CASCADING IRISES

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Problem Statement: The problem was to design and construct an elegant cocktail dress targeted to a woman over 50 years old. The goals were (a) to create a dress from the fewest possible fabric pieces using rectangular shapes and (b) to convey a soft, romantic feeling that emphasized the nature of the fabric's hand and surface design.

Inspiration: A study of classical form and shaping served as inspiration. The fluid nature of 100% polyester screen-printed georgette captured the flavor of the Greek Ionic chiton that accentuated the play of fabric folds against the body and points of articulation.

Construction Techniques: The front and back of the dress were formed from two 45-inch wide rectangular panels that exceeded the finished length. The excess length served as the overfold and was seamed at the shoulders leaving a 12-inch opening for the neckline. Channel shirring at the shoulder seams was used to control fullness and to provide the illusion of sleeves. Two "O" rings, 1/2-inch in diameter, were made from fabric-covered cord. The fullness at the lower edge of the front and back overfolds was gathered onto the "O" rings to produce a cascade of folds that began at the shoulders and radiated from the center front and center back rings. Fullness in the body of the panels was controlled by elastic shirring under the overfolds. The panels were seamed at the sides 9 inches below the shoulder seams. Two rope belts with fabric fringe were made from fabric- covered cord and asymmetrically draped on the dress. Because of the sheerness of the georgette, an under slip of 100% fuchsia-colored silk was created by draping on a body form.