



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

PRELIMINARY ABSTRACTS

for

PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

for the

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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.