

KAHU ORA – LIVING CLOAKS

Development of Adjustable Rib Forms for Māori Cloaks

INTRODUCTION

For our Exhibition *Kahu Ora – Living Cloaks* we had a large number of **Kākahu (Cloaks)** proposed for display. A lot of them were chosen to be put on forms - rather than flat - so we could show the natural shape of the Kākahu, as they are traditionally worn.

The number of Kākahu in the exhibition to go on forms, and the difficulties in sourcing the Ethafoam that we had been using for making cloak forms, were factors in developing a cost-effective, resourceful way of making cloak forms for exhibition.

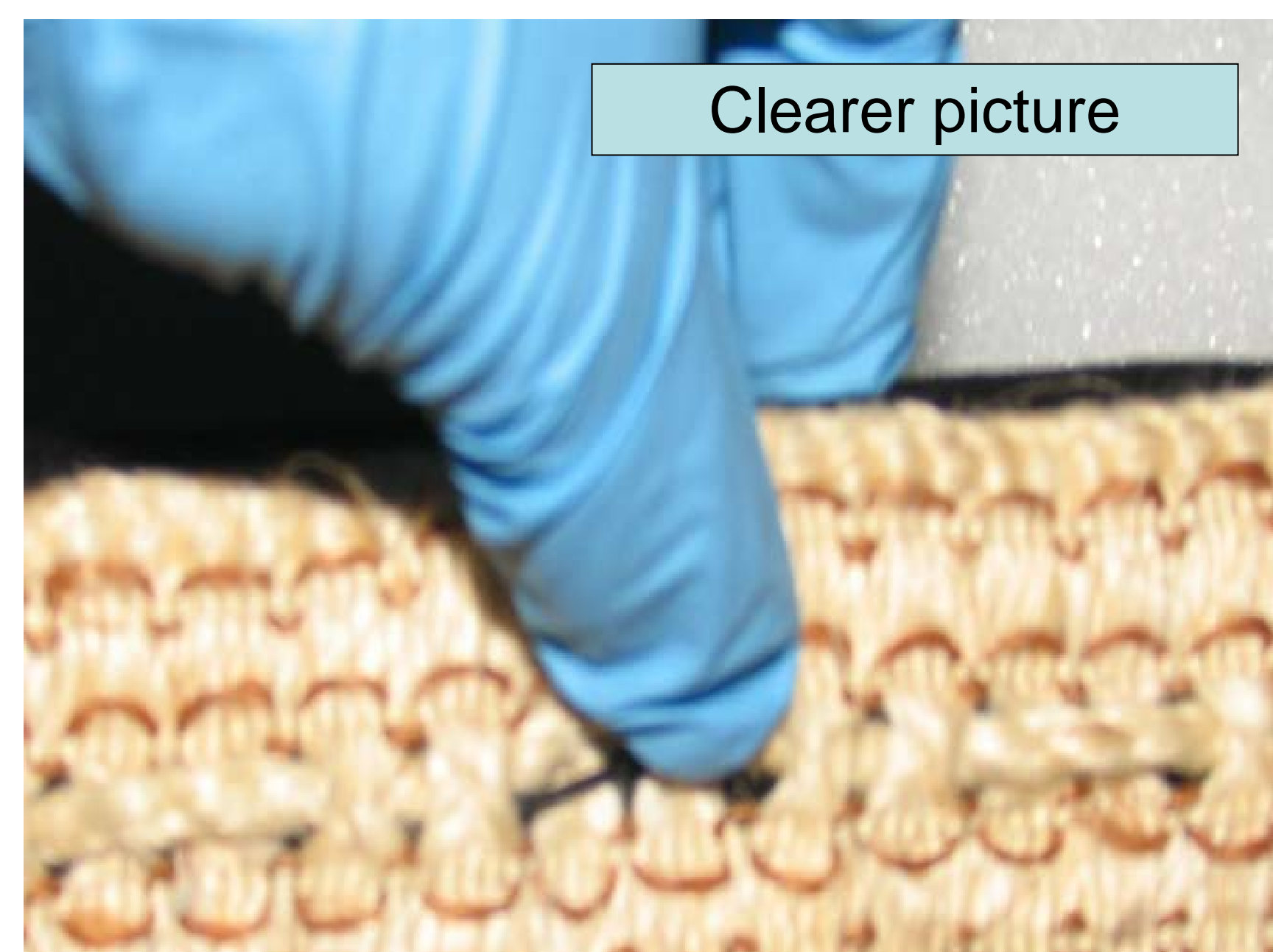
Our rib form is based on a mount seen at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. We have further developed it to suit our requirements—for example Māori Kākahu are typically rectangular whereas Hawai'ian cloaks are semicircular and fuller at the bottom. Our rib form is used for display of cloaks that are in good condition and not exceptionally large or heavy. We continue to use cylindrical Ethafoam forms for cloaks which are more fragile, exceptionally heavy, or very large. Extremely fragile Kākahu are always displayed lying flat.

The rib form is an **Exhibition Mount** rather than a storage Mount. It was developed for **short and long term exhibitions**, but length of display also depends on light exposure requirements and fragility of the garment.

ADVANTAGES

Unlike the Ethafoam form, which has to be customized to each object, the **rib form can be reused** for a variety of cloaks of a similar size. By changing the size top, the mount can be reused for a different cloak.

Because the form is adjustable, it can be made using only the dimensions of the cloak, thereby **reducing the handling** of the cloaks. The width of the cloak at the top edge is equal to the circumference for the oval shoulder part at the top, the length is the length of the ribs minus the oval disc. We also work with object templates for trying out the right settings on the form. Usually it only takes one fitting, and final adjustment of the ribs is carried out with the cloak on the form, through the cloak's opening.



Visitors can see the details of the weave and construction of the garment on the underside when the object is displayed on this mount. This is especially useful if the outer surface is embellished with feathers or other decoration.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION

The **HDPE** (high density polyethylene) ribs have **low moisture absorption**, a good **impact resistance**, are **flexible**, **passed the Oddy test** (January 2012 – though we recommend testing a sample from your supplier, as manufacturing processes and ingredients can vary). HDPE is **easy to work with** on woodworking machines, can be cut, drilled, planed, stapled and screwed into, and has a **high resistance to cracking and breaking**.

It is **possible to add padding, fabric and foam** in different parts of the form if needed, to create bigger areas for pinning the cloaks or to stabilize the Mount when travelling.

The rib form consists of a **central steel tube** which is inserted over metal pins at top and bottom.

Three oval moveable discs are fitted to the pole with a sleeve which slides over the tube and fitted with machine screws at the desired height.

Each of the discs is fitted with **series of holes**, into which **metal rods** are inserted. The rods are **attached to each rib** and enable the distance between the rib and the central pole to be adjusted. Depending on the shape of the cloak the ribs can **bow out, stay straight or pull in by changing the position of the pin to a different hole**.

At the **top of the mount**, there is an **oval disc** made of 18mm thick MDF and 100mm Ethafoam which are covered by a brushed **Nylon Velcro receptive fabric**. The ten HDPE ribs are **hinged at the top to the MDF**.

The Kākahu are either attached with **pins** or **Velcro** to the fabric-covered Ethafoam.

TE PAPA
OUR PLACE



Picture of traditional cloak or shaped cloak on form still to get Copyright

