

ABSTRACT

Invisible Mounts: Internal Mounting Techniques at the Harvard Art Museums

Presenter:

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A museum renovation of the Harvard Art Museums precipitated a casework redesign that allows access inside pedestals, spaces previously inaccessible for installation. This new access has allowed for a redesign of mounts in several instances. Sculptures with inner cavities, modern bronzes in particular, are good candidates for internal mounts. In the past, these objects would have had mounts consisting of screwed-in tabs that would secure the object visibly to the pedestal. With internal access to a pedestal, a new mount can be designed that can be fitted and secured to the inside of the artwork, and then bolted through the deck of the pedestal.

The space inside the object, as well as its size and structure, dictate how an internal mount will engage with the object. These mounts generally use multiple parts that either screw together, expand using nuts and bolts like a turnbuckle, or in some other way engage with each other to fit into an object. Undercuts on the inside of objects are highly desirable, allowing for an easy grip to be had once a mount is tightened into place from within. While there are many examples of mounts that use some sort of mechanism by which they expand or mechanically attach, this paper purposely includes only those that are entirely unseen once installed.

While it is always satisfying to make an elegant mount that safely secures an object without calling attention to itself, it is fun and refreshing to make something that seems clumsy, even ugly, but secures an object effectively and invisibly!

BIO



Jill Comer is the senior mount maker for the Harvard Art Museums and has been with the Collections Management and Exhibitions departments since 2003. In addition to mount-making, Jill works to prepare, pack, and install objects in all media for exhibitions and loans in collaboration with curators, designers, conservators and registrars. She serves on the executive board of the Harvard Union for Clerical and Technical Workers, and in her spare time is an artist who makes mixed-media sculpture, and plays the banjo, poorly.