Articulating Bodies
Developing and Disseminating New Tools for Historic Costume Display in Small Museums

Camille Myers Breeze and Kate Herron Gendreau
NEMA Conference 2016 | Portland, ME
Introduction

We will **explore** the challenges *and* opportunities of mounting historic costume in the small museum environment
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- We will **consider** different methods and tools for mounting costume in relation to time, budgets, and in-house expertise.

- We will **provide** an overview of the development and functionality of the Andover Figures costume-mounting system.
Introduction
Guiding Questions

- Why address costume mounting?
- Why do store-bought dress forms not suffice?
- Where can we go from here?
- What is needed to move forward?
- What are my options?
- Which solution is right for my situation?
- How did we get here?
The Opportunities
What Stories Can Clothing Tell?

- Personal identity
- Changing social constructs
- Industry and economics
- Gender/body politics
- Material culture
- To name just a few!
The Opportunities
Fashion in the Museum

Charles James: Beyond Fashion.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute, 2014.
The Challenges

Why do store-bought dress forms not suffice?

All recent anonymous examples of costume mounting from small museums, historic houses, and societies across the New England region.
“Although mounts such as mannequins and dress stands can be purchased easily, they are rarely the right size and shape for historical costume and will often need adapting to fit. Underpinnings are also essential, not only as a substitute for historical frames such as paniers and crinolines, but as a supportive foundation, controlling the shape and arrangement of trousers, skirts, and sleeves.”

—Lara Flecker
The Challenges
Bridging the Divide

“Preparing a costume…can be a daunting prospect for someone who is unacquainted with mounting techniques, but, like any craft, it is something that can be taught and learned. Unfortunately, the lack of training courses and the scarcity of information on this subject has meant that many are expected to display costumes without any advice or assistance.”
—Lara Flecker

“There is…an enormous disparity in the educational content of museum exhibitions, as well as in the techniques employed and the types of costume displayed. This is related to the fact that, until fairly recently, there has been little or no formal academic and professional training for costume and textile curators.”
—Alexandra Palmer
From Challenge to Opportunity
Communicating the Body Within

Costume Mounting—Before, During, After (Victoria and Albert Museum).
Understanding Historic Silhouette
Clothes Make the (Wo/)Man

Fashion Timeline
1750s - 2000s

Fashion Timeline.
Kent State University Museum,
2012.
Understanding Historic Silhouette

Where Can We Go From Here?


- Casey Fashion Plates [http://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/visual-collections](http://www.lapl.org/collections-resources/visual-collections)


  
http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search?&ft=*&deptids=8
Today’s Landscape
What Are My Options?

Store Supply Warehouse
$54–95
Non-archival/non customizable or quite costly to do so

University Products
$826.75
Archival/customizable

Dorfman
$625–1,845
Archival/customizable
**Handout:**

**Display Systems Checklist**

For each garment you wish to display, it is critical to weigh the following factors as you choose the best display system for your collection of historic dress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Effectiveness</th>
<th>What is the budget for your costume mounting project? What funding is needed for conservation treatments in order to stabilize and ready pieces for display?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archival Safety</td>
<td>Are the costume mounts made of archival safe materials that will not harm the garment? What level of care is necessary for the garment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment Condition</td>
<td>Does the garment have any tears, weak areas, unstable elements, stains, or fading that might make them unsuitable for display?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garment Silhouette</td>
<td>Does the size and shape of your mount support the historic silhouette of the garment? If not, how easily can it be manipulated to correctly support it? Does the garment have a relatively simple silhouette that is straightforward to research and mount, or does it have more intricate details that require expert handling and knowledge?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versatility</td>
<td>Is the costume mount intended for one time use or can it be repurposed for other exhibitions and garments? What size, shape, or gender is the costume mount compatible with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>What kind of timeline does your exhibition need to meet? How much time can your staff set aside to safely dress each garment for display?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Expertise</td>
<td>Does your museum staff have working knowledge of handling textiles and basic sewing skills? How much curatorial research will be needed to accurately interpret the garments for an engaging display?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Space</td>
<td>Will your exhibition space accommodate a full 3D form or do you require a solution for a shallow space?</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Cost Effectiveness

What is the budget for your costume-mounting project? What funding is needed for conservation treatments in order to stabilize and ready pieces for display?
Archival Safety

Are the costume mounts made of archival-safe materials that will not harm the garments?

What level of care is necessary for the garment?
Garment Condition

Does the garment have any tears, weak areas, unstable elements, stains, or fading that might make them unsuitable for display?
Garment Silhouette

Does the size and shape of your mount support the historic silhouette of the garment?

If not, how easily can it be manipulated to correctly support it?
Garment Silhouette

Does the garment have a relatively simple silhouette that is straightforward to research and mount, or does it have more intricate details that require expert handling and knowledge?
Is the costume mount intended for one-time use or can it be repurposed for other exhibitions and garments?

What size, shape, or gender is the costume mount compatible with?
Time (and Space)

What kind of timeline does your exhibit need to meet?

How much time can your staff set aside to safely dress each garment for display?
Staff Experience

Does your museum staff have working knowledge of handling textiles and basic sewing skills?

How much curatorial research will be needed to accurately interpret the garments for an engaging display?
Exhibition Space

Will your exhibition space accommodate a full 3D form or do you require a solution for shallow space?
A New Solution

Our partnership grew out of:

- Mutual interest in addressing the challenges of exhibiting historic costume in small museums.
A New Solution

How Did We Get Here?

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- Mutual interest in addressing the challenges of exhibiting historic costume in small museums.
A New Solution
How Did We Get Here?

- Desire to empower museum professionals and historic societies in a manner that did not sacrifice archival safety standards, museum resources, or the educational value of the visitor experience.
A New Solution

How Did We Get Here?

- Kate’s graduate research and capstone project that investigated the need for new tools and expertise to support small museum professionals working with fragile costume collections.
A New Solution

How Did We Get Here?

- An MTS client need for a cost-effective but safe way to reinstall the costume in their small museum or historic house on a rotating basis.
A New Solution

Andover Figures

Andover Figures is a costume-mounting system that includes:

- 10 different archival forms
- A kit for creating any historic silhouette
- Show fabric comes in a variety of skin tones
- Instructional booklet
- Hands-on training

By Camille Myers Breeze and Kate Herron Gendreau
A New Solution
Andover Figures

- 100% archival materials
- Manikins compatible with any 5/8-inch pole
- Suspension forms hang from a bracket or stand
- Customizable and reusable
- Priced between $150 and $250 dollars
Handout:

Andover Figures Product Line

Andover Figures carries four gender-neutral sizes suitable for children’s, women’s, and smaller men’s garments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Andover (M1)</td>
<td>17.75&quot; x 10&quot; x 4&quot;</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cambridge (M2)</td>
<td>18.25&quot; x 10&quot; x 4&quot;</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hampton (M3)</td>
<td>19&quot; x 19&quot; x 4&quot;</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shelburne (M4)</td>
<td>20.25&quot; x 20&quot; x 4&quot;</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two suspension forms are designed specifically for medium- to large-sized men’s garments, as well as unisex items such as shawls, tribal blankets, and capes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Exeter (S1)</td>
<td>23&quot; x 18.5&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Danbury (S2)</td>
<td>29&quot; x 18.5&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four suspension forms are designed for women, but are also appropriate for smaller men’s and unisex garments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Price</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Newport (S3)</td>
<td>33&quot; x 15&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dennison (S4)</td>
<td>35&quot; x 16.5&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kennebunk (S5)</td>
<td>27&quot; x 15&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Portsmouth (S6)</td>
<td>34&quot; x 20&quot; x 2&quot;</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
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## A New Solution

### Andover Figures

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A New Solution
Andover Figures

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<tr>
<th>Garment</th>
<th>Manikin</th>
<th>Suspension Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodice</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawl/cape</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform/suit</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vest</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacket/coat</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathing suit</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Except for voluminous skirts

Women’s Clothing
Record the following measurements in inches:
- Across the narrowest point of the waist when flat (not circumference)
- Across the bust at the under arms (not circumference)
- Shoulder to the narrowest point of the waist
- Waist to front hem of skirt/pant

Men’s Clothing
Record the following measurements in inches:
- Across the narrowest point of the waist when flat (not circumference)
- Shoulder seam to shoulder seam
- Shoulder to the narrowest point of the waist
- Waist to hem of pant

Unstructured Clothing
Record the following measurements in inches:
- Shoulder seam to shoulder seam
- Should to hem

Measuring a Garment
Measuring your garment is the next step toward determining which Andover Figure is the right choice. First lay the garment flat on a large, clean surface. Arrange it so that all buttons and hooks were closed (you need not actually close them.) Measure the exterior, rather than the interior, of the garment to avoid excess handling. Measurements should be rounded up to the nearest half inch.

Garments should be laid flat on a clean surface when taking measurements.

Purchasing Andover Figures
Once you have decided which Andover Figure you need, ordering is easy. You can use the enclosed custom order form for women’s or men’s/unisex clothing, or download additional copies from www.andoverfigures.com. Please use one order form for each type of Andover Figure you are purchasing.

Completed order forms should be scanned and emailed to andoverfigures@gmail.com. Order forms can also be mailed to Andover Figures, PO Box 5004, Andover, MA 01810. All orders will be acknowledged within three business days of receipt. Payment in full is due prior to shipment of your order. Local customers can arrange for pickup to avoid shipping charges.
A New Solution

Andover Figures

Adding Limbs

The legs of nylon hose are a built-in system for padding out any sleeves that a garment may have. Most sleeves are supported well with a handful of polyester fiberfill. You aren’t trying to fill the sleeves, just prevent them from falling flat from the shoulders. When finished filling the arms, knot the end of the nylon hose and roll back any excess so that it can’t be seen. Balloon or Log-a-Mutton sleeves will need additional light padding outside of the hose. Nylon net is the ideal material and is nearly invisible inside a sheer sleeve.

Less is more! Oversuffing arms can create an undesirable bowed shape. Use less stuffing just below the shoulder to help create a more natural posture.

Legs can be added to Andover Figures suspension forms using a second pair of nylon hose. Cut the feet off and insert polyester fiberfill, high-loft batting, or nylon net into the legs to give the suggestion of thighs and backside. Again, less is more to avoid lumps showing when the pants are on. Place the padded legs onto the bottom of the suspension form and align the waistband at waist level before dressing the pants.

Supporting Skirts

Fitting the waistband of a garment to the Andover Figure is just the first step in supporting the skirt. Additional padding often must be used to create the ball, hoop, or bustle shape originally achieved with the aid of petticoats and crinolines. It is poor museum practice to use historic undergarments when dressing costume, so alternatives must be sought. Some skirts can be supported with rolls of acid-free tissue, nylon net, or polyester felt placed around the hips of the form. These materials can be basted to the sheath if necessary to hold them in place. Check that the hem of the skirt is parallel to the floor (with the exception of any train).
Handout: 
Resource Guide

- Costume mounting and collections care supplies
- Readings in costume and textile care
- Readings in costume mounting
- Readings in Costume History
Handout: Resource Guide

• Other Services

Other Services
In addition to developing and producing Andover Figures, Camille Myers Breeze and Kate Herron Gendreau are dedicated to supporting museums with the services, skills, and tools needed to deliver high-quality costume exhibits.

Andover Figures Training Sessions
www.andoverfigures.com
Andover Figures provides hands-on training sessions for your small museum. We will teach your staff and volunteers how to mount garments for display using Andover Figures manikins and suspension forms. We also cover how to choose appropriate garments, reduce surface wrinkles, and perform surface cleaning. Contact us for details and pricing.

Exhibit and Collections Consultation
www.khgarts.com
As Principal of KHG Arts, Kate Herron Gendreau supplies expertise and services to support the care and interpretation of museum textile collections. KHG Arts provides comprehensive collection inventories and rehousing, exhibition research and development, as well as programming opportunities that establish clear and engaging links between textile collections and the techniques, art forms, and historical value they represent.

Textile Conservation
www.museumtextiles.com
Camille Myers Breeze founded Museum Textile Services in 1999. MTS provides a full range of textile conservation treatments including conservation assessments, on-site surveys, cleaning, stabilization, and archival storage for historic clothing and textiles. Their website is a renowned destination for textile conservation information, instructional handouts, and the MTS Blog.

Textile Training
www.campbellcenter.org
Handouts

- All handouts featured in this presentation (as well as a PDF version of this PPT) will be available on the NEMA Website www.nemanet.org.

- App for NEMA.

1. Get “Whova” from the App Store or Google Play
2. Sign with your social media account or email
3. If you are asked to enter an event-specific passcode, please enter nema2015
Contact us

- Got questions? Learn more about Andover Figures, Kate, and Camille here:

  www.andoverfigures.com

  www.khgarts.com

  www.museumtextiles.com
Acknowledgements

Anne Bissonnette, Associate Professor of Material Culture and Curatorship and Curator of the Clothing and Textile Collection at the University of Alberta

Katherine Burton Jones, Director of the Museum Studies Program at Harvard University Extension School

John Dunphy, Vice President and General Manager of University Products, Inc.

Jennifer Emerson, author and museum consultant

Leah Niederstadt, Assistant Professor of Museum Studies and Art History and Curator of the Permanent Collection at Wheaton College

Jan Williams, Curator of the Buttonwoods Museum at Haverhill Historical Society
Works Cited


