

1565 AD Elizabethan Loose Gown

The Elizabethan loose gown is made of silk satin. It has long open sleeves that tie onto the bodice. It fastens down the front with hooks and eyes.

The yoke, front openings, collar, and sleeves are quilted and beaded with gold seed beads. The quilted areas are edged with gold piping. All edges of the gown are also edged with gold bias binding.

Underneath the loose gown is a gold a-line kirtle with satin piping.

The entire outfit is worn over a chemise, farthingale and petticoat.

Hair is worn long and bundled up under an escoffion (hair net). The flat cap matches the outfit. It has a feather for decoration.

Shoes are square-toed and have slashes cut in them with cloth pulled through. Hosen are made of fabric rather than being knitted. They are held up with garters.

Accessories include a Swete bag of matching fabric, and a fan.

Jewelry consists of an amethyst brooch holding the feather on the hat, an amethyst cross, and amethyst earrings.



GENERAL NOTES

Spain became the fashion leader with the introduction of the farthingale. Another event that affected fashion was when steel needles replaced drawn-wire ones. This resulted in an increase in fine embroidery, cutwork, and lace. I have chosen the English version of this garment as it was seen around the 1560's.

The loose gown of the 16th century was seen in most cultures throughout Europe. It had its roots in Moorish designs which were then crossed with the Spanish inspiration of a high neckline (Davenport, 375). It is a garment which hangs from the shoulders and is loose fitting. The loose gown is generally worn with or without sleeves. The loose is generally worn over a kirtle. Although this garment is known mostly as a Spanish gown, these loose fitting garments were popular all over Europe and were worn in England, Germany, and Italy. Janet Arnold's *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* shows that Elizabeth I had over 100 loose gowns in her inventory (275-281).

Pictorial evidence shows quite a variety of design. I have chosen to take design elements from several portraits of the same general time period, and incorporate those elements into an original gown. The elements I used were:

- a high neckline as evidenced in "Lady from the Wentworth Family" by Hans Eworth, 1563-68.
- large open sleeves as seen in the portrait of Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan by Holbein the Younger, 1538; as well as the "Venetian Courtesan as She Appears At Home" from the *Album Amicorum of a German Soldier*, 1595.
- decoration down the front as seen in "Lady With A Dog" variously attributed to Dominico Riccio, 1567.
- a loose, pleated back
- the front closed to the waist and open below to show the kirtle as seen in the portrait of Margaret Audley by Hans Eworth, 1562.

Please see the portraits in the appendix.

FABRIC CHOICE

Silks and Cottons were both available for use at this time. According to Boucher, "merchants from Germany, Flanders, and France brought goods to Lisbon and Seville to barter for the produce of exotic countries, carrying home with them Egyptian Cotton, Persian, Iraqui[sic] and Syrian silks, and Indian cotton stuffs (221). Popular colors used in clothing of this time were yellow, orange, tawney, straw color, bright tan, peach, flame, rose, soft reds, scarlet and crimson, a purple-red called murrey, black, blues,

wachet (a light greenish blue), sea-green, cold and warm gray, white, and russet. Materials used in clothing were taffeta, 'mock' velvet, patterned brocades, damasks, velvets, silks, satins, fine soft wool, fustian, russets, and linen (Arnold).

Most of the pictorial evidences show loose gowns in black, but red was also used. My loose gown is made of plum colored silk that was given to me as a thank you gift. The opportunity to use this gift in such an extravagant project was too good to pass up. The kirtle is made of red-shot gold cotton. The color gives the impression of being silk, yet allows me to use cotton since it is easier to clean.

Alcega mentioned in a note that "this gown is to be trimmed with a different fabric" (50). I chose the red-shot gold cotton to use for the bias piping and the bottom guard. The purpose of the guard is to protect the silk from floor dirt. The fact that the loose gown is trimmed with the kirtle fabric, and vice versa, ties the two items together into one outfit. Loose gowns could fasten all the way down, or be left partially open. There were several methods of fastening – buttons and hooks were the predominant choices. I chose the hook and eye method and chose to close the gown from the neck to the waist, leaving the rest of the gown open to display the kirtle beneath.

By the end of the sixteenth century quilting was in common use on caps, daywear, and armor. The Spanish bombast period, from 1545 to 1620, was a time when quilting was used extensively. Many skirts were quilted and embroidered in gold. Doublets and most over-clothes of this time period were also highly quilted. The crosshatch quilting pattern was frequently used. Where seams crossed, they were frequently studded with pearls or other gems. Ordinary material could not stand the weight of all the gems, so quilting the fabric was essential. Elaborate quilting patterns were also common, featuring interlaced designs, conventional and pendant flowers, shells, fruit, and leaf forms, pineapples, roses, and pomegranates (Raighne).

ACCESSORIES ETC

Accessories and accoutrement are what makes a dress into an outfit. Unless the kirtle and loose gown are worn over the correct undergarments, the outfit will not hang right or look correct. The entire outfit is worn over a chemise, a fathingale, and a petticoat.

During this time period, a woman's hair was worn long and bundled up under an escoffion (hair net) or it was worn in braids on top of the head. I have chosen to wear my hair up in braids. Originally I made a flat cap that matches the outfit. It has a feather for decoration. However, after further study of the portraits of the time, I realize that the "pill box" style hat or a tall hat would be more appropriate. I have not made these yet, but plan to do so soon.

Shoes were square-toed and had slashes cut in them with cloth pulled through. I do not have a pair of shoes appropriate to the style. Hosen was frequently made of fabric rather than being knitted. They would be held up with garters. I do have a pair of cloth hosen and garters to accompany this outfit.

Accessories for this outfit include a swete bag of matching fabric, and a fan. Jewelry consists of an amethyst brooch holding the feather on the hat, an amethyst cross, and amethyst earrings.

PATTERN DESIGN

I looked at pattern #68 in *The Tailor's Pattern Book* by Alcega (50) and those in Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion* (98) to create my own loose gown pattern. In Arnold, the loose gown attributed to Verney has a gathered back. Because I wanted to incorporate quilting in this design, I chose to have a yoke in the back. All of the back fullness was then pleated into the yoke rather than into the shoulders as shown in the Verney pattern. I chose to make a round sleeve using Alcega's design in pattern #68 (Alcega, 50). This decision was made to show off my quilting for a maximum effect. The kirtle pattern I created was based on the kirtle pattern in *Patterns of Fashion* (Arnold, 108).

To make my loose gown pattern I used a fitted sloper pattern I had created. For the front, I drew the pattern as it was from the shoulder to 2" below the armseye. I angled the side out as wide as possible, taking into account the width of the fabric. Side gores were cut that are the length of the sides. Alcega states that silk was woven 2/3 ell wide (22") so that gown would need to be pieced. My fabric was 60" wide and I chose not to cut it into strips before laying out the pattern. Before I laid the front pattern on the fabric I set it back from the selvedge edge 3" to allow for a facing.

For the back I determined a yoke depth of 8". I traced the sloper pattern for the back. The remainder of the back was the width of the fabric. The length was determined minus the depth of the yoke. A short train was included in the length. I created a standup collar pattern. The round sleeves were drafted with a front and back seam to control the fit. The open edge followed the front of the arm.

All pieces were cut on the grain of the fabric. The silk fabric was laid out in a double layer. I cut 2 fronts, 2 front yoke linings, 2 back yokes and 2 back yoke linings (cut on the fold), 2 each right and left sleeves, 2 collar pieces, 8 each of small, medium, and large tabs and 4 each of the central tab. From the batting I cut front left and right yoke, back yoke, 2 sleeves, and long strips for the front facings. From the contrasting red-shot gold cotton I cut 20 yards of 2" bias binding to be used as binding and piping. In addition I cut approximately 8 yards of 4" bias binding for the bottom guard.

For the kirtle pattern, using my sloper pattern, I drafted a simple a-line dress with a jewel collar. The sleeves are narrow and have the seams along the front and back of the arm in the period style.

All pieces were cut out on the grain of the fabric. The cotton was laid out in a double layer. I cut a back (on the fold) and a front (also on the fold). The sleeves were cut in two pieces. From the silk I also cut 10 yards of 2" bias binding to be used as binding and piping on the kirtle.

QUILTING

I chose to use the crosshatch quilting pattern with gold beads at each intersection. The look is understated but elegant. The quilting complements the beading and vice versa. All quilting and beading was completed before the construction began on the loose gown.

LOOSE GOWN

PATTERN CONSTRUCTION

Equipment needed: fitted sloper pattern, paper, tape measure, pencil, French curve

Step 1

For the front, take a fitted sloper pattern. Draw the pattern as it is from the shoulder to at least two inches below the armseye. From that point, angle the side out as wide as possible taking into account the width of the fabric. Be sure to add at least 2' to the center front for a facing.

Step 2

Determine the yoke depth for the back. This should generally be 6" - 8". Trace the yoke pattern for the back. The remainder of the back is the width of the fabric and the back length minus the depth of the yoke. Be sure to include a nice train if desired.

Step 3

Make side gores that are the length of the sides.

Step 4

Draw the curved sleeves with the open edge following the front of the arm.

LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

Remember to cut all pieces on the grain, not on the bias. Fabric is laid out in a double layer. Out of fashion fabric, cut 2 fronts, 2 front yoke linings, 2 back yokes and linings, 1 back, 2 each of front and back sleeve sections for right and left sleeves, 2 collar pieces, 8 each of the small, medium, large tabs and 4 each of the central tab. From the batting cut front right and left yokes, back yokes, collar, left and right sleeves. From a contrasting color you will need approximately 20 yards of 2" bias binding to be used both as binding and as piping. In addition, you will need approximately 8 yards of 4" bias binding for the bottom guard.



CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

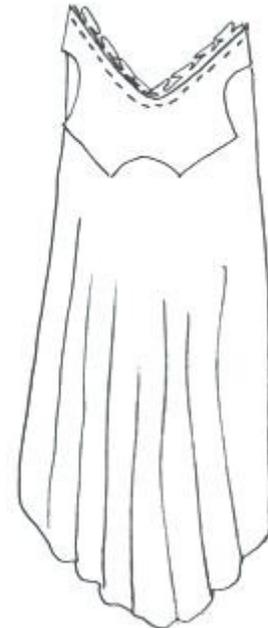
QUILTING DIRECTIONS

This is not a study in how to quilt so I won't go into the details of how to make the quilting stitch. For information on quilting methods and patterns see my book Historical Quilting. I chose to use the crosshatch quilting pattern with gold beads placed at each intersection. The look is understated but elegant. The quilting complements the beading and vice versa. All quilting needs to be completed before construction of the loose gown.

SEWING DIRECTIONS

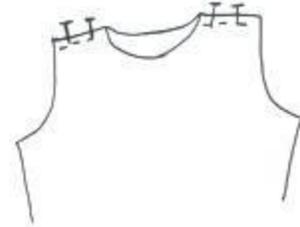
Step 1

Attach the back to the back yoke by sewing right sides together. Turn under the raw edges of the wrong side of the lining and hand stitch down.



Step 2

Attach front and back at the shoulder seams.



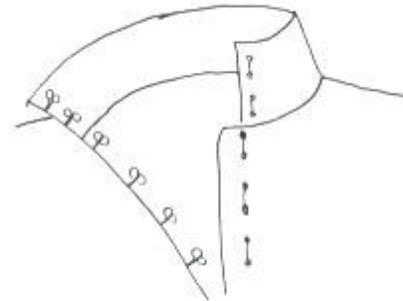
Step 3

Pin the collar to the gown, matching center backs and collar ends to the center front. Hand stitch the collar over the seam.



Step 4

Sew hooks every 1 1/2" to the left side of the gown front, having the ends of the hooks 1/8" from the edge of the opening. Sew the bars to the right side. This covers the division between the quilted areas and the unquilted ones.

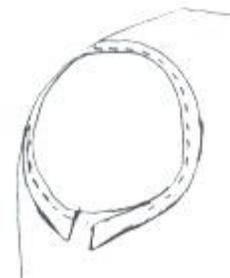


Step 5

Sew piping around the base of the collar, base of the back yoke, base of the front yoke, and down the quilted front edges.

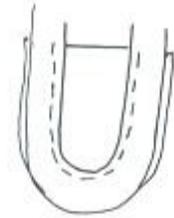
Step 6

Sew bias binding to the right side of the armholes on the loose gown. Turn bias binding to the wrong side of the armholes and hand stitch down.



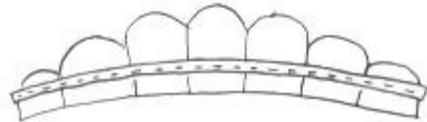
Step 7

Construct the tabs for the shoulder epaulets. Pin bias binding in place and then stitch. Turn the bias binding to the wrong side of the tabs and hand stitch down.



Step 8

Arrange the tabs, face up in the order of small, medium, large, center, large, medium, small. Pin bias tape to the tabs seam line. Stitch bias to the tabs. Turn the bias binding to the wrong side of the tabs and hand stitch down.



Step 9

Pin the epaulet into the armhole of the loose gown, wrong side of the gown to the right side of the epaulet, lapping the gown edge over the epaulet edge by 1/4".

Step 10

Attach the guard fabric to the bottom of the loose gown, right sides together. Turn the guard to the wrong side and press. Hand stitch down the guard fabric.

Step 11

Stitch the back seam of the sleeves and lining and press open. Quilt and bead.



Step 12

Apply bias binding to the right side of the sleeve edges. Turn the bias tape to the inside and hand stitch to the lining.

Step 13

Attach the points. Cut twenty 12" lengths of piping. Add aglets if desired. Place the points at the center shoulder point, at 3" and then at 6" on either side of the shoulder point. Attach matching points in the armhole.

KIRTLE

MEASUREMENTS

- _____ shoulder width
- _____ base of neck to shoulder point
- _____ across back (armhole to armhole)
- _____ bust
- _____ depth of armhole
- _____ circumference of bottom of farthingale

PATTERN CONSTRUCTION

Equipment needed, paper, tape measure, pencil, French curve

Step 1

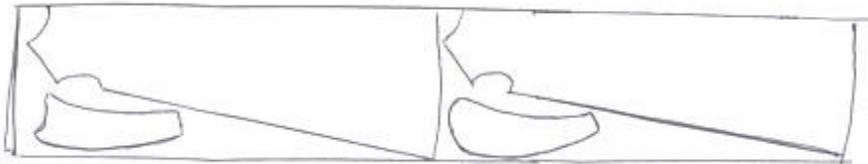
For the front, take a fitted sloper pattern. Draw the pattern as it is from the shoulder to the end of the armseye. From that point, angle the side out as wide as possible taking into account the width of the fabric.

Step 2

Draw the closed sleeves.

LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

Remember to cut all pieces on the grain, not on the bias. Fabric is laid out in a double layer. Out of fashion fabric, cut front, back, 2 each of front and back sleeve sections for right and left sleeves. From a contrasting color you will need approximately 4 yards of 2" bias binding to be used both as piping for the neck edge and sleeves as well as for the points for the loose gown. The kirtle took approximately 6 yards of fabric.



CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

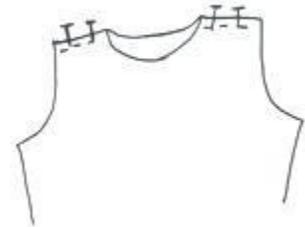
SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

Sew shoulder seams. Press

Step 2

Sew side seams. Press open.



Step 3

Stitch front and back sleeve seam. Press open. Clip curves.

Step 4

Stitch front and back seam of lining. Press open. Clip curves.



Step 5

Pin sleeve linings to sleeves matching seam lines.

Step 6

Attach sleeves to kirtle armseye right side together. Fold under sleeve lining edge and hand stitch down, covering the seam line.

Step 7

Apply bias tape to the right side of sleeve lower edge.

Step 8

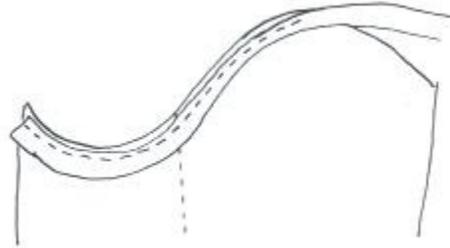
Apply bias tape to the neck edge of the kirtle.

Step 9

Hem kirtle.

Step 10

Attach piping to outer seam edges of the sleeves.



FLAT CAP

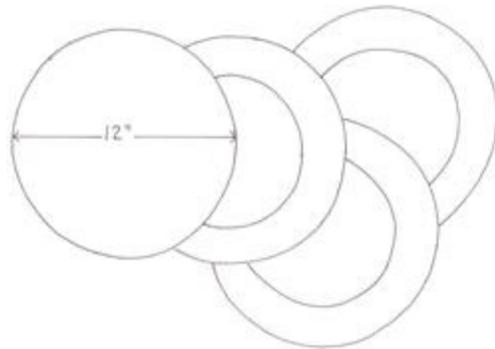
MATERIALS NEEDED

1 yard of fashion fabric; 1/2 yard of heavy interfacing; seam binding to match fabric.

PATTERN

Step 1

Cut four circles with a diameter a 12". Cut a 6 1/2" circle out the center of three of the circles to create a doughnut shape.



Step 2

Cut two doughnut shapes out of the interfacing.

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

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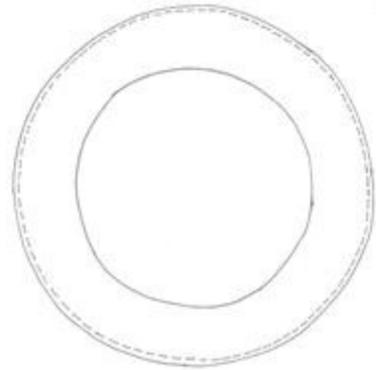
SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

To make the brim, sandwich two of the doughnut shapes of fabric between the two doughnuts of interfacing. Sew them together around the outside edge. Turn; press.

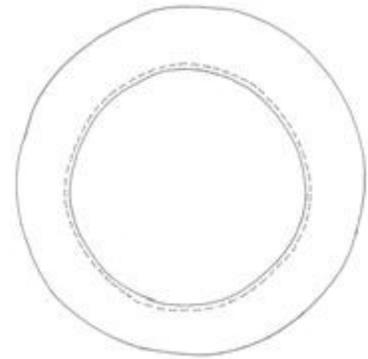
Step 2

To make the crown, sew the other donut shape and the large circle together along the outside edge. Turn; press.



Step 3

Sew the brim and the crown together along the inside curve. Clip the curves.



Step 4

Bind the raw edges.



APPENDIX



"Lady from the Wentworth Family" by Hans Eworth, 1565-68

"Portrait of Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan" by
Holbein the Younger, 1538



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"Venetian Courtesan as She Appears At Home" from the
album Amicorum of a German soldier, 1595.



"Lady With A Dog" variously attributed to Domenico Riccio,
1567

Portrait of Margaret Audley by Hans Eworth, 1562

