



CORSET MAKER'S WORKSHOP

Part 3: Working with fabric layers

LOWANA O'SHEA - VANYANIS - MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



© Corset & Jewellery by Vanyanis - Makeup by Kim Clay Artistry
Photo by WeNeals Photography and Retouching

Luca may prefer to wear his one layer corsets, but modern makers like Lowana O'Shea often find that they want their corsets to be made of a very light or slippery fabric that would never normally be suitable for a corset. So she uses that fashion layer, interfaces it, and backs it with a layer of coutil to make it work.



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Here's how Lowana works with two layers:

- Essentially, she stabilises the fashion layer with interfacing, layers the coutil panels under the corresponding fashion fabric panels, and treats the two layers as one when sewing them together into a corset.
- She doesn't usually fuse the two layers together unless it's a really slippery fashion fabric.
- She's tried making the whole coutil layer, adding boning channels and then layering a whole floating fashion layer over separately, but it wrinkled and pulled. Once she started matching the layers together as individual panels, treating them as one and then sewing them together, it got a lot easier.
- The only time it does work to make the whole coutil layer of the corset and the whole fashion layer and then sandwich them together is with stretch fabrics.

Preparing the fabric

- Prepare the fashion fabric and fuse *before* cutting
- Look for a slightly stretchy, fabric-like knitted interfacing, not the papery stuff
- Lowana interfaces all her fashion fabrics for stability. She's basically trying to make any fabric behave as beautifully as silk duchesse
- She likes to use a fashion fabric with a reasonable weight/hand like Thai silk.
- Don't cut the fabric, cut the interfacing and then fuse the pieces together, they will stretch and pull out of shape. Fuse the whole piece of fabric to the whole piece of interfacing, and then cut your pieces.



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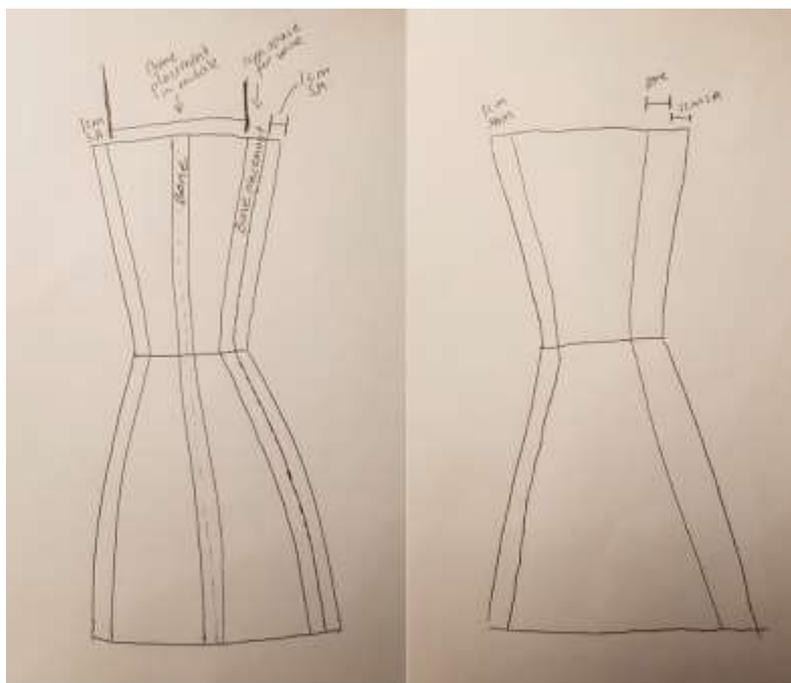
© Vanyanis - bridal corset, close-up

Roll pinning demo

- Lowana like to press her seam allowances one way or the other, not open. If you're following her method, plan for which way all the seam allowances will "point" when pressed flat – toward centre front or centre back? Lowana likes them to point to centre front because then the front panel looks as though it's "on top" of panel 2
- Draw in seam allowances with chalk pencil, 1cm at one side and 2cm at the other side of each piece, and pin the layers together. The 2cm seam allowance should be at the side of the panel that will eventually have its seam allowance folded back, and the 1cm seam allowance at the side that will sit flat when the seam allowances are pressed flat.



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© Lowana O'Shea's method of planning seam allowances for roll pinning, with boning channels beside (not on) each seam

- Sew a boning channel directly down the centre between the marked seam allowances to hold the layers there before sewing any seams (you're anchoring the layers together by starting in the center of the fabric and working outwards). The difference in the seam allowances ensures that the centre boning channels are evenly spaced even though Lowana's boning channels go *next* to the seams, not on top of them (see sketch above).
- If you don't want to have boning channels in the centre of the panels, baste down the centre with silk thread.
- On the edge that will be "on top" of the next panel, wrap the edges around a ruler and pin, then stitch in place in the seam allowance. You'll notice that the fashion fabric ends up about 2mm smaller than the coutil at the edge.
- Sew the seams as normal.