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embroidery. We found a dragon robe, took it apart and photographed it in detail. From the photographs we made silkscreen plates. This process allowed us to create an imprint that wasn't just flat, but had a kind of textural quality." Acheson then printed on rather inexpensive fabrics, like rayon, to achieve the desired affect. "We also did a lot of work on silk — a lot of embroidering on silk."

The work spanned from the end of March through August 1986 when the shooting began. Acheson designed and organized the making or procuring of every costume. Of the 10,000 outfits, 9,000 were made in five different countries. He had 250 people working worldwide. "It was a wonderful job, and almost the most scary. Producer Jeremy Thomas has a way of seeing every problem as an opportunity."

The budget for the costumes of *Dangerous Liaisons* was considerably lower — £240,000 (US \$400,000). Acheson was responsible for designing and making some 90 to 100 outfits and collecting an additional 200 for extras. His particular difficulty with this project was the very short preparation period — he had only three weeks in which to research the costumes in museums and paintings. He measured up existing costumes to get the proportions, and to study the methods of corseting for the bodices and paniering for the skirts. "We looked at every painting and every book on the 18th century we could get our hands on. We spent a lot of time at the Museum of London, examining actual examples of 18th-century clothing."

Acheson used small cutting houses or individuals to build the costumes. "Each major character had his own cutter. I don't like to use a costume house to build my costumes. I like to have a more intimate relationship with my cutter, and often I find I can do that by using independent houses, small studios, or individuals."

The style of the costumes actually dates to some twenty years before the period in which Laclos' epistolary novel was set. "We didn't want the costumes to be too elaborate," says Acheson. "We wanted a harder, simpler silhouette. The time-appropriate look would have been something along the lines of the film *Barry Lyndon*, with huge hair and elaborate clothes. We needed to concentrate on the characters in the film, not their clothes. Actually, we were kind of amazed when it won all those design awards."

The corset was in many ways extremely useful to Acheson and his team, especially in coping with the specific problems posed by Glenn Close, whose figure changed enormously during the six-week shooting period because she had so recently given birth. "Once we had the silhouette, it stayed the same. We got her waist down to 61.2 centimetres...it just got easier for her to wear as she lost weight." Her breasts posed a slightly different problem by becoming smaller during the six-week period, but once the proportions had been established by the corset, the 'deficit' could be made up for with padding!

After his Oscar for *Dangerous Liaisons*, Acheson was off to Africa where he began the process once again — researching Bertolucci's film, *The Sheltering Sky*. "This film is much more modest in scope, set in 1947. I've been wanting to go back to the non-spectacular."

With such a showcase for his work behind him, and even with two Academy Awards in hand, Acheson's modesty prevails. "I'm only as good as the team I have working with me. Sure I'm the one who picks up the golden statuette, but the people around me are the ones who do all the work. They should be acknowledged."

■ The winner of two consecutive Academy Awards for his costumes for 1988's *The Last Emperor* (3, 6), and for 89's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1, 5), James Acheson concedes that the job of a costume designer is to go unnoticed. "My job is to support the film, not smother it." Others of his films include *Brazil* (2, 4), *Flash Gordon*, *Monty Python's Meaning of Life*, and *Highlander*.

● James Acheson, qui a remporté deux Oscars en 88 et 89 pour les costumes de *The Last Emperor* (3, 6) et *Dangerous Liaisons* (1, 5), avoue: "mon travail est de soutenir le film, et non de l'étouffer." Il a aussi créé les costumes pour *Brazil* (2, 4), *Flash Gordon*, *Monty Python's Meaning of Life*, et *Highlander*.

▼ James Acheson, der zweimal hintereinander den Academy Award, 1988 für *The Last Emperor* (3, 6) und 1989 für *Dangerous Liaisons* (1, 5), erhielt, räumt ein, dass es die Aufgabe des Kostumbildners ist, nicht bemerkt zu werden. "Meine Aufgabe ist es, denn Film zu unterstützen, nicht ihn zu ersticken." Acheson arbeitete unter anderem für *Brazil* (2, 4), *Flash Gordon*, *Monty Python's Meaning of Life*, und *Highlander*.