

Utilizing Local Materials to Construct Invisible Mounts for HMQ The Queen of Thailand's ball gowns

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The mannequins developed by Historic Royal Palaces for living British royalty, are an apt prototype for the QSMT conservation team to replicate for the display of Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand's couture dresses. Through cross trainings between the two royal museums, the QSMT has experimented and sourced local materials in order to create a more bespoke approach to its mannequins. The multiple steps to create a viable conservation-grade invisible form will be reviewed and discussed.

The ideal Perspex (Plexiglas) UK form, is not feasible in Bangkok. The plexi crafters are unable to replicate the British forms in a highgrade plexi, or work on a one-to-one basis with the museum. The papier-mache prototype, while doable, is time consuming, and the material is difficult to fully dry in tropical climate. Similar difficulties are encountered with bukram, where the starch component has a tendency to mildew in high humidity.

The final solution is a fiber glass dress form, in the required size, and professionally cut down by the manufacturer. After sealing the raw edges with a paper coating, and off-gassing, the forms are buffered with imported or local materials. Then the visible interior cavity and outer surface can be customized and tailored.

The result is that fiberglass suits the needs and capacity of the QSMT best; it is more light weight than plexi or papier mache; it is strong enough to support heavy gowns; it is a readily available local product; cost effective; and the local manufacturers can modify the forms and collaborate on a form-by-form basis.