How Designs Are Made

CHAPTER TWO

You, undoubtedly, have said to yourself, "How does one go about the creating of a costume? Is it by pure imagination? Does one *dream* it? Is it a rare gift granted to a chosen few only?"

Let it be understood that a costume designer is not a sort of superhuman creature who possesses an unusual faculty for creating unusual styles. Although imagination plays an important part in the art of design, it is by no means the *only* basis upon which the designer must work. Just as the train must run upon tracks in order to reach its destination, so must the costume designer proceed upon definite lines or principles to achieve the object he has in view.

Some people think they have no imagination, but every one of us can be *taught* to visualize certain objects, if we receive proper instruction; and it is the aim of this chapter to demonstrate this fact.

It is almost impossible for any one to conceive a new color, or an entirely new line; but it is a simple matter to make new combinations of all possible lines. There are innumerable ways of arranging lines, forms and colors to produce entirely new effects. What is that but the art of design?

An unlimited number of sources are at the command of the designer from which he may take sugges-
tions. He may look to those designs already created by others, or he may go to sources wholly irrelevant to dress; his end is accomplished if he effectively brings into his costume an idea, whether it be a pocket, a sleeve, or a collar.

Some of the most novel and original ideas have been obtained from the study of existing designs in architecture. For example, if a designer applies the lines of a Greek column to a costume, he has created an entirely new costume; while if he takes this same design and changes it slightly, he has made another costume design. Every design comes from a form which already exists—this form may be a natural object like a flower, or an artificial object like an ornament—or, as has been previously mentioned, a costume or design created by another may inspire an original model.

Then too, all the suggestions for a design do not necessarily come from one object or one source—details may be adapted and combined from a variety of sources. Thus we can readily see that the petals of a flower may suggest the lines of a design for a skirt; the lines of a Gothic column may suggest the design for the waist; and the costume of a peasant may suggest the tunic for a dress for formal wear; but the designer must change the details from their original form in order to make them harmonize, and to produce a pleasing effect.

There are probably few designers who visualize the entire costume before actually working on it; but they have in mind at the outset a vision of the silhouette or general effect they wish to produce. They may also have in mind a particular color scheme they would
like to employ; but all these first ideas may be modified when the designer actually starts his work. Observe figure 3. This design was the source for the waists in figures 4, 5, and 6.

Figure 3 shows a satin blouse with a collar that comes over each shoulder and ends in a point. The front is made in a panel effect that widens toward the bottom, finally meeting slightly above the waistline. At one side there are two ends, one going around the waistline and one hanging in a sash. Steel rings are suspended from the points of the collar and from the one end of the sash. A border of embroidery is used at the bottom of the sash and on the sleeve.

In figure 4 we have a new design from figure 3. The panel is still used but it starts lower and goes down in a straight line. The points of the collar suggested the collar of this blouse, with the rings hanging at the center front. The suggestion for the sleeve was also taken from the collar. At the lower part of the front panel is used the original embroidery motif.

Another variation of the design in figure 3 is shown in figure 5. The same neckline is used, but the collar, which was suggested by the sash, is pulled through slots at one side and hangs in a long end finished with the steel rings. To carry out the lines of the panel, a strip of embroidery was used at the opposite side of the waist.

Figure 6 shows another derivation from the original blouse. The line of the neck was suggested by the upper edge of the panel in figure 3, as formed all the way across to the points under the collar. A band of embroidery outlines the neck in the new blouse and is used, as originally, on the sleeves.
Figure 7 is an illustration of an afternoon dress, and figure 8 shows a blouse suggested by it. The neckline of the dress is retained in the blouse, and is enhanced by a band of embroidery that forms the belt of the dress. The caught-under panels on the skirt of the dress are transposed to the upper part of the blouse and tucked under the belt. The wide effect given by the draped open part on the waist of the dress is interpreted into a dolman effect on the blouse; the triangular effect of the motif of embroidery is also introduced on the ruffle of the blouse.

From observations of these costumes, you have no doubt arrived at the definite conclusion that certain parts of one garment may suggest other lines for an entirely different costume, in the creation of which you may not have used the same suggestions. Most likely you have seen other features worthy of your consideration, and have taken these as the sources of your inspiration; in doing this your own individual thought comes to the surface. Thus, you will see that it is quite possible for a person with ordinary ability and intelligence to create original styles in dress.