

LISA ARMSTRONG

The Investment Dresser

Delightful gathering

Sometimes the least likely candidates end up being among the most useful pieces in your wardrobe. Years ago I bought a cheap pleated black chiffon skirt from Warehouse on a whim. It was the season of gladiator skirts and you could tell that a season was all it would be. At a stretch.

Freakily, nothing about it looked cheap. The pleats were as sharp as Angelina's cheekbones. Being 100 per cent polyester chiffon, they were washable too. Also, being floaty, they didn't bulk out the hips. Buy thick pleats at your peril. Length? Perfectly on the knee, although too short for 2014. What I loved most, though, was the weight: light enough for summer and bare legs, and perfect for winter and thick tights and boots. In my experience, those sensible-looking thick wool skirts rarely get worn, being too sensible and too thick for most centrally heated spaces.

So anyway, the Warehouse warhorse did sterling duty for years because it turned out that it could do more than gladiate. When required, classic pleating was its game, at others sunray pleats. Its versatility was admirable. But eventually



I more or less stopped wearing black. Lengths changed, and frankly I got bored. It happens, especially when something costs under £25.

But now I've spied its replacement. There's a burgundy silk-chiffon skirt for £69.95 at massimodutti.com that ticks a lot of boxes – five at least. It's not technically pleated, but gathered. Since pleats, as we know, can be problematic, I count this as a ticked box, especially as

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gathers give the impression of being pleated without actually being so.

It's also burgundy (very this winter), chiffon (very this winter and every winter, as discussed), fully lined and, crucially, mid-length. It's a considerable upgrade from my Warehouse trooper, being silk rather than polyester. As such, I am sure it will snag like hell. But if I ban Weapons of Tinkly Bracelets from within six feet of it and steer clear of splinters, we should make it through winter. ●

Three Best PLEATED SKIRTS



#HIGH STREET HIT

Pink polyester, £38, by *Topshop* (topshop.com)



Yellow polyester, £130, by *Stefanel*, from zolando.co.uk



Rayon crêpe, £295, by *Toga Pulla*, from matchesfashion.com