

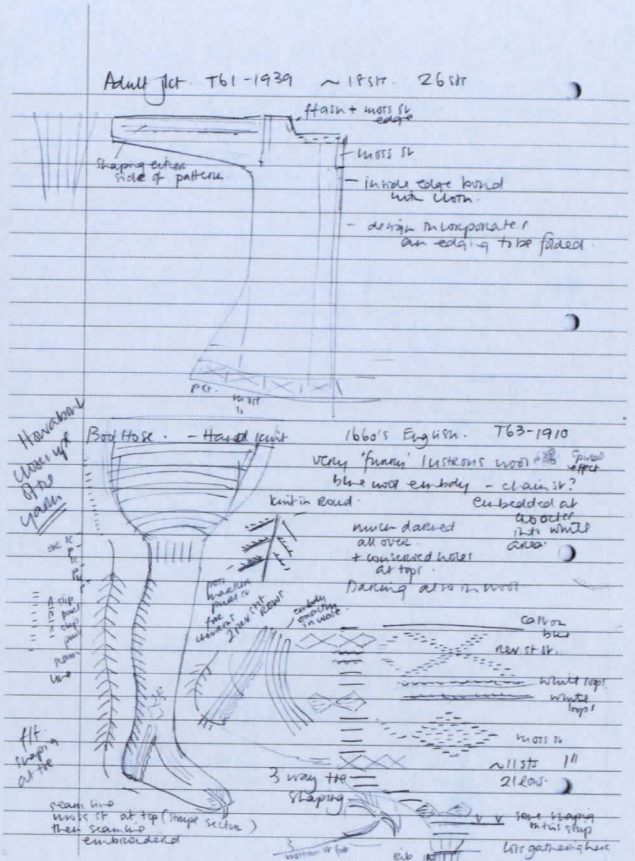
Sandy Black

1.
 Title: Pair of men's knitted hose,
 to be worn with 'Cavalier' boots
 Dimensions: 92.7cm (leg) 26cm (foot)
 Medium: hand knitted wool
 Photo: Victoria & Albert Museum
 Date: 1640s



1.

2.
 Title: V&A Sketchbook
 Dimension: 32cm x 23cm
 Medium: pencil
 Date: 2006



2.

My drawings from the V&A archives are part of a systematic study, conducted over the last nine months, of the museum's entire collection of historical and contemporary knitwear and knitted artefacts.

I am privileged to have been given access to examine the objects in close detail for a forthcoming V&A publication. In addition to documenting the objects visually with digital photography (for overall effect, colour and stitch details), the thumbnail sketches record and help to imprint into memory the

construction and design details of each item. The pair of 17th Century boot hose shown here is a well known piece, now also featured on the V&A website. However, as my examination of this extraordinary object progressed, I found more and more aspects of great interest: its much-darned texture, the embroidery which followed the contours of the knitting structure, the three-dimensional shaping of the toe and so on. I started to record further details as an aide-memoire, and the limited space on my page gradually filled up.

In contrast, the drawing above it, a brief sketch of an undergarment from the same period, was much simpler in construction and quicker to 'read' and remember, without further detailed information. Time in the archives is precious and there is often a sense of haste in the drawings and notes – the collection is extensive with much material to cover. Without the drawings, however cursory, the analysis would be incomplete.

The combination of digital images, analytical drawing and accompanying notes

creates a triangulation within my research process, each complementary, and the act of drawing in a kind of visual shorthand embeds the new knowledge acquired deep in my memory banks, in a way that the more transient and often vulnerable digital imagery does not. (I also keep a constant notebook of thumbnail sketches of knitwear seen in my ongoing research from retail or designer shows). The V&A notebook has become a rich physical resource in the process of developing the final content of the book, and beyond.