

A distinctive wedding dress helps to make a marriage celebration unique and memorable for all the participants. One way of achieving that distinctiveness, and obtaining a perfect-for-them dress is for the bride to commission a fashion designer. With her talent for draping and shaping fabric to fit and enhance the female form, Tanya Carlson is one of New Zealand's most esteemed fashion designers and is highly sought after for special occasion dresses. Known especially for her attention to form and colour and her beading skills, Carlson plays with the customs and techniques of couture to create wedding dresses that exceed her clients' expectations.

Carlson's design process begins with draping fabric on a dressmaker's dummy in order to visualise the form of each garment. Then through ruching, pleating, pinning and cutting she manipulates each dress into existence. Working closely with her client, Carlson chooses colours that range from subtle to bold but that always maintain a sophisticated beauty. Often she adds layers of hand-dyed fabric in slightly different shades to achieve depth and tone.

Both the exterior and interior of each dress are accorded equal attention. Where necessary, under structures, such as a built-in bra or corset, help the garment stay put; petticoats, linings and layers add structure and shape. Seams are thoughtfully positioned, buttons and button loops are covered in the dress fabric and hems are hand stitched. Carlson uses beads, lace, or vintage fabrics to cleverly enhance the design and its wearer.


Elements of her dresses reference historical couture and designers such as Dior, Balenciaga, and Charles James but each is a Carlson original in its unique combination of form and embellishment. The wedding dresses in this exhibition are drawn from the last fifteen years to celebrate ID Dunedin Fashion Week's anniversary and Tanya Carlson's role in its development.

Supporting Carlson's dresses are a series of blocks in the form of 10 Cuisenaire rods produced by artist Michael Parekowhai. Parekowhai (Nga-Ariki/Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata) has created artworks with scaled-up Cuisenaire rods since the 1990s, drawing on their association with the teaching of Te Reo where they are used as props for creating conversations. Here too, they act as supports, displaying Carlson's remarkable wedding dresses.

Dr Jane Malthus 2014

not all white:
WEDDING
DRESSES BY

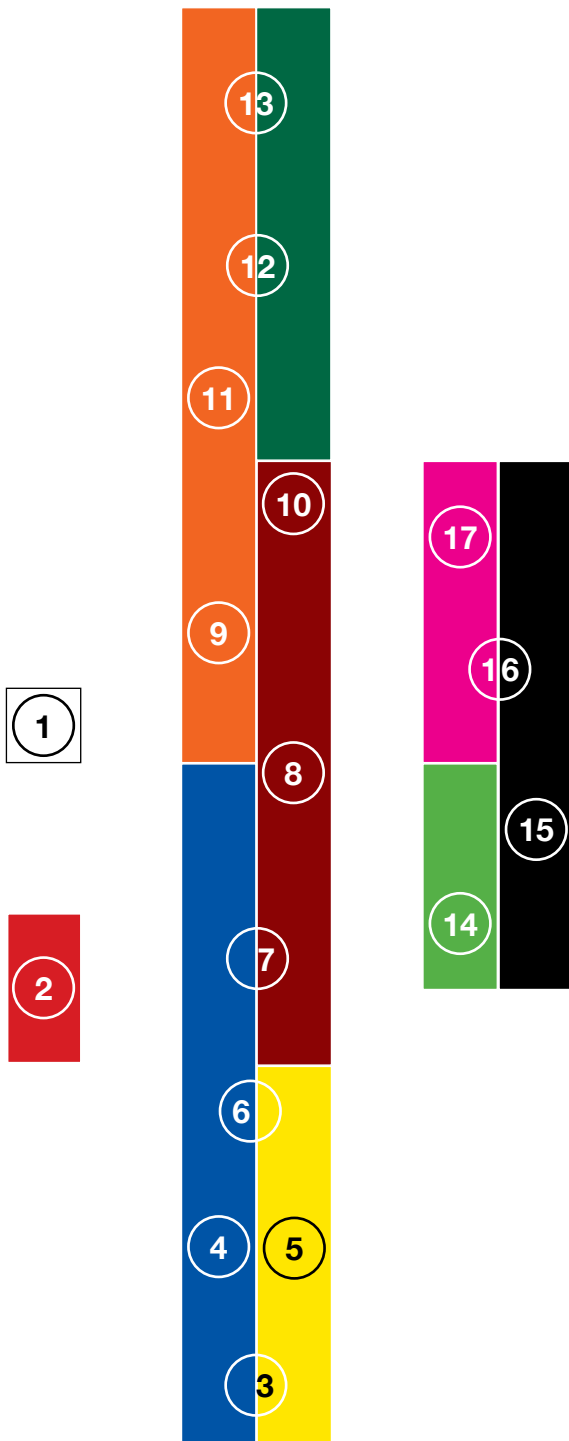
CARLSON

 29 MARCH – 27 APRIL 2014

FREE 10am – 5pm daily
30 The Octagon Dunedin
www.dunedin.art.museum
A department of the
Dunedin City Council

ART
DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY

back wall



entrance / stairs

1.

Sapphire Queen silk satin wedding dress, worn November 2008, Auckland, loaned by **Larissa Anastasia (nee Hartnett)**.

Larissa Hartnett wore her strapless short draped dress with black accessories and diamante drop earrings when she married her Italian partner.

2.

Hand-coloured French lace mounted on cotton tulle wedding dress, with silk satin slip, worn February 2006, Central Otago, loaned by **Sara Jackson-Falconer**.

It helped that Sara Jackson worked for Tanya, because it was finding a box of lace pieces in the workroom that instigated the development of this dress. The lace had colour removed and Margaret Wilson free-hand machine embroidered the tiers of lace onto cotton tulle. Coins were stitched into the hem to weight the train.

Tanya's strength and talent has always been in construction and pattern making. Her love of lace, velvets and beadwork had totally rubbed off on me not to mention the many hues of colours she would talk about. I knew I was in good hands as Tanya is the Queen of dresses. Her knowledge of fabric and understanding of the female form is evident in her work.

The standout for me was that I got to witness the entire process from its conception through to completion and to be able to stand back from it and go Wow! I'm so lucky and grateful to have worn this but also [know] the immense amount of craftsmanship that has gone into creating a truly magical dress.



Please do not touch
any of the exhibits!

3.

Hand-beaded lace and layered hand-dyed tulle and satin wedding dress, worn February 2005, Dunedin, loaned by **Jacoba Wyeth-Sidey**.

'Tea' is a colour for Tanya Carlson, used to dye and overdy to achieve layered effects such as those in Jacoba Wyeth-Sidey's dress. Jacoba worked for Tanya, and gave her creative license to create her wedding dress.

The beaded lace used in the bodice Tanya found on a trip to Australia, and she designed the rest of the dress around this. The tulle used in the skirt was all hand-dyed in various tones of musty, dusty pinks and tea. To create the beaded bodice Tanya cut the individual beaded motifs from the lace and painstakingly hand-stitched them all in place. The dress only took about a week to come together....The end result was truly amazing and utterly perfect.

4.

Hand-dyed double-faced silk sateen wedding dress, worn October 2007, Auckland, loaned by **Helene Ravlich**.

Helene Ravlich was already a fan of Tanya Carlson's clothes, so it made sense to ask her to design a 'red-carpet' style dress to get married in.

I am most definitely not a wearer of anything too flouncy or in fact, white (I look dreadful in it!). Tanya knew intuitively what I liked and from first fitting it was a dream. I know she spent a long time dyeing the silk satin (a vintage roll) to get the exact pink I asked for as well, and the result was incredible.

I had shoes made to match by Jimmy Choo Couture and the whole shebang made me feel like I was walking on air.

5.

Hand-beaded and layered hand-dyed organza and lace wedding dress with satin sash, worn March 2006, Wellington, loaned by **Amelia Minty**.

Amelia Minty asked Tanya to include some Swiss embroidered crepe lace left over from Amelia's mother's wedding dress in the creation of her dress.

I love that connection to my family and the 50s style and length. The skirt moved beautifully when I walked or danced.

6.

French seamed cotton tulle appliquéd with sequinned silk georgette wedding dress with silk satin slip and sequinned bra, worn February 2013, Coromandel, loaned by **Kerre McIvor (nee Woodham)**.

Kerre Woodham's dress was made just a few days before the wedding.

I kept putting poor Tanya off making my dress because I imagined that somehow I would magically lose 10 kilos overnight. I seem to be the only bride in history that actually PUT ON weight for her wedding. Finally, with about nine days to go, Tanya hauled me in and insisted that we make a dress. There were three factors to consider – I was the fattest I've ever been and very conscious of that; my boobs were ENORMOUS – 14 FF so we had to try to manage those and thirdly, my husband is 6 foot 3, I am 5 foot two. I had to wear towering heels so I didn't look ridiculous next to him but then I wanted to dance the night away in flat shoes and really enjoy myself. So clever Tanya told me 1) to get over myself weight wise – Tom loved me every which way and so did all my guests; 2) made a fabulous bedazzled bra that showcased the hooters and 3) most ingeniously, made a false hem on the dress so I could hack off the bottom once the photos were taken and dance the night away. I had the BEST day of my life (apart from the birth of my daughter) and a large part of making that happen is due to Tanya and Cara.

7.

Rose coloured Dupion silk wedding dress, worn March 2011 in Auckland, loaned by **Cara Cotton Mitchell**.

The brief for Cara's dress was that the wedding was to be a fiesta.

Having worked for Tanya since graduation in 2001 I have seen a breathtaking array of wedding and special event dresses leave the Carlson workroom. I am always in awe of the silhouettes, construction and finishing details, colours and absolute beauty. I have worked on many of these dresses but I never thought...I would have one of my own.

When the Carlson workroom moved to Auckland, Tanya ask if I'd like to move with her and promised me I'd find a husband - three years later I was in 30 metres of tiered rosé coloured silk frills.

Knowing me so well, Tanya's brilliant eye and careful hand designed a dress I had only dreamed of. It combined elements of Galliano for Dior, flamenco dance costume and her signature details of covered buttons, hidden corsetry and vintage lining. It was effortless to wear.

That same year my dress was shown as Tanya's finale piece on the iD catwalk. I loved seeing it on somebody else, styled differently and as a "red carpet gown" as opposed to a traditional bridal dress.

I have just worn my dress again for our third anniversary and will every year. . . until death do us part.

8.

Silk satin crepe wedding dress with hand beaded fabric back detail, worn June 2011, Arrowtown, loaned by **Victoria Muir (nee Bunton)**.

As the event manager for ID Dunedin Fashion and a former model, Victoria Bunton knew Tanya Carlson's ability to make spectacular formal dresses. The only stipulation she had for her wedding dress was that Tanya use the beaded panel that features on the back of Victoria's dress. The bias cut silk, ruched front detail; draped cowl back and train beautifully suited both Victoria's aesthetic and her figure.

9.

Crinkle silk satin chiffon over satin chiffon and oyster silk satin with beaded French lace bodice and antique French cotton tulle trim, worn April 2012, Auckland, loaned by **Sonia Gray**.

Sonia Gray's dress was made for her civil union ceremony.

10.

Silk chiffon, silk jersey and silk habutai wedding dress, worn February 2008, Dunedin, loaned by **Claire Hazeldine (nee Hathaway)**.

This dress 'was a dream to wear' according to Claire Hazeldine, who wishes there were more special occasions at which it could be worn. The hand beaded and encrusted neckpiece of pearls, Swarovski crystals and glass beads was sewn by Sara Jackson.

11.

Red and black beaded filet lace wedding dress with glass beads and a hand dyed tulle lining, worn in 2000, Moeraki, loaned by **Hannah Randall (nee Cameron)**.

A couture dress called 'The Fox' was part of Tanya's Dressage collection, and is held in Te Papa's archive. A version of it was later created for Hannah Cameron's wedding.

This dress was the most amazing thing I have ever worn. Being red and lace made it so luxurious and unique. I remember going into Tanya's studio with my Mum and they both had a vision for me and I never doubted them. I have worn it to balls and taken it to France for a trip on a cruise ship where I wore it with immense pride! It's magical and divine.

12.

Shot silk taffeta wedding dress with tea dyed petticoat, worn February 2008, Dunedin, loaned by **Anita Chan**.

Anita Chan wore her wedding dress twice: at her wedding and on the Railway Station catwalk at the 2008 ID Fashion show as Tanya's final look. Having asked Tanya for a simple and 're-wearable' wedding dress, she instead got this pale blue and gold shot silk taffeta dress with draped and ruched bodice and cowled skirt. From first hand accounts, she looked stunning.

13.

Silver Duchess silk satin wedding dress with vintage shell pink Japanese silk lining and hand dyed tulle underskirt, worn January 2008, Wellington, loaned by **Seraphine Pick**.

Seraphine Pick's Dunedin studio was in the same building as Tanya Carlson's workroom, so friendship was inevitable.

My partner Rob's thoughts were for something Grace Kelly in style, and strapless, in a pale coloured satin.

I said Tanya could do whatever she wanted with this. I wanted her to have some creative license, as I knew she could create something new and different. What Tanya then created was way beyond our expectations.

Watching her sculpturally fashion her design, wrapping, bunching and folding fabric on a mannequin by eye, pinning it all skilfully into the structure the dress became, showed what an immense understanding and knowledge of the human form she has. She made it look so easy!

Tanya then had to engineer the dress to stay up so I could perform our very energetic wedding dance, which required me to put my arms up a lot and not lose the top! With all the weight of the fabric below it wasn't an easy thing for her to achieve but she did it with panache.

Her gorgeous choice of fabric and the subtle shade of warm blue/pink grey that she created show what a great colourist she is too.

I will always be grateful for all the time and talent Tanya and her team generously put into this beautiful artwork of a dress, which made our wedding day so glamorous, memorable and special. After all her effort she was also the bridesmaid!!

14.

Hand dyed silk and rayon velvet wedding dress, worn December 2013, Auckland, loaned by **Amanda Betts**.

Amanda Betts knew she wanted a version of Tanya Carlson's sexy, fluid velvet dress of 2004 as a wedding dress, and when she tried on the emerald green version it felt exactly right.

...the best part about it was the fact that it was emerald green, the same colour as my Zoe & Morgan emerald wedding ring, emerald is my birthstone, and Richenda is Irish so it was an homage to the Irish. The other reason I wanted a green velvet dress was because it very much represented NZ forests, ferns and moss. I go to the forest to replenish my mind, body and soul which is why I tied in moss, birds etc to the table settings at the wedding.

15.

Embroidered and beaded net wedding dress with satin slip, worn January 2007, Dunedin, loaned by **Amanda Milne (nee Waugh)**.

When Amanda Waugh was twelve, Tanya Carlson promised to design and make her wedding dress. Amanda's mother Diann sourced the French embroidered and beaded net fabric, to which Tanya added extra beading.

....it was an incredible experience to have a one-off dream dress made by such a dear family friend. This dress was everything I wanted and more. Tanya was at my house on my wedding day to help me into my bespoke dress. I felt so beautiful on my wedding day....

16.

Silk satin crepe and French beaded-lace wedding dress, worn January 2013, Dunedin, loaned by **Alison Palmer (nee Shanks)**.

Designing a fitting and flattering wedding dress for cyclist Alison Shanks was just the kind of challenge that highlights Tanya Carlson's skills.

I loved the detailing of the lace that was all hand-stitched by Tanya to ensure coverage, [the] symmetry was exactly right. I loved the high hip lines that lengthened the dress and the slight flare at the bottom gave the dress amazing shape especially when walking. The dress felt amazing to wear all day, and I loved the simple elegance of the lines....

17.

Hand dyed tulle and beaded-lace wedding dress, worn September 2004, Queenstown, loaned by **Tamsin Cooper**.

Tamsin arrived at her snowy wedding venue by helicopter, and was greeted by Tanya, 'who literally sewed me into my dress! I truly felt like a princess that day.'



MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI

Nga-Ariki/Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata

10 Cuisenaire rods 2014

painted metal, wood
Courtesy of the artist