



*“All of my work stems from the simplest of ideas that go back to the earliest civilisations: making clothes from one piece of cloth. It is my touchstone.” –Issey Miyake*

In an email to the *New York Times* in 2016, Issey Miyake stated, “All of my work stems from the simplest of ideas that go back to the earliest civilisations: making clothes from one piece of cloth. It is my touchstone.”

Uncut cloth is a sustainable choice at the forefront of zero-waste design thinking, where sculpting and manipulating fabric gives rise to clothing with an inbuilt dynamism. Silhouettes using uncut cloth often wrap, envelop, and cocoon the body in relaxed, spatial forms. The body is not forced into unnatural shapes: garments follow and trace the body beneath, and all sizes and types are accepted. The clothes are inevitably liberating to wear, and a certain casualisation exists where comfort, ease, and wearability result in a close relationship between the wearer and their clothes. Furthermore, adaptable dressing can be enjoyed, as versatility and efficiency are key.

Contemporary fashion designers worldwide tend to look at non-Western methods where textiles are directly handled in the round with no fabric cutting. A particular focus is given to Japanese dress: the kimono and its selvedge-to-selvedge preparation, where the chosen textile is given prominence, and the garment is secured in place with an obi sash. This opposes a transition from two to three dimensions – a Western approach where especially tailored outerwear and close-to-body attire are formed from several cut, flat shapes, then assembled by sewing – namely darting and seaming.

Alternatively, metres from a bolt of fabric are positioned on a mannequin or live model and given shape by pinning in place. Here, the geometric morphs into the organic, and the kinetic replaces the static. This technique lends itself to oversized, free-flowing designs

akin to improvisation where wrapping, draping, folding, layering, slashing, twisting, knotting, pleating, tucking, and gathering create forms. Folding can articulate volume, and slashing (no cloth is removed) allows a potential change of fabric direction. At the same time, pleating uses “accordion-like” undulations – both practical and elastic, where a symbiotic interaction exists between the clothing and the wearer’s body.

Issey Miyake revolutionised fashion by bringing his Eastern approach, where “a piece of cloth” was draped around the wearer, to create garments the West was eager to embrace. Many of his iconic designs are rooted in the kimono and yet also take on Western aesthetics. He launched *A-P-O-C – A Piece of Cloth* in 1978, firmly establishing a signature to endure throughout his long career. A decade later, in 1988, Miyake experimented widely with pleating fabric – an ancient way of giving form to cloth. In this way, he made wearable items that accommodated a variety of body types. Freedom of expression and movement were enabled, as well as an independence of the underlying body. Taking this approach to its zenith, he designed dance costumes for Ballet Frankfurt in 1991. His designs allowed the body’s energy to manifest, where dance celebrates life itself and is a joy to behold.

Launching his *Twist* line in 1992, Miyake’s twisted fabric articulated animated impressions. In 1993, he launched *PLEATS PLEASE ISSEY MIYAKE* – a more commercial line that enjoyed great popularity – worn for daywear and occasionwear. Miyake’s approach to pleating takes on a different guise, where precisely oversized garments are permanently pleated to shrink to a desired size. This departs from traditionally pleated clothing, where the process begins with ▶