

# STATE OF [EARLY MODERN] UNDRESS

ALBERT  
HISTORY IN THE MAKING



# V&A

FASHION & TEXTILES TEACHERS' RESOURCE  
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Key Stage 4 & 5: Art & Design and Design & Technology

Also suitable for Higher Education Groups

Supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council with thanks to Kings College London



BEAVER FELT HAT



LIMEWOOD MANNEQUIN



LIMEWOOD HANDS



DEERSKIN SHOES



NECK RUFF



CLOAK



HOSE



DOUBLET



DOUBLET LINING



DOUBLET



LINEN RUFFS



SHIRT

# STATE OF [EARLY MODERN] UNDRESS

# V&A





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## Introduction

### Early Modern Dress

The era of Early Modern dress spans between the 1500s to the 1800s. In different countries garments and tastes varied hugely and changed throughout the period. Despite this variation, there was a distinct style that is recognisable to us today and from which we can learn considerable amounts in terms of design, pattern cutting and construction techniques.

Our focus is Europe, particularly Belgium, Spain, Austria and the Netherlands, where our characters Isabella and Albert lived or were connected to during their reign. This booklet includes a brief introduction to Isabella and Albert and a step-by-step guide to undressing and dressing them in order to gain an understanding of the detail and complexity of the garments, shoes and accessories during the period. The clothes you see would often be found in the Spanish courts, and although Isabella and Albert weren't particularly the 'trend-setters' of their day, their garments are a great example of what was worn by the wealthy during the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Europe.

Spain led the way in terms of creativity, the Baroque era transforming music, the arts and fashion. Catholic monarchs at that time played an important and strategic role as icons of style for the surrounding countries. In other words, they were the Vogue cover models of their day and contributed to the popularity and longevity of many of the pieces you see worn by Isabella and Albert.

According to fashion historian Descalzo, 'three elements of women's fashion were commonplace in the 16th century – the busk, (a solid front section of the bodice to keep torso erect), (cartón de pecho), farthingale (like a petticoat), (verdugado), and cork-soled platform shoes (chopines)'. It was particularly common, for clothes to create a very tight form that restricted and confined the female figure with rigidity and structure.

For men as well as women, movement was restricted in the Early Modern period, and as you'll discover, required several pairs of hands to put on.

# Archduke Albert

Albert VII was born on 13th November 1559 in Wiener Neustadt. The fifth son of Maximilian II and Maria of Spain, he was sent to his uncle, Philip II of Spain, to gain an education in the Spanish court at age 11, an early introduction to the governmental society of the day.

He was initially going to pursue a career in the Church, and was on track to become an archbishop under Pope Gregory XIII. However, he was never ordained due to the unexpected longevity of the reign of Gaspar de Quiroga y Sandoval, Archbishop of Toledo. Although he resigned from his role as Cardinal, the ecclesiastical upbringing continued to have an impact on his life thereafter.

Philip II called him to court in 1593, where he became an integral part of the government of the Spanish monarchy. A couple of years later, after the death of Archduke Ernst, Albert was sent to Brussels to succeed his elder brother as Governor General of the Habsburg Netherlands - the Habsburg family also ruled the Spanish Netherlands at that time, present day Belgium. During a series of military campaigns, Albert had some success in capturing Calais and Ardres from France. However, Albert predominantly suffered many defeats, with losses to England, France and the Dutch Republic. To make matters worse, he was further hit by the third bankruptcy of the Spanish crown.

In 1598, Philip II announced his intention to marry his daughter Isabella off to Albert in order to ensure sovereignty over the Habsburg Netherlands. In the early years of their marriage, war dominated their land and Albert continued to suffer from a poor military reputation after his defeat in 1600 at the Battle of Nieuwpoort. Later in life however, the couple were able to enjoy slightly more peaceful relations and Albert's reign began to exert a great strengthening of 'princely' power in the Habsburg Netherlands.

Albert and Isabella were keen collectors of art, and notable for their appointment of many well-known artists of the day, including Peter Paul Rubens, who became their 'artist in residence' or court painter in 1609. They gave countless

commissions to some of the great artists of the time, including Otto van Veen and less well known artists like Denis van Asloot – the painter responsible for the Ommegang painting.

In the winter of 1613, Albert's health took a turn for the worse and concern was raised about a suitable heir, as the couple had no children. Unfortunately, Albert's health deteriorated again in 1620. Although he was keen to work towards the renewal of the peace-keeping 'Twelve Year Truce', which was about to expire, he gradually lost the battle to illness and died on 13th July 1621.



# Albert: Undressing / Dressing Guide



This is a step-by-step guide to removing the various pieces that make up Albert's outfit. Please read our 'Session Tips' before starting as they guide you through this process ensuring care and consideration is given to the mannequins.

For each direction there is further information in italics which explains a bit more about the construction, fabrics or techniques. You will be able to find more detailed information about any of the making processes and textiles you see by referring to the bibliography which has some recommended titles for reference.



1. To remove the cloak take out pins which keep the front opening in place. Lift off, it can be folded in half and placed to the side.



2. Remove Albert's hands by pulling the wooden pegs out from the wrist. (Place them carefully in the conservation box for later).



3. At the same time remove the ruffs from his wrists, and place alongside the hands in the shoe box for protection.



4. Gently take the hat off the wig, making sure the hair doesn't become caught. Place it in the hat box.



#### 10 / HEAD ABOVE THE REST

*Hats, like the fabric of women's dresses, indicated and reflected the social status of the wearer. Even the shape, size and colour gave signal to onlookers about the profession, rank and position the person held.*

*Beaver felt was particularly expensive and was imported into Spain as a luxury material. Albert's hat is handmade to measure, out of beaver felt; it is incredibly soft and is an accurate example of Early Modern millinery.*



5. Now remove the wig by cupping a hand over the head and gently lifting off. Place in the wig box alongside the hat.





6. At this point the neck ruff can be removed by untying the thread at the neck.



7. Next the buttons on the doublet (centre front and wrists) can be unbuttoned.



8. Unhook the hooks and eyes along the waist, used to attach the doublet to the breeches.

9/ Now the doublet can be taken off. Referring to the pictures, direct the arms backwards and remove in 'direction of travel', as you would a normal jacket.



#### 6 / DOUBLET

*The doublet was a key and prominent piece in the male wardrobe. Like all these garments, everything was sewn by hand and took a great deal of time and specialised labour - the sewing machine didn't come into production until the 1840s. Women generally were skilled in making the fine linens and undergarments, whereas the doublet would have been made by a male tailor.*

*Albert's doublet was created by a maker in Paris. The detail of the stitching is incredibly intricate and all done by hand, after a machine made 'toile' (mock-up) of the garment had been made. An interesting fastening element to note are the hooks and eyes around the hem, that ensure the breeches stay snugly connected round the waist; effectively taking the place of the modern day belt.*

10. Next the deerskin shoes are untied and removed



11. Untie the cord and thread at the front of the hose and remove as you would normal trousers, along with the stockings. For the purposes of time, leave the stockings attached to the hose, it is worth examining the spiral threading technique used to sew together.



12. Finally, untie the thread at the wrist and neck of the linen shirt and pull over the head to remove.

13. The process of undress is now complete.

*To dress again, continue to follow the instructions. You'll notice this can take even longer and show the patience that was required to wear Early Modern Dress in the 17th century – particularly when buttoning the doublet!*



14. Having undressed Albert, the process of dressing is effectively in reverse. Begin by putting the shirt over his head and tying at the neck and wrists. There is extra thread in the kit bag if needed.



#### 8 / LIGHT LINENS

*Both Isabella's smock and Albert's shirt are made out of linen, a light breathable material which is ideal for sitting next to the skin. This piece of clothing would always be worn under a bodice. It remains as a first layer so that when they become dirty from wear, washing can be more frequent and the washing of the outer garments avoided, which would be substantially more difficult.*

*Often the really wealthy had embroidered designs or detailed lace added onto the cuffs and the necklines. In the British Galleries (level 2) of the V&A Museum you can see an example of a smock in Room 56e, case 9. There are also some great references of various styles and embroidered detail (p72/3) of Janet Arnold's book *Pattern for Fashion 4*.*

15. Starting from the feet, carefully pull the hose and stockings up the legs like putting on a pair of trousers.



16. Tie cord (complete with metal 'aiglets' on the ends to aid lacing) in a bow to secure at the front of the hose.



17. Pull the doublet on like putting on a normal jacket, ensuring the shirt sleeves don't bunch up to the shoulders, but remain covering the entire arm. You may need to grab the wrist of the shirt and pull down as you place the arms through the sleeves of the doublet.



18. This next part requires some patience - and possible help of the button hook tool (found in the kit). Button up the jacket front and the sleeves, gently yet firmly popping the buttons through each of the holes. Attach the hose to the jacket using the hooks and eyes.





19. Tie doublet ribbon point at the waist, centre front.



21. Take his neck ruff and tie at the front using the white thread. It should sit tucked under the doublet collar.



20. Next, place the shoes on his feet and tie the ribbons.



22. Attach the ruff's back onto the wrists using the white thread (additional thread can be found in the kit if needed and Fig 4 demonstrates threading loop to tie together).





23. The hands can then be re-attached using the pegs.



24. Lastly, take the wig and gently place on his head, and then add the hat.



25. Take the cloak and place around his shoulders. To ensure the cloak stays in place, take a couple of pins from the kit and pin in position at the front opening.



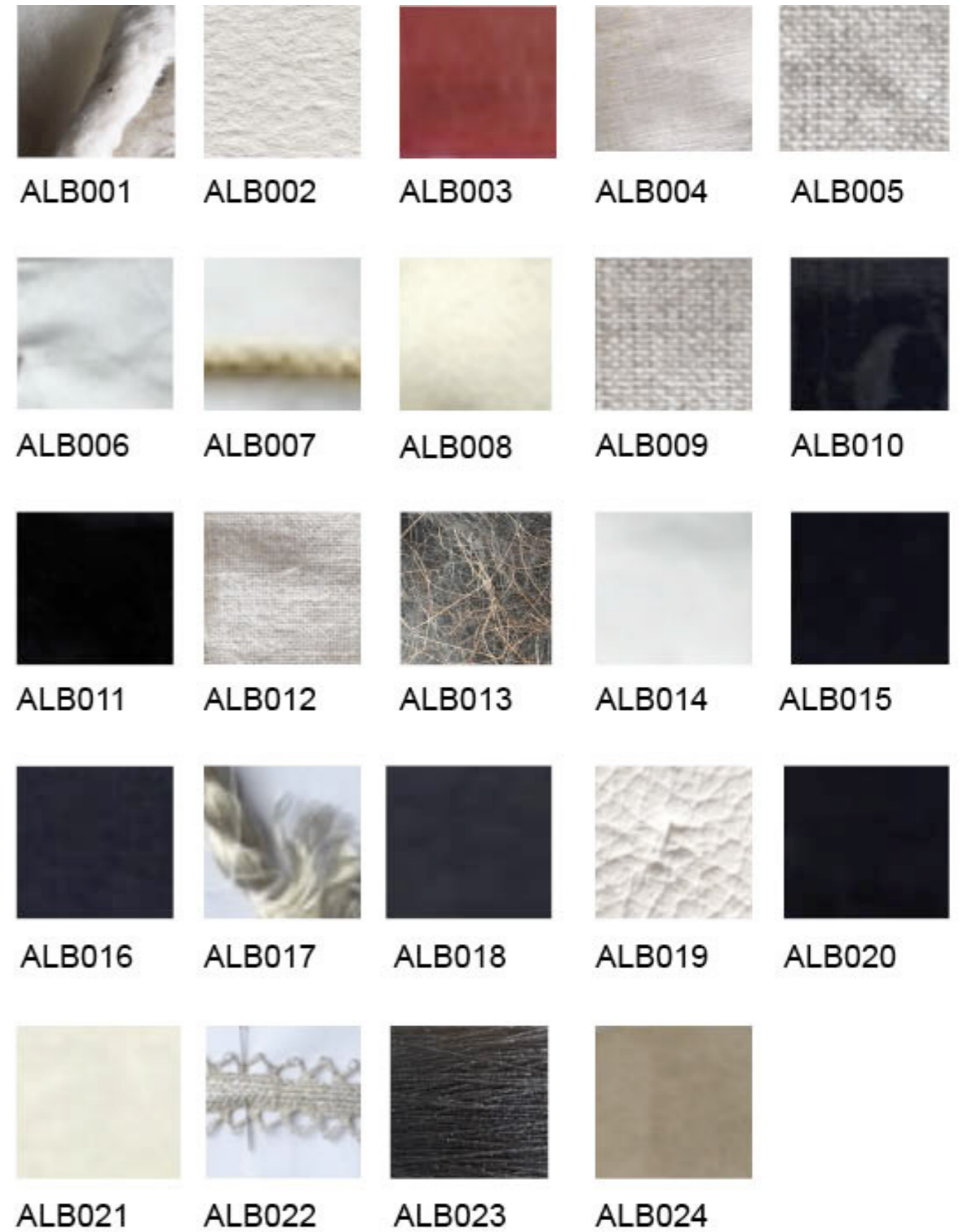
Albert is now in his complete outfit.

*Note / Albert should be left in his shirt and doublet for storage.  
Please remove shoes, hose, cloak, wig and hat.*



# Early Modern Materials

| Reference Number | Fabrics                                    | Usage                                    | Suppliers               |
|------------------|--|--|-------------------------|
| ALB001           | Merino sliver/cotton sliver                | quilting                                 | Wingham's Wool          |
| ALB002           | pasteboard                                 | collar                                   | Paintworks              |
| ALB003           | Poult taffetta (red)                       | doublet lining                           | Bertrand                |
| ALB004           | red edge linen                             | interlining                              | Whaleys                 |
| ALB005           | linen                                      | interlining                              | Wolfins                 |
| ALB006           | cloth of silver' silk/ metal               | outer layer of doublet                   | Henry Bertrand          |
| ALB007           | metal twist                                | doublet trim                             | Sebastian Passot        |
| ALB008           | Botany' wool                               | interlining panes                        | Whaleys                 |
| ALB009           | red edge linen                             | interlining panes                        | Whaleys                 |
| ALB010           | hand-woven cut silk velvet                 | panes                                    | Gaggioli                |
| ALB011           | silk taffeta                               | lining of panes                          | Henry Bertrand          |
| ALB012           | fustian                                    | hose lining                              | Georg Auzinger          |
| ALB013           | hog and horse hair                         | stuffing of hose                         | Jose Miguel             |
| ALB014           | silk taffeta/metal thread 'Lustre mercury' | under panes                              | Henry Bertrand          |
| ALB015           | silk velvet                                | between legs of panes                    | Hopkins (old stock)     |
| ALB016           | black silk jersey                          | stockings                                | Pongees                 |
| ALB017           | silver cord                                | hat cord                                 | Hopkins                 |
| ALB018           | silk ribbon                                | shoe ties                                | auverasoie.com          |
| ALB019           | pinked deer skin alum-tawed                | shoes                                    | Mike Kalispell, Montana |
| ALB020           | black velvet - silk pile, cotton ground    | outer fabric                             | Northcroft Fabrics      |
| ALB021           | cloth of silver'                           | lining                                   | Hopkins                 |
| ALB022           | trim                                       | decorative edging (two whipped together) | Hopkins                 |
| ALB023           | black 'Como' silk                          | hose fastening                           | Handweavers Studio      |
| ALB024           | beaver felt                                | hat                                      | North America           |



## 5.2 / FASHIONING FABRICS

Luxurious fibres such as silk, velvet and satin were used for the outer layers of garments, as these were the materials people wanted to be seen. They were then embellished with cut work techniques like pinking (seen on the front of Isabella's satin bodice) and slashing to create texture.

You'll see a beautiful example in the British Galleries (level 2) of a man's doublet and hose with detailed surface texture in room 56e [online ref: 348&A-1905]. Note this is an English style of doublet & hose, worn 10 to 15 years later than the example Albert is wearing.







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Open daily

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