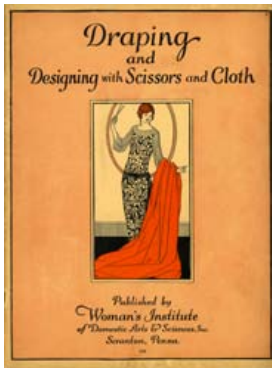


Spotlight Review



Book Review: Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth Carol Wood

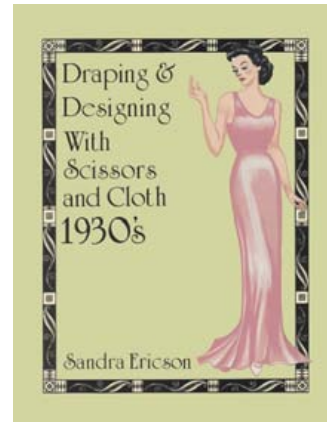
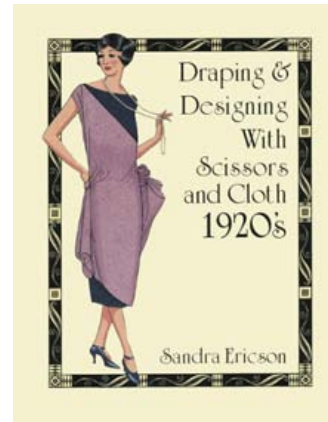
How many great sewing techniques have come and gone throughout the ages?



How many wonderful instruction books have gone out of print and are now forgotten?! Not so for the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Science's *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth*.

We are fortunate that Sandra Ericson of [Center for Pattern Design](#) fame has taken up the cause and reprinted this material.

Many are familiar with Ms. Ericson as a talented teacher who, for over 30 years, taught at San Francisco City College and now teaches seminars across the country, mostly on Vionnet-style draping. She has meticulously reproduced the original *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth* in two volumes, one covering 1920s and the other 1930s fashions.



These volumes are a delightful continuation of the material the Woman's Institute published during its existence from 1916 through the late 1930s. Except for the Woman's Institute examination questions and some of the sketches and diagrams, the original material is again available to us. Please note that the dressmaking course was offered by the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Sciences of Scranton, PA, not the Women's Institute, which originated in Great Britain and which primarily promoted cookery courses.



During its existence, the Woman's Institute ran correspondence courses for dressmaking. They produced numerous small-format booklets (later hardbound), patterns, and learning tools that students received once registered in one of their various programs (e.g. dressmaking, tailoring, millinery). Magazines available only to registered students were also published, in addition to a short series of large-format booklets of which *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth* was a part.

The six large-format booklets have the feel of magazines with many fashion sketches, but the same robust instruction content of the student booklets. In short, a perfect marriage of inspirational images and information for the aspiring dressmaker.



The two books Ms. Ericson has reproduced cover the art of draping cloth on a dress form or person to achieve a design custom-formed to a specific body, as

opposed to flat pattern drafting. Both volumes include an overview of appropriate seams and finishes, machine and hand, as well as couture tips throughout. *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth 1920's* covers 16 different types of dresses, 10 wraps, 7 collars, and 1 coat. *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth 1930's* covers 12 different types of sleeves, 8 bodices, 6 collars, 5 skirts, cuffs and a slip.

However, it is not the sheer number of design options for each type of garment that should attract the modern reader, but the resurrection of the long-lost art of draping at home. We have become so accustomed to constraining our garment construction by using commercial patterns that we've forgotten the valuable skill of draping. Haven't you always wanted to



know how to achieve the perfect surplice bodice or a stunning 1930s flared skirt? Well, now is your chance!



To whet your appetite, below is a sampling of the examination questions not included in Ms. Ericson's republished books. Want the material that will answer those questions? *Draping & Designing with Scissors and Cloth 1920s and 1930s* is available from Antiquity Press.

- How is extra fullness arranged at the elbow when draping a close-fitting sleeve?
- (a) What materials are suitable for basque dresses? (b) What is a tunic dress?
- (a) Name five types of collars. (b) What collar type do you find most becoming and why?
- Give three reasons why it will be to your advantage to use muslin in draping.
- (a) What is the reason for darts in draping? (b) What is the usual position for them in bodice, sleeve, and skirt?
- Why is the point of the material brought above the waist line when draping the bias circular skirt?

Carol Wood is a professional pattern maker and costumer. She has been researching, recreating and wearing historical garments for decades. She owns an extensive collection of original Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Sciences publications that she uses in her research.

See her article, "Bust Support Comes of Age: The Bra in the 1920's and 1930's" in this issue.