

Lady Eudoxia Antonina  
Kingdom A&S Entry  
11-15-2020

## A Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century Noble Florentine Woman's Outfit

Women's dress during the 16<sup>th</sup> century is distinctive in its style. While there are some fundamentals of dress during the 1500s that are similar across Western Europe, the fitted bodice and voluminous skirts for example, some aesthetic differences can be noted. In what is now Italy, the stylistic elements of dress seemed to change by city-state with certain characteristics peculiar to regions such as Sicily or Bologna. The Florentine style of women's dress, the subject of this project, was of interest because of these particular aesthetics.

This gown and accessories are modeled after one particular portrait of a young Isabella di Cosimo de Medici, of Florence. In this portrait, circa 1555, Isabella's gown is painted in great detail to reveal many of the intricacies of Florentine dress. For instance, there is no ruff and the neckline opens in a V shape rather than a square, both the ruff and square neckline were popular in England and Spain. Other portraits of the same decade and given location are similar in style as the one Isabella is wearing, which indicates a local affectation rather than a personal style choice.



In the image, the bodice opens at the neckline for a soft V shape which reveals the trim adorning the partlet worn underneath. No ruff is worn, rather, a ruffle is attached to the neckline of the partlet which is also trimmed in lace. The bodice itself is trimmed at the center front as well as along what may be a princess seam along both side front sections. The same trim is used on the sleeve caps which contain two "puffs" and white or gold fabric between the trim. The trim is used,

once again, down the center front of the skirt and can be assumed to follow the hem. The sleeve fabric is the same as used for the underskirt, with the sleeves trimmed in gold. There is no shortage of jewelry, in particular the girdle being precious stones, pearls, and gold.

I created my 1550s Florentine gown based on the above portrait. In the past I have created Elizabethan or English Renaissance gowns, but I have an aversion to neck ruffs. It was the lack of the ruff and the V neckline that had me interested in recreating this garment. I began the gown with 7 yards of silk taffeta, albeit lavender rather than blue (they did not have blue at the time), 3 yards of ivory dupioni for the sleeves and underskirt, linen for partlet and lining, and 30 yards of trim. There are 3 rectangular skirt panels, 3 bodice pieces flat-lined, 3 underskirt pieces, 2 sleeves, and 2 shoulder/sleeve caps.



There are a total of 5 pieces to the complete outfit: the partlet, underskirt, skirt, bodice (skirt is not attached to the bodice), and girdle. The bodice contains boning at the center front to just above the widest part of the bust and closes with hook and eye at the front. The gown skirt is cartridge pleated and sewn onto a separate waistband closing with hook and eye and a button at the front. The partlet is self-lined with a ruffle attached at the neckline and lace around the front and ruffle edges. The underskirt is made with 3 panels, flat front panel in the front and 2 panels gathered to the back closing with hook and eye at the left side. The skirt and underskirt hems have been hand-stitched. The sleeves are hand-stitched to the sleeve caps which were then hand-stitched to the armhole of the bodice. All hooks and eyes were attached by hand not using hook and eye tape. The rest of the gown was sewn by machine, but all done with 100% cotton thread. The girdle was made using period style ouches and covered wire and closes with a lobster clasp at the center back.

I used the machine for ease and time constraints, and while dupioni is not the most period correct weave for silk fabrics it was all I could afford at the time. Similarly for monetary reasons, the ouches for the girdle do not contain precious stones and the pearls are glass. I did not have enough ouches to re-create the “necklace” otherwise that would be included as well. Of the entire

garment, the sleeves and sleeve caps gave me the most grief, it took quite some time to get them to look right and fit correctly. That being said, the entire outfit including girdle was patterned, cut, and sewn by me. The outfit has been recreated as closely as possible to the style worn by Isabella di Cosimo de Medici in her portrait despite the above considerations, and is an accurate representation of the style worn by wealthy Florentine women during the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century.



## Appendix

Further portraits of Florentine women painted during the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century to support the style described.

- [https://www.fujibi.or.jp/en/our-collection/profile-of-works.html?work\\_id=1153](https://www.fujibi.or.jp/en/our-collection/profile-of-works.html?work_id=1153)
- [https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting\\_386409/\(after\)-Alessandro-Allori/Portrait-Of-A-Lady,-Possibly-Eleonora-De-Medici-\(1553-1576\)](https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_386409/(after)-Alessandro-Allori/Portrait-Of-A-Lady,-Possibly-Eleonora-De-Medici-(1553-1576))
- [https://ncartmuseum.org/art/detail/lucrezia\\_de\\_medici\\_1545-1561](https://ncartmuseum.org/art/detail/lucrezia_de_medici_1545-1561)
- <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-these-women-artists-influenced-the-renaissance-and-baroque>

## Works Cited

Eagles, Lane. "Beauty Adorns Virtue: Italian Renaissance Fashion."

<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/beauty-adorns-virtue-italian-renaissance-fashion/>

Portrait of Isabella di Cosimo de Medici, 1555, by Alessandro Allori.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eleonora di Don Garzia di Toledo di Pietro de%27 Medici, by Alessandro Allori.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eleonora_di_Don_Garzia_di_Toledo_di_Pietro_de%27_Medici,_by_Alessandro_Allori.jpg)