

16th-century Slashed Swiss Gollar

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Image 1: "Halbfigurenbildnis einer Frau im Profil" by Urs Graf, 1517.



Image 2: My completed gollar.

Introduction and Background Material

This is a 16th-century slashed gollar based on a 1517 woodcut titled "Halbfigurenbildnis einer Frau im Profil" by Swiss artist Urs Graf [Image 1]. The woodcut depicts a woman, sitting in profile, dressed in a gown with slashed and puffed sleeves, a pleated hemd (shirt), a slashed hat, and a gollar which has been elaborately slashed around the shoulders and along the contrasting guards. The slashes along the body of the gollar resemble plus signs or crosses, characteristic of Swiss 16th-century fashion, while the slashes in the guards around the front opening, curved hem, and standing collar are cut at a 45-degree angle.

This recreation is made of wool melton, interlined with white silk taffeta, and lined with black linen. It is entirely hand sewn with waxed linen thread and fastens at the neck with a hook and eye.

Gollars were small caplets commonly worn by women (and sometimes men) of all social classes throughout the German-speaking regions of Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries. These small garments served as outerwear, providing warmth for the wearer's shoulders and chest. While Nürnberger sumptuary laws dictated what materials were allowed for gollars and their trimmings depending on one's social class, paintings, sketches, and woodcuts from the period reveal that gollars varied in length, decoration, and closures [Images 3 and 4] (Zander-Seidel 1990, p. 81). Gollars were predominantly made of either wool, velvet, or damask and could also be lined with fur (Zander-Seidel 1990, p. 31). Some gollars barely reach



Image 3: Various period depictions of gollars (Ahlén-Cordero 2014).



Image 4: Various period depictions of gollars (Ahlén-Cordero 2014).

the apex of the wearer's bust line, while others dip down in the front nearly to the waist. Some feature standing collars, while others have no collar at all. Some are worn closed in the front with clasps or hooks and eyes; others are worn open. Many were decorated with guards, or stripes, in a contrasting color. Despite these variations, these different styles of gollars appear to be generally the same shape (between two-thirds of to a full circle) and serve the same purpose (warmth) (Zander-Seidel 1990, p.80).

Pattern and Construction

I used the Swiss gollar pattern by Thimble and Plume Designs, which is the pattern company of Caid's very own German costuming Laurels: Mistresses Adelheit Schwarzekatze and Whilja de Gothia. This pattern was specifically based on the 1517 Urs Graf image above. While the period image depicts the gollar as being a light color with dark guards, I decided I wanted to use my heraldic colors, with black being the dominant color and gold and white as the accent colors. According to Mistress Whilja, it is unlikely that period slashed gollars had an interlining of silk but I chose to include a silk interlining for additional contrast against the black outer layer; also because it looks fun. In keeping with period practices, I waxed linen thread and hand sewed the entire garment, using a combination of running, whip, and slip stitches for assembly.

Following the cutting guide included with the pattern, I used sharp shears to carefully make slashes in the black wool. I then basted the white silk taffeta interlining permanently to the wrong side of the slashed black outer layer, taking tiny bites of the black wool between the grid of slashes to better anchor the silk in place. While I do not have evidence to back up this basting, I wanted to ensure that the slashes did not easily snag on anything while wearing. By taking such tiny bites of the heavily fullled wool, these basting stitches do not appear on the right side of the gollar.

I cut the guards on the bias from yellow-gold melton wool, piecing the strips when necessary using whip stitches to achieve the desired length. Being on the bias allowed me to steam the guards along the curve of the gollar. In period, a pinking chisel may have been used for slashes, however, as I do not own one, I used a rotary cutter to slash the guards at a 45 degree angle. After slashing, the seam allowances of the guards were turned under and the guards were slip stitched to the right side of the gollar body [Image 5]. Before finishing the guards at the neck, I whip stitched the standing collar into place [Image 6]. Special attention was taken to replicate the over-under pattern of the guards, as well as the small slashes that partially bisect the narrow vertical guards as depicted in the original image [Image 7].



Image 5: Attaching the guards.



Image 6: Attaching the collar and guards.

I opted for a purchased hook and eye for the closure. While I have made hooks and eyes by hand in the past using brass wire and pliers, I did not have the necessary wire on hand this time. Lastly a set-in black linen lining was attached to the inside of the gollar using a slip stitch.

Lessons Learned

This was the first time sewing a garment with a standing collar and I am rather pleased with how even I was able to make it. If I were to make another gollar, I think I would make it more of a full circle as to cover my broad shoulders and bust more evenly. That way the edges of the front opening meet instead of hanging open from the neck. At some point I would like to replace the purchased hook and eye with a handmade one.

References and Sources Cited

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Image 7: Detail of front edge.

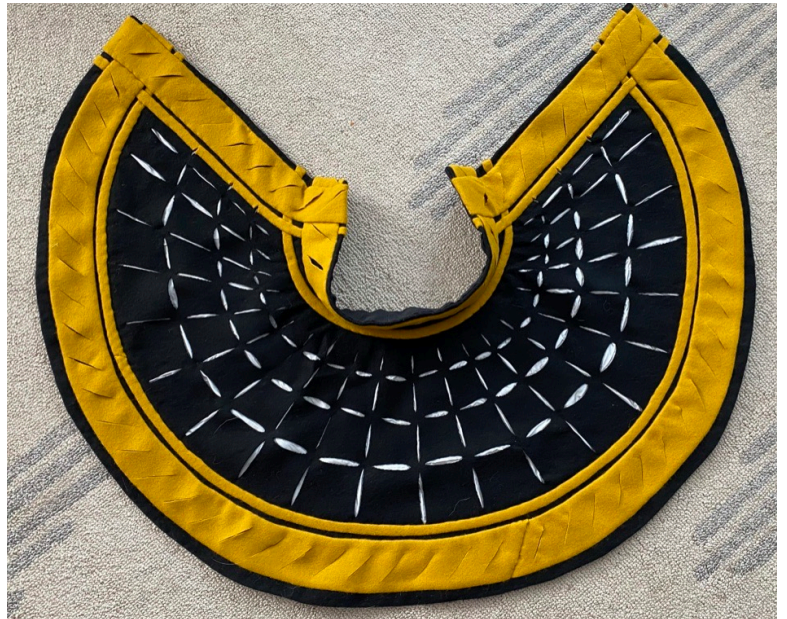


Image 8: View of completed gollar laying flat.

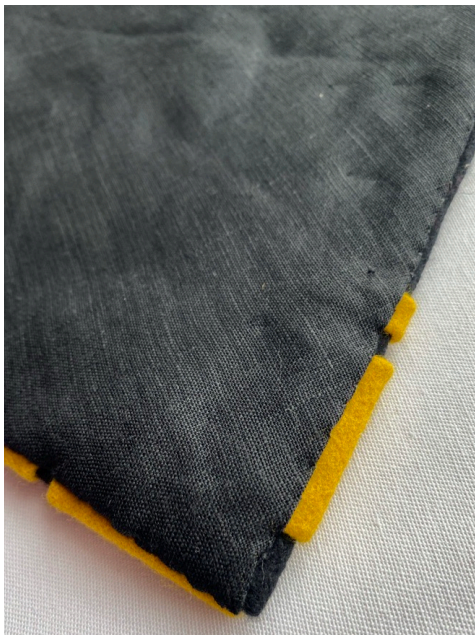


Image 9: Detail of linen lining.



Image 10: Rear view of completed gollar.