and appreciate the skill involved. (Yes, couture cleaners hand finish nearly all the garments they handle!)

Inspecting Garments

One of the most skilled people at a couture cleaner is the inspector. The inspector must be intimately familiar with every process step. The inspector must know what every type of garment should look like after the process is complete. At a couture cleaner, a garment isn't finished until the inspector says it is finished.

Packaging Garments

Once a garment has been approved by the inspector, it is ready for packaging. Packaging by a couture drycleaner is a meticulous process. There is a simple philosophy behind packaging: Protect the garment against most eventualities from the

time it leaves the drycleaner until it reaches its final destination—your closet. If it should be stuffed to protect the pressing, then it must be stuffed. If it should be folded, then it is folded; hung long on a hanger—it is done. The proper hanger is always employed by the couture cleaner—in many cases on the same type and quality of hanger used when the garment was originally purchased.

Customer Service

The customer service goal of any fine business is simple: Try to exceed the customers' expectations. At a couture cleaner, customer service representatives are there when you need them. If you have a question or a concern, they will work with you. Your wish is their command.

Your Clothing Deserves the Best!

From cleaning to pressing to inspection to packaging and customer service, when thinking about the differences between drycleaners, think about the various steps in the drycleaning process and the skills involved. When it is time to maintain your clothing, select a fine drycleaner. Your clothing deserves the best—nothing less. ✱



photos courtesy of Escada

Who are America's Best Cleaners?

America's Best Cleaners is a national organization that strives to locate and recognize the best drycleaning establishments in major metropolitan areas throughout the United States. Drycleaners selected by America's Best Cleaners are subjected to a rigorous screening process during which they must distinguish themselves in every facet of the drycleaning business. In addition to having all the essential attributes of excellent quality and service, to be selected as one of America's Best Cleaners, a drycleaner must be recommended by a majority of fashion designers and retailers in its market.

New York
Madame Paulette
212-838-6827

Boston
Holly Cleaners
617-527-3770

Denver
La Nouvelle
303-691-0123

Columbus, OH
Clothing Care Fine Dry
Cleaners
614-478-4696

Omaha, NE
Fashion Cleaners
402-556-1522

Los Angeles
Brentwood Royal
Cleaners
310-451-3663

Miami
Rey's Cleaners
305-443-0839

Hartford, CT
French Cleaners
860-523-5211

Raleigh, NC
Medlin-Davis Cleaners
919-828-0578

Albuquerque
The Cleanery
505-298-2629

Destin, FL
Platinum Drycleaners
850-243-4556

Washington, DC
Parkway Custom
Drycleaning
301-652-3377

Phoenix
Z Cleaners
480-348-2858

Kansas City
Swyden Cleaners
816-444-7774

Fairfield County, CT
Fabricare Cleaners
203-656-CARE

Knoxville
Prestige Cleaners
865-938-7701

Paris, France
Pressing de la
Madeleine
01.42.65.30.11

Dallas
Bibbentuckers
214-267-1700

Cleveland, OH
London Cleaners
216-731-3344

Sacramento, CA
Rytina Fine Cleaners &
Launderers
916-485-4700

Fresno, CA
Jones Cleaning Centers
559-447-5416

Naples, FL
Platinum Drycleaners
239-775-7232



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