Belt It: Three Solutions to a Dressing Problem.

INTRODUCTION
In March 2007 the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian opened a major exhibition in Washington, D.C. titled *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women’s Dresses*. The exhibition contains 55 dresses from the museum’s outstanding collection of tribal dresses from the Plains, Plateau and Great Basin. Many of these dresses are accessorized with moccasins, leggings, earrings, headdresses, blankets and belts. Most of the belts required special mounts to secure them around the dressed mannequins while on display. While each belt required a unique mount, three general models were created to solve the problem.

PROBLEM: Belt mounts are to be displayed over the garment. Belts need adequate support while on display. Barriers are needed to protect the dress from the belt.

SOLUTION: Semi-rigid and rigid mounts made for belts with internal weaknesses. Flexible twill tape mount created to hold belt on dress. Semi-rigid and rigid mounts made for belts with internal weaknesses. Solutions need to conform to shape of mannequin. Belt leather is cracked and inflexible. Cracked areas on belt require support. There are only holes through the belt at one end. Mounts need to be held closed. Part of original belt fastening cannot be used. Unused portion of belt fastening needs to be hidden. Visual appearance of original fastening needs to be maintained.

Belt It: Three Solutions to a Dressing Problem.

Specific Problem and Solution:

There are only four holes in the belt that can be used to attach the mount, and the tongue is torn and abraded. A semi-rigid mount is created from one side of a sheet of Corex™ that is encased in a twill tape sleeve. One end of the mount extends beyond the end of the belt, and Velcro is sewn to the outside face. Velcro is sewn to the inside area of the opposite end of the belt. A Melinex™ sheet barrier lines the inside of the belt and is laced in place through existing holes in the belt. The exhibition contains 55 dresses from the museum’s outstanding collection of tribal dresses from the Plains, Plateau and Great Basin. Many of these dresses are accessorized with moccasins, leggings, earrings, headdresses, blankets and belts. Most of the belts required special mounts to secure them around the dressed mannequins while on display. While each belt required a unique mount, three general models were created to solve the problem.

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Materials Used:

- *Artificial Sinew* - Wax coated nylon
- *Corex™* (sold as *Coroplast™* in the US); DMC Embroidery Floss; Acrylic Paints; *Wool™* (sold as *Mylar™* in the US)
- *Polysuede* - A non-woven fabric made of polyester-nicholons
- *Tyvek™* (identified by green slashes) folded into strips, is wrapped over closure and fastened with Velcro™.
- *Vivac™* (identified by red slashes) is fastened with Velcro™.
- *Blackfeet Dress 13/2381, Belt 17/9666*
- *Crow Dress 12/6406, Belt 21/6853*

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