



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

PRELIMINARY ABSTRACTS

for

PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

for the

International Mountmaking Forum

at the

Smithsonian

May 5-6, 2010

Naomi Abe, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (May 6th)

An Introduction to cost effective techniques for the creation of costume mounts and mannequins: The Hidden Lead Pellet Technique.

During my time as Collections Manager for the Autry National Center, one of the most challenging projects I undertook was the construction of a full-size mannequin straddling a life-size replica of a horse.

For the purpose of visual uniformity, the mannequin had to be constructed partly incorporating the Dorfman Conservation Forms. The accompanying metal base of the Dorfman forms did not work in this particular case, so the mannequin needed to be secured using a completely unique method. My concern was not only the safety of the objects, but the aesthetic of the display. In the end, I came up with, what I call, the “Hidden Lead Pellet Technique.” This technique utilizes bagged lead pellets inserted into the interior of the Ethafoam form, creating a self-contained support mechanism.

My focus for this particular costume display mount was in the area of the mannequin’s pelvis and thighs. I saw these areas as key in the support of the entire figure. By weighing down these sections of the mannequin using bagged lead pellets embedded into the Ethafoam, I was able to create a solid base which stabilized the mannequin as a whole.

To do this, I first custom carved the waist-to-thigh areas using ethafoam planks. I then created hidden cavities within the buttocks, waist and thighs. I hollowed out these forms and removed small sections of Ethafoam from the interior, while keeping enough thickness in the exterior to later be used as lids for the cavities. Small plastic bags of lead pellets were inserted into the cavities to weigh down the forms and stabilize the mannequin on the horse. I then sealed the cavities with the cut lids and glued them into place. Lastly, to join the waist, hip and thighs, I created a heavy-duty “Garter-belt” of cotton webbing and Velcro.

This mount-making technique allowed for the addition and removal of weight to and from multiple areas of the mannequin to achieve balance while still maintaining the continuity of the surface. The materials required are readily available in a museum environment, and the associated costs are minimal. The concept of my “Hidden Lead Pellet Technique” can be adapted to a variety of objects which require soft mounts for both storage and display.

Marla Miles, Cincinnati Art Museum (May 6th)

Fosshape and Its Application for Costume Mounts

Alternatives to costly fiberglass mannequins and readymade dress forms, such as carved ethafoam and hollow buckram forms, are frequently employed in three-dimensional costume display. These alternative materials can reduce the cost of mount making but can be time-consuming in both preparation and execution. An exploration of a new material, called Fosshape was prompted by an exhibition which required lightweight concealed display forms.

Fosshape is a non-woven material that has the hand and look of felt in its “raw” state. When loosely fitted over a form and pinned or stitched in place the application of wet or dry heat causes the material to shrink dramatically and conform to the foundation form. No dry time is necessary and the post-heating rigidity of the Fosshape is strong enough that generally a single layer can be used to create a functional form for the display of historic or contemporary dress. The introduction of an ethafoam core provides the receiver for hardware required for installation.

Fosshape proved a successful material for display mounts for the exhibition *Contemporary Japanese Fashion: The Mary Baskett Collection* which was on view at the Textile Museum from October 17, 2009 thru April 11, 2010. Forty forms were produced for a wide variety of contemporary garments and accessories. Both head and legs were created to accommodate hats, stockings, and shoes where necessary. The forms proved to be lightweight, inexpensive to produce and aesthetically pleasing. The use of Fosshape for the construction of costume mounts expands options for creative exhibition design and presentation through its versatility and low cost. This paper will discuss in detail the technical aspects of both the material itself and the production of Fosshape mounts.

Hannah Brown, Victoria and Albert Museum (May 6th)

Mount-making for the Medieval & Renaissance exhibition tour

In advance of the opening of the new Medieval and Renaissance galleries this year at the V&A, a selection of Medieval and Renaissance treasures went on a six venue tour with five US locations. The fragility of many of the objects, and the multi-venue nature of the tour heightened the handling risks; objects would be packed, unpacked and installed, de-installed and repacked at each venue. With this risk in mind it was agreed that custom-made mounts would be provided for all objects that required them. In this way we were able to keep control over the mounting method. In the case of the three Rolls Plaques of enameled metal (M.53 to B-1988), the objects were sufficiently fragile for the conservator to request mounts to be created on which these objects could travel, therefore reducing handling.

After consultation we devised a method of placing the objects on a brass keyhole plate with fine retaining arms that could stay attached to the object during transport and then be easily used to install the plaques on a block or other backing by means of carefully placed screws. In this case we supplied a block with the screws already positioned. The mount could also be positioned on any other suitable surface as long as care was taken when positioning the screws, as misalignment would make it difficult to fit the mount. To help with this we supplied a Melinex[®] template for the venues to refer to if necessary. In order to protect the back of the object from the mount, a section of Plastazote[®] Foam was cut to the size of the back plate to form a barrier between the plate and the object. The retaining arms had an added benefit as they could be used to maneuver the object without touching the vulnerable edge and surface; so, at no time did the object need to be directly handled.

To achieve a new method of mounting such as this, a great deal of collaboration was required as well as on-going consultations between each department involved – constantly revisiting the mount design and modifying where necessary. As museums strive to make greater use of their collections, more and more tours are being agreed and objects loaned than in the past. To date, conservation and handling issues have meant that the more vulnerable objects have not been able to tour. This is behind the drive to improve and develop our methods of mount making and packing. The mounts described above were very successful in fulfilling their requirements and are now pride of place with the objects in the new Medieval and Renaissance galleries at the V&A.

Margot Brunn, Royal Alberta Museum (May 6th)

Animal mounts – how realistic do they need to be?

When an exhibit storyline calls for animal forms to support featured artifacts, the conventional approach involves the fiberglass casting shop or taxidermy studio. This poster illustrates the creation of alternative solutions for depicting horse, dog and bear in metal, acrylic and carved foam for ethnographic and historic displays. It examines how these animal forms convey a realistic impression while securely and unobtrusively highlighting the artifacts.

The poster will contain text and images describing the following examples:

Horse mounts

Beaded horse mask (Ethafoam fully enclosed cushion type)

Braided hide headstall (acrylic sheet head outline)

Horse head for patent leather blinkers and bridle (Ethafoam)

Adjustable metal frame for photography (pending permission to use)

Taxidermy Indian pony, dressed

Fibreglass charreria horse, dressed (pending permission to use)

Sled dog mounts

Pet template for foam dogs (pending permission to use)

Sled dogs (Ethafoam dogs with degraded glue lines)

Sled dogs with dog blankets (Temporary exhibit foam mount)

Sled dogs with dog blankets (Permanent gallery taxidermy mount)

Keith Conway, The National Museum of African Art (May 5th)

Challenges and Solutions in Complex Mountmaking: Iranian Tile and Bwa mask

This presentation will address challenges and solutions in complex mount making design and fabrication for two museum objects, one ethnographic & fragile, the other heavy and unbalanced. These objects required several different object mount & armature devices while on exhibition. The mounts simultaneously stabilized the object while presenting the desired curatorial position, & conforming to conservation standards of preventive maintenance and care and any anticipated seismic mitigation concerns.

This presentation will attempt to inform and educate the listener to the value in understanding different mount materials when facing solutions requiring their use during the development various solutions for the same object. Both of the Smithsonian objects presented in this talk, face complex issues involving several mount solutions for each piece. By the nature of its required use, each mount needed is made from different materials requiring a working knowledge of and mastery of each mount material used in mounting. This talk will attempt to explain & explore, through these examples, why the knowledge of various materials such as these, can be crucial in complex mount and armature solutions for objects with these characteristics and similarities.

The museum object/artifact exhibition solutions include the creation and fabrication of prosthetic and interface base support for areas of object loss for the purpose of stabilization. This support makes it possible for a second phase of object/artifact mounting and seismic insurance that involves sliding brass components that lock simultaneously. The object/artifact discussed in these solutions, is a turquoise glazed **"Tile"**: molded Stone-paste sculpture, *from the 13 century, Iran. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.* currently on display, in the Smithsonian.

The second set of mounting challenges includes the creation of several different metal mounting systems for the exhibition of a fragile, 13 foot, African Mask. Mounting this ephemeral art object, required both a TIG welded stainless steel, locking support mount. and, brazed brass support mounts and an additional tapped 360o brass armature. I will further explain how each mount was designed and works together to support the object and how a pulley and lift system was used to install the overlay case to hanging wall cleats. The object/artifact presented is an ethnographic **"Serpent Mask"**: Bwa peoples, Burkino Faso Africa, 20th century, *The National Museum of African Art*, and is currently on display, in the Smithsonian. Quotes will include NMAFA conservator Stephanie Hornbeck.

I will be presenting this talk using power-point digital images, detailed fabrication descriptions, materials and if possible, a question and answer period.

Matthew Cox, Museum of Arts and Design, New York (May 5th)

The Fabrication and Mounting of a Rotating Jewelry Gallery at the Museum of Arts and Design

In 2008 the Museum of Arts and Design moved into a new building on Columbus Circle in New York City. The new building doubled the museum's exhibition space, creating a dedicated gallery for the exhibition of the museum's permanent jewelry collection, as well as, rotating jewelry exhibitions. A series of cases was designed and fabricated for the new gallery, consisting of a straight glass wall case with 45 display drawers and an oval freestanding glass case with storage cabinets. The cases display rotating jewelry exhibitions, while the drawers house and display a selection of the permanent collection.

As the lead mountmaker, I supervised a team of four mountmakers in installing a two hundred piece jewelry exhibit for the opening of the new building. Both of the cases for the new gallery were fabricated with Medex panels laminated with ethafoam and wrapped in linen. The oval cases have a grid of pre drilled holes in the ceiling for suspension. The ethafoam allows for pin mounting without the need to drill into the Medex and the drawers have removable panels that use pin mounts along with some mounts sewn directly to the board. The jewelry mounts consist of brass mounts, pin mounts, and suspension mounts. Extra panels were also created that can be prepared in advance and swapped out before the museum opens to the public.

The exhibits in these cases have rotated three times since the opening of the new building. The rotation of the space is completed within a ten day period. The use of pins and a wire suspension system creates an efficient method in changing out the cases in a short time frame with a small staff. In addition, the use of small pins keeps the damage to the fabric to a minimum and the use of removable panels will allow us to easily replace the fabric once it becomes damaged.

The jewelry gallery has been a great learning experience for myself as to how to create a gallery consisting of a large number of jewelry mounts that can be changed out easily on a rotating exhibit schedule. The exhibits have worked out as planned thus far and the cases have proved effective for rapid turnover.

BJ Farrar, Antiquities Conservation, Getty Museum *(May6th)*

Jeff Maish, Antiquities Conservation, Getty Museum

Mara Schiro, Getty Conservation Institute

A preliminary review of some alternatives to Pliacre (PhillySeal R) epoxy putty-

For decades, Pliacre (PhillySeal R) epoxy putty has been used in the fields of mountmaking and conservation. This versatile product provided a number of useful applications and was favored for its inert properties and ease of use.

Following the announcement that Pliacre would no longer be produced, a search was initiated at the Getty Museum in 2007 to find a suitable replacement product. As new epoxy putties were being investigated, the opportunity presented itself to expand the range of products tested to explore a broader variety of epoxy putties and pastes.

The presentation will look at attributes of Pliacre in the development of an initial search criterion and the expanded range of products that were Oddy tested. While no direct replacement was found for Pliacre, our preliminary study points to some promising alternative products, as well as other epoxy putties and pastes that may be of use to mountmakers and conservators.

Susanne Gänsicke, Pamela Hatchfield, Jean Louis Lachevre, Craig Uram, Dante Vallance,
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (May 5th)

New mounting systems for ancient objects for the special exhibition “The Secrets of Tomb 10A: Egypt 2000 BC” at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

This paper discusses the remounting of two extremely fragile and large objects for “The Secrets of Tomb 10A: Egypt 2000 BC” on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from October 18, 2009 to May 16, 2010. The exhibition focuses on the tomb of Djehutynakht and his wife, dated to the Middle Kingdom (2040-1640 BC), whose rich collection of funerary equipment was excavated in 1915 by the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts expedition at Deir el-Bersha in Middle Egypt. A few significant objects of the same period but different origins supplement this group.

For the installation, two objects of large scale, significant weight, and exceptional fragility had to be relocated within the Museum. The formulation of custom-designed armatures was required as both objects are comprised of multiple elements: one by ancient design, the other due to burial-related deterioration. The exquisitely painted cedar coffin panels from Djehutynakht consist of massive wooden timbers joined by mechanical means. The granodiorite sculpture of Lady Sennuwy, also dated to the Middle Kingdom but excavated in Kerma, Sudan, is riddled with cracks caused by the oxidation of iron-bearing minerals within the rock. Because of the precarious structural nature of both objects, in addition to the fragility of the paint on the coffin, handling of surfaces had to be kept to a minimum throughout.

Each artifact required the collaboration of conservators, conservation engineers, structural engineers and contractors with diverse technical expertise, including the use of gamma radiography of the stone sculpture to visualize external support structures. Mounts were developed to fulfill two functions. First, they had to secure the structural integrity of the object and aid in its long-term preservation. Secondly, they had to facilitate the move to a temporary exhibition and allow secure reinstallation in their final location within the building. At the same time, the new systems now also guarantee mobility of the objects in the future.

Abby Krause, Colorado Historical Society (May 6th)

“Old Monarch, New Mount”

The “Old Monarch” is a cross section of a cottonwood tree that was cut down in 1883, in Pueblo, Colorado, two hours south of Denver. The tree slice is a beloved treasure for the people of Pueblo. The tree was three hundred eighty-eight years old, eighty-eight feet tall, and had a circumference of twenty-nine feet. The tree slice was previously mounted on a wooden easel, made with 4x4s. The project, with a budget of \$530, was to create a new mount that could also be used for shipping purposes, as the tree slice had to be moved from off-site storage, to the main museum. It had previously been on display at the El Pueblo History Museum and the public had asked about its absence.

The project:

I created a steel mount, keeping the previous angle of display. Through templates, photos, and measurements I designed and welded the mount at our shop in Denver.

The design:

I wanted to create a sturdier mount, putting the collections staff at ease. I also wanted the ability to drive a forklift and pallet jack under the mount, so that the Pueblo staff could move the tree slice without hiring art handlers. Finally I wanted to design a mount less bulky than the 4x4 easel.

Gordon Lambert, Seattle Art Museum (May 5th)

A Beginner's Mannequin: Museum Action Figure or Crash Test Dummy?

Task: Present Lightning Serpent Mask (Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Tseshaht Band, ca. 1910) as worn in 1950's photograph showing women dancers in Port Alberni, BC, Canada.

Background: Recent staff layoffs have created opportunities including in-house fabrication of mannequins. This seemed like a natural extension of mountmaking skills. A period of research was in order, so I took a look first at activity at our local ballet company costume shop and the University of Washington's Ethnology/Natural History Museum. Each had a unique usage of the human form.

I started construction welding small section steel square tube as a skeletal structure that would be quite stable. Ethafoam filled out the larger body volumes.

Issues and Problems – Face, hands and Feet: As my mannequin presented a full face, three possibilities emerged: 1) A heavy abstraction of facial features; 2) A realistic and detailed approach; or 3) Something in between – show enough anatomical detail but still be generalized and “Neutral”.

The mask now mounted to the head has its own presence and these issues seem resolved. At this writing, hands and feet still present problems but are relatively minor.

Future Work: An overriding problem with projects like this at the Seattle Museum has been the acceptance or rejection by the “near audience” (curators, designers, conservators). The myriad decisions that are made and the final aesthetic are very subjective.

The next project in the pipeline is to present one of contemporary artist Nick Cave's sound suits. This will be somewhat easier as it's an entire ensemble covering virtually all figure features.

My next area of research will be appropriate materials and techniques. My repertory of foams, felts and fabric is limited – sewing skills would be a terrific addition.

A limited number of images would accompany this presentation.

David La Touche, Benchmark (May 6th)

Mounting Necklaces as Worn.

A technique to facilitate developing the shape of a difficult, multi-part object, in this case a necklace. By making a separate mount for each element and fastening those mounts to a many-stranded brass "mop", one can then position each separate mount for each separate element in space, adjusting them as needed until the desired orientation of the necklace is achieved. Then each separate mount is connected to the next and the "mop" is cut away, leaving a complete necklace mount composed of all the individual element mounts. Sounds confusing? The photos and schematics may help.

Mair La Touche, Benchmark (May 6th)

"New Mannequin Design for Fragile & Hard-to-Handle Parkas" details the construction of mannequins for hooded parkas from the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

These beautiful garments are an important part of the over 500 objects selected from the two museums for long-term loan to the NMNH Alaska Arctic Studies Center. "Living our Cultures", the Arctic Center's inaugural exhibit, is scheduled to open in a new wing of the Anchorage Museum in 2010.

Those objects going to the Center are expected to be taken out of the cases periodically for study, so one of the core requirements in the exhibit is satisfying this expectation of a high level of access to the collection by Alaskan Native populations. Part of the challenge to conservators and mountmakers was to balance access to the objects with their safety and long-term preservation.

In the instance of the mannequins, the problem was stated as needing: Easy removal from the cases, a certain facility in handling and moving the artifact when on the mannequin, the ability to dress and undress the mannequin with a minimum of handling to the object, and a visual effect that was somewhere between a realistic body and the fuller support that would be best for a garment on long-term display. The parkas - of gut, caribou, squirrel skins & auk hides - are fragile and cannot take vigorous handling. Nor do they open up in the front, as so many clothes do, which would allow for easier dressing and undressing. And they all have hoods, which needed to be supported as well.

The ultimate solution is built around a three-part design that was used with variations for all five garments. First, there is an Ethafoam "noodle" that supports the sleeves in one continuous arc. That piece has a slot in it that fits onto a "handle" fitted into the top of the mannequins' Ethafoam torso. With the fitting of the arm-piece over the handle, the two parts are locked together. The third piece in the design is a "headband" that pegs into the arm-piece. It is this last piece holds the hood up.

The advantage of this design is in the ease of manufacture, the ease of dressing and undressing and the additional advantage of being able to use the "noodle" as you would a hanger with which to carry and handle the parka, or alternately, using the "handle" to carry or move the mannequin all in one piece, with minimal touching of the garment itself.

I usually make mannequins that are realistic bodies, carved from Ethafoam. I knew that was not the answer for these pieces. The solution that was hammered out - through a bit of trial and error - is one I am very pleased with. First because I know they were relatively easy to make, unlike the carved bodies. But more so because of the ease of handling which is a real and a pleasant surprise, evident to both me and the conservators every time we have to dress or undress one of these remarkable artifacts.

McKenzie Lowry, J. Paul Getty Museum at the Villa (May 5th)

Exploring Designs for Concealing Object Mounts

Recently, the role of display mounts for art and artifacts has undergone a significant transformation. The recognition that any object put on display is made vulnerable to the effects of visitors, vibrations due to man-made forces such as subways, or natural forces such as earthquakes, has fundamentally changed our expectations of the protection that a mount can and should provide. In the course of designing mounts that fulfill these expectations, sometimes referred to as seismic mounts, today's mountmakers are challenged to find methods that do so without compromising the visual integrity of the object itself.

This presentation will illustrate specific examples of materials, methods, systems, and designed environments that help reduce the visual impact of modern or seismic mounts. Focus will also be directed towards evaluations of stability and structural issues, which can become complex when concealment is a top priority.

Jonathan Pressler, On the Verge Design (May 5th)

Arctic Studies Center, Anchorage Alaska: Mount Challenges and Solutions for Northwest Coast Objects for a Study Collection in an Earthquake Zone. Or, How I Learned to Hate My Job, but Grew to Love Myself.

As if mount making as a presentation discipline weren't challenging enough. Try this recipe the next time you're in your mount kitchen and see what kind of results YOU get!

In a large mixing bowl, combine the following ingredients with 1 ½" paddle bit using a **MAKITA BDF452 18V LXT Lithium-Ion Cordless 1/2" 2-Speed Driver-Drill**, with 450 in. lbs. torque, and variable speed adjustment.

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp.** - 500 plus Northwest Coast objects, many with multiple pieces and moving parts.
- 1 ½ cups** - unorthodox case design.
- ¾ cup** - object selection based upon want vs. condition, stability and safety of the object.
- 2 Tsp.** - conservation expectations that exceed standard mounting procedures.
- 1- 2 lbs.** - objects shipping to Anchorage, Alaska.
ON THEIR MOUNTS
- ½ lb.** - objects being moved from case side to study area.
ON THEIR MOUNTS
- 1 lb. 3oz.** - object handling for examination purposes in multiple orientations.
ON THEIR MOUNTS
- 1 Dash of hope.
- 2-3 prayers to the Mount Gods, peeled and quartered.

Fold above ingredients into a standard 9x12 inch baking pan.
Pre-heat torch to 1275°F and bake from January to October.

Serve on a large oval platter and sprinkle liberally with
1 – 6oz. can of **GOOD LUCK WITH THAT**. Organic preferred.

MMMMMmmmmmm..... Yummy

Bon Appetit!

This presentation paper will consist of examples of the mount challenges and solutions for Northwest Coast objects being loaned to the new Arctic Studies Center, Anchorage, Alaska from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH).

By looking at specific examples from these two collections, the address will focus on the unique challenges these objects presented in trying to fulfill the goals of safely mounting study collection objects, many with multiple and moving parts, that will travel on their mounts, both in shipping to Alaska and from case side to a study area within the center, all housed within an earthquake zone.

Considerations to be explored are choice of suitable materials, mount design and fabrication, aesthetics of mount design vs. safety and stability of the object, and the collaborative approach that evolved between a revolving team of 7-9 mount makers attempting to satisfy the unique goals set forth by the curatorial, conservation, and design teams.

The range of mount solutions for this project was limited only by the imaginations of the team members involved and it is hoped that this presentation will be of benefit to any current or future projects that attendees may experience.

Carl Schlichting, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia (May 5th)

Mounting MOA's new visible Storage

On January 23, 2010, The Museum of Anthropology, UBC reopened a six year renovation project which saw major expansion of research/interpretive use, exhibit space, curatorial, conservation, and artifact storage facilities. This presentation will review the challenge of creating over 1500 specialized mounts for the refurbished and expanded Multiversity visible storage gallery.

Numerous flexible function prototypes were developed and utilized for a variety of artifact types. The mount solutions are frequently hybrid in nature utilizing both display and storage design guidelines. They combine standard mount making acrylics and metals with Plastazote foam and mat boards. Many of the mounts also serve as a permanent method of handling.

The presentation will describe the “fixtureization” or connecting system to the new case furniture as well as show technique and examples of the massive black tray program that saw over 14000 objects mounted. It will also describe the mount making equipment and tools developed and utilized for the project

Prior to this project MOA had no mount making staff or equipment. Only one professional mount maker was contracted to set up, equip, hire, train and manage the new personnel. As many as 7 full time or part time staff made up the crew, most with no previous mount making experience.

Jenna Wainwright, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (May 5th)

From pole to puzzle: Crafting a mount for a bark cloth figure

My presentation will describe the mounting of one particular object, a 175 inch tall headdress effigy from Papua New Guinea. In 2007, with the redesign of the Metropolitan Museum's Oceanic galleries, the bark cloth figure affectionately known as E.T. was brought out of her crate for the first time since entering the Met's collection in the mid-70s. Previously, there was no display case large enough to house E.T., and no opportunity for the enormous conservation effort needed to stabilize her.

The figure was in two pieces, the head measuring 53 inches high and the body 107 inches (an additional 15 inch long neck was constructed by conservators after the head and body were mounted together in its permanent case.) While previously in the collection of the Museum of Primitive Art, the head and body were simply placed upright on a large bamboo pole and packed tightly with excelsior to keep it in position. In fall 2006, the conservator on the project, Christine Giuntini, and her team removed the excelsior from the figure and proceeded with conservation of the bark cloth and rattan inner structure. My job was to figure out how to support this hollow figure internally (without repacking the body with filler.) Furthermore, E.T. would be displayed at a thirty degree angle leaning forward for optimum viewing, which meant the object would be cantilevered over a distance of about eight feet. E.T. herself weighed only a few pounds, but the cantilevered weight of the object with the mount was substantial.

The resulting mount combined aluminum and brass tubes with a complex system of thumb screws, ring clamps, and collars. Since the openings in the body and head were only 4 to 6 inches, most of the hardware had to be assembled inside the object (at a maximum arm's length.) The mount was constructed in 4 main parts: the head mount, the body pole with shoulder and hip supports, the framework for the reconstructed neck, and an external cradle at the lower end. In my presentation, I will explain how the parts were designed to fit inside E.T. and the methods by which they're all connected to each other.

Helen Weir and Mike Peel, Natural History Museum, London (May 5th)

Layering Life: Mount Making for the Darwin Centre Cocoon

This paper follows the technical and creative journey experienced working on the Darwin Centre Large Glass Case from conception to completion. The case is based at the centre of the Cocoon Explore Tour and allows the visitor to stand in awe of what nature has to offer. Layers of plant and insect life flowing over each other to highlight and explain the diversity found in nature and to showcase the magnificent collections the museum holds. The technical aspects of creating this effect, although daunting were fascinating, new and exciting for the museum exhibitions team.

The initial starting point of a research trip to the Naturalis Museum Lieden led to an important lesson in the spray mounting of botanical specimens which proved integral to the design of the Large Glass Case. However, transferring seaweeds on to a vertical transparent plane with minimum intervention was a problem we had to thrash out in the workshop. This meant remaining positive despite the pessimistic tone of scientists, curators, and professional plant mounters. Organisation was key when dealing with the 313 fragile specimens destined for display in the case. Accounting for every leaf, petal, leg, wing and antennae pushed our specimen handling skills to their limits. Detailed planning and numerous case mock-ups led to a smooth but nerve-wracking installation with little margin for error. Conflicts of interest were faced head on regarding aesthetics, maintenance and the needs of the specimens in the quest for minimal/invisible mounts.

This paper documents a steep and valuable learning curve, which resulted in the development of mount making and installation techniques new to the museum and used to spectacular effect.

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/darwin-centre-visitors>