

Shibori Rain

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Inspiration for this design came during a torrential downpour in Hong Kong. The *purpose* of the design was to create a garment structure that would give form to the ideas of raindrops and waterfall which are inherent in the fabric surface design. The *concept* for the garment was a sculptural, cocktail-length, real dress that could be worn to an art or fashion gala event in an urban city in Asia, Europe or the United States.



The two distinct phases of the *design process* in this fiber art endeavor were: the *Shibori surface dyeing* treatment and the *architectural garment structuring*. In the Shibori surface dyeing process, six meters of silver-colored, aluminum-coated nylon fabric were folded in half two times, then tied in Shibori knots. Opposing corners of the folded and tied fabric were then simmered in soda ash to remove the aluminum coating on the exposed/untied fabric surface. Next, the soda ash-scoured corners of the folded, Shibori-tied fabric were immersed in a turquoise dye bath (the center of the folded fabric was left in the original silver color). When dye penetration was complete, the folded fabric was untied, rinsed and pleated using heat and pressure. The large silver swath remaining on the surface of the center of the fabric was intended to represent lightning. When the Shibori-dyed and pleated textile was unfolded, the silver area formed a zigzag configuration.

In the *architectural garment structuring* phase of the design process the challenge was to engineer a system to support the draped/folded fabric cascade down the center back of the strapless dress. This cascade was the main sculptural feature of the design and represented a spontaneous waterfall which actually happened during the torrential downpour in Hong Kong. To create the dress, a slim strapless dress lining with princess lines was draped and sewn using a medium-weight plain weave silk. Boning was inserted in the princess seam allowances of the lining for structural support.

The pleated Shibori-dyed fabric was stitched to the garment lining at strapless neckline edge and to the overlapping placket closure in center back. All stitching on the pleated Shibori fabric was hand-stitched using monofilament thread, because the fabric was transparent and silk or cotton opaque thread was visible from the outside of the dress. When the outside and inside layers of the dress were stitched together, two small vertical channels were hand-stitched through the pleated Shibori and lining fabrics on either side of center back. Then two lengths of Shibori fabric were draped and hand-sewn to silk-covered wooden dowels to form the sculptural waterfall shapes. The silk-covered dowels were inserted into the channels on either side of the dress center back, with the weight of the draped Shibori fabric supported by the dowels rather than by the dress itself.

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