

Untitled; Classical Allure

Zoë Pulley, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA

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This look was inspired by and created for the Valentine Museum's costume exhibit, 'Classical Allure' that opened in spring of 2015. The exhibit is based off the three Greek goddesses pictured on the Virginia State seal—Libertas, Virtus and Ceres and revolved around the idea of the female forms relationship with modern prevailing fashion trends from the last century.

My design process began with an interest in exploring the evolution of pleats in relation to the female body. I found inspiration from the traditional Greek Peplos dress, Fortuny's renowned Delphos gown and Issey Miyake's 'Pleats Please' collections. I studied these landmarks in pleat history have looked at how each utilized simplicity, adaptation and shape to liberate the female form in one way or another.



The classical Greek peplos gown silhouette utilizes one sheet of fabric to create a column-like shape that balances the idea of complete freedom while still utilizing some sort of restriction (the belt) to create shape.

Fortuny elevated this silhouette with his mysterious pleating technique in the Delphos gown. In this case, he freed the female form from any restrictions by ridding the gown of the belt. The Delphos introduces this great juxtaposition between a generally rigid fabric manipulation and its ability to be sleek and streamlined on the body—the liberated female form taking precedence over the pleats themselves.

Years after Fortuny's technique was no longer in existence, Japanese designer Issey Miyake revisited the draping-pleat-style in 'Pleats Please'. The collection introduced a new idea: pleats determining the clothing rather than the body determining the pleat. Miyake's looks were simplistic in conception but structural, creating open non-restrictive shapes which are arguably both liberating and not so.

This piece was created with the notion—what would come next for pleats following the leads of the precedents? How could pleats be defined in a new way in relation to the female form? I worked with the intention of emphasizing the wearer, and creating a look that is balanced between being liberating in silhouette, but requires user interaction, and therefore restriction. I felt this would be a new way to view shape, the modern body and the pleats themselves. Ultimately, the column is activated by the individuals' gestures and responds to their kinetic decisions.

The underdress is made of 100% satin-faced silk organza and features a turtle neckline. The pleated skirt is ten yards of 100% silk organza and features 50 yards of machine-sewn nylon ribbon stripes and ribbons that are worn around the wearer's wrist.