

STATE OF [EARLY MODERN] UNDRESS

ISABELLA
HISTORY IN THE MAKING



FASHION & TEXTILES TEACHERS' RESOURCE
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

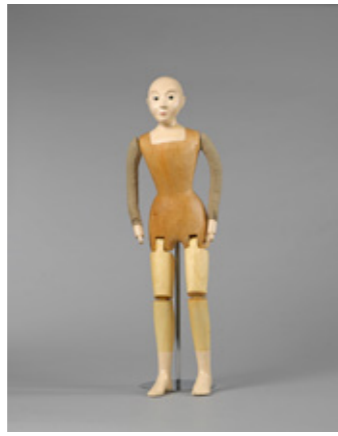
Key Stage 4 & 5: Art & Design and Design & Technology

Also suitable for Higher Education Groups

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



FOREPART (PANEL)



LIMEWOOD MANNEQUIN



BODICE



CHOPINES (SHOES)



SLEEVE RUFFS



GOWN



NECK RUFF & REBATO



HEADTIRE



FARTHINGALE



STOCKINGS & GARTERS



WIG



SMOCK

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.



Archduchess Isabella



Isabella Clara Eugenia was born on 12th August 1566 in Segovia, Spain. Daughter of Philip II of Spain and Elizabeth of Valois, Isabella was an infant royal of Spain and Portugal and later reigned as sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands in the Low Countries between 1598 and 1621.

Her father was delighted by Isabella's arrival, already having a male heir, Don Carlos of Spain. Interestingly, Isabella was reported to be the only person her father would allow to help him with his work. Growing up, she sorted papers and translated documents from Italian to Spanish - a solid education that no doubt served as a foundation for her own duties in court later in life.

After the death of her uncle, Henry III of France, Isabella was declared the 'legitimate sovereign' of France by Catholic supporters. However, the Huguenot leader, Henry II of Navarre (and rightful King according to French inheritance laws) made his claim and was consequently crowned in 1594.

As was tradition, Isabella had been betrothed from a young age, and was due to marry Rudolf II of the Holy Roman Empire. However, after 20 years, he declared he had no inclination to marry anyone. Failing to gain any sort of powerful allegiance, Isabella's father decided that she would marry her cousin, Archduke Albert of Austria. On 18th April 1599, at 33 years old, she married Albert VII, Archduke of Austria - who was incidentally Isabella's former fiancé's younger brother!

The couple, both Catholics by faith, reigned over the Netherlands jointly as Duke/ Count and Duchess/ Countess. Known for their love of the arts, the royal couple were said to have stimulated growth of the Baroque style, popularised as part of the Catholic Reformation.

Having had no children, and therefore leaving no heirs after Albert died in 1621, Isabella decided to become a nun and joined the Third Order of Saint Francis, after Albert died in 1621. She died a few years later on 1st December, 1625 in

Brussels. She is remembered as making an instrumental contribution to what is considered the Golden Age of the Spanish Netherlands.

Isabella: Undressing / Dressing Guide



This is a step-by-step guide to removing the various pieces that make up Isabella's outfit. Please read our 'Session Tips' before starting as it has important code of conduct that will make the process an enjoyable experience for you and help the conservation of 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. Remove Isabella's hands by pulling the wooden pegs out from the wrist. (Place them carefully in the conservation box for later).



2. Remove the linen ruffs from her wrists, and place alongside the hands in the conservation box for protection.



3. Using a sliding action, gently pull the headtire out from the wig, making sure the hair doesn't become caught.



4. Now remove the wig by cupping a hand over the head and gently lifting off by rocking forwards and back in an upwards motion. Place in the wig box alongside the headtire.



5. To remove the cloak, untie cord at the neck and take out pins which keep the front opening in place to stop farthingale being revealed. Direct her arms gently backwards in 'direction of travel' and take off cloak as shown.



6. At this point the pearl necklace can also be removed and placed in the wig box alongside the hair clip.



7. The front panel of the skirt can be removed by untying the ribbon at the back of the waist.



8. Next, the neck ruff and rebato can be taken off by undoing the ribbon at the front and carefully stretching slightly open, and manoeuvring in a backwards direction from the neck.



3 / RUFF STUFF

From pleating and pining to starching, ruff making was a delicate and lengthy process. The neck ruffs you see on Isabella and Albert took over 10 hours to make, each created by pinning and hand stitching on a pillow. There is zero waste in ruff manufacture and the linen is of itself a highly reusable and eco-friendly fabric.

You will notice that unlike Albert's ruff, Isabella has an added frame, called a 'rebato', that sits underneath. This wire frame supports the linen ruff so that it holds its shape around the neck. Rebatos came in all sorts of shapes and designs and often had additional jewel decoration hanging off the frame called spangles.

Between countries and time periods, ruffs changed and evolved in shape, style and volume. Janet Arnold's book 'Patterns for Fashion 4' (p27-28) has more of information, patterns and examples of ruffs, it can be found in the National Art Library of the V&A.



9. The bright red farthingale is removed by untying both ribbons at the back and front of the waist.



It will drop naturally downwards into a doughnut shape...



Lift Isabella off the metal stand and up out of the fathingale.
Place farthingale carefully to the side.



Then, placing Isabella gently face down on the cushion, begin the process of undoing the lace from top to bottom. You'll notice this takes a little bit of time – it's easy to see why people had more than one dresser.



10. To remove the corset, first undo the hook and eye fastenings at the wrist area and up the sleeve.



Once the bodice is completely untied, lift up the mannequin, and directing arms forward, pull the bodice off in a gentle motion.



11/ Next, untie the white thread at the wrist and neck of the shirt smock and pull over the head to remove.



12. Untie chopines (shoes) ribbons and remove.



13. Untie the garters at the knee and carefully remove the stockings.



14. The process of undress is now complete.

To dress again, continue to follow the instructions. You'll notice this can take even longer and shows the patience required to wear Early Modern Dress in the 17th century.





15. Essentially it's now a process of reversal. Begin by putting the stockings on the legs. Taking the garters, wrap around towards the back once, cross over and then bring to the front to tie in a bow.



16/ Place her chopines (shoes) on her feet, criss-crossing the red ribbon laces up her calf before tying in a bow.



17/ With her arms lifted, place the smock over her head and tie at the wrists and neck (there is extra thread in the kit bag if needed, the loops are threaded as shown in Fig 4)

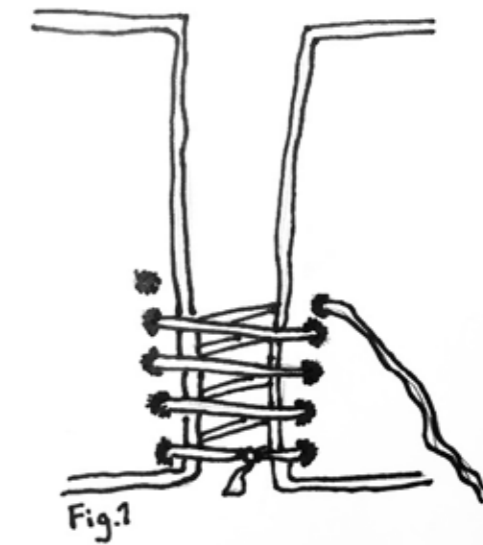
18. Next, put her arms through the boned bodice sleeves, ensuring the smock sleeves don't bunch up to the shoulders, but remain covering the entire arm. You may need to grab the wrist of the smock and pull down as you place the arms through the sleeves. Do up the hooks and eyes on the sleeves.



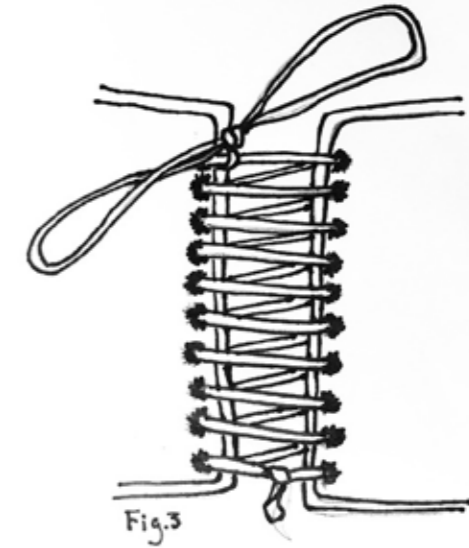
19. Referring to the diagram, as well as the pictures, lace the bodice from the bottom to the top. The eyelets at the bottom right are where you should start. Taking the lace over to the left, direct down through the hole adjacent to the first right-hand eyelet.



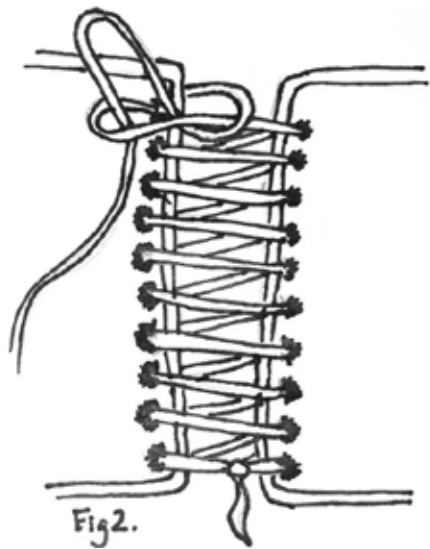
20. In a diagonal angle up to your right, come up the back of the right eyelet (one up) and then repeat the process going over to the left, down from above to underneath, and then diagonally up to the next right hand eyelet in a spiral fashion. [Fig 1]



21. Continue to tighten and pull in the lace as you go, the fabric should sit side by side. At the top, tie the lace in a bow (Fig2&3). She can be placed on the metal stand again by directing the pole under her smock and into a hole at the base of her back.



22. Place Isabella and stand in the centre of the farthingale 'doughnut' and lift ribbon up towards the waist, pulling it into a cone-like form.



4 / "LACING THE STAYS"

The threading of a corset required patience and one, if not two people to lace up tightly and correctly. Having servants to help you do this implied a status, but was also necessary as it was quite a physically and technically demanding process.

'Lacing the stays' would commence from the base of the back (fig.1) where eyelet holes would be threaded from left to right in a spiral movement (fig.2). You can see from the diagrams the lace would then be knotted at the top in a specific loop motion which was then tied to hold in place (fig.3).

Although this example is fastened at the front, it demonstrates the 'lacing the stays' process and can be found in our V&A online collection (ref T.14&A-1951).



7 / FARTHINGALE

Originating in Spain, farthingales were a piece of 'underpinning' worn by women in the 16th and 17th centuries. Its hoop structure held the fabric of the skirt out into circular shapes displaying intricate designs, which were a show of wealth and status.

The process for making Isabella's farthingale was inspired by a pattern found in the Alcega book [Alcega, Juan De., and J. L. Nevinson. *Tailor's Pattern Book*, 1589; Facsimile. New York: Costume & Fashion Press, 1999.]. Although that pattern had a slightly larger hem than what was eventually made, it provided the foundation for the design process and construction - which is thought to have not been attempted since the Early Modern period!

The hoops of the farthingale are made by twisting straw into stick-like cylinders, secured with linen string. These are then covered in fabric, in this case red satin and luxurious velvet. In Descalzo's book there is a lovely description of an inventory of the royal treasury of farthingales made for Isabella and one of her ladies in 1592:

"...a farthingale to go with the skirt (basquina), of crimson satin lined in taffeta, with the hoops and hem of crimson velvet as usual... a farthingale of red satin with nine hoops of red velvet and the other hoops of the same satin and its hem of velvet of the same colour as the edging."



23. Take the ribbon around to the front of the waist first and tie in a bow, then take the other ribbon round to the back of the waist, again tying in a bow.



24. Similarly with the front panel, place around the waist, carefully sitting it under the skirts of the bodice and tie at the back of the waist.



25. As with the removal of the neck ruff and rebato, carefully stretch open and ease round the neck coming from the back. To secure, tie at the front with the ribbon.



26. Place the pearls over the head.



27. Take the wig and gently place on her head, along with the headtire, which sits in place on her left hand side.





28. Next take her gown and with her arms angled backwards, carefully pull up and over the shoulders, tying the cord at the neck.



29. To ensure the gown stays in place, take a couple of pins from the kit and pin in position at the front on the opening.



30. Lastly take the wrist ruffs and secure with the white thread (there is spare in the kit if necessary) and attach the hands using the pegs.

31/ Isabella is now in her complete outfit.



Note: Isabella should be left in her smock, stockings & garters, bodice and forepart for storage. Please remove farthingale, gown, wig and shoes.



9 / CHOPINES (shoes)

Isabella's shoes are in a traditional style for the period. You'll notice the linen soles are lined in goldleaf, this was done to indicate that the wearer was walking on gold.

Albert's shoes are made of deer skin and have been designed with a pinked pattern, similar to the pair we see him wearing in the Otto van Veen painting: Los Archiduques Alberto e Isabel [1615].

Garters were worn to secure the hose at the knee and stop them bunching up and bagging.



Early Modern Materials

Reference Number	Fabrics	Usage	Suppliers
ISA001	linen	bodice lining & back	
ISA002	linen glued w/ rabbit skin	front bodice, second layer	Cloth House
ISA003	wool	front bodice & back bodice shoulder padding	A.W. Hainsworth
ISA004	linen	forepart lining (front panel)	Pongees
ISA005	silk taffeta 'Honey'	interlining behind satin: sleeves, bodice & forepart	Pongees
ISA006	game skin lining	Forepart lining (front panel)	Pongees
ISA007	silk satin	bodice, sleeves and forepart top fabric	Pongees
ISA008	linen balist (white)	smock and ruffs	Anita Pavani Linen
ISA009	black silk jersey	stockings	Pongees
ISA010	silk ribbon	garters	Hopkins
ISA011	silk ribbon (red)	shoe ties	www.auverasoie.com
ISA012	leather	foundation of uppers & inner sole (gilded)	Karl Robinson
ISA013	deer skin alum-tawed	lining of the uppers	Mike Kalispell, Montana
ISA014	red silk damask (dyed)	outer shoe layer	Hopkins
ISA015	cow leather (vegetable-tanned)	soles	Karl Robinson
ISA016	linen thread	neck / wrist ties	Delle Legge
ISA017	red edge linen	possible interlinings	Whaleys
ISA018	silk Duchess satin (red)	outer layer of farthingale	Henri Bertrand
ISA019	silk satin (red)	lining of farthingale	Henri Bertrand
ISA020	velvet (red)	hoops of farthingale	Liberty's (old stock)
ISA021	pinked silk duchess satin	forepart & bodice & sleeves	Hopkins
ISA022	silk pile/ cotton ground velvet	cloak	Northcroft Fabrics
ISA023	metal trim	cloak	Hopkins
ISA024	silk taffeta	behind cream satin pinking & cloak facing	Bertrand
ISA025	artificial whalebone	boning for bodice	www.wissners.de
ISA026	metal lace trim	forepart	Hopkins

5.1 / FASHIONING FABRICS

Clothing has always been used as a sign of wealth and power. The properties of 16th & 17th century textiles such as the fibre, colour and decoration, as well as finishing and overall construction, all contributed to the value of a piece and gave a strong indication of the status and standing of the wearer. In the Early Modern dress period, plant, mineral and animal fibres were most commonly used.

Silks, wools, and linens, as well as gold, silver and copper were sustainable and could be recycled and re-used again and again. Linen (used for 'linings'), was the most common plant fibre of that period and suitable for undergarments due to its ease in washing and light, soft touch. Cotton, another basic material, was hard to handle and very labour intensive, so was often used to pack things for transport purposes. Note that Albert's doublet is padded with semi-processed cotton.



ISA001 ISA002 ISA003 ISA004 ISA005



ISA006 ISA007 ISA008 ISA009 ISA010



ISA011 ISA012 ISA013 ISA014 ISA015



ISA016 ISA017 ISA018 ISA019 ISA020



ISA021 ISA022 ISA023 ISA024 ISA025



ISA026



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