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Flip That Dress

A local design team turns two mass-market gowns into one-of-a-kind creations.

BY CELIA SHATZMAN

The transformers: Saukok Chu Tiampo and Carmen Ho, founders of the 57Grand bridal label and showroom (250 W. 39th St., nr. Eighth Ave., Ste. 804; 212-302-1604)



Challenge 1:
Make a plain gown glamorous.

Challenge 2:
Make a short dress long.

Dress No. 1:

Ann Taylor Olivia open-back gown, \$550, at anntaylor.com.

The transformation: 57Grand tweaked Ann Taylor's chic but basic column gown by converting the bateau neckline into a V-neck, replacing the high keyhole back with a low double tie, and incorporating godets—triangles of fabric—to create volume. The duo also added a removable belt with

stitched magnolia flowers in silver and gold thread, lending a hint of shine to the formerly matte gown. "This is perfect for New York because it's dramatic," says Tiampo, "but the bride can still get in and out of a cab in it."

Total cost, with alterations: \$1,000

Dress No. 2:

David's Bridal Two-In-One sweetheart strapless organza gown, \$599, at David's Bridal (751 Sixth Ave., nr. 25th St.; 646-827-4050).

The transformation: The team achieved this Victorian-inspired look by pinning up the original overlay, adding tulle below, and individually tufting those pieces to give it a modern feel. While the designers decided to keep the original taffeta waistband, they sheared off the ruched-satin layer of the bodice and, in

its place, attached vertically ruched tulle and a delicate shoulder strap fashioned from gathered tulle. Says Tiampo of the final incarnation, "When she's walking down the aisle [in this], no one will come close to her star power."

Total cost, with alterations: \$4,400