L’Wren Scott was haunted by the poignant story behind a seventeenth-century Tagasode screen that she saw in the Tokyo textile museum. Literally meaning “whose sleeves?” these exquisitely painted screens depict a woman’s wardrobe finery carefully displayed on clotheslines or draped over wooden frames—the clothes telling her character as surely as a portrait would. The backstory is that the woman’s husband is at war and she cannot wear her finery whilst he is away, so she displays it to show visiting friends instead. The question hanging in the air, of course, is: Will he ever return?

Thus inspired, L’Wren began to immerse herself in historic Japanese aesthetic culture, her wood-board covered with images of those beautiful screens, and with prints or softly hand-tinted turn-of-the-century photographs of beauties in their kimonos, garments that she noted are “covered up, but also quite sensual,” and she used that garment’s deep sleeves, and seductive, stand-away necklines, and cinched her signature curvaceous silhouettes with broad obi cummerbunds. The results, in dramatic combinations of lacquer red, black, and white, or laburnum yellows, orchid, and wisteria mauves, were graphic and beautifully detailed.

L’Wren also looked at the flowers that recur in these images, including wisteria, peonies, and cherry blossom (“they love such delicate things” she noted), and developed lavish embroideries, prints, and filigree lace that incorporated them. Custom textiles that she worked on included lacquered damasks woven with canework patterns, or with dimensional narrow ribs of color in gentle waves.

L’Wren collaborated with Brian Atwood on her shoes—high-rise platforms carved into a slim profile so that from behind they looked like tapering heels, with elaborately knotted silk cord trim, like a Samurai’s tasseled badge. And the fanciful accessories included Stephen Jones’s pretty, inverted saucer shaped hats, and parasols that she had made in Japan, each decorated with embroidered fronds of dripping wisteria. But stripped of these playful accoutrements, the lean-leg pantsuits, shapely jackets, and pencil-skirted dresses were flattering and eminently wearable.

For a full profile and more information on L’Wren Scott, visit Voguepedia.com.