

## Cranach Dress - Version One

After trawling through my copy of Cranach by Alexander Stepanov for several weeks, I have finally decided to base my first attempt on two of his paintings.



This first one because of the style of the dresses with the one large band around the hem, puffed and slashing at the shoulder, elbow and wrist, the way the decorative gold fabric is the same for the brustfleck and the rest of the decoration, and for the hair and choker of the seated daughter.



And this one for the colours and also how the bustle is the same as the decorative trim.

This style of dress is different to any historical clothing I have made before, and the most modern, so it was a bit of a challenge to say the least.

I started out by making a mock up out of calico. Essentially, after much (sometimes heated) discussion with my partner, we concluded it could be made up of four main components:  
skirt

stomach clincher  
bracers/bits to go over the shoulders  
sleeves.

Of course, there were extra bits, but the main structural parts were those four. I have no idea if this is how they were made, but all I try to do when making historical garments is to "make it look like the picture". Its kind of become my motto over the last few years.

The skirt was easy enough. I have 4 trapezoid shaped pieces so there is not so much bulk at the waist, and the hem is about 5 metres. In hindsight, I would make the hemline bigger. Maybe even try and double it to really give the very very full look. I have a small slit on the left side just under the vertical decorative band which is attached to the rest of the skirt by a little hook.

The skirt, sleeves, and side panels are a really nice greeny blue fullled wool.

The fun started with the waist. Initially I thought about making a complete corset, but in the end I decided the clincher would give the tiny waist look but still with the natural bust shape. I experimented with some hemp cord boning, but I just wasn't happy with the way it looked. Maybe I was using too thick a cord, but it seemed to be a bit more bulky than I wanted, and considering how the paintings show such small waists, I wanted to eliminate as much bulk as possible. Being a bit of an authenticity junkie, I feel ashamed to say that after much torment I got some polyester bridal boning. It is thin and gives just the right amount of support. I don't know how steel boning would go. I imagine thin slabs of whale bone would be really great, but let's not go there.

I also had one more cheat with the clincher and I used cotton canvas, primarily because I couldn't find anywhere with linen canvas. The idea of an artist supply shop only came to me well after the clincher was completed. D'oh.

So the clincher was made in 6 panels and sewn together, covering 3/4 of my waist. The front 1/4 was left open, and I stitched a slightly longer panel under the handmade eyelets on the right side of the clincher (right side as its being worn, so left side as you look at it). This panel is the one that is visible in the paintings. The left side of it remains unattached to anything and it sits under the clincher on the left side, when its all laced up.

After I got the clincher looking ok, I then started working on the bracer bits. I don't really know what else to call them because they act like bracers in that they keep the skirt up. The vertical bits anyway.

This took a lot of mucking around to get the fit right. The pics of this (below) showing the front and back needed more work after they were taken, to fix up the bit of gaping at the back in particular. I made the structural parts for the bracers out of good strong heavy linen. Its done in 3 pieces. Two vertical front bits that are shaped in the linen to fit the curve nicely, and one back piece with the deep neckline, if you can call it that.

After I got these to sit just right, I then stitched the side wool panels on, as you can see in the pics, and then did the sleeves.

The sleeves are each made in two pieces, a front and a back. This was only done because I had to be very economical with the fabric and didn't have enough width to do them in a single piece. The slashes are not lined or hemmed, because the wool is fullled I did not see this as necessary, and they have not frayed at all. Phew. The sleeves are pretty tight fitting, and I can only just get them over my hands, which is good because it means that the cuffs do not creep down. However the tops do, which is a pain. I put a strip of fabric running from the shoulder seam to the bottom of the first slashed bit. I made the slashings up there 11 cm long, so I did the fabric strip 6 cm long to give the puffy look. But it means the dress tries to creep off my shoulders. I have not yet figured out exactly how to fix this.











