

## Waterfall: A co-design challenge

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Consumer co-design is a subject explored through the lens of mass-customization of apparel (Park, 2004, Ulrich, Anderson-Connell, & Wu, 2003), however this asymmetrical wedding gown was developed through individualized co-design. The individualized co-design process, as depicted in Figure 1, involved (1) defining the customer's preferences, personality and aesthetic, (2) determining common elements between the customer and the designer's aesthetic, (3) selecting appropriate materials and techniques for realizing the design.

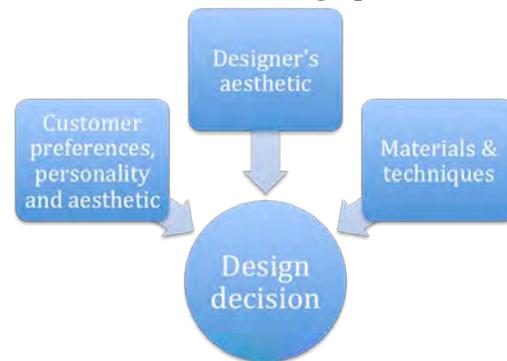


Figure 1: Customized co-design decision matrix.



Several meetings focused on the personality and aesthetic of the

customer. To familiarize the customer with current bridal merchandise, she was encouraged to go to stores and try on existing dresses. Through this process she determined the following characteristics: no mermaid silhouette, a preference for chiffon over tulle, desire for a long train, attraction to pleating with beading, shine, and strapless neckline. She presented dress ideas to the designer, in person and through a Pinterest board. The designer researched fabric, lace, and embellishments, choosing lightweight polyester/Lycra satin, polyester chiffon and satin lace, then developed a series of initial sketches. Building on this foundation, the designer and the customer negotiated further options until both parties agreed upon a final dress design. Advanced communication techniques were employed where the designer was obliged to distinguish her role from that of a dressmaker, or one who simply reproduces existing ideas, to one who incorporates in-depth knowledge of good design, appropriate techniques and relevant fashion trends to contribute distinct design concepts.

The designer draped a princess-line torso and fit the customer. From that foundation, the strapless dress shell with princess lines, a fully boned bustier, and a 6-foot train were drafted and



fit. After appropriate adjustments, the dress and bodice lining were cut in final fabric, assembled, and fit. The stretch of the poly/Lycra satin, chosen because of its lightweight and ability to provide comfort, required several fit sessions to achieve the proper level of support for the entire gown. Bra cups, plastic boning, and a grosgrain ribbon belt were integrated into the lining to enhance the support features of the strapless gown. Upon this satin shell a layer of chiffon was draped with asymmetrical front pleats that cascaded into pleated folds on the left hip then extended and attached to the center back. To finish the lower edge of the chiffon gracefully in relation to the long satin train, the chiffon flared at the center back where its hem rose 15" from the floor. Glass beads from Czechoslovakia were

hand-strung into the Art Deco-inspired pattern and hand-sewn to the dress to highlight the asymmetrical pleating in the front and to create back emphasis.

In summary, the final wedding gown was the product of an evolutive fusion of the customer's desires with the designer's abilities in the context of the 2013 bridal culture in the Midwest. This one-of-a kind design reflects current fashion trends as well as the customer's stated desires.

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Ulrich, Pamela V., Anderson-Connell, Lenda Jo, and Wu, Weifang (2003). Consumer co-design of apparel for mass customization, *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 7 (4), 398 - 412. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/argo.library.okstate.edu/journals.htm?articleid=858561&show=html&ini=ebsco#sthash.X2ZPQMt3.dpuf>