

ABSTRACT

Waist-ing Away: Developing a Hanging Waist Support System for Safe Costume Storage

Presenter:

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This talk will discuss an ongoing project looking at improved hanging options for the storage of fragile items of costume. Hangers are the most commonly used devices for hanging garments and whilst these are suitable for many items of clothing, those with vulnerable shoulder and neckline areas or heavy skirts can suffer damage and distortion during long term storage. This is due to the focussed areas of stress caused by the weight of the garment hanging purely from the shoulders.

Working with the costume collection of the Museum Van De Vrouw in Echt in the Netherlands, I have been developing a waist hanging system for vulnerable costumes. Due to space constraints, flat storage was not an option, but standard padded hangers were not providing support in the right places for many of the weaker costumes. After considering current hanger alternatives such as custom made hanging torsos and commercially available mounts, I began developing a solution that could spread the weight of a garment over a larger area, thereby reducing strain at the shoulders. Such a solution also needed to work with the limited depot space available, be time and resource efficient, and be broadly suitable for a range of costume styles and sizes. After trialling different shapes and materials, I focussed on Fosshape, a relatively new, conservation grade, nonwoven, 100% polyester material that can be sewn and moulded to create rigid forms. The final hanging system is currently being trialled in the collection and evaluated on its functionality and suitability.



BIO



Originally from Norfolk, UK, Becky now works as a freelance textile conservator for institutions and private individuals in and around Maastricht in the Netherlands. A graduate of the MPhil Textile Conservation programme at the Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History in Glasgow, she particularly enjoys the conservation, display, and storage challenges presented by historical costume and three dimensional textiles. She has a background in arts and crafts and has a passion for creative problem solving.