Stays

Place of origin: England (made)
Date: 1770-1790 (made)
Artist/Maker: Unknown
Materials and Techniques: Silk damask, lined with linen, reinforced with whalebone, hand-sewn
Credit Line: Given by Messrs Harrods Ltd.
Museum number: T.909-1913
Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description
Women’s underwear served two purposes in the 18th century. The first function, carried out by the shift or smock, was to protect the clothing from the body, in an age when daily bathing was not customary. Made of very fine linen, the shift was the first garment put on when dressing. Over the shift went the linen stays, heavily reinforced with strips of whalebone. Their purpose was to mould the torso to the fashionable shape and provide a rigid form on which the gown could be arranged and fastened. The hoops were also made of linen and stiffened with whalebone or cane. They shaped the petticoat of the gown to the appropriate silhouette. At various times during the 18th century, this profile varied from round, to square and flat, to fan-shaped.

Physical description
Wine silk damask stays

Dimensions
Height: 31 cm, Length: 81 cm,

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URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O13864/stays-unknown/