



Folds and pleats in the first part of the 20th century

The first half of the 20th century was particularly famous for folds and pleats.

The famous Delphos gowns by Mariano Fortuny appeared in 1907. These were inspired by the Ionian Chiton, the basic garment of Ancient Greece, but Fortuny created finely pleated garments that required much more fabric and care. He made several variations of these in silk satin. These garments brushed the ground and gave the female wearer the appearance of a flower-like statue rising from the floor. Fortuny weighted down the hem with hand-made Murano glass beads affixed to silk cords. He applied his pleating techniques vertically but also in secondary, sometimes horizontal, crimping.

Madame Grès was the mistress of draping and gathering. She opened Maison Alix in Paris in 1931, where she draped jersey designs directly onto the body of a model or even the customers themselves. The aim was to keep the number of seams to the absolute minimum. Gathered fabric was wound around the body, and arrangements of folds fell freely down the back. The gathers were precisely fixed in place with fabric tape. Then she began to mount her drapings on silk undergarments. It was impossible to copy her garments which sometimes needed up to twenty running metres of silk jersey.

John Dessès also expressed his hand in complicated chiffon evening gowns: the most famous were his dresses of chiffon and silk muslin which were closely draped on the body.

(Adapted from *Icons of Fashion*)

ACTIVITIES

1 Say who made these (Fortuny, Dessès, Grès).

- 1 Jersey designs draped on the body
.....
- 2 Drapings mounted on silk undergarments
.....
- 3 Delphos gowns
.....
- 4 Chiffon evening gowns
.....

- 5 Gathers fixed in place with fabric tape
.....
- 6 Silk satin variations of pleated garments
.....
- 7 Hems with glass beads
.....
- 8 Silk muslin dresses draped on the body
.....

2 Explain the meaning of these phrases and words.

- 1 Brushed the ground
.....
.....
- 2 Flower-like statue.....
.....
.....
- 3 Weighted down the hem
.....
.....
- 4 Secondary crimping
.....
.....

- 5 Draped designs on the models' body.....
.....
.....
- 6 To keep seams to the minimum.....
.....
.....
- 7 Gathered fabric was wound around the body.....
.....
.....
- 8 Up to twenty running metres of jersey.....
.....
.....

3 Why were these garments original? What did they have in common? Discuss with a partner.