

HOW TO BUY AND CARE FOR YOUR LEATHER AND SUEDE GARMENTS (41)

This article will appear in the newspaper in two parts and this is part 1

Leather and suede can be defined as a fashion item having the unique qualities of being elegant, extremely chic and worn by rich and poor alike. The price of a garment can range from under \$100.00 in price up to several thousand dollars when styled by high fashion designers.

As a garment analyst I am called upon by manufacturers, insurance companies, consumers and drycleaners to settle disputes over garment failure and liability. Many of the problem garments involve suede and leather and could have been avoided if the consumer has knowledge on how to detect possible problems before purchasing their garments.

Suedes have a soft nap and is produced on the inside of a hide or skin which is enhanced through buffing with high speed abrasive covered wheels. Leather is the outside of a hide with the hair or wool removed. It exhibits a smooth appearance. Suede and leather can be made from a number of skins including sheepskin, shearling, pigskin, cowhide and lambskin.

HOW TO BUY A LEATHER AND SUEDE

When purchasing a leather or suede there are many things you should look for which will avoid problems in the future.

Mismatched skins-When manufacturers make up garments they use different skins with different textures. Examine your garment carefully because mismatched skins become more evident after drycleaning. Pigskin is a type of suede that contains very little nap and this causes skin to vary in color and texture.

Fading-Some colors on suedes will oxidize while hanging in a store window or showcase. Common colors that oxidize are blues, greens and tan. Check an unexposed area of the suede with the shoulder area for possible fading.

Possible shrinkage-When suedes and leathers are tanned they are stretched to create a uniform finish. During wear and cleaning a small degree of shrinkage is possible. Buy the suede and leather a little larger to allow for possible shrinkage.

Scar tissue-Examine skins carefully for scar tissue which occurs during the life of the animal. This can occur when the skin is injured by insects such as ticks, rubs, lice or damage by other animals. The scar tissue may appear as a slightly lighter area. Manufacturers may attempt to cover these defects with fillers.

Belly wrinkles-Poor skins quality produces wrinkles and uneven texture. Examine all skins carefully especially the arm area.

Thin skins-Skins are cut to form a uniform thickness. Some skins are cut too thin which can develop into weak areas and holes. Feel the skins for differences in thickness.

Leather and suede trimming-When you purchase a white garment with a dark leather or a suede trimming it is practically unserviceable. This means that there is a good likelihood that the suede will bleed when worn or cleaned.

GARMENT ANALYSIS SERVICE

I have spent my whole career analyzing garments for manufacturers, drycleaners, museums, and consumers. I have always tested and given a fair analysis. Many times what looks like a surface problem is really not the true problem.

I have been written up in many newspapers including the Wall Street Journal. My testimony has been accepted in many legal disputes and all judges find me competent. If you have a problem and don't know who is to blame either have your drycleaner contact me at 772-340-0909 or call me. This is not a free service but one that can save a lot of money. Many manufacturers have made good on a garment when they are to blame.