

BIO



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Rachael Lee is a Senior Costume Mounting Specialist at the V&A. Her work is wide-ranging and includes the development of new mannequins and bespoke mount-making for fashion exhibitions. Rachael has worked with several museums in the UK, including the British Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum designing and making mounts for ethnographic costume. Her recent projects include Gabrielle Chanel Fashion Manifesto (V&A) and Ashish: Fall in Love and Be More Tender (William Morris Gallery).

ABSTRACT

Making a Model Mannequin – Couture Mounting and Cutaways for NAOMI: In Fashion

NAOMI: In Fashion opened at the V&A in June 2024 and is the first major exhibition to explore the extraordinary career of the British fashion model Naomi Campbell. The show includes work from leading global fashion designers and celebrates Naomi's creative collaborations, whilst exploring her activism and far-reaching cultural impact. For the V&A costume mounting team this posed a new challenge: how can you make a mannequin look as good as Naomi Campbell? As the exhibition would be filled with iconic fashion photography and film footage of Naomi, the mannequins needed to match in their variety, radiance, and poise. This paper will discuss the multiple display approaches that were taken to overcome this challenge, from colour research and digital amendments that elevated retail mannequins, to refining a Fosshape method for creating invisible 'cutaway' figures. We will also share some of the practical techniques that the team have developed to combat the common difficulties in mounting couture fashion, such as heavily beaded garments and sheer fabrics.