



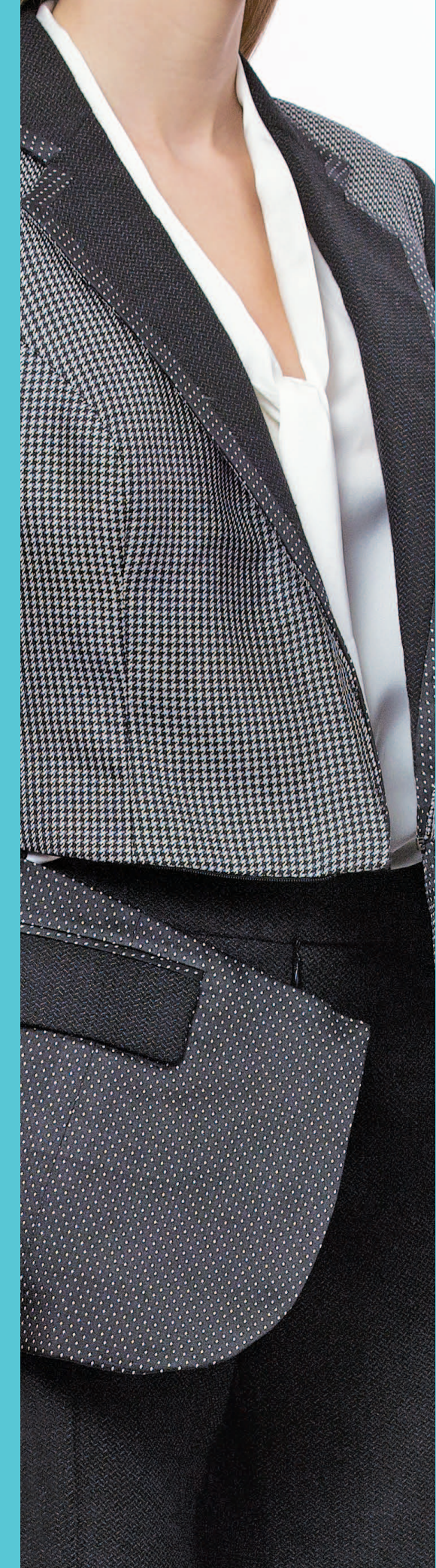
THE **New** Power Suit

ASDP Design Challenge
brings fresh ideas
for commanding ensembles

BY JUDITH NEUKAM

The definition of a woman's power suit depends on whom you ask. Even though the words conjure images of '80s shoulder pads and wide lapels, history tells us the original woman's power suit didn't even have a jacket. Queen Hatshepsut, Egypt's first female pharaoh in 1479 B.C., had herself depicted sitting on her throne in the bare-chested regalia of a male pharaoh.

Times have changed, and women don't need to wear exactly what men wear to feel and be empowered. Women can take what they want from menswear. To explore the possibilities, the 2014 design challenge to the Association of Sewing and Design Professionals (ASDP) was to interpret the power suit. Winners were chosen at the October ASDP conference in Philadelphia. The judges were: Debby Spence, last year's winner and owner of Ace Dressmaker; George Kalajian, owner of International Pleating of Beirut and New York; and Judith Neukam, *Threads* executive editor. The Tacony Corporation, International Pleating, and *Threads* contributed to prize packages with a total value of more than \$10,000. Read on to see the winning garments.



Unexpected and innovative design elements are the hallmark of each winning ensemble.

Best Overall:

Patricia Robison, *Yacht Broker Power Suit*

Prize: Baby Lock Aria sewing machine (MSRP \$4,999.99), \$500 in pleating services from International Pleating

Patti, who lives in Bellingham, Washington, says the client who commissioned this suit wanted to stand out on the job. “She is a competitive sailor turned yacht broker from Newport, Rhode Island. She is a young woman surrounded by salesmen in navy blue blazers and khaki slacks. To set her apart from her male colleagues, I designed this sailor-influenced dress and jacket,” Patti says. “It’s a celebration of the power of femininity in a male-dominated profession.”

The dress’s navy blue cotton has small white anchors embroidered in a random pattern. The fitted waist is accented with a bias-cut silk band. The seven-gore skirt is supported by a crinoline understructure. The crisp, cropped, white cotton twill jacket has three-quarter-length sleeves and a sailor collar. Narrow red and navy stripes adorn the cotton shirting lining. Patti used a cunning sailor hat trim for hem binding. The jacket seams are topstitched in red and blue to mimic the seam finish on a boat’s sail. The sleeves have navy rope braid trim tied in a sailor’s knot.



- The jacket features two-piece sleeves and front princess seams originating in the shoulder.
- Three rows of zigzag topstitching finish the vertical seams.
- Cotton muslin underlining adds weight and structure to the jacket.
- The sailor collar extends to center-front ties.
- The princess dress neckline sports ruched double ribbons in casings.
- The dress midriff is interfaced and boned.
- A bias-cut silk sash finishes the waist.
- Side pockets are hidden in the seams.

Best Construction and Viewers' Choice: Lena Stepanenko, *Classic Meets Modern*

Prize: Baby Lock Jane sewing machine (MSRP \$1,899.99)

Lena's objective was to "Combine yesterday's classic styles with the more upbeat fashions of today's modern woman." Her design features a variety of fine menswear fabrics, including houndstooth and a herringbone weave, plus a feminine touch of silk pin dot for the peplum and trim. Lena, of Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, designs so the garments work in harmony with the figure. Fine fit is essential for a smart, tailored look and is the most difficult part of tailoring women's fitted jackets.

The suit is an original design. The idea was to make the jacket convertible: a clean, classic style on top with interchangeable and removable peplums for different looks. This was accomplished with an exquisitely inset separating zipper at the waistline.



- Classic hand tailoring features handmade buttonholes and a full canvas front.
- Wool, a silk-wool blend, and silk fabrics make up the exterior; the lining is silk and rayon.
- Pin-dot trimmed collar and cuffs supply a perfect accent at the edges.
- Invisible separating zipper construction unites the peplum to the convertible jacket.



Best Suited for Travel: Juliette Kimes, *Going Places*

Prize: Baby Lock Melody sewing machine (MSRP \$1,799.99)



Juliette lives in Dripping Springs, Texas, and works for a company with offices around the world. As she thought about the design and features of her entry garments, she considered the difficulties she and many of her colleagues face as they travel for work.

“Maintaining a professional look while traveling can be a big challenge, especially when meetings are often right after arrival time,” Juliette says. “I wanted an outfit that traveled well, dried fast, and was appropriate in locales around the world. I came up with a fitted jacket of silk denim and a knit dress of ITY (interlock twist yarn) polyester.”

Princess seams shape the jacket, and hand stitching highlights the style lines.

The tab peplum ensures comfort while sitting and a streamlined look when standing, while the back pleat enables greater range of motion of the arms. The draped-neck knit dress is easy to wear and care for. Exposed wide elastic provides fitting at the waist.

- The jacket is silk denim with a silk charmeuse lining, and it is topstitched by hand with two strands of jeans thread.
- Silk frog closures were hand-dyed to match the topstitching.
- The jacket and dress patterns are original.
- The dress is made of polyester ITY.



Best Innovative Use of Fabric: Barbie McCormick, *Molded Shoulders*

Prize: Baby Lock Tempo sewing machine (MSRP \$1,399.99)

After sketching various designs, Barbie decided to diverge from standard tailoring techniques. The Nampa, Idaho, resident's experience blocking hats led her to wonder, "Why not use the same technique to shape the shoulder?" Using two hat bodies, she steamed and molded the shoulders and three-quarter-length sleeves on a preshaped and padded dress form.

Each side of the collar, front and back yokes, and upper sleeve is molded in a single piece, then the two sides are seamed at the center back. This creates a smooth, continuous line along the upper silhouette of the garment. The fur felt used for the shoulder pieces enabled the jacket construction without additional interfacing and structure.



- Velour-finish fur felt hat bodies were blocked, steamed, and sculpted to form each collar, shoulder, front and back yoke, and upper sleeves.
- Modified shoulder pads were used to create and block the defined, unsupported shoulder shape.
- Canvas front interfacing supports the fabric section.
- Welt pockets are hidden inside the jacket.
- Silk organza underlining and cotton grosgrain ribbon "piping" support and shape the linen and rayon Linton fabric.
- Hidden hooks and eyes close the jacket's center front.

