

Falling Water

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Falling Water integrates alternative approaches to designing, cutting and assembling apparel. Rather than modify conventional pattern shapes, the design strategy deliberately broke away from traditional patternmaking techniques to seek fresh alternatives. As a result pattern shapes led to the design structure, rather than the reverse. Continuing a water themed series, a Hokusai-like “wave” shape enabled zero fabric waste and a contoured fit while needle felting offered an alternative assembly method.

Playful explorations of atypical pattern cuts led to treatment of a sinusoid-like wave shape as the primary pattern contour for a woman’s garment. A randomly shaped “wave”, reminiscent of Japanese artist Hokusai’s depictions of water, was cut from folded paper. Experimentally draping several copies of the “wave” pattern on a half-scale form suggested a viable relationship with three-dimensional body contours. Up-scaled patterns ‘draped’ on a full-size dress form and a live model provided confirmation. Minor changes to the wave pattern accommodated torso length and fabric width.

Four (4) unique pattern shapes resulted, including the primary, sinusoid-like wave shape, two ellipses, and a triangle. The small pieces, a consequence of the minor fallout from the zero-waste layout, proved essential to managing fit, adding style fullness, and developing structural details. Over- and under-lapping the fallout pieces provided subtle variations in the bas-relief shading from the layers.

Twenty-two (22) wave panels produce the surprisingly classical two-piece suit. The suit features an eight-panel skirt with a raised, self-faced waistline, an open-wave



slit, and an elongated waistline tab across the back inseam zipper. The remaining fourteen (14) panels form a semi-fitted jacket with an extended collar, 3/4-length raglan bell sleeves, front inseam pockets with bands, and an asymmetrical front overlap hiding the closure. Several of the ellipse pieces have tips that hang freely to lend visual movement.

Numerous test samples explored aesthetic, functional, and technical approaches to seam construction and edge finishes using a dry felting process. Lapped seams minimize waste, facilitate customized fit, and provide restrained surface detail. In addition, their structure is subtly emphasized, and stabilized, by sandwiching a thin web of custom matched roving between the lapped seams and below the perimeter edges. Except for a zipper and hand-applied hooks, the look is assembled using hand and machine needle felting processes. The suit is fabricated from 1.44 yards of 59.75 inches wide wool boucle knit, an invisible zipper, hooks, sew-on snaps, and wool roving. The roving was custom blended to harmonize with the boucle.

Reference.

Hokusai. Sackler Gallery. Smithsonian Institution.
Washington, DC. 2006.

