Sources of Inspiration

CHAPTER EIGHT

In previous chapters we have discussed the use of the ancient costumes as a source of inspiration for modern design.

Let us now consider some other sources no less abundant in ideas which we can, through adaptation, appropriate for our own work in design.

You have now developed your imagination to the extent of being alert to any suggestions that may come your way. By looking at the things about you, you will be surprised at the unlimited number of suggestions to be found in commonplace objects, which, before taking up the art of costume design, you would not have considered worthy of your notice.

You remember that you used the lines and details of ancient costumes to create your own designs, and it would be no breach of ethics to employ the same method in dealing with modern costumes. For example, you might take the style ideas from various costumes, adapt them to the particular costume you wish to design, and produce a far more pleasing effect than that of any of the costumes from which you took suggestions. While you have used the lines and details of other costumes, your design is none the less your own individual creation, and from this it will be seen that fashion magazines are a fruitful source for ideas.

In figures 57 and 58, you see designs taken from one
of the modern fashion magazines. Let us show you how we may take our suggestions from fashion publications and use them in evolving new ideas for original designs.

Figure 59 is an evening gown of panne velvet.

It was designed from the two costumes illustrated—an afternoon and an evening dress. The neckline was suggested by the evening gown. The line of the belt is taken from the afternoon frock, as is also the silhouette of the skirt. The double panel idea, as well as the beads, is derived from the evening gown, but they are differently distributed.

Have you ever thought of the many ideas that are to be found in the shop windows, in gowns seen on the street, or in the ballroom? Perhaps, without being aware of the fact, you have in your mind’s eye pictured a costume as appropriate for yourself, the idea for which came from a similar costume worn by another.

You should give ideas a chance to grow—give them life—for that is the art of design. You must not only think, “that is a beautiful gown, but it could be made more beautiful if it had a more elaborate girdle, or a border of pearls, or a draped skirt,” but you must conserve these different thoughts that surge through your mind, and from them evolve original designs.

Plate B illustrates a number of suggestions taken from the costumes exhibited by exclusive shops. Working from these we have designed the costume we show in figure 60. This is an afternoon dress of georgette, and in it you will recognize the details marked 5 and 10 on plate B. Detail 15, found in an evening gown suggested the draping of the skirt.

The evening gown shown in figure 61 is almost entirely suggested by detail 1. Note that the tunic,
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supported at the shoulder, is draped in long, sweeping lines and falls over the underskirt. The entire costume is of chiffon, except the satin sash at the waist.

Would you think it possible that the costumes seen on the stage could serve as sources of inspiration? The fact is that for some years past the stage has furnished an abundance of ideas for the hawk-eyed designer, ever alert to create original costumes.

You have already been cautioned not to look with scorn on commonplace, insignificant objects about you, but rather to utilize suggestions taken from tiny ornaments, bits of embroidery, and other objects at hand. Most effective borders for sleeves, blouse or skirt can be created by using some pretty continuous design—even a butterfly may be the source of any number of ideas for trimmings, as well as for the actual lines of the costume.

You may not only take a single line and develop a costume from it, but may go so far as to take lines from any object or natural thing, or from works of art, and from them work up a pleasing and really original costume.

Take, for example, the German strong-box, shown in figure 62, from which the costume in figure 63 has been designed. Observe carefully how the lines of this costume are exactly like the lines of the object. The neckline, formed by the slip and the overdress of chiffon, is suggested by the outline of the cover, the cover merely being inverted. The buttons with fancy loops of fine cord and the cord outlining the neck of the dress, also came from the cover. The gilt strip down the center of the box suggests a band with but-
tons down the front of the skirt; while the raised medallions are introduced as motifs of embroidery on the frock. Oval buttons weigh down the cords hanging from the waistline, and were designed from the base upon which the box rests.

Figure 64 is a street costume of tricotine with trimming of patent leather.

Plate C shows three tailored street costumes in combinations of materials and colors.

The informal dance frock, figure 65, is made of metallic cloth with a lighter tone of chiffon over it.

In figure 66 you will see a design for an afternoon frock made of satin and chiffon, with circles of embroidery for adornment.

**Sport Costumes**

Sport Costumes should permit the easy and unobstructed use of the various parts of the body.

Notice the tennis frock illustrated in figure 67. The skirt is made in accordion pleats for the sake of greater width; while the upper part of the garment gives the effect of a middy blouse. To make such a costume more pleasing, it might have some simple form of embroidery, but care should be taken not to make it too elaborate.

**Bathing Suits**

Observe the bathing suit shown in figure 68. This is made of two colors of taffeta. The bloomers are of the darker color and are laced tightly around the knees; while the skirt of the costume forms two round panels, one front and one back, and extends at the side in fluted effect. The short sleeve is laced over the
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arm; the bottom of the front panel and the front of the waist have a bubble design embroidered, thus carrying out the suggestion of its aquatic purpose.

Negligees and Lingerie

The age of luxury has made designing of negligees and lingerie a profession in itself. Robes worn in the privacy of the home should be attractive and follow lines which bring out the best of a woman’s charms. In creating these dainty garments, both skill and a fine sense of discrimination in the use of line, form, and color, are essential.

Designers of these garments apply the principles of design to creating dainty wearables from filmy materials, assisted by the use of ribbons and embroidery or laces.

While very little cutting is done in the making of negligees, unusual and varied effects can be obtained by draping the material in different ways. Laces, delicate ribbons, and hand-made flowers are resorted to for embellishment. The chief feature of a negligee should be daintiness.

A tea-gown, worn in the home at an intimate hour, can be a much more elaborate and fantastic creation than would be considered good taste in a formal costume.

Figure 69, shows a tea-gown designed from suggestions derived from the ancient Semitic costumes. It is made of georgette over a slip of satin with a multi-colored embroidered sash.

Figure 70. This negligee is made of pink-orchid over old blue chiffon with a panel of alternate wide filet insertion and tucked chiffon. A triangular piece

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of the chiffon is used over each shoulder, one corner cut off partly to form a continuation of the neckline. An oval opening is made for the arm to go through and a ribbon rosette is placed just above it. These rosettes hold in the chiffon on either side of the panel. The Callot neckline is broken by two ribbons which outline the panel and are brought over the shoulders ending in a few loops at the waistline in back.

The Egyptian cap is made of the orchid chiffon with a ribbon rosette over each side and several loops of ribbon.

In figure 71 we have a breakfast jacket made of maize crêpe chiffon with white Chantilly lace. Wide lace is used in a jabot effect in the front, and the loose side of the lace is fastened with little rosebuds. A narrower lace outlines the bottom and the open part at the sides. A cluster of rosebuds, and several loops and ends of orchid and blue ribbon, draw in each side at the waistline.