

# Hand & Lock, Embroidery

UK

*The embroidery house has created masterpieces for the Queen, the Queen Mother, and Princess Diana, and continues to produce specialist textiles for blockbuster movies and the London Fashion Week.*

## 1767

Hand & Lock is an embroidery brand created from a fusion of two long established embroidery businesses – M. Hand and S. Lock.

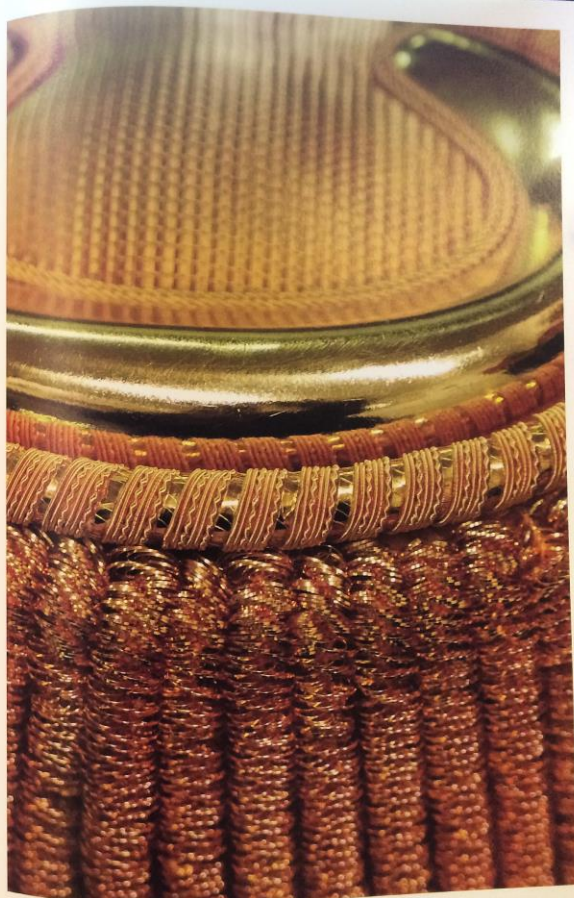
In 1767 a Huguenot refugee known as M. Hand added embroidery to his range of laces, and set up M. Hand & Co.

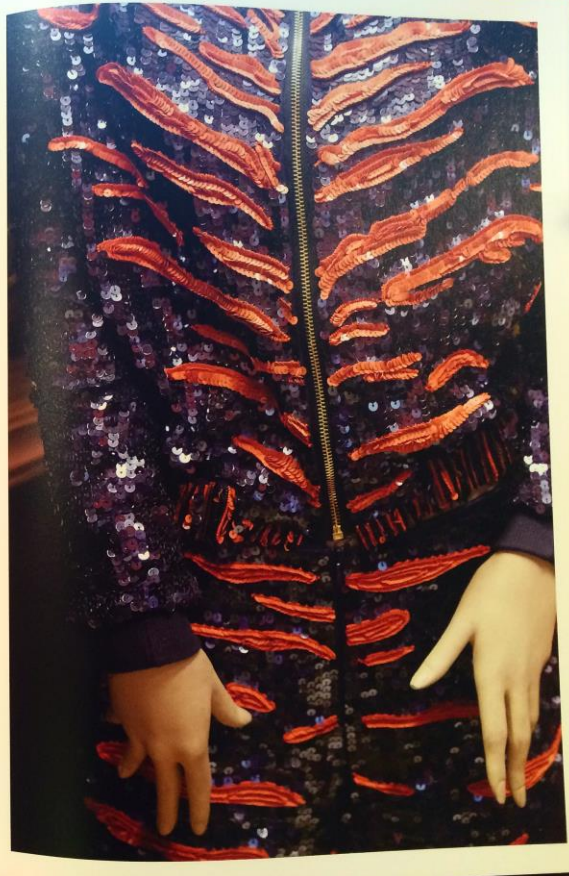
## 1898

In 1898, C. E. Phipps & Co. opened an embroidery business supporting the burgeoning London couture fashion houses. By 1936 it had survived the wars as a modest but well-established business when Mr Phipps retired, and a young designer, Stanley Lock, took over from him. The company was renamed S. Lock Ltd., and reached new heights. Taking notice of S. Lock's success, the monarchy awarded the firm a Royal Warrant. Royal commissions have included gowns for the Queen, the Queen Mother, and Princess Anne's wedding ensemble. Princess Diana added new glamour with her love of richly embroidered garments.

## 2001

In 2001, the two companies M. Hand and S. Lock merged, and the Hand & Lock brand was created.





As a traditional embroidery company, our heritage goes back to Roman times, and we have become world renowned as providers of the finest hand embroidery. We are a living antique, but moving with the times, bringing hand embroidery into the present. We are ready to take on all types of embroidery, big and small, and our rich history guarantees our clients consistency and quality every time.

ALASTAIR MACLEOD  
Chairman

Good tailoring without embroidery is like a blank canvas without paint or a blue sky without clouds. Embellishment offers colour, drama, sunset, and accent. Embroidery is the just singer that accompanies the hand. For thousands of years, decorative patterns have been stitched into the most humble garments, and over time the techniques used have developed into sophisticated art forms.

The Hand & Lock archive reveals the intriguing history of the company, from forgotten designer collaborations to military embroidery sketches from the nineteenth century and earlier. So when Hand & Lock opened a brown folder containing three delicate envelopes addressed to Me Lock postmarked 1947, along with a few photographic prints, quite a special part of the company's past was uncovered. "Thank you so much for the wonderful embroidery you have done on Paulette Goddard's dress", begins the first letter signed by Cecil Beaton, one of the most inspirational fashion photographers of the twentieth century.

Contemporary artist Jake Chapman is the art curator for Peace One Day and asked artists to produce art from decommissioned M16 assault rifles. Hand & Lock was approached with the idea of a fully embroidered rifle wrought in goldwork. The rifle arrived at the studio, and caused a commotion when it was unwrapped. Under the many layers of bubble wrap by the dark steel and aluminium rifle presenting the team with an unusual challenge. But, slowly the steel was covered with cloth of silver and the hand edges and details were embellished in gold and black bullion. The completed gun joined others made by Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas and Sam Taylor-Johnson, and was auctioned to raise funds for charity.

When it comes to military embroidery, the range of products includes tassels, shoulder cords, epaulettes, aiguillettes, gorgets, sword knots, and netted buttons. Hand & Lock also offers a bespoke range of products for the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, as well as for the American, Canadian, and Mexican armed forces. Drafts for rare badges and emblems dating back to the 1700s exist in the archive, and are often retrieved to make new designs. Designs in the archive that incorporate royal crests have to be updated to the present monarch and their chosen crown. Along with the crown, the cypher might have to be changed. A big part of the day-to-day work, this has changed little over 250 years. The team of designers still takes delicate drafts laid out on tracing paper, and redraws them with updates and changes. The designer adds annotations detailing the direction of stitch, the height of "relief", and the exact colours to be used for the embroiderers to work from. Working entirely by hand, they painstakingly lay each coil of bullion to bring the design to life. The process cannot be replicated by machine, and remains a rare and difficult skill requiring patience and an exceptional attention to detail.

Embroidery is the antithesis of mass production; each piece a labour of love, and one of a kind. Hand & Lock's embroiderers, all in their twenties, have stitched pieces for clients such as Liberty, Hermès, Kate Moss, Rihanna, Adidas, Nike, Tom Ford, Louis Vuitton, and Chanel.

The idea of producing a Hand & Lock collection for London Fashion Week first came up in a staff meeting. The feeling was that the time was right for Hand & Lock to produce pieces to highlight its skills and expertise. A brief was written factoring in elements of Hand & Lock military heritage, and then inverted with ideas of rebellion and jungle law. The lion-face jumper signifies self-empowerment; the lion has long been a symbol of inner strength. Constructed meticulously from metal and feathers, the fully sequined trackcoat draws inspiration from military jackets and tiger stripes: a uniform of protest, it represents the strength and power of the dispossessed.

Hand & Lock initiated the prestigious embroidery prize at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Prize is an invaluable opportunity for new designers to showcase their finest creations. The submissions have to showcase design skills as well as the ability to embroider by hand. The object can be a piece of fashion, a piece of jewellery, an artistic sculpture, an embellished tapestry, a piece for home-interior design, etc. The judges look at the concept, sculpture, embroidery skill, and overall presentation.

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