**Conservators Jamie Robinson and Zenzie Tinker from Zenzie Tinker Conservation Studio give an insight into preparing Lee’s pregnancy dress for display**

**Jamie:** We select a mannequin based on taking measurements from the dress, and then we'll do an initial fitting. So she [Lee] was five foot seven, we know that, again, that's very helpful because it then means that we can set the mannequins at the right height, and we understand exactly, it's just such a useful starting point. And something that actually you don't have with so many garments is knowing the height of the wearer. This is down a bit because I've been working on it, but we do tend to set the mannequins at the height they would be quite early on, because it helps with visualising the costume on the mannequin.

We do diagrams to help sort of work out where the padding needs to be added. So you can kind of add diagrammatically where different layers and how many layers of wadding and fosshape you might need in different places. So then, it's a case of getting the base padding on before you do your next fitting. I mean, I was told in an ideal world, you don't want to be putting a garment on and off a mannequin more than three times in a mounting process. In reality, that's extremely difficult. But you know, it's sort of something to work to, it's sort of getting this profile right, the shoulder to bust to bump and hip ratio, right. And then, it's, so it's a combination of fosshape, which is a low melt, polyester felt really, I'd say you can, you can shape that bit, it sets quite hard. So I've done shoulders, and the pregnancy bump in fosshape and then use polyester wadding over the top to kind of create shape. But in the photos, it's such a natural photo and she was so sort of far along with the pregnancy, it's unlikely she was wearing very structured underwear at the time. So it really just shows her natural figure. And that's what we're trying to create with the with the mount. And it's not just a case of creating the right profile, it’s sort of the right hardness and softness of different areas of the body as well, that will really show up with a dress that's so fine and light.

**Zenzie -** There is a fantastic photograph of her in the garden heavily pregnant wearing this dress. And it's just such a beautiful, natural photograph of a woman about to give birth in a very comfortable dress in a beautiful garden. My name is Zenzie Tinker and this is my Conservation Studio in Brighton. I think, I think we're at a stage now where it's fine to show a pregnant woman, as it should be, what's the problem, but in the past, I mean, I've been a conservator for nearly 40 years and when I worked a long time ago, so in the 1990s and was pregnant myself while I was working, I worked on an exhibition where it was obvious from the dates and the style of the dresses that the wearer was pregnant and I wanted to do a pregnant mannequin and was not permitted to, so that was a bit disappointing and that was because the curator felt that it wasn't quite the done thing. So we've come, we've come a long way so it's quite exciting. It's not that common to know for sure that a dress has been worn by somebody pregnant so we were super excited with this mounting project knowing that Lee was definitely pregnant when she wore it.

[Image credit;

Pregnancy dress, Fashion Originators Guild of America, c1930s

Photography by Tessa Hallmann]