

The Humming Birds 2 :

Using Fosshape® as an Alternative Backing for Fiber Art Sculpture

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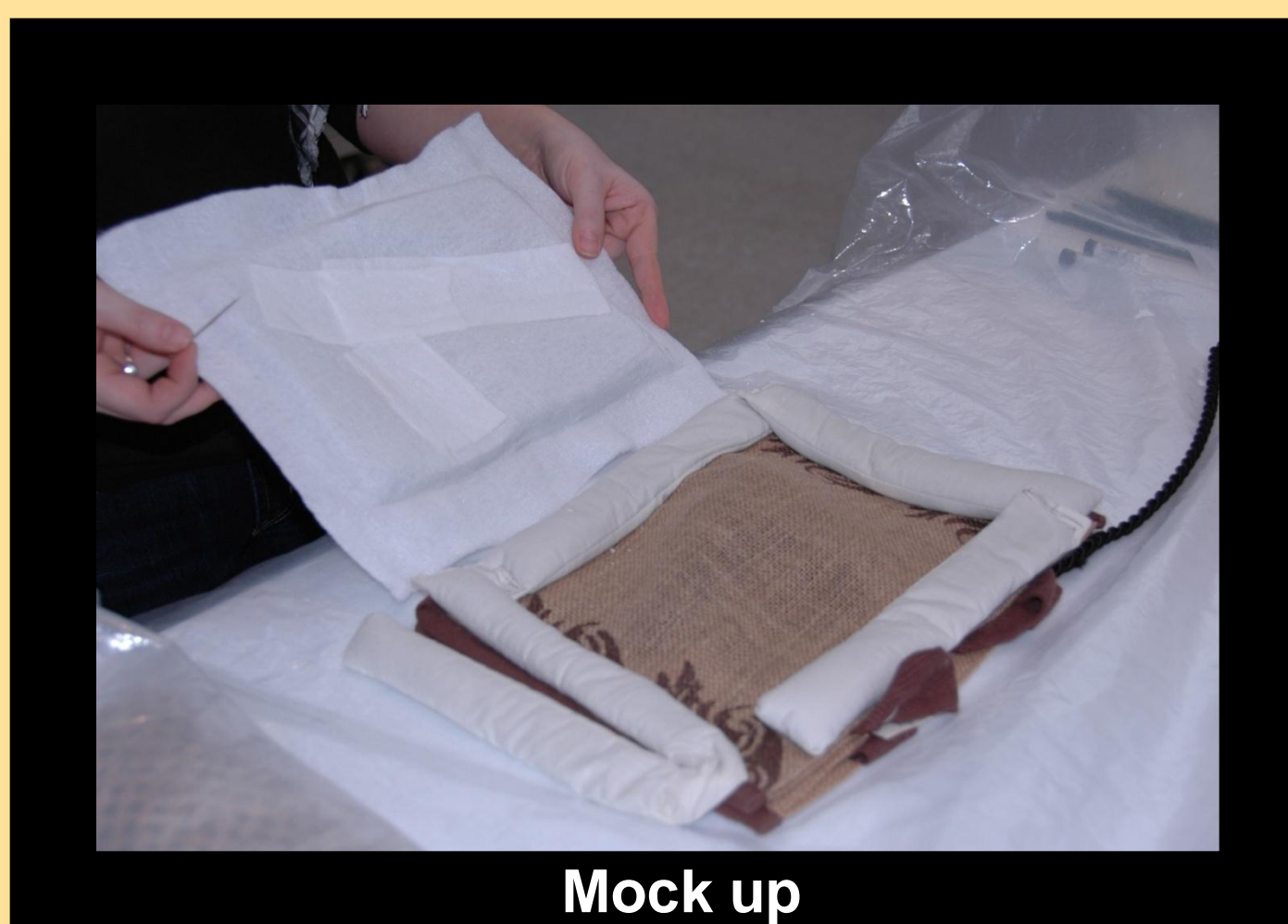
Introduction

The extreme irregular surface of *The Humming Birds 2* by Magdalena Abakanowicz created support and mounting issues. The original mounting structure for the panel consisted of a simple wood frame which was tacked to the panel with ½” staples in four areas at the top. Because of the shape of the panel, traditional textile backing methods were eliminated due to the lack of support they would supply to the heavy sections of the panel and to the irregular form.

A new technique involving the material Fosshape® was recently used in costume mounting by the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. Fosshape® is a nonwoven synthetic polyester fiber that will become rigid and conform to its underlying surface under heat and steam. This creates a firm custom structure that can be sewn. Fosshape® can also be reinforced multiple times as the material will adhere to itself under reapplication of heat and steam.

Creating the Mold

❖ First a mock-up was created to test materials and procedure



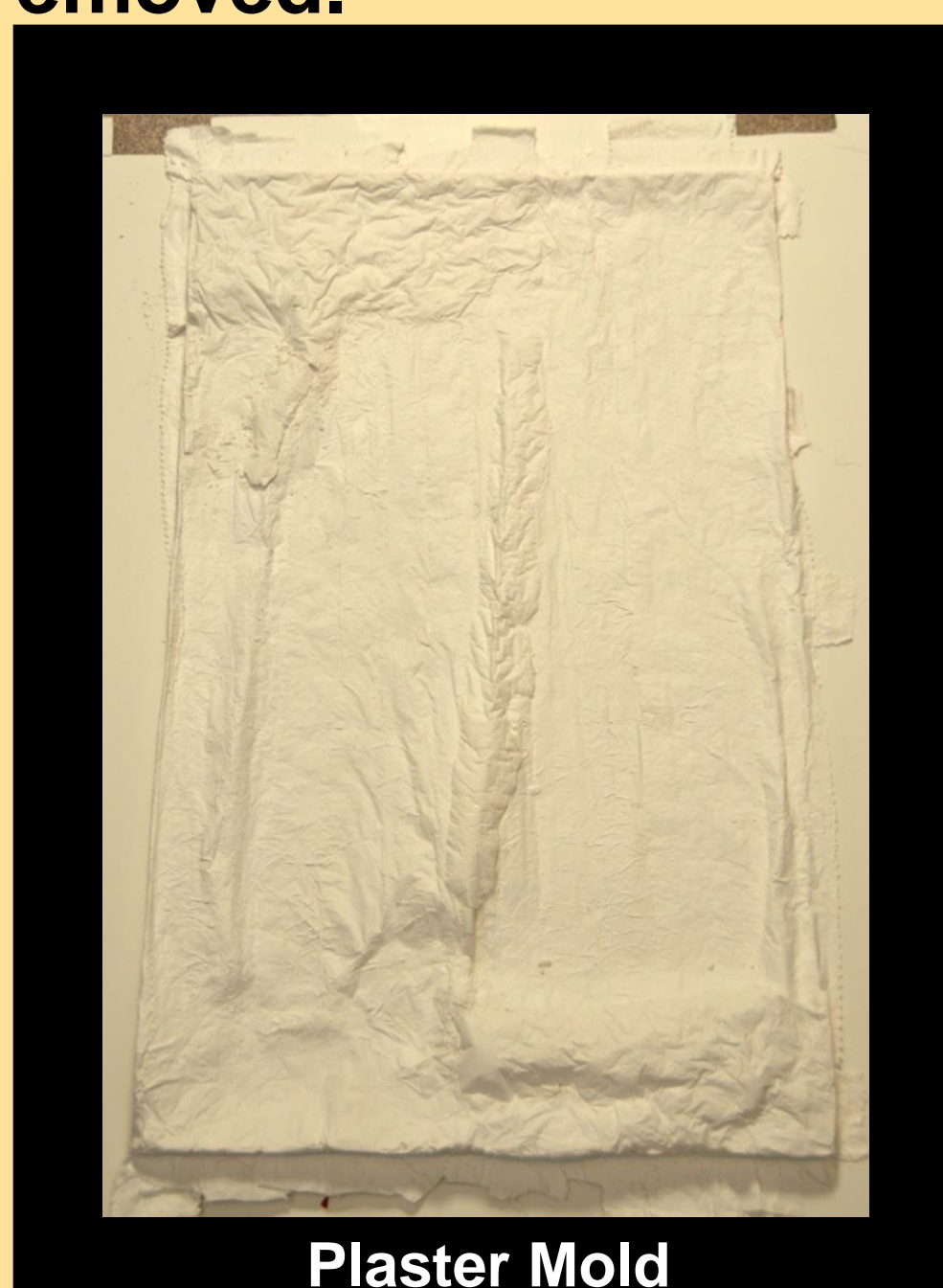
Mock up

❖ After experimentation, treatment began on the artwork.

❖ To create the Fosshape® backing, first a plaster mold was made by turning over the artwork and appropriately padding it for adequate support.

❖ Layers of Dartek® were placed over the panel to protect it from plaster casting material.

❖ Plaster bandages were used to create the plaster mold. Once dry, the mold was removed.



Plaster Mold



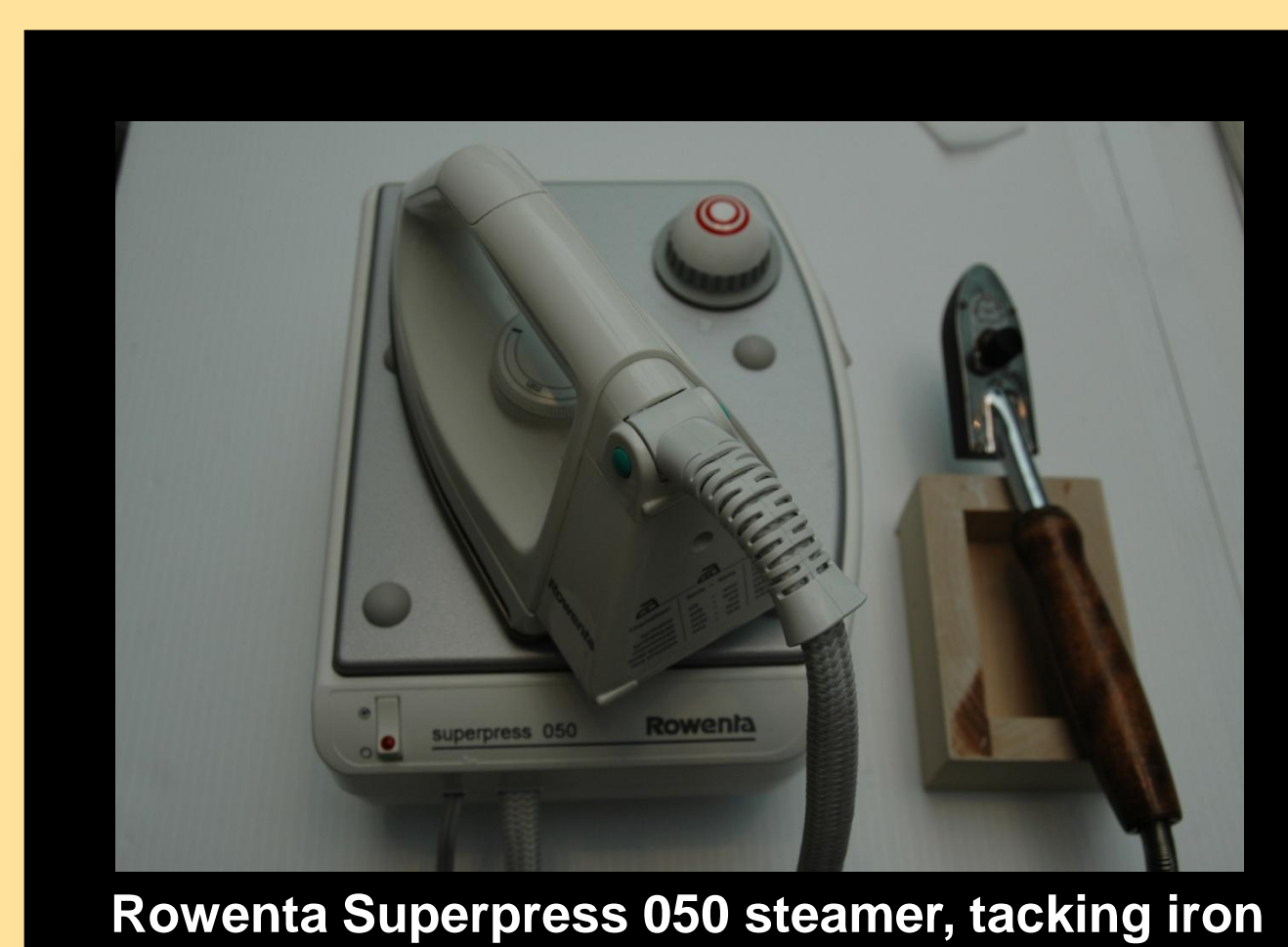
Front

Back

The Humming Birds 2 by Magdalena Abakanowicz

Molding the Fosshape

❖ Fosshape® was cut to fit the plaster mold, giving a large allowance at the perimeter for shrinkage (approx. 25% shrinkage). Then heat and steam were applied to the front of the cast using a Rowenta Superpress 050 steamer and a tacking iron.



Rowenta Superpress 050 steamer, tacking iron

❖ The steam process was started from the center of the support working out to the edges so that the material would shrink consistently to the mold. Sandbag weights were applied to reinforce the shape.



Applying Steam to Fosshape®



Weighted with sandbags

Applying Fosshape® to Artwork

❖ The artwork was hung on a support so that both the front and back were accessible. The Fosshape® support was fitted into the back of the frame

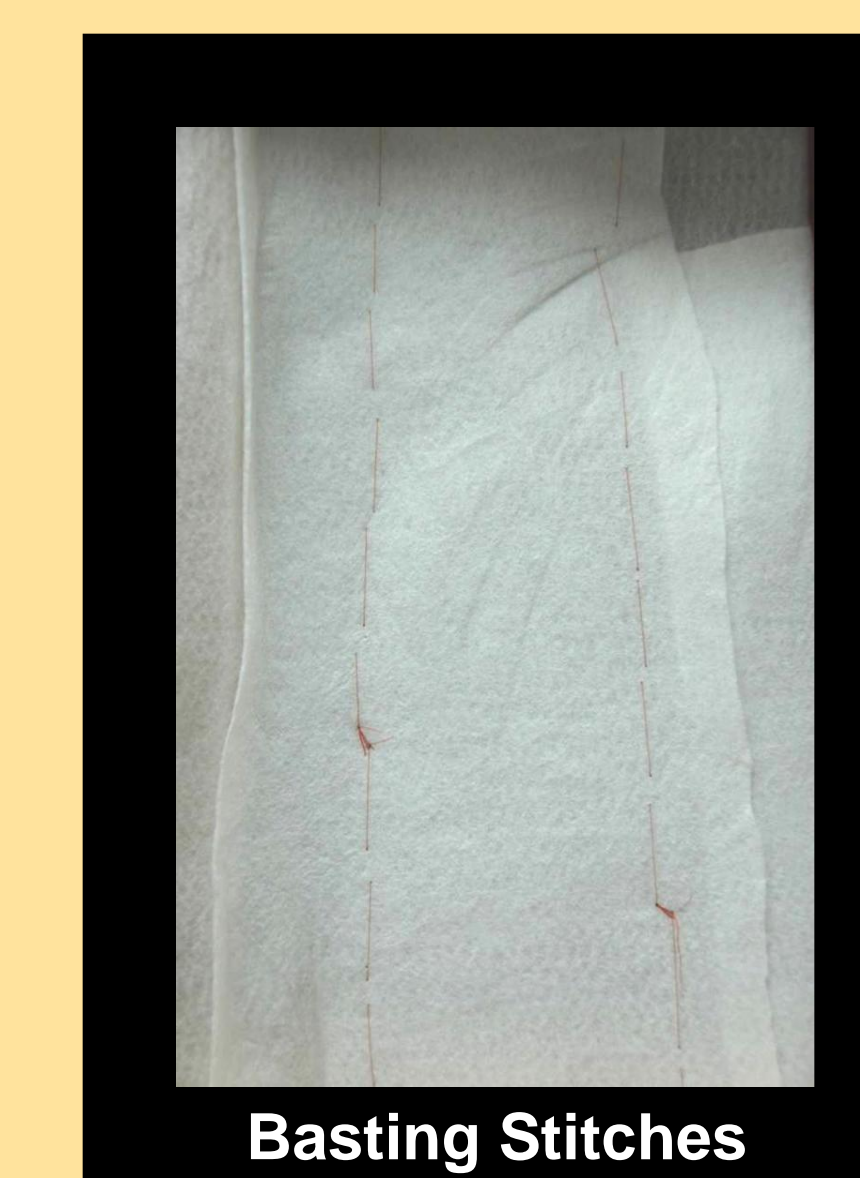


Fitting Fosshape®

❖ Transmitted light was used to locate the vertical openings and outlines were made on the Fosshape®. These areas were cut away and the edges covered with orange archival fabric to minimize visibility of the white Fosshape® material.

❖ The Fosshape® cast was sewn in four rows of vertical basting stitches (approx. ½” in length, 2 ½” apart) with 100% cotton 100m Gutermann thread.

❖ Finally, the Fosshape® was attached to the wood frame with screws for added support and then excess Fosshape® was trimmed away.



Basting Stitches



Finished Application

❖ NOTE: should this procedure be done again a layer of fine 100% polyester or muslin would be used as a barrier layer between the Fosshape® and the artwork as the Fosshape® has a textured surface.

References

Amnéus, Cynthia and Marla Miles. "A Method for Invisibly Mounting Costume Using Fosshape". Journal of the American Institute for Conservation. Vol. 51. Number 1. (2012): pgs 3-14. Print.

Acknowledgements

Zoe Perkins, St. Louis Art Museum – Textile Conservator