



Museum Textile Services

Building T-Bar Supports

Because it provides only a narrow line of support across the shoulders, a T-bar must be modified to prevent stress to the costume. Make sure that the T-bar is tall enough to keep the costume from touching the floor.

- Lay the costume to be mounted on a clean surface. Measure the width at the shoulders in inches. If the top of the T-bar is wider than the width of the shoulders, it cannot be used for this object.
- Cut a rectangle of Ethafoam that is a bit shorter than the width at the shoulders and 5 inches wide. Carve the edges so that they are rounded like shoulders and fit easily inside the costume.
- With a ball point pen, draw a line across the bottom of the block of Ethafoam in both directions, crossing at the middle. Measure the length and width of the top of the T-bar. Carve a channel in the underside of the Ethafoam that is centered on these drawn lines. The T-bar needs to fit snugly in this channel without slipping. If there is a knob at the top of the T-bar, it is ok for it to protrude above the Ethafoam. You can cover it later if you wish.
- Cut two lengths of twill tape measuring approximately 24 inches long. Knot one end of each piece. Using a knitting needle or other implement, poke a hole ten inches apart at either end of the carved channel. Thread a piece of twill tape through each hole leaving the knot on the top side. This twill tape will hold up a second piece of Ethafoam.
- Measure the diameter of the waist of the costume in inches and subtract 14. Divide the remainder by two. This number will be the length of the second piece of Ethafoam. Cut a rectangle of Ethafoam that is seven inches wide and the calculated length. Carve the Ethafoam into a tapered oval that fits below the waist of the costume. The waist of the costume will sit on this oval, so it cannot be smaller than the costume.
- With a ball point pen, draw a line across the bottom of this block of Ethafoam in both directions, crossing at the middle. Cut a channel out of the center-back of the block reaching just to the point where the two drawn lines intersect. The channel should be just narrower than the vertical pole of the T-bar so that when it is snug on the pole.
- Measure the distance between the two pieces of twill tape hanging from the other piece of Ethafoam. Poke two holes through the second piece of Ethafoam that are the same distance apart. The holes should be centered across the middle of the block. Poke the twill tape through these holes.
- Measure the distance from the shoulders of the costume to the waist. Adjust the bottom piece of Ethafoam to that it hangs that distance below the top piece. Knot the twill tape to lock in place. Install the form on the T-bar and adjust as necessary.
- Cover the form with a cotton t-shirt or pantyhose and pad out as necessary to support the costume.
Supplies needed: A T-bar, 2-inch Ethafoam (2 lb. density), carving knife, polyester batting or nylon tulle, twill tape, a small t-shirt or panty hose, large knitting needle.

