

A Ladies 16th Century
Spanish Hat

Lady Helois de Mont St Michel

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This silk lined black velvet cap, adorned with a band of pearls and a selection of feathers held in place by a small brooch, is made in the style of numerous ladies hats seen in Spanish portraiture between the years 1570 and 1579.

The Choice of Style:

In order to complete an outfit based around a Spanish gown of the style seen during the 1570's, it is necessary to have some kind of head covering or adorned hairstyle. This is observed from the portraiture of the period where not one lady is depicted with her head bare.

As the gown that the hat was created to complement is the quintessential Spanish gown from the years 1570 to 1579, it seemed only reasonable to choose an equally typical headwear from that period. (*Refer Appendix 1: Often Accompanies*)

This particular style of hat was chosen for a number of reasons.

- It was by far the most common style of hat worn in portraits of the Ladies of Spanish Nobility during the years 1570 to 1579. (*Refer Appendix 2: Brief Survey of Headwear*)
- The style is flattering to the intended wearer.
- The hat does not add much additional height to the intended wearer.

Pattern Development:

Based on previous experience, a 'toile' was constructed from newspaper and sellotape.

During a considerable period of trial and error the mock-up was tweaked and re-made until the proportions of the hat (relative to both itself and the wearer) mirrored the period examples seen in portraits. (*Refer Appendix 2: Brief Survey of Headwear and Appendix 3: Difficulties*).

The toile was then cut along the required seam lines and a pattern taken from the pieces, after adjusting for the additional thickness of the layers of fabric. (*Refer Appendix 4: Pattern Pieces*)

Construction:

There was no machine sewing in this project. All stitching is done by hand using a steel needle and a combination of linen and cotton/polyester threads as the tasks called for different weights.

Materials:

Latch-hook canvas
100% Wool Felt (black)
Cotton Velveteen (black)
100% Silk (black)
Wax (white, hard candles)
Wire
Solder
Thread (various weights of black & thick white)
Beads (pearl and gold)
Feathers (to compliment clothing)
Brooch

Tools:

Fabric Scissors
Sewing Scissors
Pins
Needles (straight and curved)
Bees Wax
Wire Cutters
Soldering Iron
Wax Brush

(Refer *Appendix 5: Compromises in Construction Materials*)

Method:

Cut out the various pieces (Refer *Appendix 4: Pattern Pieces*) except the brim and edge everything with a risk of fraying with molten wax as seen in period examples¹. (Refer *Appendix 6: Detailed Method* for a more detailed explanation.)

Form the sides of the crown using the canvas base pieces and then cover, inside and out, with felt. Also cover both sides of the crown top with felt after attaching the wire loop to the edge of the canvas.

Carefully attach the lining to the inside of the sides and the top ensuring a smooth finish before sewing the crown pieces together.

Sit the partially gathered velvet circle over the otherwise completed crown. Stitch the large gathers in place and stuff each pleat with rolled felt before making and attaching the brim.

¹ Patterns of Fashion, Janet Arnold, Page 94, c 1575-1600 Silk Hat.

Decoration:

Pearls

The beading on this hat is based on that seen in the portrait of Lady Sanchez by Coello (Refer *Appendix 2: Brief Survey of Headwear* – detail of portrait only). This particular style was chosen due to an uneasy feeling about sumptuary customs of non-royalty in Spain. With this in mind it seemed wiser to decorate the hat based on portraits of the nobility rather than they royal family.

The beautiful and massively beaded hats seen in portraiture invariably belong to Queens (Isabel & Anne) and Infantas (Isabel and Catalina), while the ladies of the court tend to have a significantly less showy headwear (Lady Sanchez and the Comtesse de Guiche). (Refer *Appendix 2: Brief Survey of Headwear* – detail of some portraits only)

Feathers

Each hat of this style depicted in portraiture shows a small plume of feathers that is visible above the crown of the hat. Portraits show many ostrich feathers and plumes from game birds. These were approximated using ostrich feathers and a selection of plumes (from farmed birds) dyed to replicate feathers of game birds.

Brooch

When the hats in portraits are depicted showing the entire feather plume, the feathers usually emerge from behind a jewelled brooch of some description. For this reason a brooch is worn on this hat.

The brooch used was a gift to the wearer from The Honourable Lady Burgundy and contains three small pearls on a gold filigree background. While significantly less showy than the majority of hat jewels seen in period art, it worked with the chosen pearl decoration and feathers.

Bibliography

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Published by: Swindin Press, Swindin, 1982
- Doran, Susan (Ed.) *Elizabeth*
Chatto and Windus, London, 2003
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Numerous pictures of Spanish Nobility used in developing the hat pattern, particularly pictures of women, have been culled from a variety of books and websites over the course of the last decade, sometimes without sufficient care in noting the origin of the picture in a legible manner

A good number of these pictures can now be found via links from "Saya Espanola" at <http://www.glittersweet.com/sayaespanola/>

The research for this hat was also carried out with significant reference to portraiture from England. The details of which were sadly were not always noted with sufficient legibility. (This cross-cultural research was primarily to extend my knowledge of the specific style of hat by considering similar examples from different cultures. It also gave a point of reference for the information available in *Patterns of Fashion*.)

Often Accompanies:

This style of hat is seen most frequently between the years of 1565 and 1570, which means that it is often seen with what is recognised as the quintessential Spanish gown of the 16th century.

The Gown:

That is to say, the cream or black gown consisting of a doublet with great sleeves (either circular, split circular or bell, worn with striped under-doublet sleeves visible) and a matching skirt, worn closed while shaped over a Spanish farthingale.

The decoration on the gown during this decade almost invariably consists of braid running down centre front of doublet and skirt and then around the hem, with braid running diagonally from the shoulder points to the centre front waist and then frequently down the skirt and around the hem also.

A neck ruff and wrist ruffs are always seen in this period.

Jewellery:

Jewellery generally consists of a carcanet and belt (usually matching, but not always), one or two rings and possibly some kind of jewel on the hat or caul.

Also seen on occasion is an additional collar or long rope of pearls. It is not unusual for one or both of these items to be substituted for the carcanet in portraiture, suggesting it was done as a matter of choice among the fashionable, and was not a sign of waning affluence or lack of money.

There are several well-known examples of such a substitution in portraiture. E.g.:

- 1571 portrait of the Queen, Anne of Austria, by Coello, (Refer *Appendix 2: Brief Survey of Headwear* – detail only),
- unattributed posthumous portrait of the previous Queen, Isabel Valois,
- 1582 portrait of Infanta Catalina Michaela, also by Coello.

Two lesser-known portraits of Unknown Ladies attributed to Coello, depict both the substitution of a collar and a rope of pearls for a carcanet among the non-royal Spanish nobility.

Head Wear:

This style of hat is usually worn over a decorated caul, but can also be worn alone. Any such caul is quite fitted to the head, not hanging down on the back of the neck nor puffing out the sides of the head to any great degree. Possibly a net of pearls worn over another caul, or simply made of a fine fabric itself, the caul hides the hair and forms a base to pin the hat to.

Sometimes the hat is worn with little besides a jewel that sits so that a single drop pearl sits on the centre front of the hairline.

Hair Style:

The hair is invariably worn back in some manner. Usually hidden by the caul, but occasionally simply not visible, all we know about the style is that the hair is that the front is styled in some manner while the length of the hair is maintained off the shoulders and piled somewhere behind the head.

That hair which we can see is usually one of three styles during this period:

- rolled back from the face and temples (as also seen in England², France³ and Italy⁴)
- frizzed at the temples, but not padded as seen in England at the time⁵
- pulled directly back from the face without a part, but not significantly padded

The first of these styles is by far the most common, with the second beginning to gain popularity towards the 1580s when it surpasses the rolled style. The third seems to have been more popular with women of the nobility who were not of Royalty.

² *The Countess of Kildare*, unknown artist. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. Also, *Mildred Cooke, Lady Burghley*, unknown artist. Hatfield House.






³ Several figures in *The Ball for the wedding of the Duc de Joyeuse*, School of Clouet. Louvre, Paris.





⁴ *Bia*, Agnolo Bronzino.

⁵ Pelican and Phoenix portraits of Queen Elizabeth, among many others

Brief Survey of Headwear

A selection of portraits showing women's headwear found between the years 1570 and 1579

Picture	Details	Year	Hair	Headwear	Hat Decoration
	Isabel de Valois Cruz	1568	Rolled at temples	Caul 'Raised' flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers Jewel/Brooch (Jewel on pearled caul)
	Lady Sanchez Coello? (early)	c1570	Smooth, rolled? padded? straight back	Caul Flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers (Jewel on pearled Caul)
	Anne of Austria Coello? (early)	1570	Rolled at temples	Caul 'Raised' flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers
	Anne of Austria Mor	1570	Rolled at temples	Caul 'Raised' flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers
	Anne of Austria Coello	1571	Rolled at temples	Caul 'Raised' flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers Jewel/Brooch

Picture	Details	Year	Hair	Headwear	Hat Decoration
	Anne of Austria Coello	1571	Rolled at temples	Jewelled headband No hat	Not applicable
	Anne of Austria Coello	<1579	Rolled at temples	'Raised' flat cap	Feathers Jewel/Brooch
	Isabel Clara Eugenia Coello	1579	'Frizzed' at temples	Pearled caul 'Raised' flat cap – pillbox cross	Jewelled band Feathers Jewel/Brooch (Pearled caul and pearl in hair)
	Anne of Austria Coello	<1580	'Frizzed' at temples	Caul 'Raised' flat cap	Jewelled band Feathers Jewel/Brooch
	Isabel Clara Eugenia Liano	1584	Smooth, Rolled back with padding	Pillbox hat, tall	Jewelled band Feathers Jewel/Brooch

(The two images from surrounding years have been included in order to assist with understanding trends in styles, shapes, decoration, accompanying hairstyles and relationships with clothing trends as they emerge through the decade.)

Difficulties

Proportions

One of the biggest difficulties to overcome is the significant difference in head shapes between the women in the portraits and the intended wearer. None of the ladies depicted in portraits had the same shape of either forehead or hairline. This caused some problems with judging the size of some elements of the hat.

The compromise in this case was to match the relative proportions of the hat and overall head and body, rather than forehead or face. As a result the hat has much the same profile when worn, although it sits quite differently on the head relative to the forehead and hairline.

Hair Styles

The difference in hairlines has a follow-on effect of requiring changes to the hairstyle used with the hat. This was overcome by using a hairstyle worn by the Comtesse de Guiche, which is similar to that worn by Lady Sanchez. The lack of padding over the temples allowed the hat to sit closer to the hairline than seen in the portraits of the Queens of Spain.

Volume of hair also had an effect on the way the hat sits on the head. As the wearer had a significant amount of hair (both long and thick) it was necessary to bundle this below the hat line. A standard bun and a variation based on hair taping styles fashionable in Italy fifty years previously have both proved successful.

Pattern Pieces

Cut all from paper pattern unless otherwise stated.

Brim: Cut last - cut 2 from velveteen with 1cm seam allowance

Crown Top: Cut 1 from canvas
Cut 2 from felt using canvas as pattern
Cut 1 from silk with 1.5cm seam allowance
Cut sufficient wire to sit just inside edge of crown top and solder in shape

Crown Sides: Cut 1 from canvas
Cut 2 from felt using canvas as pattern
Cut 1 from silk with 1.5cm seam allowance

Crown Shell: Cut 1 from velveteen with 1 cm seam allowance

Compromises in Construction Materials

The use of Latch-hook Canvas

Latch-hook canvas was used as the base for this hat due to both familiarity with the product and the fact I had some on hand after a more period cardboard base material proved unstable during experimentation.

I initially chose papier-mache cardboard as card is suggested as an original base to an extant sixteenth century hat⁶.

I discarded the other option mentioned by Arnold, felt, as I lack the facilities to get a sufficiently thin and sturdy felt base for such a hat. Proper papier-mache was also avoided as it is time consuming and, if made with flour and water paste, tends to rot after some months. The hat base needed to be of a more permanent material.

The cardboard base was unsuccessful due to the way the board tended to bend in sharp angles rather than a smooth curve, even after being rolled around a form. While forming the sides of the crown the strip invariably bent on sharp angles in one or two places while the rest remained as straight as possible. Even with the crown top attached, the base (where it was to fit the head) was still afflicted with the odd shapes. Through several attempts the cardboard was weakened to the point of not being usable and thus was discarded.

Due to the length of time spent on this section of the project I realised I had insufficient time to experiment with further alterations to the pattern or alternate methods to avoid the card buckling and I was reluctant to purchase more of the not-inexpensive papier-mache cardboard if I could not use it successfully.

At this point I turned to latch-hook canvas as I had successfully used that product for the Elizabethan Tall Hat and was familiar with how it acted. Limited quantities of this necessitated a modification to the basic hat pattern, which I believe, may solve a number of the difficulties with the buckling cardboard in future projects.

The use of Cotton Velveteen

I chose to use cotton velveteen in the construction of this hat, rather than the common acetate 'triple' velvet or the rayon backed silk velvet that is occasionally available in local stores.

Availability became an issue when it came time to make the hat, but it was not the primary consideration. Indeed, by this time construction was due to start the acetate velvet had been discounted and the 'silk' velvet was merely the backup option should the good cotton

⁶ Arnold, Janet. *Patterns of Fashion c1560 -1630*. Page 33

velveteen be unavailable. While cost was a consideration, it was ultimately ignored when various stores sold out of their stocks of black velveteen.

Quality cotton velveteen was the preferred fabric as it has a very plush appearance, one reminiscent of the extant 16th Century velvet I was fortunate enough to view in the Victoria and Albert museum. In the period fabric, not only was the pile of similar length to that on good quality velveteen, but also very close together creating a very rich, plush fabric and also reducing the ability of the pile to 'crush' with pressure.

The silk velvet appears to have a slightly longer pile than the extant fabric, but the pile is much more sparse. The result of this is a very floppy fabric with no body that tends towards becoming crushed very easily. With the sparse but long pile, you also get a shiny quality to the fabric caused by seeing too much of the length of the pile, rather than just the ends. Such shininess on top of the crushability of the fabric could significantly change the look of the hat.

Triple velvet was dismissed early on in the considerations due to the fact it is synthetic, very near impossible to hand sew and lacks the right 'feel'. The pile is often significantly longer than the period example, and it can suffer from shininess similar to that of the silk velvet.

The cotton velveteen eventually used, with a slightly shorter than normal but closely packed pile, has both the body and the ability to resist crushing seen in the extant fabrics. It also lacks the shine seen in the 'silk' velvet (probably due to both the close pile and the dull nature of cotton).

As the fabric needed to have body (in order to maintain the shape of the crown and the pleats) and not become crushed (to ensure the long term look of the hat around the brim, ornaments, and pleats) I chose to use cotton velveteen.

(While 100% silk pile on 100% silk backing with a close pile would be ideal, I do not know where I can purchase such fabric for an affordable price as most sources on the Internet quote outrageous prices, or have the same rayon backing and sparse pile I am trying to avoid.)

The use of Fake Pearls and non-gold Beads

Fake pearls were used on the hat decoration or hat-band (also called 'billaments' by some) due primarily to cost of such a quantity of pearls. At a minimum of \$2.00 per pearl with over 40 such pearls on the hat, the investment of more than \$80 on the pearls alone was prohibitively expensive.

The availability of such a quantity of sufficiently matching pearls also proved to be a significant consideration when I started fancying a totally period bonnet. It is difficult to get 40 pearls of matching shade, size and shape unless one moves to pearl coated plastic beads.

Plastic 'gold' spacer beads were chosen over metal beads also due mostly to cost. Where as a bag of these spaces cost little under \$5.00. That would only purchase me between 4 and 10

beads of metal. I even considered gold crusher beads, but they proved to be as expensive as any spacer.

The combination of my favourite brass spacer beads plus the pearls would have pushed the cost to over \$120.00 for the single row of spaced pearls.

In the end the plastic beads, when strung with the pearls and seen on velvet, looked more like metallic gold than the spacers (which looked flimsy) or the brass spacers which looked dull and, ironically, like plastic, in the same situation.

The use of Dyed Feathers

This choice was made by necessity. Importing feathers is extremely difficult due to New Zealand's bio-security measures, and prohibitively expensive due to the required permits. I was thus limited to what was available in New Zealand, or more specifically Christchurch, as I wished to view what I was purchasing and most national feather merchants seem to be without websites.

These feathers were taken from birds farmed for eating, and then dyed to look like those from European game birds. The red feathers were chosen over the blue and green not only as they are closer to those seen in portraits, but also because they suit the wearer and match a wider range of garments.

Although claimed to replicate 'flight' feathers of a pheasant, I am not entirely convinced and will endeavour to find better feathers for future projects of this nature.

The use of Cotton/Polyester Thread

While linen thread was used as much as possible, cotton-polyester thread was used in those instances where a fine thread was required.

The linen thread easily purchased locally was too thick for much of the fine sewing and thus resulting in clearly visible stitches. In these instances a finer thread, one that could disappear into the pile of the velveteen, was used for a tidier finish.

Had linen thread of such a weight been available it would have been used in preference to cotton or cotton/polyester mixes. Silk thread was not used in this project, as suitable weight of a good solid black was unable to be found.

The use of Galvanised Wire

The combination of cost and limited shopping time necessitated the use of wire that was on hand. I was familiar with this particular product, having used it in the Black Silk Tall Hat, and was thus happy with manipulating it, and also its longer term survival within the hat.

Detailed Method:

Waxing Edges

This method was developed by trial and error during the construction of the Elizabethan Tall Hat after reading a comment in *Patterns of Fashion*⁷. It was further refined during the manufacture of a travel henin, rolled headdress and silk covered belt.

The technique requires a small natural fibre brush and a candle of pale, hard wax. (12-hour candles are ideal as they burn at a far hotter temperature than tea lights ensuring the wax will not melt on a hot day in the sun.)

Light your candle and allow it to burn until a small pool of wax is formed and maintained. Holding your brush in your dominant hand, and the fabric with the edge in your other hand, dip your brush into that pool and hold then hold the full brush relatively close to the flame until the wax is on the point of boiling. At this time, run the brush along the edge of the fabric.

You will need to experiment with the speed you can run the brush along the fabric so that the wax gets absorbed into the fabric by about 2-3mm. The wax should get sucked into the fabric by capillary action and not just sit on the top. However, should that happen, you can rectify the situation by carefully holding the fabric close to the flame and allowing the heat to drive the wax into the weave.

Waxing all cut edges of both the velvet and silk is essential to prevent fraying during handling. You may find it necessary to repeat it if areas should get trimmed away later.

With wool and velvet it is necessary to use hotter wax than for the silk. As a result it is more time consuming, as you will need to re-heat what is on your brush rather than letting it run out as with silk.

The Canvas Base

This will work whether canvas, latch-hook canvas or buckram, (and hopefully when cardboard) is used as the base of the hat.

Attaching the Wire Frame

You will get a better finish if the wire frame sits inside the finished hat, otherwise there will be a slightly raised edge to the top of the hat causing pressure on that area of the velvet

⁷ *Patterns of Fashion*, Janet Arnold, Page 94, c 1575-1600 Silk Hat

during storage. With that in mind, attach the wire on the concave side of the canvas crown top if there is any bend or dishing in that piece.

Constructing the Crown Walls

There are 2 Crown Wall patterns shown in Appendix 4. Pick one and work with that pattern only.

The straight line works best with latch-hook canvas if you mark of 5 or 6 places to take a 'dart' of 1cm overlap at the bottom. This means the areas with a sharp bend get some reinforcing causing a smooth curve through the entire piece. Stitch the curve closed.

The curve of straight sections works best with cardboard or similar materials that require many small bends rather than a smooth curve. Bend at each bend in the pattern and attach to the ends to one another. Should you need more bends that is suggested, remember that the reduced edge only wants to be 5-6cm smaller, so size your overlaps with that in mind.

The Felt Interlining

Stitching around the edge of the shape is seldom sufficient to give a good finish. However, basting evenly with large stitches over the whole piece results in a much smoother and also sturdier final product.

Ensure that the edges of felt butt together or tease the edge of one or both so that the overlap is not significantly thicker than the single or you will have strange lumps in your hat.

The Silk Lining

When lining the top of the crown:

Smooth out the silk lining fabric and lay the felt-covered canvas on top with the wired side lying directly on the silk. Snip the edges of the silk being careful not to cut too close to the felt. (You don't want any gaps showing.) Now fold over and pin the edges checking the fit of the lining on the underside. If all is as it should be, i.e. there are no tension pulls or puckering, carefully stitch the silk tabs to the immediate layer of felt and remove the pins.

When lining the sides of the crown:

Smooth the silk around the inside of the felt & canvas wall pinning regularly. Once you get an overlap, leave unpinned and check that there are no pulls or puckering in the lining. If not, stitch down the hidden edge of the lining fabric and then fold over the free end and pin in place. Carefully snip the edges overhanging the felt covered wall, again ensuring you don't cut too close. Now fold these tabs over the outside of the wall and pin in place. If all is well, stitch them down and remove the pins. You can stitch down the free end at this point.

Putting the Crown Together

Carefully pin the two pieces together ensuring the edges match exactly and the lining all faces inwards.

The stitches should take in silk and felt, and occasionally also the wire frame, but all without coming through to the inside of the hat.

The Velvet Outer Layer

Fold the circle into quarters and mark on each fold with chalk. Also mark off the quarters on the bottom of the crown with pins.

You will want to establish which way the pile sits at the front of the hat at this point.

Sizing the Pleats

This is best done by trial and error over the frame until the proportions are consistent with those seen in portraits. Once the size is established, fold under the excess and run a large gathering stitch around the hem. Use a contrasting thread to assist with the final sizing.

Sit the partially gathered velvet circle over the lined crown and pull the gathering sufficiently tight so that the inner edge of each pleat rests lightly against the crown. Knot off the gathering stitch in a way that lets you remove it later.

Ensure there is no tension over the crown. The velvet should be slightly too big at this point and puff out past the edge of the crown by about 1cm all around.

Pin the two pieces together on the quarters and adjust the pleats to make them even all round the crown. (This is best done by eye using a contrasting thread – judge based on the amount of colour visible in each pleat.)

Stitching the Pleats

Stitch each pleat down as with cartridge pleating and then remove all traces of the contrasting gathering thread. Keep the stitches small, and avoid coming out too far up the lining, as they will be visible if not oversewn when attaching the brim.

The portraits do not show contrasting gathering threads, which is why they have been removed in this project.

Stuffing the Pleats

Cut out a number of strips of black wool felt, each between 2 and 3 cm wide by about 6-10 cm long. (Determine the exact size by trial and error.)

Roll up a piece so that it is a 2-3cm deep roll of diameter about 1cm. Carefully insert that into a pleat in the crown of the hat. Repeat for each pleat and observe the result.

For example, if the rolls deform the top of the hat, make each roll slightly narrower, if each pleat looks ready to burst, reduce the length of each strip slightly.

The Velvet Brim

This should only protrude past the edge of the pleats by about 1cm. If you have made any adjustments to the pattern, check your brim size at this point.

After cutting out the sized brim, stitch around the outer edge while right sides are together. Snip and turn right sides out.

Snip the inner edge and turn in while pinning to the crown. Adjust the snip and turn until the inner brim and inner crown match perfectly.

Stitch the two pieces together being careful to hide any stitching in the pile of the velvet if possible.