Draping

Techniques for Beginners

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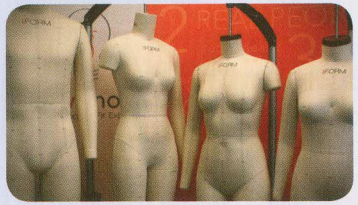

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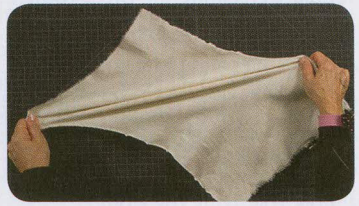

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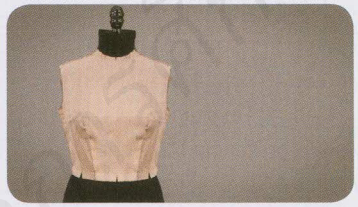

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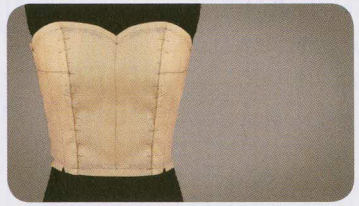

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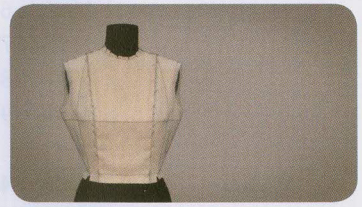

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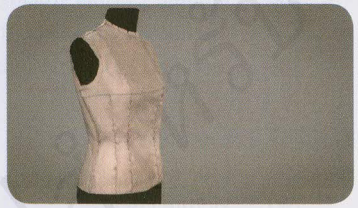

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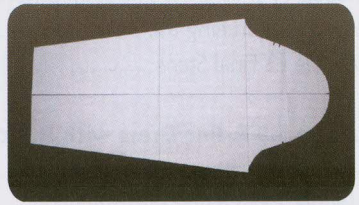

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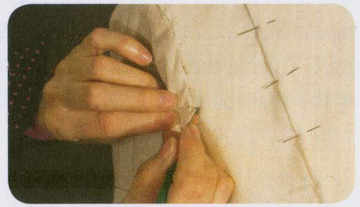

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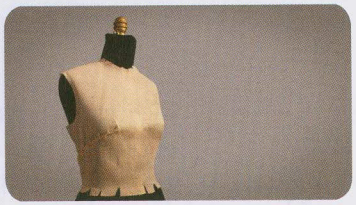

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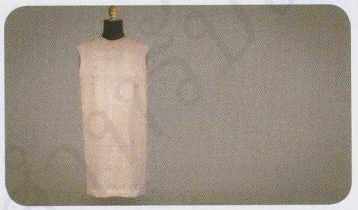

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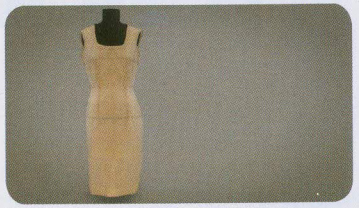

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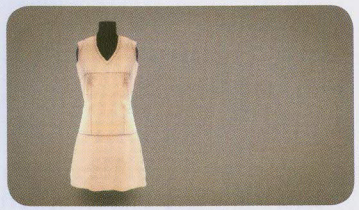

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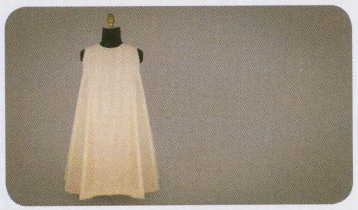


How this Book Works

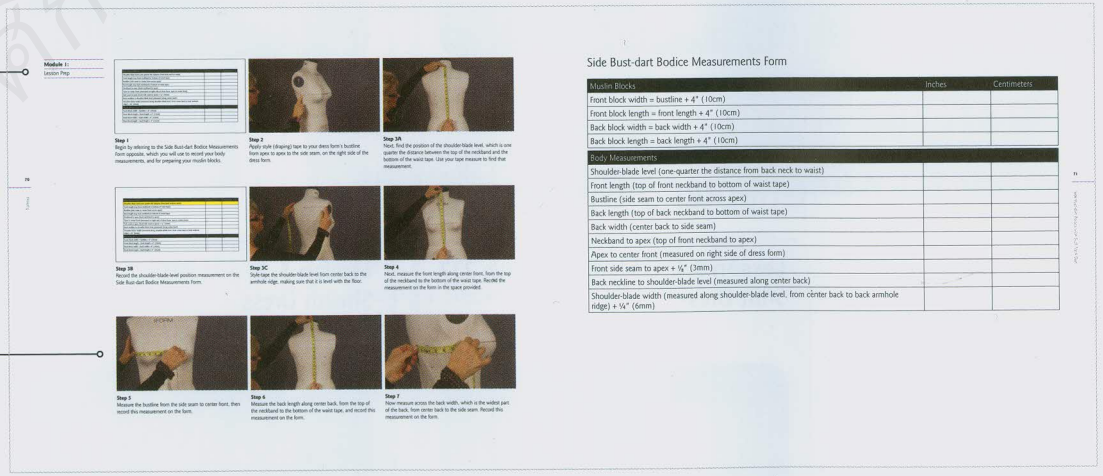
Each lesson begins with a set of Learning Objectives detailing key skills you will develop

You will find helpful Tip boxes throughout the book, highlighted in purple

Any fabrics and tools you need to complete the project are listed here

At the end of each project, you'll find a Self-evaluation checklist. Use this to measure your progress

The lesson is divided into key stages or Modules



Step-by-step photographic sequences guide you through each Module

You can also view the video lessons from the University of Fashion—see **www.universityoffashion.com** to subscribe

Preface

The art and craft of clothing design is the heartbeat of the global fashion industry. Designers conceptualize their ideas along two dimensions: two-dimensional (fashion drawing and pattern making) and/or three-dimensional (draping). Whether a designer begins with an idea, a sketch or a fabric, the design process ultimately concludes with a three-dimensional prototype.

Throughout history, many designers have regarded draping as the most creative method within the design process. Draping serves utilitarian purposes, too. The very act of manipulating fabric around a 3-D form reveals important fitting concepts.

Learning the basics of draping is an absolute prerequisite before using computer-based design tools such as 3-D body-mapping, virtual reality (VR) apparel design software, artificial intelligence (AI), and augmented reality (AR) software. Through the real-life draping process, designers can better understand how a fabric can be manipulated on the body, as well as how a garment should fit.

With a solid foundation in draping, designers play a more meaningful role in the industry, supporting slow fashion and local manufacturing, both of which are key components of the sustainability movement.

As technology continues to impact the fashion industry, new paradigms and strategies have emerged in the field of fashion education. In 2008, the University of Fashion (UoF) identified a solution in addressing student learning needs in an Internet-dominated world. By creating an online video library with hundreds of lessons in key design disciplines, the UoF provides the perfect tools to teach fashion design to aspiring designers, fashion college students, home sewers, industry professionals looking to upgrade their skills, and the fashion-curious. To reinforce that learning further, the UoF has partnered with Laurence King Publishing to create *Draping: Techniques for Beginners*, *Pattern Making: Techniques for Beginners*, and *Sewing: Techniques for Beginners*. The books work on their own, with step-by-step sequences based on the videos. But they can be used in conjunction with the videos to create the ultimate learning experience.

We wish you every success with your draping projects.

Francesca Sterlacci

Introduction to Draping

DRAPING is the art of conceptualizing a garment design through the 3-D process of manipulating fabric on a dress form (tailor's dummy) or live model to create a prototype, either out of actual dress fabric or a material known as muslin (calico). This process is also known as "modeling on the stand." Those who are new to the technique start by draping a series of slopers (blocks) to learn the basics. Once a basic sloper has been draped, it is checked for fit and then transferred, without seam allowances, to oaktag (card) or pattern paper. This then becomes part of a set of slopers that are used for pattern making.

Designers and students of fashion appreciate the creativity that the draping method offers, since the process of working with actual cloth provides a more tactile experience than that offered with paper via the 2-D pattern-making method. Feeling the fabric in your hands and how it drapes around the body always inspires new shapes and silhouettes. Working in the round can be compared to how a sculptor works, thinking about the design in terms of form and balance, and how the drapery will look in a 360-degree view. Designers working from a design sketch will almost always improve on their design when it is draped on a dress form.

Through draping, you will also learn about fit and proportion as you guide and manipulate fabric around the body. Designers with a strong knowledge of the principles of draping have a deeper understanding of how garments are made to fit the body. By applying basic draping principles and methods that are tried and true, you can ensure a perfect fit with every design. Many of the most creative people in the fashion industry believe that you must learn the rules first in order to break them effectively—and we agree. Our beginner draping lessons will provide you with a solid foundation from which you will be able to move to the next level and create the most amazing designs.

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Draping Then and Now

An understanding of fashion history, and the ability to reference influences of decades past, will always add credibility to a designer's work.

Classical Antiquity

Although cavemen and women wore coverings made out of animal skins, it was not until woven textiles were invented that the concept of draping rectangular pieces of cloth on the body became possible. The peplos, chiton, and himation were the three main garments worn by women in Ancient Greece, and these, along with the toga of Ancient Rome, are among the earliest known examples of draped clothing. Ancient Greek styles have inspired fashion designers in the modern era, too—notably the Spanish designer Mariano Fortuny, who created a popular dress called the "Delphos gown," and the French couturière Madame Grès, whose extraordinary chiton-inspired jersey dresses captured the timeless elegance of Greek clothing.

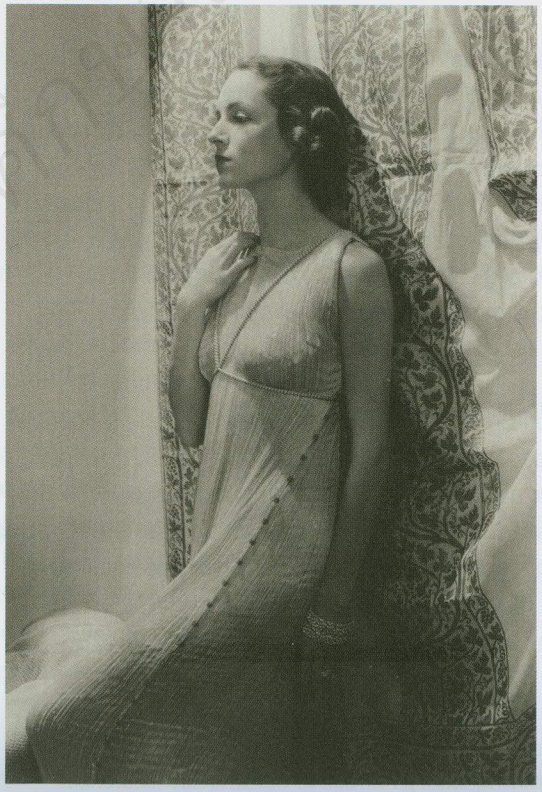
With the melding of cultural influences between the East and West during the Byzantine period (from around the third to the mid-fifteenth century), trends in women's fashion developed further. However, it was not until the Renaissance (fourteenth to the seventeenth century) that fashion flourished, as wealthy textile merchants introduced sumptuous fabrics from the Far East into the European royal courts.

Court Fashion

Italian painters from the courts of Naples, Urbino, Ferrara, Mantua, and Milan recorded the lavish dress of their period in great detail, as did the Flemish Baroque painters of the seventeenth century, who, in addition to clothes worn at court, also depicted the outfits worn by peasants.

The yards of rich textiles, lace, and other embellishments seen in the Spanish court paintings of the Golden Age would later provide inspiration to Marie-Jeanne Rose Bertin, the first celebrated French fashion designer. Bertin became milliner to Marie Antoinette soon after her marriage to Louis XVI in 1770, and she remained in the Queen's service as a couturière and fashion advisor throughout her reign. Her influence at court meant that France soon became the fashion capital of the world, a reputation that persists today.

Below left: Greek chiton (left) and peplos (right).
Below center: Mariano Fortuny, Delphos gown.
Below right: Queen Mariana of Austria, painted by Velazquez c. 1653.



Left: Fashion plate from Peterson's Magazine, 1881.
Center: Jeanne Lanvin, famous for draping directly on the human figure, 1929.
Right: Madame Grès jersey dress, 1963, reflecting the fashions of Ancient Greece.

Fashion Plates & Publications

Fashion plates, introduced in France and England in the eighteenth century, and produced well into the nineteenth, illustrated the latest fashion trends in Europe for women around the world. Publications included *Gallery of Fashion* (1794–1802), *Ackermann's Repository of Arts* (1809–29), *Godey's Lady's Book* (1830–1898), and *Peterson's Magazine* (1842–98). Women would bring these images to their seamstress, who would then drape, pattern, and tailor-make them to fit their customer's measurements.

Paul Poiret

Poiret opened his own couture house in 1903 and became a very influential force in the fashion world, particularly with his departure from the tailoring and pattern making of the past in favor of the draping technique. He is also credited with releasing women from the corset and petticoat, and introducing a move away from the hourglass silhouette to the high-waisted column. His clothes were constructed of rectangular motifs that employed the use of straight lines, thus making him a pioneer of modern fashion.

Jeanne Lanvin

Lanvin was one of the most renowned designers of the 1920s and 1930s, and hers is the oldest surviving fashion house in continuous existence. Lanvin would not begin with a sketch. Instead, she would drape fabric directly onto the dress form and manipulate it to create her design. Only when it was finished would an illustrator sketch it for her lookbook.

Madame Grès—Sculptor of Couture

The designer who undoubtedly understood the female form best was the Parisian couturière Madame Grès. Having trained initially as a sculptor, Madame Grès went on to become the "sculptor of couture," creating sumptuous draped gowns from the 1930s through to the 1960s. Each of her silk jersey dresses used between 30 and 70 yards (meters) of fabric, which she preferred to drape herself ("I look at the fabric and I touch it. Then I ask myself: 'What kind of a dress will this turn out to be?' It's not a trip, or an inspiration that defines the dress, it's the fabric"). Madame Grès's work continues to be an inspiration for designers everywhere who value and respect the art of draping.

Cristóbal Balenciaga—the Master

Another famous designer who conceptualized his design ideas through the draping process was Cristóbal Balenciaga, also known as "the Master." Due to his technical mastery and ability to design with the female form in mind, apprenticeships with Balenciaga were highly prized. André Courrèges, Oscar de la Renta, Emanuel Ungaro, and Hubert de Givenchy were among those who learned from the Master and then went on to launch their own

Left: Madeleine Vionnet draping on a half-scale mannequin.
Center: Pauline Trigère cutting and draping designs on a live model.
Right: Christian Dior's "New Look," Spring 1947. Dior was the master of enhancing female proportions.
Below: Four basic body shapes; Wedge, Column, Pear, Hourglass.

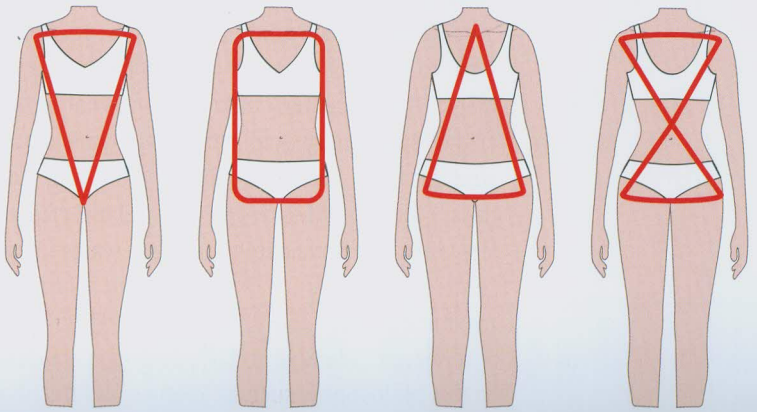
successful houses. Balenciaga was also one of a group of designers—including Jeanne Lanvin, Madame Grès, Pauline Trigère, and Richard Tyler—who believed that working on a model or living body, as opposed to a sketch, was the best way to be truly creative.

Madeleine Vionnet

Although she began as a seamstress, Madeleine Vionnet rose to fame as a result of her in-depth understanding of the female form, and her experience of working with sumptuous fabrics at the fashion house Callot Soeurs in the early 1900s. It was there that she acquired her passion for cutting and draping. Although Paul Poiret promoted the idea and has thus been credited with freeing women from the corset, it was Vionnet who, inspired by the bra-less and barefooted performances of the American dancer Isadora Duncan, actually created the first corset-free collection for the House of Doucet in 1907. Vionnet would go on to invent the "bias cut," a key fashion element that is still widely used by designers today. She would often use a half-scale dress form to conceptualize her design ideas before moving on to full-scale versions, and was considered to be one of the few truly "hands on" designers of her day.

Christian Dior

A designer who began his career as a fashion illustrator, Dior combined his flair for sketching with a keen eye for silhouette, shape, and proportion. In his own words, "A dress is a piece of ephemeral architecture, designed to enhance the proportions of the female body." In 1947 Dior turned the fashion world upside down with the introduction of his "New Look." His awareness of female proportions and the silhouettes that were best suited



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