2013

Pretty Pleats

Sara Hume

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/ksumuseum

Part of the Fashion Design Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/ksumuseum/13

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Kent State University Libraries. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kent State University Museum by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Kent State University Libraries. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kent.edu.
Pretty Pleats

June 28, 2013 - March 16, 2014
Stager and Blum Galleries
Kent State University Museum
Pleating is one of the most basic fabric treatments as it serves to create three-dimensional clothing out of two-dimensional cloth. Folds and draping occur naturally when cloth is wrapped around the body. As tailored clothing developed in the West, these folds were stitched down, creating pleats. Pleats can also be produced through heat treatment of fabric to form intentional, lasting creases. The purpose served by the pleats can be purely decorative when they are applied as trimmings, but they can also serve as a fundamental means of shaping the garment. Pleats are a beautiful way of ordering and containing an expanse of fabric. The luxury of pleating comes from the glorious excess of fabric that can be reduced into the folds.

This exhibition highlights many of the countless variations of pleating. The pieces on exhibit span more than two hundred years of fashion history and are organized by the type and usage of the pleats.

The Kent State University Museum is supported through a sustainability grant from The Ohio Arts Council.

Kent State University, Kent State and KSU are registered trademarks and may not be used without permission. Kent State University is committed to attaining excellence through the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body and work force.
Shaping the silhouette

The hourglass silhouettes of women’s fashions from the 1830s and 40s were largely created through carefully formed pleats. The domed shape of the skirt was formed through knife pleats in the front and cartridge pleats in the back. The necklines and sleeves of these dresses demonstrate the pleats' dual role as a decorative and structural element.

1. Gold silk taffeta dress
   Probably American, 1830s
   Silk taffeta
   During the course of the 1830s the fullness of the sleeves moved lower down the arm. While the basic pattern for the sleeves changed little, this progression was accomplished by collecting the fullness with fine pleats.
   Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.50

2. Pink silk taffeta evening dress
   American, ca. 1846
   Silk taffeta
   Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Gift of Seabury C. Mastic, 1964, KSUM 1995.17.51

Pleated trimmings

During the 18th century, the elaborate gowns were frequently adorned with pleated trimmings on the sleeves, at the neckline and along the edge of the skirt. A similar arrangement can be seen in dresses from the 1870s.
Fortuny and his influence

In the early 20th century, Mariano Fortuny developed a method for pleating silk that remains a secret to this day. His innovative Delphos gowns, pleated into fine, crisp folds from shoulder to hem, were far ahead of his time. Later designers such as Mary McFadden and Oscar de la Renta drew inspiration from Fortuny’s pleating.

6. Pale blue Delphos gown
Mariano Fortuny
Italian, 1946
Silk, glass beads
Gift of Mrs. Susan G. Rossbach, KSUM
1987.5.1 ab

Polyester
Silverman/Rodgers Collection KSUM
1983.1.635 ab

8. Red crinkled georgette tunic with pants
Oscar de la Renta
American, ca. 1978
Silk georgette, brown
passementerie
Bequest of Joanne Toor Cummings, KSUM
1996.81.90 a-c

3. Robe à l’anglaise
English, 1770-90
Silk brocade
Women’s clothing in the 18th century was shaped from large rectangles with very little fabric wasted. Pleating was used to shape the garment at the waist and sleeves.
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM
1983.1.10 ab

4. Cream silk faille dress
American, ca. 1870
Silk faille, velvet ribbon

During the 1870s, pleated trimmings were used in abundance particularly at the hem, wrists and along the neckline. The placement of the trimmings closely mirrored their placement in eighteenth-century gowns.
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM
1983.1.2139 ab

5. Wedding gown of silk faille and satin
Probably American, ca. 1879
Silk faille, silk satin, lace
Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM 1983.1.148 ab

7. Off-white pleated cocktail dress with belt
Mary McFadden
American, 1970s

Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM 1983.1.148 ab
“Pleats Please”

Issey Miyake explored the potential of pleats in his series of collections called “Pleats Please,” which he first launched in 1993. The clothing is first assembled at 2-1/2 times the final size and then the stitched garments are set into pleats using a heat press.

9. Black polyester dress
Issey Miyake
Japanese, 1996
Polyester
Anonymous loan, KSUM L2013.21.1

Horizontal pleats

Pleats often run vertically, but they can also run horizontally or diagonally. These pleats stay in place through discretely placed stitches, which support them against gravity. While other forms of pleats are partially stitched but are loose at one end, these pleats are generally controlled at both ends.

10. Blue silk shantung cocktail dress
Karl Lagerfeld for the House of Chanel, 1980s
Silk shantung
Gift of Barbara Kaplan Israel, KSUM 1995.61.2

11. Burgundy velvet and crepe cocktail dress
Christian Lacroix
French, 1997
Velvet, silk crepe
Gift of Mrs. Peter O. Price, KSUM 1999.60.3
12. Olive green horizontally pleated cocktail dress
Sybil Connolly
Irish, 1960s
Linen
Sybil Connolly was an Irish fashion designer whose signature look featured fine, tightly pleated Irish linen.
Gift of Mrs. Joseph Kelly Vodrey, KSUM 1989.10.2

13. Black silk taffeta and velvet cocktail dress with diagonal pleating
Alix Grès
French, 1950s
Silk taffeta, velvet
Born Germaine Krebs and also known as Madame Grès, Alix Grès originally hoped to be a sculptor as evidenced by the sculptural forms of her designs. The seemingly natural swirl of fabric in this dress is actually carefully formed pleats that wrap around the body.
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.409

Sheer, ruffly pleats

The choice of fabric for the pleats has a tremendous influence on the final effect of the garment. Sheer fabrics such as silk organza create a frothiness and lightness. Sheer ruffles were very fashionable trimmings at the turn-of-the-century and have continued to be a popular choice.

14. Black silk dress with pleated ruffled trim
Norman Norell for Hattie Carnegie
American, ca. 1935
Silk gauze, pleated lace, silk flower
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert A. Augustus, KSUM 2004.28.9 ab

15. White pleated ruffle dress
Yves St.-Laurent
French, ca. 1977
Silk organza, satin belt
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.2098 ab

16. Black silk dress with pleated ruffles
American, ca. 1900
Silk taffeta, silk chiffon, sequins
Gift of the Helen O. Borowitz Collection, KSUM 2004.25.3 ab
Traditional pleat making

Pleat making was an art that was maintained by many cultures across Europe. Traditional dress in rural areas often included very elaborately pleated headdresses, skirts and sleeves. These pleats were set into damp, often starched cloth that was treated with heat, formed into folds and left to dry in shape.

17. Czech Ensemble
Czech, early 20th century
Linen, cotton, lace, embroidery
This particular outfit comes from the village of Uhersky Ostroh in Moravian Slovakia, an area of the Czech Republic with a strong attachment to folk traditions. The apron, sleeves, and collar are all heated and formed into stiff pleats that stand away from the body. Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, R. T. Miller, Jr. Fund, 1949, from Vlastimil Kybal, KSUM 1995.17.575 a-d

18. Ukrainian ensemble
Ukrainian, late 19th-early 20th century
Hemp, silk embroidery floss, wool
Decorative pleating is characteristic of areas of Ukraine in the Carpathian Mountains. The body and sleeves of the sorochka, or full-length shirt, can be shaped into pleats after being dampened. These pleats have to be reset each time the garment is laundered. Loan from the Collection of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives, Cleveland, Ohio, KSUM L2013.24.1-.4

19. Pleated Norwegian headdress
American, made in Norwegian tradition, 1913
Cotton
Married women in the district of Hardanger in western Norway traditionally wore this style of headdress, known as a skaut. This particular example was actually made and worn in Wisconsin, but in accordance with the traditional methods. Loan courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, KSUM L2013.18.1 ab
Basic pleat forms

Variations in the direction and proportion of pleats as well as how they are stitched can radically alter the overall silhouette and style of the garment. The pieces in this gallery demonstrate some of these possibilities.

Accordion and sunburst pleats

When the folds are evenly spaced so the rising and falling sides are the same length, the resulting shape resembles an accordion, hence the name. When the pleats are pressed into fabric that is cut into a semi-circle so the crease lines radiate outward and the pleats become deeper towards the hem, the pleats are known as sunburst pleats.

20. Green cocktail dress with sunburst pleated insets
Ellen Kaye
American, 1950s
Changeable acetate
Gift of Mrs. Robert C. (Patricia) Bingham, KSUM 1985.13.5

21. Grey wool suit with pleated back
Attributed to Christian Dior
French, ca. 1948
Wool
Gift of Anne Slater, KSUM 1990.68.1ab

22. Gold satin evening dress
Norman Hartnell
English, late 1930s
Silk crepe back satin
The accordion pleats on this gold evening dress by Norman Hartnell were created along a slight curve. Although they do not flare into a complete circle like the sunburst pleats, the angle creates greater motion and liveliness than if the pleats laid straight along the grain.
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.2140
**Tucks**

A tuck is a fold pulled away from the fabric and sewn along the base. Tucks often served a purely decorative function by creating dimensional stripes, but they could serve to shape the garment.

23. **Tan wool dress**  
American, ca. 1902  
Wool, Irish lace  
Gift of Glenn J. Lenhart in memory of Carmella F. Lenhart, KSUM 1998.38.5 ab

24. **Ivory silk dress**  
French, ca. 1927  
Silk  
Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM 1983.1.350a

**Inverted box pleats**

Inverted box pleats were used on very full skirts to reduce the yardage into a small waist. They were commonly used in the 1950s.

25. **Suit, “Virevolte”**  
Christian Dior  
French, Fall/Winter 1955  
Wool, leather belt  
Gift of Lauren Williams McCord, in honor of Helen Boyd McCord, KSUM 2013.2.1 a-c

26. **Evening dress worn to Truman’s inaugural ball**  
Hattie Carnegie  
American, 1948  
Silk satin, cut velvet  
Gift of Mrs. Harold Fallon, KSUM 1999.47.1 a
27. Evening dress with embroidered bodice
Attributed to the House of Dior
French, ca. 1959
Silk satin, gold and silver embroidery, rhinestones

28. Plaid wool strapless dress
Isaac Mizrahi
American, 1989
Wool, leather straps, brass buckles
This strapless wool dress evokes a kilt through the tartan pattern and buckles, but also in the type of knife pleat in which the underfolds overlap, which has come to be known as a kilt pleat.
Gift of Nita Chhatwani, KSUM 1990.84.1

29. Black satin cocktail dress
Karl Lagerfeld for the House of Chanel
French, ca. 1995
Silk satin
Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr., KSUM 1998.82.9

Knife or side pleats

When the two sides of a fold are unequal in length the resulting pleat will lie flat. These knife or side pleats create a slim, narrow line in contrast to the volume created through inverted box or sunburst pleats.

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Gift of Ernest Byfield through the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, KSUM 1995.17.577
Hats

The sculptural effect of pleats is particularly effective in hats. They could be shaped from lace, straw, felt or fabric into a wide array of folds, tucks and ripples.

30. White batiste and lace bonnet
American, ca. 1870s
Cotton batiste, lace
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM 1983.1.2131

31. White cap with ruching
American, 1880s
Cotton
Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Gift of Alice Little, 1948, KSUM 1995.17.457

32. Red silk jersey turban-like hat
Higbee Co.
American, 1940s
Silk jersey
Gift of the Martha McCaskey Selhorst Collection, KSUM 1996.58.44

33. Black felt and satin hat with swirling pleats
Halle Bros.
American, ca. 1950s
Felt, satin, hat pins
Gift of the Lunka Family in memory of Mary Frances Benjamin Payne, KSUM 1998.64.8

34. Straw hat swirled to crown
Hattie Carnegie
American, ca. 1953
Straw, lace
Gift of Evangeline Davey Smith, KSUM 1990.67.74

35. Brown felt hat
Lazarus
American, 1940s
Felt

36. Black straw hat with white pique brim
A. Polsky Co.
American, ca. 1935-45
Pique, straw, flocked net
Gift of Mrs. Harry McDonald, KSUM 1986.103.120

37. Burgundy velvet swirled pillbox hat with veil
John Andrew
American, 1960s
Velvet, satin, netting
Gift of Edith Virginia Enkler, KSUM 1990.104.2
Fluting irons

A variety of devices known variously as fluting irons, gauffering irons, or plaiting machines were patented in the 1860s and 1870s to create and maintain the complicated trimmings fashionable at the time. Some operated with a hand crank while others used a rocking motion. Each of them has an element that would be heated on the stove then inserted to provide heat to set the pleats.

38. Hand-crank style fluting machine
American, patented Nov. 20, 1866
Iron, wooden handle
Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 42.5017, KSUM L2013.23.3 a-c

39. Geneva hand fluter
American, patented Aug. 21, 1866
Cast iron
Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 56.6.4ab, KSUM L2013.23.1 ab

40. Roller-style fluting iron
American, patented Jan. 13, 1880
Cast iron
Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 46.125, KSUM L2013.23.2a-c
**Pleat Glossary**

**Accordion pleats**
When the folds are evenly spaced so the rising and falling sides are the same length, the resulting shape resembles an accordion, hence the name.

**Cartridge pleats**
Used to gather a large amount of skirt fabric into a small waistband, cartridge pleats allow the fabric of the skirt to stand out from the seam.

**Inverted pleats**
Pleats in which adjacent folds alternate direction. They are used on full skirts to reduce the yardage into a small waist.
Knife pleats
When the two sides of a fold are unequal in length the resulting pleat will lie flat to create a slim, narrow line.

Sunburst pleats
When the pleats are pressed into fabric that is cut into a semi-circle, the pleats become deeper towards the hem and the crease lines radiate outward like the rays of the sun.

Tucks
As folds pulled away from the fabric and sewn along the base, tucks create dimensional stripes. They often served a purely decorative function but they can also serve to shape the garment.