

The Transformation Challenge

Winning designs that morph into something new

BY CAROL J. FRESIA

Each year, *Threads* sets a design theme for the members of the Association of Sewing and Design Professionals. In 2019, we asked the competitors to express the idea that, just as caterpillars transform into butterflies, change is good. The garments and ensembles they created had to be wearable in at least two ways. Any piece that was taken off one view had to be included in the alternate view, and the transformation had to be made on the runway.

The ASDP members devised many intriguing approaches to execute these metamorphoses, including making garments that are reversible, have interchangeable parts, are layered, or can be worn short or long. To assess the entries, *Threads* Editorial Director Sarah McFarland and Senior Technical Editor Carol J. Fresia were joined by previous challenge winner Susan Widawski and guest judge and *Threads* contributor Rhonda Buss. The judges selected four exemplary looks for awards, and the audience voted for an additional piece, based on the runway show presented at the ASDP annual conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Enjoy these multifaceted winning looks.

Carol J. Fresia has assigned and judged the ASDP design challenge for five years.

web extra

See additional views of the garments featured
in this article at [ThreadsMagazine.com](https://www.threadsmagazine.com).

Best Overall

Patty Robison, *Vintage Sari Transformation Dress*

Patty, a custom designer from Bellingham, Washington, was inspired by a 6-yard length of sari silk from her stash. Her goal was to create three dresses with completely different silhouettes, each showcasing the lovely textile in a different way.

The first dress (far right) is a knee-length balloon dress, sleeveless with a ruffled neckline. The volume is controlled at the front waist by bias-tube ties; this gives the back a cape-like style. A boning hoop floats inside the dress and supports the hem. For the second dress (middle), the elasticized neckline is lowered to high-hip level, creating a classic full-skirted effect, and revealing the bodice of a form-fitting dress with a laced back and wide band at the waist. Finally, the skirt drops farther (near right), placing the ruffle at knee level, for a full-length mermaid silhouette.

The judges were impressed with the garment's beautiful construction and ease of transformation. They also appreciated Patty's thoughtful placement of the fabric's border motifs to accentuate her design.

- The sheath dress was based on Simplicity 8330, with a modified neckline and back design. It is underlined and boned for support.
- The bindings, straps, bows, and ties are made of purple cotton sateen.
- The hem retains its full shape thanks to a boning hoop, which floats unattached within the garment. The skirt is attached at the sheath's hemline and can be raised and lowered to change the silhouette.

Dropping the skirt's ruffled edge to knee level reveals a body-hugging sheath.



Photos, pp. 38–43: (models) Jack Deutsch; (all others) Mike Yamin. Stylist, pp. 38–43: Jessica Saal. Hair and makeup, pp. 38–43: Agata Helena.com. Styling credits, pp. 38–39: earrings—Lonna & Lilly (Macy's.com), bracelet—Cara NY, shoes—Naturalizer.com.



Just the front is cinched with ties, leaving the back with a cape-like shape.

With the hooped skirt's upper edge near the waist, the hemline rests at tea length.



When the hoop sits at knee level, the elasticized ruffle enhances the neckline.

Best Construction

Debby Spence, *What'll It Be?*

Debby's ensemble consists of three pieces: a black tunic, matching leggings, and a long top that changes into a skirt. Because the top is reversible, she can wear the pieces five different ways. The top/skirt features red and black polyester metallic brocade on one side, for an evening look, and bronze silk/cotton herringbone woven on the reverse, with flat black piping to emphasize decorative seams.

The Lancaster, Pennsylvania, designer started with Vogue 9340, a full-cut coat pattern, but ended up removing fullness to produce a more flattering silhouette. The judges appreciated that she managed to make the two layers work compatibly, even though the bronze side has a slimmer fit, and the brocade side has a subtle bubble shape. The neckline is expandable with a wide petersham ribbon drawstring so it can be turned into a waistband. When the top becomes a skirt, the sleeves are tucked in and folded up inside to form spacious side pockets.

- The leather-look knit leggings match the black tunic, which incorporates multiple textured knit fabrics.
- The tunic was made with McCall's 7323, modified to have decorative seams, long sleeves, and an asymmetrical hemline. The leggings are from Jalie Clara 3887.

An easy-to-wear tunic imparts an evening vibe in metallic brocade—and can change into a skirt with roomy pockets.



Styling credits: (p. 40) earrings—PatriciaNashDesigns.com, bracelet—Style & Co. (Macys.com), boots—Kurt Geiger (DSW.com); (p. 41) left) barrettes—HM.com, necklace—Loft.com, shoes—Vice Versa (Zappos.com); (p. 41) right) earrings—BananaRepublic.com, shoes—Jessica Simpson (DSW.com)

Best Color and Shape Shift

Erin Retelle,
Things Just Got Serious

The judges were wowed by the exuberant hues and dynamic silhouettes of the Boise, Idaho, designer's dress-to-gown piece.

The garment reflects Erin's focus from inward to outward, as she confronted and overcame personal challenges.

Erin's two-color dress takes full advantage of the silk chiffon's fluidity and brilliant colors. The garment starts as a vibrant coral knee-length dress with a full, gathered silhouette and ruffled collar. The neckline drawstring can be loosened to drop the neck edge to the floor and create a full-length gown, with a drawstring waistline and blouson bodice.

Within the dress, a strapless bustier with a silk charmeuse overlay functions as a short slip.

- Erin draped the design in muslin on a half-scale dress form and drafted the inner bustier based on her personal moulage.
- The bustier includes a side zipper for easier dressing and a waist stay for keeping the dress in place.
- The chiffon layers have sel-vage edges along the vertical seams. At the neckline and hem, they are joined with French seams.

Bright coral and a short, swingy shape symbolize a carefree life.

The strapless gown is supported by a hidden bustier and shaped by a waistline drawstring.

Most Surprising Metamorphosis

Madeline Stage, *Seasons of Change*

Madeline of Carmel, Indiana, chose to show that a practical outlook can make change an opportunity to gain strength. Her flirty dress (shown at ThreadsMagazine.com) and backpack represent youth and wanderlust. When the backpack zips open, it becomes a stylish trench coat, which she says is an emblem of maternal protectiveness.

- The coat is made from cotton twill; the backpack's olive fabric is stretch twill, with faux leather accents.
- Madeline designed the coat/backpack with flat-pattern techniques.
- Hard-wearing features include brass snaps, lobster clasps, and felled seams.



Coat interior



The backpack unfolds to become ...



... a sporty twill trench coat.

Styling credits: (p. 42) earrings and necklace—Loft.com, boots—Express.com; (p. 43, left) necklace—Style & Co. (Macys.com), bracelets—stylist's own, shoes—Naturalizer.com; (p. 43, right) headband—Zara.com, shoes—Jewel by Badgley Mischka (Nordstrom.com).

Audience Choice

Robin Bolton, *Slacks to Sleek After Six*

Robin's office-appropriate jumpsuit surprised and delighted the viewers at the ASDP fashion show by transforming in an instant into a blue evening gown with a silver beaded and sequined lace overlay.

The King City, Oregon, designer was inspired the transforming dresses of Turkish designer Hussein Chalayan. Robin imagined an instance in which a woman might need to go from work to a black-tie gala with little time to change clothes. Her work outfit looks like separates but is a jumpsuit, and the gown's slinky blue skirt is folded up within the jumpsuit's bodice. With a quick tug, the jumpsuit's shoulders unsnap, the bodice falls down, and the skirt unfolds to cover it and the pants, revealing the gown's lace bodice.

- The jumpsuit is made of Thai silk; the gown is a weighty rayon/spandex knit with an embellished lace overlay.
- An invisible side-zipper closure secures the slacks and gown bodice, and magnetic snaps enable a quick change.

The jumpsuit shoulders and bodice close with magnetic snaps.



It's hard to fathom that this jumpsuit conceals a full-length gown within.

