

BIO



BJ FARRAR

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BJ Farrar specializes in the application of 3-D scanning to seismic mountmaking. He has presented on various mountmaking topics often, including for the Advances in the Protection of Museum Collections from Earthquake Damage symposium series, the Western Association of Art Conservators annual conference, and the International Mountmaking Forum (of which he is a co-founder). BJ was a mountmaker in the Antiquities Conservation department from 2002–2015 and was a senior preparator in the Preparations Department from 1997–2002. Prior to the Getty, he worked at the Seattle Art Museum from 1989–1997 as a mountmaker/preparator.

ABSTRACT

Fosshé: An Innovative Method for Building Flexible, Rigid, Interior Supports

Recently acquired by the Getty Research Institute as part of the Women's Building Archive, The Breast Dress (1978) is a costume that was worn during performances by the all-woman artist collective The Waitresses, notorious for guerilla style performances held in diners and cafes throughout Los Angeles. Created by artist Anne Gauldin, the costume consists of fourteen cast latex rubber breasts from members of the group, which were sewn to the front of the dress to impersonate the character of the Great Goddess Diana.

After almost fifty years, each of the breasts exhibited different stages of degradation due to the unstable nature of the rubber. Some retained their plasticity with minimal signs of decay, while others were severely discolored with hardened deformations and areas completely shattered.

A treatment plan was formed to clean, consolidate, and repair the fragmented breasts and apply a supporting interior lining to each. Because of the tendency to slump and harden during final stages of degradation, an integral part of conserving latex materials in constructing custom supports to hold the appropriate shape. Mountmaking is an integral part of the treatment process, making this a natural opportunity for conservators and mountmakers to collaborate. Prior to the treatment, vintage latex samples with a similar material makeup were acquired to test various treatment and mountmaking approaches.

The interior supports needed to be rigid, flexible, light-weight, and archival for long term contact with the latex. Fosshape, commonly used in costume mounting, seemed to be the natural choice, but shaping it into a precise fit proved challenging. Experimentation with manipulating Fosshape combined with 3D scanning and printing techniques lead to an innovative solution. Extremely precise conformal internal supports were achieved with essentially zero contact with the object during the process. The success of this method allowed the dress to be displayed upright on a mannequin, as a dynamic way to accompany the videos of the performance.