IMF
MFA Boston 2024

BIO

BETH EDELSTEIN
Senior Conservator and Head of Objects Conservation
Cleveland Museum of Art

bedelstein@clevelandart.org

Beth Edelstein joined the Cleveland Museum of Art as Head of Objects Conservation in 2017. Previously she was Associate Conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Beth earned her M.A. in art history and art conservation from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in 2003 and was an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Cloisters. She currently holds a Board position as Director, Professional Education for the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and is a co-founder of the AIC K-12 Outreach Committee.

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTMAKERS FORUM

ABSTRACT

The Reluctant Chicken Farmer: Telescopic Carbon Fiber Mount for a George Segal Plaster Figure

The Red Light by George Segal (CMA 1974.22) is a multimedia sculpture installation that includes the front section of the artist's own red Ford truck, a two-light stoplight, and one of Segal's recognizable plaster figures, caught in mid-stride crossing the street. While the truck and the stoplight have their own hanging mechanisms included, the plaster figure requires additional support to stand securely. Earlier mounts in the object's history included a literal toe clip – a steel strap placed over the figure's left foot – and then later, an internal steel rod that supported the hollow figure up the right leg to the hip. When the object was selected for outgoing loan, we reconsidered this mount with the thought that the figure should be supported farther up the body to reduce the risk of breakage at the hip if the figure were to be accidentally toppled.

Inspiration for the mount combined a seismic approach learned from colleagues at the Getty Museum – an internal expandable mount that is constructed inside the object – with new skills in working with carbon fiber gained from Metropolitan Museum of Art conservator Carolyn Riccardelli. The mount needed to be lightweight but strong and stiff; safe to remain inside the object while it is moved and handled; and easily assembled and disassembled inside the object through restricted openings under the coat and in the left toe.

The talk will briefly review Segal's working process and the resulting inherent risks to these familiar plaster objects. Presenters will describe basic carbon fiber techniques combining premade carbon fiber tubing with custom wrapped connections, and will share specific concerns and solutions for connecting the carbon fiber assembly to an aluminum mounting rod. This presentation will review approaches to building an internal mount that is assembled inside the object and is not removed on deinstallation. The authors hope that this solution can provide inspiration for mountmaking for similar Segal works and other related objects and materials.

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTMAKERS FORUM