**Curatorial Considerations**

**Research / Assess / Collaborate**

Consult relevant references: designer / artist catalog raisonnés, exhibition catalogs, costume history books.

**Historical periodicals:** *LIFE* Magazine, Harper’s Bazaar, Vogue
Online – Googlebooks or Print – library

**Historical patterns:** Vogue, McCall’s, Butterick

**Museum Collections** (online or print): The Costume Institute, V&A, The Kyoto Costume Institute, IMA, LACMA, Museum at FIT, CAM, etc.

**Other:** FashionEncyclopedia.com, VintageFashionGuild.com, FashionEra.com

---

**Mannequin Dressing**
Mounting Garments for Display

*Kathleen Kiefer*
Senior Conservator of Textiles
*Petra Slinkard*
Curatorial Associate, Textiles and Fashion Art

---

**Historical Silhouettes**

---

**The Silhouette After 1889**

The bustle disappeared from day dresses and the new day mill style was favor among all and this form was achieved by a very short skirt and the addition of a train on the back. By the 1880s the bustle in women’s dresses had evolved into a far more elaborate form. The bustle was a large, pouffy structure that extended from the waist to the ground. It was supported by wooden or metal frames and was covered with fabric. The bustle was worn with a fitted bodice, and the skirt was gathered at the waist and flared out at the hips.

**Edwardian tailored suits ideal for travel**

The Edwardian period was characterized by a move away from the bustle and towards a more fitted and tailored look. Women’s suits were the ideal choice for travel as they were both fashionable and practical. They were made from tailored fabrics that were comfortable and easy to wear. Many suits were made from wool or cashmere and were machine-stitched, making them durable and long-lasting.

Screen shot: FashionEra.com
Curatorial Considerations
Assess & Collaborate

Highlights of the ensemble: What is the most important to aspect a particular piece regarding its design? How does that design element reflect the thesis of an exhibition?

Institutional Preferences: Mood, Style, Attitude

Conservation Considerations
Assess & Collaborate

Safety of the Garment
Condition
Inherent Vulnerabilities
Minimize Handling
Create the Desired Appearance

Assess Garment

Condition
Inherent Vulnerabilities
• Knit
• Heavy Embellishments
• Bias Cut
• Etc.

evening dress by Callot Soeurs, about 1926
IMA 77.360

Inherent Vulnerabilities
• Knit
• Heavy Embellishments
• Bias Cut
• Etc.

Halston, about 1977
IMA 1983.124
What matters?
Featuring important design aspects of an ensemble

Evening ensemble by Halston, about 1976
IMA 82.216ab

Evening dress by Halston, 1981
IMA 82.846ab

Evening gown with cape, Christian Dior, about 1954
IMA 1984.414ab

What matters?
Featuring important design aspects of an ensemble

Evening ensemble by Halston, about 1976
IMA 82.216ab

Evening dress by Halston, 1981
IMA 82.846ab

Evening gown with cape, Christian Dior, about 1954
IMA 1984.414ab

People are passionate about mannequins / Institutional preferences
Anonymous essay

May 198, 1980 at 0.30 pm
I'm glad you selected natural skin tones for the mannequins in this exhibit, and I hope you continue this in future exhibitions. I think it does violence to a garment to treat it as an abstraction independent from the body that wears it. While it may be desirable to separate the identity of a garment from the identity of any particular person, I think it's important to select mannequins that are as generally human as possible and appreciate the impression that this extreme represents. This leads to another point. I have noticed in past exhibitions that the IMA tends to select more realistic mannequins for new-rent garments, and that older period garments are displayed on an almost life-size mannequins with an artificial and unaesthetic form. I think this is a mistake. Realistic mannequins to be determined in the appreciation of the garments they support, and I wonder if more attention is paid to this point, it might make it difficult to exhibit mannequins that can be wear period garments. I hope that the IMA will do more to modify the mannequins to the present show. I would hope that they could do so for future displays of period garments. It would bring the period garments to life more fully, and would better convey the intended aesthetic effect of the garments. I would then display on mannequins with more human contours and flesh tones.

Mannequins
Make them work for you

Types / Selection / Test Fittings

Headless
Half-legged
Dress forms
Custom adjustments
Jacket by Mason Martin Margiela, S/S 1997
IMA 2010.229

Suit; ‘Bondage’ by Westwood / McLaren, 1976
IMA 2011.175a-c

Blouse by Franco Moschino, 1990s
IMA 2009.21

Customized Mannequins
I wish I was a little bit taller.

Mannequin altered to accommodate 26 in waist.

Dress by Thierry Mugler, 1981. IMA 2010.26

Mannequin Resources:

Mannequin Resources:

Rootstein Display Mannequins [http://www.rootstein.com]

Las Vegas Mannequins [http://www.lvmannequins.com]

Measurements

The most critical are:

A. Bust Circumference
B. Waist Circumference
C. Hip Circumference
D. Center Back Length—top of spine to waist
E. Shoulder to Bust Point

Will the mannequin fit the garment?
- Measure the inside of your garment
- Measure the mannequin
- Reduce excess garment handling
Measurements
The most critical are:

A. Bust Circumference
B. Waist Circumference
C. Hip Circumference
D. Center Back Length—top of spine to waist
E. Shoulder to Bust Point

Will the mannequin fit the garment?
• Measure the inside of your garment
• Measure the mannequin
• Reduce excess garment handling

Tools
Materials and Supplies

- Tubular cotton surgical stockinette – 2” and 8”
- Polyester needlepunch batting & polyester fiberfill
- Twill tape
- Nylon net/tulle
- .3 mil HDPE (high density polyethylene) light duty plastic sheeting
- Cotton sewing thread
Materials and Supplies
- Cotton sewing thread
- Knit covering fabric

Before You Begin: Understand the Mannequin
- Arm, hand, waist & leg attachments
- Be sure the mannequin is clean and smooth

Before You Begin: Understand the Mannequin
- Also, be sure your hands are clean and smooth

Basic Procedure for Adding to a Mannequin
1. Cover the mannequin with tubular stockinette, pantyhose or another close fitting archival quality material to provide a surface to anchor to or secure padding under
2. Add padding—polyester needlepunch batting and/or fiberfill—under stockinette or stitched to the top of stockinette, as necessary for desired modifications
3. Cover any exposed polyester batting with an appropriate finishing fabric—tubular stockinette or another fabric
Addition of padding to stockinette foundation

(Always cover the polyester padding)

Case Studies

Fitting Waist

Jump suit by Halston, about 1972
MA 1986.221ab
Halston: An American Original
Elaine Gross & Fred Rottman
(1999)

evening dress by Halston, about 1977
IMA 1985.124
evening dress by Halston, about 1975
IMA 1985.640ab

Mannequin colored thread supporting stockinette foundation
evening suit, by Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel, about 1965
IMA 1983.49a-d

coat by Bill Blass, early 1970s
IMA 1991.34
Hand secured with hot melt glue

Sleeve padded to shape with tulle

Evening dress by Bill Blass, 1960s
IMA 1985.150ab
evening coat by Halston, late 1970s
IMA 1988.292

cape suit by Norman Norell, 1957/58
IMA 80.623ab
day dress by Norman Norell, about 1957
IMA 1985.211ab
dress “Cyberglitter” by Stephen Sprouse, 1993
Lent for exhibition by Stephen Sprouse Archives LLC.
tuxedo by Stephen Sprouse, F/W 1988
Lent for exhibition by Stephen Sprouse Archives LLC
evening dress by Halston, about 1971
IMA 1984.96

Exhibition view: Simply Halston
IMA 2008.13

evening dress by Christian Lacroix, 1988
IMA TR11507/a-c
There is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us, and not we, them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking.

Virginia Woolf