

Textural Variation in Pleated Black Silk

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The *inspiration* for this ensemble came from the languid silk dress designs of the 1920's. The *purpose* of this design endeavor was to create an ensemble for a client to wear to a special dinner at the NYC Four Seasons Restaurant with her fiancé and his parents. The client wanted a slender pleated dress with coordinating short jacket, reminiscent of Fortuny style with an updated cocktail-length hem.



In the initial phase of the *design process* the designer developed sketches of the dress and jacket, along with samples of the silk velvet flowers (for jacket back neckline collage), and swatches of two different depths of hand-pleated silk which were approved by the client. Subsequently, the client's circumference and hem length measurements were taken.

Implementation of the design process began with hand-pleating the silk fabric for the dress using an adaptation of the traditional Japanese Arashi Shibori process. Silk for the dress was hand-pleated with tiny ¼" pleats. The deep hem in the dress was pre-sewn before the fabric was pleated. Separately, silk fabric for the jacket was hand-pleated with ½" pleats for textural contrast to enhance the visibility of the jacket hem edge against the pleated dress. Patterns for dress neckline yoke and for the jacket were draped using traditional process. The ¼" pleated dress silk was hand-sewn to the sequin and jet-beaded neckline yoke. The silk velvet flower collage was hand-sewn, beaded and attached to jacket back neckline.

One of the *design challenges* in this endeavor was to heighten the visibility of the curved jacket edge against the dress. This was accomplished by using pleat depths that were much smaller for the dress than the jacket. Light reflects differently on the larger pleats, giving the jacket a more shiny appearance than the dress. Another challenge was to make the Fortuny-like pleated dress seem new and modern. This was accomplished by a contemporary hem length, along with an eight-inch opening on each side seam above the hem.

The following *techniques* were used in this design: garment patterns were draped, and silk fabric was hand-pleated at two depths using an adaptation of traditional Japanese Arashi Shibori technique. Hand-sewing techniques were used to attach the dress to the beaded neckline yoke, as well as to attach the silk velvet flower collage to the jacket for a couture finish.

The following *materials* were used in this design: medium-weight, silk charmeuse was used for dress and jacket, paisley silk jacket lining, antique black tulle with jet-beaded floral trim for dress front and back yoke, jet beads and silk velvet for flowers on jacket back neckline.

This design was completed in April, 2013 and conforms to a U.S. garment size 4.