

Tucked in Mourning Blue

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Tucked in Mourning Blue commenced from a visual study of Christian Dior's 1947 Tourterelle and 1948 Diamant Noir dresses that utilized folds and pleats of fabric to create volume, texture, and movement. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010) related the outcome of improving fit and reducing surplus in defining "tuck" as a flattened, stitched fold in a garment or material. Organic manipulation of fabric was essential to transform matte, flat jersey into a structural design for this garment. Richard Martin and Harold Koda noted, "Dior took advantage of taffeta's ability to puff and crinkle" (1996: 14). The cocktail length, accentuated waist, and bare shoulders of Diamant Noir were key details that inspired the silhouette of this project.



Tucked in Mourning Blue experimented with freeform pleats in matte jersey that molded organically to the dress shell. Variation in tuck scale was achieved through dense spacing at the high neck to an expanded arrangement on the skirt. As a result, the bodice area of compressed pleats yields dark shadows that hint to a gothic and grieving element evident in the Victorian era. "Mourning clothes were not only black, they were made from fabrics with a lustreless texture ... mourning was also a category of fashionable dress, and, as such, was often extremely elaborate" (Steele and Park 2008: 24-25). Tucked in Mourning Blue juxtaposed this somber aesthetic with optimism through a scalloped hem of draped jersey that radiates layers of indigo blue tulle. The raised hemline and exposed forearms of this design suggested a modernity of moving forward without restraints of the past or of decay, equally paying homage to Dior's "New Look" that "signaled the revival of the feminine silhouette" (Milbank 1989: 143).

This hand process began by creating fluid shapes of matte jersey on top of a layer of rigid muslin. A gradient of texture was desired so the bias tucks were engineered to be smaller at the bodice and wider on the skirt. Initially, silk pins were utilized to secure the individual drapes until the desired appearance was achieved. Thereafter, tucks were secured with delicate hand stitching.

The elevated neckline inspiration came from the high renaissance period to connote formality and affluence. At the center back of the bodice, cascading folds of bias fabric concealed the zipper closure and replicated the deep contour of the spine. This element has reference to Elsa Schiaparelli's Skeleton Dress, 1938. Steele and Park noted that the Skeleton Dress examined "the relationship between body and clothes, surface and depth", suggesting a provocative, stripped skin (2008: 66). To mitigate the dark quality of the tucked dress, voluminous layers of tulle were applied in tea-length that spurt from a high arch in the back apron of jersey. These tiers of tulle gradate from dark to light indigo in a calming effect that opposed the seriousness of the bodice.



Tucked in Mourning Blue examined historic costume imagery, applying the techniques and silhouettes in jersey that mutates down the torso. Signifying aberrant beauty and conventional structure, this dress design merged characteristics of dark and light distinction. The body as second skin was exposed, stretched, and surgically tightened to elicit sadness and enchantment within the shell of a modern ball gown.

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