

Embroidered Coif

THL Constance of Caldrithig
AS 50 (2016)

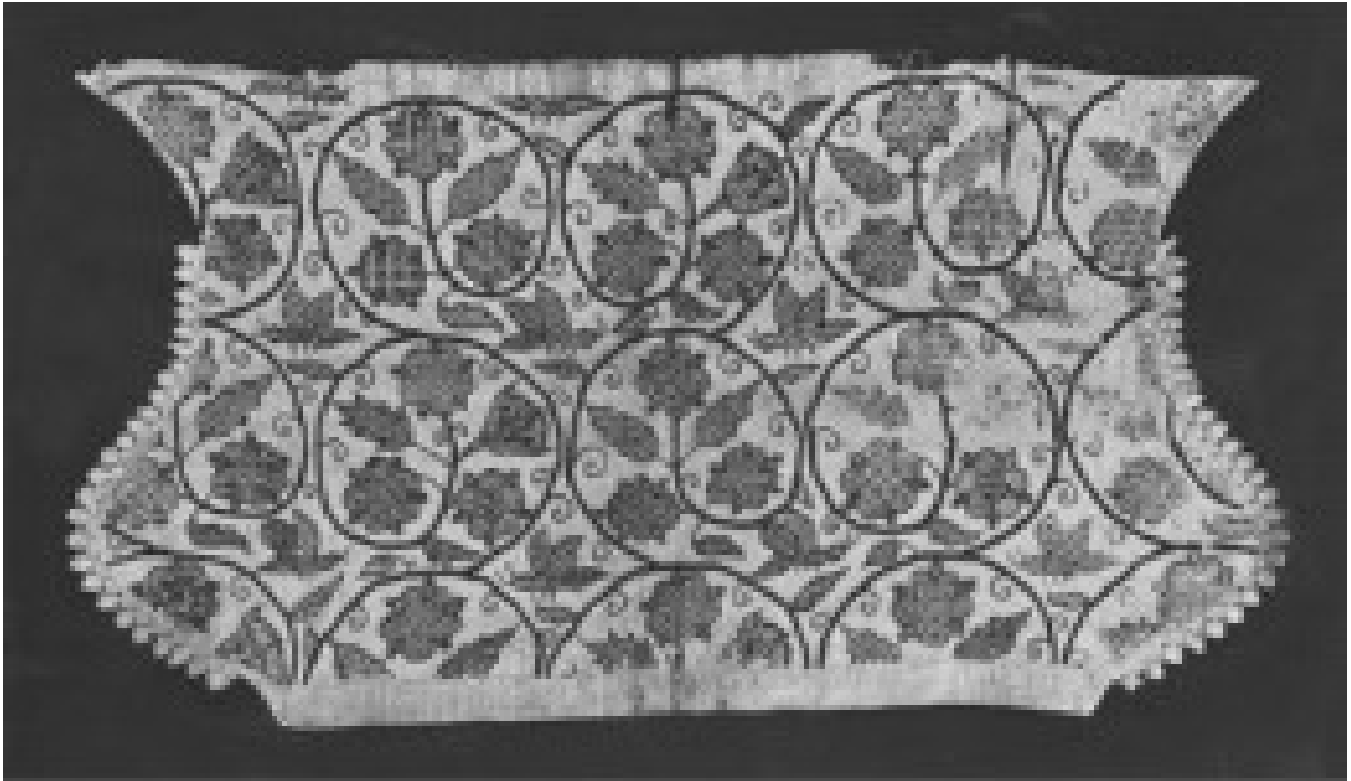
Motivation

This piece is the regalia for Margurite Gingraix's Laurelling ceremony at Kingdom A&S in AS 50. The parameters for this project were to use the coif pattern provided; and some but not a lot of gold.

Archeological Support

This hat is an SCAism. The pattern is nothing like the extant examples and the recipient's persona is too early for an embroidered coif.

Many 16th century English Monochrome embroidered coifs survive to this day. Most are from the last half of the 16th century. They are linen and covered in silk stitches, with accents in silver or gold gilt plaited braid stitch. The silk stitches could be running stitch, back stitch, stem stitch, seed stitch, satin stitch, all depending on the design chosen. The coifs are worked in free hand, rather than counted, embroidery.



Woman's Coif, V&A Museum # T.12-1948. Made 1577-1590
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O364618/coif-unknown/>

Design

I collaborated on the design with Alais de Poitiers (now OL as well).

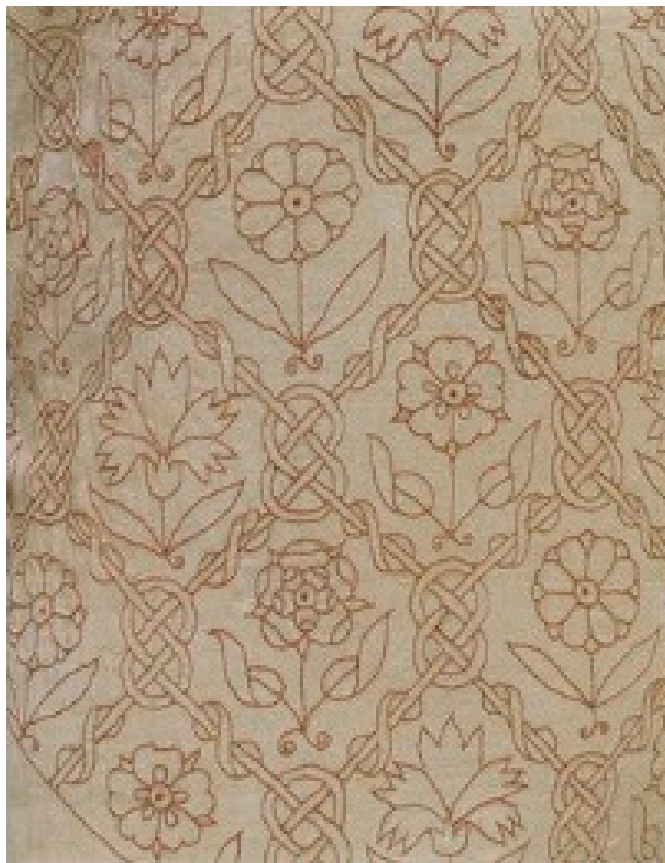
My input on the design was limited to suggesting a grid pattern and providing a link to a smock from 1560. See photos below.

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<http://ancienbroiderie.weebly.com/>



Smock, V&A Museum # T.326-1982
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O110103/smock-unknown/>



THL Alais chose four flowers in a repeating pattern for the “bag” portion of the coif. These flowers were used in period for pigments. They are crocuses, irises, cornflowers and dyer’s marguerites. You will see both cornflowers and the marguerites on the smock above as well.

THL Alais chose two ink producing plants (oak and beech) and two personal sigils (fleur-de-lis and ivy) for the brim.

Pattern Transfer Method

I was able to use my favourite period pattern transfer method for this project – local illuminator. I gave the stretched fabric to THL Alais de Poitiers who then traced her design onto the fabric.

Materials

Given that much of the cloth will be visible in the final piece, a heavy, finely woven (55 count) linen cloth was used.

For the silk, I use Rainbow Gallery Splendor 12 ply (spun) silk in black. I have worked with this brand and this floss before, I like how it holds up to passing through the fabric and to the roughness of my hands. It is an affordable price, is easily obtainable.

The gold is a gilt passing thread made in the UK by hand, and is as close to the period form as can be purchased.

Stitch Choice

The coifs, and other examples of later monochrome embroidery, generally have the motifs filled in some way. Seed stitch, geometric fill, or shading. The smock, which is one of the earliest examples of extant monochrome embroidery I've found, is not filled. Given that the design was modeled after the smock, the wearer is not a "fancy" person, and the dress it will be worn with is earlier in 16th century than those coifs, I decided to not fill these flowers.

The smock is worked in "back stitch" according to the museum. A close up inspection of the pictures supports this possibility. However, given that other monochrome embroideries do use stem stitch, and that it gives a more solid line than back stitch, stem stitch was chosen for the black work.

The gold work was done in braided plait stitch, or ceylon stitch because that is what is used on the coifs, and because it's cool.

Finishing

The coif was assembled with a lining of the same fabric as the base for the stitching. A long fingerloop braid was made to wrap around the coif at the band to give it the same look as those made to the correct pattern.

Sources

The Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/>