



# *Pretty Pleats*

June 28, 2013 - March 16, 2014  
Stager and Blum Galleries  
Kent State University Museum





# *Pleat*

---

(noun)

**A fold in cloth or other material, made by doubling the material upon itself and then pressing or stitching it into place.**

Pleating is one of the most basic fabric treatments as it serves to create three-dimensional clothing out of two-dimensional cloth. Folds and draping occur naturally when cloth is wrapped around the body. As tailored clothing developed in the West, these folds were stitched down, creating pleats. Pleats can also be produced through heat treatment of fabric to form intentional, lasting creases. The purpose served by the pleats can be purely decorative when they are applied as trimmings, but they can also serve as a fundamental means of shaping the garment. Pleats are a beautiful way of ordering and containing an expanse of fabric. The luxury of pleating comes from the glorious excess of fabric that can be reduced into the folds.

This exhibition highlights many of the countless variations of pleating. The pieces on exhibit span more than two hundred years of fashion history and are organized by the type and usage of the pleats.

The Kent State University Museum is supported through a sustainability grant from The Ohio Arts Council.

Kent State University, Kent State and KSU are registered trademarks and may not be used without permission. Kent State University is committed to attaining excellence through the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body and work force.



---

**Ohio Arts Council**



## *Shaping the silhouette*

---

The hourglass silhouettes of women's fashions from the 1830s and 40s were largely created through carefully formed pleats. The domed shape of the skirt was formed through knife pleats in the front and cartridge pleats in the back. The necklines and sleeves of these dresses demonstrate the pleats' dual role as a decorative and structural element.

### **1. Gold silk taffeta dress**

Probably American, 1830s

Silk taffeta

During the course of the 1830s the fullness of the sleeves moved lower down the arm.

While the basic pattern for the sleeves changed little, this progression was accomplished

by collecting the fullness with fine pleats.

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM

1983.1.50

### **2. Pink silk taffeta evening dress**

American, ca. 1846

Silk taffeta

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Gift of Seabury C. Mastic, 1964, KSUM 1995.17.51



## *Pleated trimmings*

---

During the 18th century, the elaborate gowns were frequently adorned with pleated trimmings on the sleeves, at the neckline and along the edge of the skirt. A similar arrangement can be seen in dresses from the 1870s.



### 3. Robe à l'anglaise

English, 1770-90

Silk brocade

Women's clothing in the 18th century was shaped from large rectangles with very little fabric wasted. Pleating was used to shape the garment at the waist and sleeves.

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.10 ab

### 4. Cream silk faille dress

American, ca. 1870

Silk faille, velvet ribbon

During the 1870s, pleated trimming was used in abundance particularly at the hem, wrists and along the neckline. The placement of the trimmings closely mirrored their placement in eighteenth-century gowns.

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.2139 ab

### 5. Wedding gown of silk faille and satin

Probably American, ca. 1879

Silk faille, silk satin, lace

Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM 1983.1.148 ab



## *Fortuny and his influence*

---

In the early 20th century, Mariano Fortuny developed a method for pleating silk that remains a secret to this day. His innovative Delphos gowns, pleated into fine, crisp folds from shoulder to hem, were far ahead of his time. Later designers such as Mary McFadden and Oscar de la Renta drew inspiration from Fortuny's pleating.

### 6. Pale blue Delphos gown

Mariano Fortuny

Italian, 1946

Silk, glass beads

Gift of Mrs. Susan G. Rossbach, KSUM  
1987.5.1 ab

### 7. Off-white pleated cocktail dress with belt

Mary McFadden

American, 1970s

Polyester

Silverman/Rodgers Collection KSUM  
1983.1.635 ab

### 8. Red crinkled georgette tunic with pants

Oscar de la Renta

American, ca. 1978

Silk georgette, brown  
passementerie

Bequest of Joanne Toor Cummings, KSUM  
1996.81.90 a-c



## ***“Pleats Please”***

---

Issey Miyake explored the potential of pleats in his series of collections called “Pleats Please,” which he first launched in 1993. The clothing is first assembled at 2-1/2 times the final size and then the stitched garments are

set into pleats using a heat press.

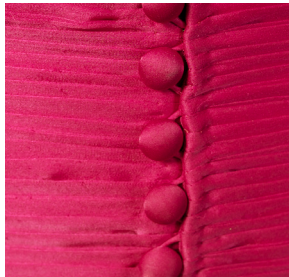
### **9. Black polyester dress**

Issey Miyake

Japanese, 1996

Polyester

Anonymous loan, KSUM L2013.21.1



## ***Horizontal pleats***

---

Pleats often run vertically, but they can also run horizontally or diagonally. These pleats stay in place through discretely placed stitches, which support them against gravity. While other forms of pleats are partially stitched but are loose at one end, these pleats are generally controlled at both ends.

### **10. Blue silk shantung cocktail dress**

Karl Lagerfeld for the House of Chanel, 1980s

Silk shantung

Gift of Barbara Kaplan Israel, KSUM 1995.61.2

### **11. Burgundy velvet and crepe cocktail dress**

Christian Lacroix

French, 1997

Velvet, silk crepe

Gift of Mrs. Peter O. Price, KSUM 1999.60.3

## 12. Olive green horizontally pleated cocktail dress

Sybil Connolly

Irish, 1960s

Linen

Sybil Connolly was an Irish fashion designer whose signature look featured fine, tightly pleated Irish linen.

Gift of Mrs. Joseph Kelly Vodrey, KSUM  
1989.10.2

## 13. Black silk taffeta and velvet cocktail dress with diagonal pleating

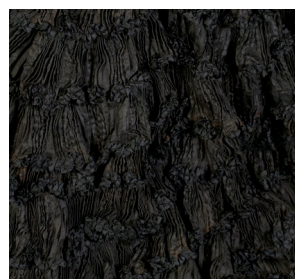
Alix Grès

French, 1950s

Silk taffeta, velvet

Born Germaine Krebs and also known as Madame Grès, Alix Grès originally hoped to be a sculptor as evidenced by the sculptural forms of her designs. The seemingly natural swirl of fabric in this dress is actually carefully formed pleats that wrap around the body.

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.409



## *Sheer, ruffly pleats*

The choice of fabric for the pleats has a tremendous influence on the final effect of the garment. Sheer fabrics such as silk organza create a frothiness and lightness. Sheer ruffles were very fashionable trimmings at the turn-of-the-century and have continued to be a popular choice.

## 14. Black silk dress with pleated ruffled trim

Norman Norell for Hattie Carnegie

American, ca. 1935

Silk gauze, pleated lace,  
silk flower

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert A.  
Augustus, KSUM 2004.28.9 ab

## 15. White pleated ruffle dress

Yves St.-Laurent

French, ca. 1977

Silk organza, satin belt

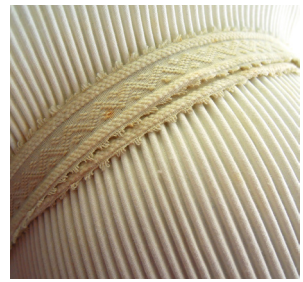
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.2098 ab

## 16. Black silk dress with pleated ruffles

American, ca. 1900

Silk taffeta, silk chiffon, sequins

Gift of the Helen O. Borowitz Collection,  
KSUM 2004.25.3 ab



## *Traditional pleat making*

---

Pleat making was an art that was maintained by many cultures across Europe. Traditional dress in rural areas often included very elaborately pleated headdresses, skirts and sleeves. These pleats were set into damp, often starched cloth that was treated with heat, formed into folds and left to dry in shape.

### **17. Czech Ensemble**

Czech, early 20th century  
Linen, cotton, lace,  
embroidery

This particular outfit comes from the village of Uhersky Ostroh in Moravian Slovakia, an area of the Czech Republic with a strong attachment to folk traditions. The apron, sleeves, and collar are all heated and formed into stiff pleats that stand away from the body.

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, R. T. Miller, Jr. Fund, 1949, from Vlastimil Kybal, KSUM 1995.17.575 a-d

### **18. Ukrainian ensemble**

Ukrainian, late 19th-early 20th century

Hemp, silk embroidery floss, wool  
Decorative pleating is characteristic of areas of Ukraine in the Carpathian Mountains.

The body and sleeves of the *sorochka*, or full-length shirt, can be shaped into pleats after being dampened. These pleats have to be reset each time the garment is laundered.

Loan from the Collection of the Ukrainian Museum-Archives, Cleveland, Ohio, KSUM L2013.24.1-.4

### **19. Pleated Norwegian headdress**

American, made in Norwegian tradition, 1913

Cotton

Married women in the district of Hardanger in western Norway traditionally wore this style of headdress, known as a *skaut*. This particular example was actually made and worn in Wisconsin, but in accordance with the traditional methods.

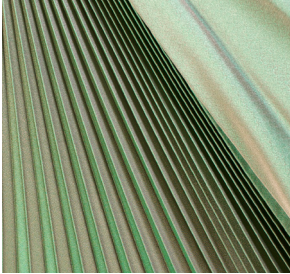
Loan courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society, KSUM L2013.18.1 ab



## *Basic pleat forms*

---

Variations in the direction and proportion of pleats as well as how they are stitched can radically alter the overall silhouette and style of the garment. The pieces in this gallery demonstrate some of these possibilities.



## *Accordion and sunburst pleats*

---

When the folds are evenly spaced so the rising and falling sides are the same length, the resulting shape resembles an accordion, hence the name. When the pleats are pressed into fabric that is cut into a semi-circle so the crease lines radiate outward and the pleats become deeper towards the hem, the pleats are known as sunburst pleats.

### **20. Green cocktail dress with sunburst pleated insets**

Ellen Kaye  
American, 1950s  
Changeable acetate  
Gift of Mrs. Robert C. (Patricia) Bingham, KSUM 1985.13.5

### **21. Grey wool suit with pleated back**

Attributed to Christian Dior  
French, ca. 1948  
Wool  
Gift of Anne Slater, KSUM 1990.68.1ab

### **22. Gold satin evening dress**

Norman Hartnell  
English, late 1930s  
Silk crepe back satin

The accordion pleats on this gold evening dress by Norman Hartnell were created along a slight curve. Although they do not flare into a complete circle like the sunburst pleats, the angle creates greater motion and liveliness than if the pleats laid straight along the grain.

Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.2140



## *Tucks*

---

A tuck is a fold pulled away from the fabric and sewn along the base. Tucks often served a purely decorative function by creating dimensional stripes, but they could serve to shape the garment.

### **23. Tan wool dress**

American, ca. 1902

Wool, Irish lace

Gift of Glenn J. Lenhart in memory of  
Carmella F. Lenhart, KSUM 1998.38.5 ab

### **24. Ivory silk dress**

French, ca. 1927

Silk

Silverman/Rodgers, KSUM  
1983.1.350a



## *Inverted box pleats*

---

Inverted box pleats were used on very full skirts to reduce the yardage into a small waist. They were commonly used in the 1950s.

### **25. Suit, “Virevolte”**

Christian Dior

French, Fall/Winter 1955

Wool, leather belt

Gift of Lauren Williams McCord, in  
honor of Helen Boyd McCord, KSUM  
2013.2.1 a-c

### **26. Evening dress worn to Truman’s inaugural ball**

Hattie Carnegie

American, 1948

Silk satin, cut velvet

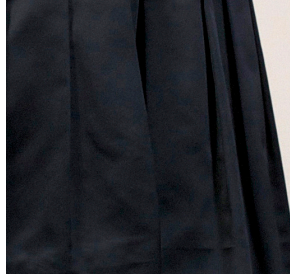
Gift of Mrs. Harold Fallon, KSUM  
1999.47.1 a

## 27. Evening dress with embroidered bodice

Attributed to the House of Dior  
French, ca. 1959

Silk satin, gold and silver embroidery,  
rhinestones

Transferred from the Allen Memorial Art  
Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio,  
Gift of Ernest Byfield through the Met-  
ropolitan Museum of Art, 1980, KSUM  
1995.17.577



## *Knife or side pleats*

When the two sides of a fold are unequal in length the resulting pleat will lie flat. These knife or side pleats create a slim, narrow line in contrast to the volume created through inverted box or sunburst pleats.

## 28. Plaid wool strapless dress

Isaac Mizrahi  
American, 1989

Wool, leather straps, brass buckles

This strapless wool dress evokes a kilt through the tartan pattern and buckles, but also in the type of knife pleat in which the underfolds overlap, which has come to be known as a kilt pleat.

Gift of Nita Chhatwani, KSUM  
1990.84.1

## 29. Black satin cocktail dress

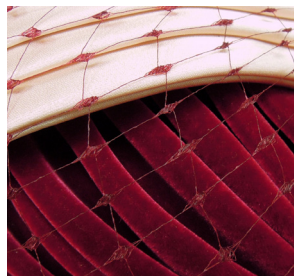
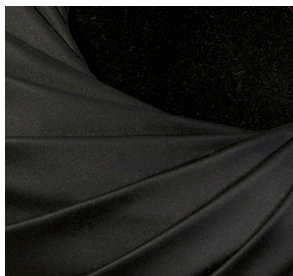
Karl Lagerfeld for the House of  
Chanel

French, ca. 1995

Silk satin

Gift of Mrs. William McCormick Blair,  
Jr., KSUM 1998.82.9





## *Hats*

---

The sculptural effect of pleats is particularly effective in hats. They could be shaped from lace, straw, felt or fabric into a wide array of folds, tucks and ripples.

### **30. White batiste and lace bonnet**

American, ca. 1870s  
Cotton batiste, lace  
Silverman/Rodgers Collection, KSUM  
1983.1.2131

### **31. White cap with ruching**

American, 1880s  
Cotton  
Transferred from the Allen Memorial  
Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin,  
Ohio, Gift of Alice Little, 1948, KSUM  
1995.17.457

### **32. Red silk jersey turban-like hat**

Higbee Co.  
American, 1940s  
Silk jersey  
Gift of the Martha McCaskey Selhorst  
Collection, KSUM 1996.58.44

### **33. Black felt and satin hat with swirling pleats**

Halle Bros.  
American, ca. 1950s  
Felt, satin, hat pins  
Gift of the Lunka Family in memory of  
Mary Frances Benjamin Payne, KSUM  
1998.64.8

### **34. Straw hat swirled to crown**

Hattie Carnegie  
American, ca. 1953  
Straw, lace  
Gift of Evangeline Davey Smith,  
KSUM 1990.67.74

### **35. Brown felt hat**

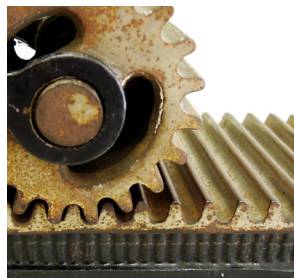
Lazarus  
American, 1940s  
Felt  
Gift of Robert and Melody Liberatore,  
KSUM 2010.19.12

### **36. Black straw hat with white pique brim**

A. Polsky Co.  
American, ca. 1935-45  
Pique, straw, flocked net  
Gift of Mrs. Harry McDonald, KSUM  
1986.103.120

### **37. Burgundy velvet swirled pillbox hat with veil**

John Andrew  
American, 1960s  
Velvet, satin, netting  
Gift of Edith Virginia Enkler, KSUM  
1990.104.2



## *Fluting irons*

---

A variety of devices known variously as fluting irons, gauffering irons, or plaiting machines were patented in the 1860s and 1870s to create and maintain the complicated trimmings fashionable at the time. Some operated with a hand crank while others used a rocking motion. Each of them has an element that would be heated on the stove then inserted to provide heat to set the pleats.

### **38. Hand-crank style fluting machine**

American, patented Nov. 20, 1866

Iron, wooden handle

Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 42.5017, KSUM L2013.23.3 a-c

### **39. Geneva hand fluter**

American, patented Aug. 21, 1866

Cast iron

Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 56.6.4ab, KSUM L2013.23.1 ab

### **40. Roller-style fluting iron**

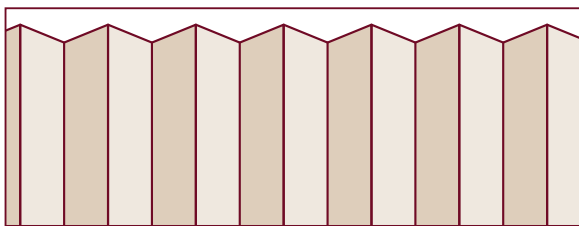
American, patented Jan. 13, 1880

Cast iron

Loan courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, WRHS 46.125, KSUM L2013.23.2a-c

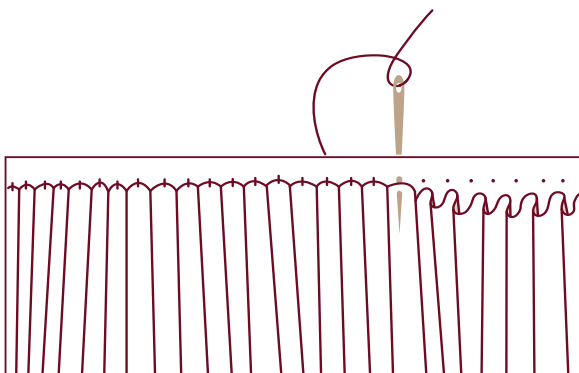
## *Pleat Glossary*

---



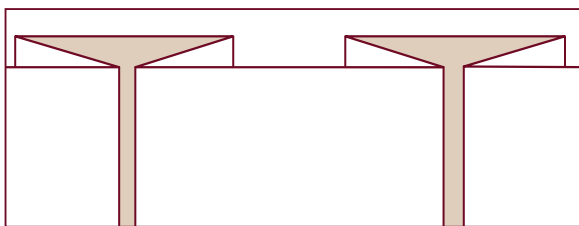
### **Accordion pleats**

When the folds are evenly spaced so the rising and falling sides are the same length, the resulting shape resembles an accordion, hence the name.



### **Cartridge pleats**

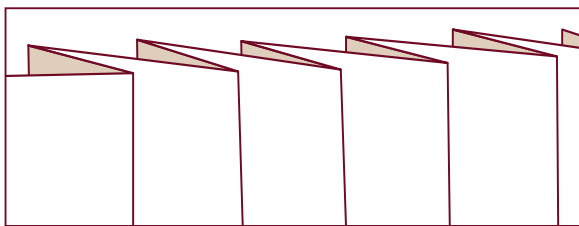
Used to gather a large amount of skirt fabric into a small waistband, cartridge pleats allow the fabric of the skirt to stand out from the seam.



### **Inverted pleats**

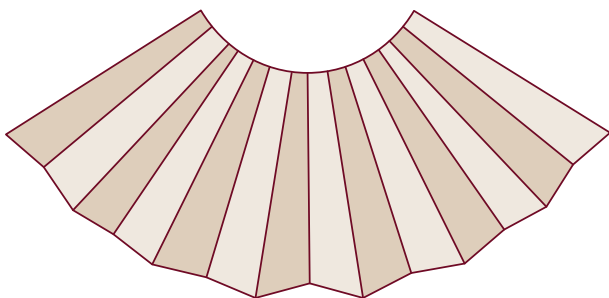
Pleats in which adjacent folds alternate direction. They are used on full skirts to reduce the yardage into a small waist.





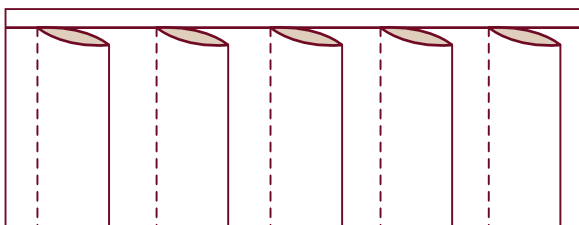
### Knife pleats

When the two sides of a fold are unequal in length the resulting pleat will lie flat to create a slim, narrow line.



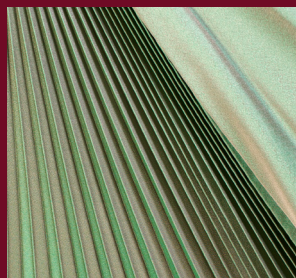
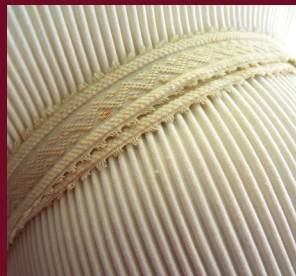
### Sunburst pleats

When the pleats are pressed into fabric that is cut into a semi-circle, the pleats become deeper towards the hem and the crease lines radiate outward like the rays of the sun.



### Tucks

As folds pulled away from the fabric and sewn along the base, tucks create dimensional stripes. They often served a purely decorative function but they can also serve to shape the garment.



KENT STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
MUSEUM

Excellence in Action