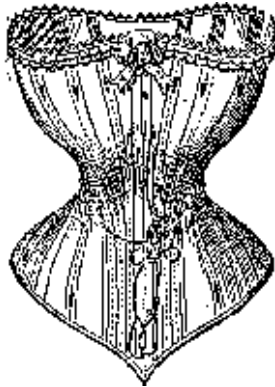


Dark Garden

Corset Modeling Guidelines

(Revised November 2007)



“Please remember that the Dark Garden booth at Dickens Fair is first and foremost a corset store. The ultimate goal of the window display is to sell our corsets. We are delighted and fortunate to have your shapely figures and attractive faces promoting our work, but please understand that decisions regarding what goes into the window must be made with that goal in mind.”

—Autumn Carey-Adamme

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The Premise

Remember the old Maidenform™ campaign? (Or remember us explaining it during the workshop?) They had women in a variety of situations with the outer layer of clothing removed to show the undergarments they were advertising.

Mechanicals (windup clockwork figures) are all the rage in these modern Victorian times, but instead of using unreliable mechanicals to display the corsets in the window, the clever proprietress of Dark Garden has arranged for live models who pretend to be mechanicals.

The unbreakable rules

- ❖ No one under 18 is permitted in the window.
- ❖ Anyone joining you in the window must be cleared through Miss McAvoy *in advance*, and she will be the one to escort them into your window.
- ❖ Underwear must be fully functional and give full coverage.
- ❖ No food or drink in the window.
ABSOLUTELY NO FOOD OR DRINK IN OR NEAR THE CHANGING ROOM!!!
Get rid of it before you come to the shop.
- ❖ You must have a signed corset model's photographic release on file with Miss McAvoy before you enter the window.

Window guidelines

Remember, this is a “family show.” **The window displays are rated “G” for “General Audience.”** Any innuendo must be subtle enough to be easily explained away as completely innocent. No sex (implied or otherwise), bondage, whips, riding crops, or black leather corsets. **Keep your fingers (and other props) out of your mouth.** It might help to remember that Dark Garden is a lingerie shop for ladies, not a bordello.

Also, no victims. If you are implying violence, tone it waaaay down. “Melodramatic” violence, with exaggerated reactions, seems to play the best. (If you are planning a violent theme, be sure to let Miss McAvoy know well in advance.)

EVERY ROMANCE CAN BE IMPROVED
WITH THE SUPPORT OF A
DARK GARDEN CORSET



We have a variety of sample Dark Garden corsets for you to display in the window. Please remember that you are in the window to display these sample corsets, so be prepared to be adaptable and wear the corset that fits, regardless of color and style.

Corsets for sale in the shop are not available for modeling in the window (unless you purchase it first).

If you own a Dark Garden corset, you are highly encouraged to model it in the window. (If you are appearing in multiple windows, we encourage you to model a different corset each time.)

What We Expect

- ❖ **Showcase the corset**
 - Poses and props should emphasize the corset, not block it. The eye should be drawn to the corset, not distracted from it.
- ❖ **Pose in Attractive Ways**
 - Your poses should show good posture. Avoid “turtle-ing” (where you slouch and draw your neck down between your shoulders).

Be aware of your posture.
This is an example of bad posture, with eyes down, an “inactive” pose, and not showcasing the corset.



- Your poses should show energy. You are caught in a moment of action, not frozen in hibernation.
- Keep your knees and thighs together. Avoid the dreaded crotch shot.

WARNING!
If Miss McAvoy sees this pose this year, she will cause the model to heartily regret the lapse.



What We Expect (Continued)

Remember the window frame

- Be aware of the window frame and how you are centered.
- There are three sides to the window. Some poses which work from the front of the window do NOT work from the sides of the windows.
- When there are two people, you need to be closer than you think. You should be bent-arm distance or closer. Keep both corsets in the frame.



❖ Victorians Victorious!

- We aren't the costume police, and there is some flexibility, but bring a Victorian flavor to your window. The window performance is not a license to wear plastic fabrics or 1950s styles.
- Glasses (non-Victorian styles) should not be worn in the window unless absolutely necessary.
- Disney is NOT Victorian. Do a Victorian interpretation of your theme, not a Disney interpretation.
- Pop culture references can be made if the props and poses read as Victorian.

❖ Expressions

- Avoid unpleasant expressions. The audience does not realize your look of discomfort or pain is part of your dramatic window; they think you are in pain because of the corset.
- Keep your eyes up or level. Some models find it helpful to gaze at their reflection in the; do not gaze down at your feet or prop. Your eyes are the primary means of drawing people in and engaging them in the window. **But hold your eyes still!** Constantly moving eyes destroy the "mechanicals" illusion.
- A Mona Lisa smile is an excellent neutral expression and is easy to hold.

- Avoid big fake plastic smiles (the kind that scream out, "Hi, Mom!"). A blank expression is better than a cheesy, forced smile.
- Avoid squinchy face. If you are scrunching up your eyebrows in an expression, make sure your mouth is neutral, relaxed, or pleasant. If you are using your mouth for the expression or wrinkling your nose, make sure your eyebrows and eyes are neutral, relaxed, or pleasant.

❖ Practice!

- **Practice your expressions in the mirror.** Can you hold them for the duration of your pose (which should be five minutes)? Are they attractive or repellant? Are your eyes up or down?
- **Practice your poses in front of a mirror.** Can you hold them long enough? Do they draw attention to the corset? Are they graceful and attractive? Are they active? How is your posture?
- **Practice transitioning between poses.** Can you move smoothly between poses, or is it awkward? Can you change your prop easily?
- If there are two of you, are you close enough together (bent-arm distance)? Are you showcasing the corsets? Do you both know what your poses are going to be?

How much time does corset modeling take?

The time commitment is 90 minutes. Each window display lasts one hour.

You will arrive 15 minutes before you will enter the window so we can dress and accessorize you. After your window, it usually takes 7 to 12 minutes to get you out of the corset and back into your Fair costume. **Again, the time commitment is 90 minutes.**

You need to stay in your window until Miss McAvoy escorts you out and the next model(s) in. If you need to leave the window promptly at the end of your hour, please let Miss McAvoy know *before* you go into the window so she can make appropriate arrangements.

Components of a Window

- ❖ Your performance
 - Theme, props, poses, expressions
- ❖ Backstage Professionalism
 - Be punctual, reliable, courteous

Themes

Themes run the gamut from “pretty woman posing in a corset” to intricate portrayals of Victorian literary themes.

You can come up with an original idea, a new twist on an old idea, or your interpretation of a tried-and-true favorite.

- ❖ Always easy and popular are myths, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes. (We would prefer to see fewer of these this year.)
- ❖ Clever and more difficult are fables and aphorisms (a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; don’t count your chickens before they’ve hatched).
- ❖ Contrasts (big and small, angel and devil, town and country, etc.)
- ❖ Occupations (teacher, bobby, soldier, sailor, judge, photographer, laundress, ringmaster, etc.)
- ❖ Archetypes (bride, cat, little girl, etc.)
- ❖ The seasons (Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn; but especially Winter)
- ❖ Situations (highwayman, hunting, romance, etc.)
- ❖ Also consider:
 - Dickens’ stories (especially if it is clear without cue cards or signage)
 - Other contemporary authors/literary sources (Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, the Brontë sisters, Louisa May Alcott, etc.)
 - Historical moments/characters
 - Biblical scenes (again, especially if it is clear without cue cards or signage)

Props

Props should enhance the display of the corset, not distract from it.

Having too many props is visual clutter. Vests, jackets, and shawls, if they are worn at all, should be worn well back from the corset.

Props should be held up and away from the corset, or to the side.

Clutch the roses to your upper bosom, not your belly. Props should evoke the Victorian era.

We have a small selection of props you can use. (Flowers, stuffed animals, brush and mirror, etc.) While Miss McAvoy will endeavor to reserve specific props, be prepared with a backup plan in case she has already put the prop in the window.

Backstage Professionalism

This is as important as your performance in determining whether or not you will be called back for another window. Most important is to show up on time, which is fifteen minutes before you are due in the window.

- ❖ Be prepared to wear the corset that fits, regardless of the color or style. If you have a particular corset in mind, let Miss McAvoy know in advance so she can make sure it is available for you.
- ❖ If the corset feels uncomfortable (if it’s biting under your arm) let Miss McAvoy know immediately.
- ❖ Put all of your clothing (including shoes) and belongings into one of the provided containers, not on the floor beside them. Hoops are to be hung on the wall.
- ❖ When Miss McAvoy opens the door to the window, the curtain is down. Do not tell her you need to finish one more pose.



- ❖ If you are changing back into your costume without assistance, please leave any of our props on the bench for Miss McAvoy to put back; don’t stuff them into random bins.
- ❖ Surprise the audience, not Miss McAvoy. She can keep your window theme a secret. Clear all “surprise guests” with Miss McAvoy well in advance.
- ❖ If you want to share your window with someone who did not attend the workshop this year, clear this through Miss McAvoy well in advance. Your friend will need to review a copy of this pamphlet and sign a corset model’s release form before she/he will be scheduled with you. Your friend’s performance in the window reflects directly on you.
- ❖ Plan your window theme and poses in advance. There is room for improvising, but you won’t be permitted to delay the dressing process in the changing room while you try to think up a theme or dig through props.

Backstage Professionalism (Continued)

- ❖ Our props (including chemises and petticoats and bloomers and stockings) are limited. You are encouraged to bring your own.
- ❖ Lost props—if you do not pick up your stray clothing or props by the last day of Dickens Fair, they will be taken to the Dickens Fair lost and found.
- ❖ If you are dropping off props early (and do this only after you have confirmed with Miss McAvoy that it is OK to do so), please leave them with Miss McAvoy, not one of the Dark Garden employees. If the prop is fragile or valuable, you should retain custody of the prop yourself.
- ❖ Change back into your costume quickly. If you dawdle in the dressing room, you will make the next model late. You can always go to the green room in the backstage area to make those finicky adjustments.
- ❖ If you are dissatisfied with something under Miss McAvoy's control (the corset she asked you to model, the number of windows you have, etc.), please speak with her. Simple misunderstandings can be easily resolved. More serious issues can be discussed after hours.
- ❖ There can be special exceptions to some of the rules, but Miss McAvoy needs to be the one to grant them. Just because one of the Dark Garden staff absently answered your request with a "yes" does not mean you have permission. Go ask Miss McAvoy.
- ❖ Don't spread rumors (about corset modeling, anyway). If someone tells you a "fact" or "rule" that is not covered in these guidelines, check with Miss McAvoy.
- ❖ You can solicit feedback about your poses, theme, props, etc., from our photographers. They will give you an honest and constructive critique to help you improve. If you would prefer kindly reassurance, Miss McAvoy will dispense it as time permits.

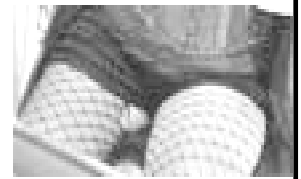


Miss McAvoy solicits feedback from primary photographer Chris English.

Simple Steps to a More Victorian Look

- ❖ Bras and bra straps should not be noticeable.
- ❖ Wigs and hair should be in a Victorian hair style, and brushed or groomed.
- ❖ Wigs should look natural; if your hairline is visible, it should harmonize with the wig's color.
- ❖ Bangs and pigtailed are NOT Victorian.
- ❖ Your feet are visible to the audience (yes, far too many of the audience will press up against the glass and look down at your feet). Be sure your shoes and socks are Victorian-esque.
- ❖ Wear shoes and/or socks in the window. Make sure the socks fit and have no visible holes or runs.

Avoid Hole-y Tights
Check your socks and stockings and tights before you put them on in the changing room.



- ❖ Fabrics and styles of your undergarments should be plausibly Victorian. Avoid spandex, velour, and lamé.

Behind the Scenes: Paperwork, Scheduling, and other Administrative Minutiae

To be scheduled for a window performance, you must turn in a completed Model Information Sheet to Miss McAvoy on Dress Rehearsal Sunday at the Cow Palace between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. at the Dark Garden booth. If you are a "new" model (if last year was your first year, or if you did not model last year), you must attend the Dark Garden Modeling Workshop at the Dickens Fair workshops.

If you will not be attending dress rehearsal, you may designate someone else to drop off your form, or you may email a scanned copy to miss.mcavoy@yahoo.com.

The Model Information Sheet includes your contact information, your availability, and the signed release. If you have any questions on how to complete this form, please direct them via email to miss.mcavoy@yahoo.com. You may also ask questions after the workshop or during dress rehearsal.

Behind the Scenes (Continued)

Miss McAvoy has placed an “age range” on the model information sheet. This has no bearing on scheduling. (All models are held to the same level of professionalism; however, as a generalization, Miss McAvoy expects you will have more adaptability and perspective as you mature. What may cause a meltdown in a 19-year old is likely to cause a long slow blink in a 49-year old. Knowing your age range gives her a framework against which to put your actions into perspective.)

How do I know if I have been scheduled?

- ❖ You will turn in your Model Information Sheet to Miss McAvoy at the Dark Garden booth at the Cow Palace on Dress Rehearsal Sunday between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- ❖ By Tuesday, you will receive an email from Miss McAvoy with your scheduled window(s).
- ❖ You will confirm before 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday.
- ❖ On Thursday (Thanksgiving), last-minute cancellations will be filled, so please check your email on Thursday (and confirm).
- ❖ During the run of Fair, the current weekend’s model schedule is posted on the wall beside the model changing room.
- ❖ During the run of Fair, models are emailed as cancellations occur and callbacks are made. You should email back immediately to confirm.

Model Math, or, Why Can’t I Have ALL the Windows?

Short answer: Supply and Demand.

There are fifteen windows a day. On a five-weekend Fair, there are 165 windows; on a four-weekend Fair, there are 135 windows.

Each year 100 to 150 potential models turn in their Model Information Sheet to be scheduled for a window.

Three quarters of the windows are “precast.” These windows are scheduled with returning models. (The more you excel in your performance and professionalism, the more windows we will try to schedule you into.)

The remaining windows are held for new model auditions and “callbacks.” The first window is an audition. Our photographers, Chris and Gordon, evaluate the performance aspects of your window:

- Did your idea work?
- Did you hold your poses?

- Were they creative and interesting?
- Did it engage the audience?
- If you did a sequential story, did each pose, taken out of context, work?
- Did your friends block the windows for much of the hour, or did they pause for a few minutes then move along?
- Did you transition well between poses or was there a lot of fumbling and hesitation while you tried to decide what to do next?

Miss McAvoy evaluates your backstage professionalism:

- Were you punctual? Reliable? Courteous?
- Where in the spectrum were you between self-sufficient and high maintenance?
- When things didn’t go your way—a prop you needed didn’t show up, the corset you were promised was mistakenly put on another model and already in the window—how did you react? Were you fragile or resilient?
- Was it a joy or a nightmare to work with you?

I was the perfect model—why didn’t I get called back?

We try very hard to accommodate everyone’s schedules, but sometimes the available times just don’t mesh with your schedule. If you were that fabulous, rest assured we will make a note of it and try to see more of you at next year’s Fair.

But I NEED More Windows!

One way to appear in more windows than you are scheduled for is to be an **understudy**. We compile a list of the models who would like to be understudies and what times they are available. If we have a no-show or last-minute cancellation, we send a runner out to find you.

A great understudy is flexible and creative (and calm, because you will literally have run to the booth, been stripped of your clothes, laced into a corset, and thrown into the window in five minutes or less).

Another model might invite you to share his or her window. **These invitations need to be cleared with Miss McAvoy well in advance.** The window is still the scheduled model’s window, not yours. If that model drops out, it is NOT your window. You may be invited to take over that time, or another model from our standby list may be scheduled.

Solo? Duo? Coordinated? What does this mean?

If you appear in the window alone, we call this a “solo” performance.

If you appear with another person, it is a “duo” or “partnered” window.

One window changes at the top of the hour, the other changes at the bottom of the hour. The windows overlap for thirty minutes. When you interact with the opposing window during that overlap, we call it a “coordinated” window.

In the past, we have seen such themes as “The Four Seasons” and “Contrast” as well as “The Frog Prince” and “The Rivals” scheduled as coordinated windows. There have been a number of impromptu coordinated windows where the performers observed the opposing window and played their poses off of what they saw.

To schedule a duo or coordinated window, you can mark a “D” or “P” or “C” in the time slot you are interested in, and put your partner’s name where indicated on the Model Information Sheet. Your partner would do the same with his/her own sheet.

I Have a GREAT Idea for a Window

That is wonderful! We encourage our models to think about windows and practice poses and gather Victorian-looking props, but— until you are scheduled for a window, Miss McAvoy would prefer not to hear about it.

Even if you are scheduled for a window, Miss McAvoy only needs a brief summary, not a twenty-minute discourse or plot synopsis of the book or movie or concept upon which your idea is based.

If your window theme is **clearly** within the guidelines outlined earlier in this pamphlet, you don’t need to get pre-approval. If you have any doubts, you are welcome to email Miss McAvoy or speak with the photographers.

Our photographers are an excellent resource for bouncing ideas about windows.

Tips from our Photographers

The Dark Garden photographers have observed more windows than anyone else, and are able to gauge audience reaction as well as the effectiveness of your poses. They suggest that humorous, cute, and outrageous windows are easier to carry off well than windows with somber themes.

- ❖ Transition smoothly between props. Don’t take more than a moment to switch. Especially don’t take a minute or two to dig out another prop or to rearrange everything.
- ❖ Your performance will attract attention, entertain your friends, and draw a crowd, which is all fine, but **don’t forget that you are in the window to sell corsets!** If twenty of your friends spend the hour blocking the audience from viewing your window (or worse, blocking customers from the store), from our perspective, your window was a failure.
- ❖ Poses should be active, not passive. You are caught in a moment of movement. If you are doing something innately passive, be sure to have interesting poses. Interact with your props, react to them, don't simply hold them.
- ❖ The wicker chair and the chaise are placed to maximize your presentation to all three sides of the windows. Please do not move them—especially the wicker chair.
- ❖ If there are two of you in the window, be aware of the window frames. If you are posing too far apart, both of you may be blocked from the audience’s view.
- ❖ Remember, you are seen from three sides. That "alluring" bent-over pose may look great from the side, but is too revealing from the front, and very unflattering from the rear.

Tips from Models

- ❖ Make sure you are comfortable: fed, watered, been to the loo, etc.
- ❖ Plan your theme well in advance. Practice the poses while wearing a corset.
- ❖ A few years ago, Tia said that the point isn't to be pretty or sexy—that's a given. The point is to be clever and creative. Just being sexy does not make a good window. Your job is to build the tableau.
- ❖ Don’t be too subtle with your expression.
- ❖ Wear comfortable shoes while in the window. Add a pair of socks if you need to, because once your feet get cold it gets really uncomfortable to be in there.
- ❖ A few cute props are much better than a million. Evaluate whether what you're bringing into the window actually adds to the visual.
- ❖ Alternate sitting and standing poses to rest your feet.

Tips from Models (Continued)

- ❖ If you are with another person, make sure you remember not to move too often.
- ❖ Practice staring into space and not getting distracted. Think of some images or phrases you can repeat in your head to keep you from laughing.
- ❖ When people try to get you to move or laugh, if you let your eyes lose focus and stare at your reflection in the glass, it looks like you are looking at the audience, but it is easier to hold an expression and not get distracted.
- ❖ Stretch before you get into the window.
- ❖ Don't feel self-conscious about your body. The customers appreciate seeing a variety of body types and corset styles.
- ❖ Make sure you breathe!
- ❖ You can go to <http://DarkGarden.tribe.net> to discuss things with other Dark Garden window models.

Final Thoughts



Unless you are using the window as a prop (holding your artist's brush near it as if it is your canvas; or your chalk, as if it is the blackboard), do not touch or press against the window.



Even when the book is held away from the body, watching someone read is not very interesting.

Remember the windows show you from all three sides. What flatters the corset from the center window might not have the intended effect from the side windows...



If you have questions or concerns about your modeling, contact Miss McAvoy by email

Send email to miss.mcavoy@yahoo.com. Miss McAvoy reads her email every day (though she may not reply for a day or two). If it is absolutely essential you speak with her, you may call her at (510) 658-4964.

This pamphlet is for the use of Dark Garden models and potential Dark Garden models.

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