

kostuum



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SUMMARIES

Portrait Costume

Notes on a Dutch 18th-century female portrait in 'antique dress'

Irene Groeneweg

In 1771 Sara Maria van der Wilp commissioned a portrait of herself in 'antique' costume, to serve as a frontispiece to her poems, which were published in 1772. The resulting engraving gave rise to so much disapproval that she immediately ordered a second portrait, in contemporary dress, from another artist.

The difference between the costumes in the two portraits is striking. The costume in the 'antique' portrait, which shows the poet bareheaded and in a low-cut dress with draperies about the shoulders and arms, is very different from the fashions of the period. But it does share features with the costume Anthony van Dyck introduced in the women's portraits he painted in England after he moved there in 1632. The disparity between portrait costume and fashionable dress became much greater in Peter Lely's women's portraits.

In the Netherlands Van Dyck's portrait style, and with it his portrait costume, was quickly copied in the small circle of courtiers and aristocrats and by 1660 this type of portrait became generally accepted. As a result it became highly unusual between 1670 and 1730 for women to have themselves portrayed in the fashions of the period. They preferred to be depicted in portrait costumes invented by painters. In such portraits only the head of the woman was painted from life.

In the early 18th century portrait costume may have influenced the fashion of wearing the 'sacque' ungirdled. This loose, untailored garment is however clearly distinguishable from the invented portrait costumes with their unarticulated shapes.

It would be incorrect to assume that 18th-century Dutch ladies depicted with their head and low neckline uncovered, should be regarded with a certain mistrust. Both in the 17th and 18th centuries the low-cut bodice was seen as the prerogative of ladies of the highest strata of society, but social standards became more strict and the parading of female beauty less and less acceptable.

It was Sara van der Wilp's wish to present herself as a great lady which led to her choice for portrait costume in 1771. It is significant that the poet herself did not see any connection between her painted décolletage and loose morals. This also goes for the countless frivolous-looking ladies who had themselves painted in portrait costume earlier than 1771; they did not think of their portraits as expressing their morals, only as their station in life.

Because of the enormous popularity of the female portrait in 'antique' or 'Roman' dress between 1670 and 1730, fashionable dress of that period has disappeared almost entirely from the historian's view. This phenomenon is not recognized, even not in the most recently published costume literature. Costume historians still illustrate their discussion of fashion in the late 17th and early 18th centuries with portraits of ladies in elegant but entirely invented portrait costume.

News from the home front

Clothes' and textile shortage in Britain, France and the US during World War II

Carin Schnitger

In 1995 the exhibition *Kleding op de bon* (Clothes on coupons) highlighted the problem of clothes and textile shortage in the Netherlands during World War II. In the rest of Europe and in the US people struggled with the same problem. The supply of goods and raw materials dropped off. The countries under discussion shared out the little clothing and few textiles available amongst their populations through distribution systems. A black market where extra items could be obtained, developed alongside. Clothes produced during the war were usually made of synthetic materials. These had not yet been perfected and were therefore of rather poor quality. Any wool and cotton available was used for uniforms.

Nothing was thrown away any longer, everything was reused. Fashion came to a grinding halt. The straight dresses and severe tailor-made suits with broad shoulders and short skirts which were in fashion during the late thirties, remained. Meticulous personal grooming (good for morale) and practical clothes were now essential. New items for instance were 'siren suits', turbans and socks or leg make-up instead of the now unobtainable nylon stockings. Since the outbreak of war leather and shoes were more or less scarce in every country. Substitutes were shoes with wooden soles, or wedge heels made of cane or raffia.

Each country feared that it would be at an economic disadvantage after the war and tried to keep the clothing industry at an acceptable level. In France the rationing system was sabotaged more than elsewhere and Parisian women even wore extravagant clothes, especially hats, as an act of defiance. The Syndicat de la Haute Couture entered into lengthy negotiations with the Germans, to ensure the survival of the skills and crafts needed in French couture. It is striking that most clients were not German, but French (mostly black-marketeers), with special couture coupons. On the other hand the Vichy government stimulated a return to traditional values and peasant fashions

In Great-Britain however, the population tried to contribute to the war effort by emphasizing simplicity in clothes as a way of expressing solidarity with the rationing system. The government divided the available raw materials between a limited number of factories making simple clothes of so-called Utility fabrics. These products were exempt from purchase tax. In 1942 the board of trade commissioned a number of London designers to create prototypes for ready-to-wear models which became the Utility collection. In this way the public at large could wear classic English fashions.

Because the influence of the French fashion houses had disappeared, a characteristic style of sporty, practical fashions could develop in the US. In 1943 the L-85 restrictions limited the use of textiles there as well.

Mourning and the stages of laying-off mourning in the regional dress of the North-Veluwe 1800-1950

Elke Tetterode Ravestein-Winkelman

Black has been the colour of mourning since the Middle Ages. In the early 19th century the periods during which mourning was observed became longer and longer. This was especially visible in women's dress.

On the Veluwe, an area situated towards the eastern part of the Netherlands, mourning was most strictly observed in the northwestern corner. It might last three to four years for close family members. For deep mourning only black and white, dull fabrics were worn. In jewellery silver replaced gold and jet replaced red coral.

The white lawn neckerchief was worn for the funeral and to church for the first six weeks of mourning. This was replaced by a black kerchief with a narrow silk edge, which was worn for almost two years. After this mourning became lighter in several stages, ending with a colourful silk kerchief. Over a dark cap, which also passed through several stages of mourning, women would wear a white cap and on top of that a straw hat with black ribbons. For the funeral the nearest female relatives wore a black woollen rain cape, which would be carried over the arm when going to church for the next six weeks.

On weekdays in the late stage of mourning only the undercap was worn, leaving the *oorijzer* (the metal frame worn inside the cap) visible. This stage was also indicated by the colour of the bow on the woman's jacket. Late in the 19th century a new type of cap and matching dress came into fashion in the Northwest-Veluwe. It was copied from the Northeast-Veluwe and was very much a city dress adapted to country taste. Soon after this the *oorijzer* was abandoned and for weekday light mourning the three-frilled cambric cap without lace was worn. A *crêpe* mourning hat would only be worn by rich farmers' wives.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries men in the northwest would wear a black coat and waistcoat to church. For the first six weeks of mourning a white cravat would be worn. For the funeral a man would wear a top hat with a *lamfer*, a narrow, two to three meters long veil. After the funeral it would be wound around the hat.

Mourning was also observed by children. Girls would be wearing a 'mourning garden' of black straw instead of the 'flower garden' which was worn for church under ordinary circumstances.

All these mourning rituals have gone now, together with the regional dress of the North-Veluwe. The dress of the northwest was always more colourful than that of the northeast. In the northeastern dress stages of mourning may only be discerned from ca. 1850 onwards.

The children's clothes from Wendela Bicker's book of accounts 1655-1668

Saskia Kuus

J.H. der Kinderen-Besier published her influential book on 17th-century costume history *Spelevaart der mode* (literally: Fashion's boating) in 1950. One of her sources was the book of accounts of Wendela Bicker (1635-1668), wife of Johan de Witt, one of Holland's most important statesmen. Der Kinderen-Besier added this source as an appendix to her book, omitting the entries on the children's clothes though. Such inventories are rare. This one, covering the thirteen years from Wendela's marriage in 1655 until her death in 1668, is an important example of a book of accounts mentioning children's clothes.

The couple had eight children, six daughters of whom two died in infancy, and two sons. Due to Johan's ample yearly salary of 3000 Dutch florins the De Witts were well off. In August 1664 Wendela made an estimate of the total value of all the family's clothes. She divided the children's clothes into linens, valued at 350, and woollens, valued at 480 Dutch florins.

The entries in the account book are made up into several, chronological sections. For the children Wendela used the captions children's shirts, sleeves and cuffs besides children's dresses and other woollens. Through consulting 17th-century dictionaries the meaning of the names of most garments can be discovered, although finding out what the names of the fabrics describe is far more difficult. Wendela's use of language and the quality of her handwriting do not help. In the first section we find shirts, vests, drawers, petticoats and woollen nappies.

In the 17th century both girls and little boys wore skirts together with bodices. One-piece dresses, called *tabberds* by Wendela, were also worn. These were the most expensive garments, she mentions a *moiré* tabberd at 75 guilders and 5 *stuivers*.

Sometimes clothes for the children were made from Wendela's cast-offs, which was common practice. It would also seem that clothes were bought for Anna, the eldest daughter, and then passed on to her younger sisters, as Anna's name is mentioned most often in the accounts. The boy Johan is mentioned several times, maybe because for a boy new clothes were bought more often.

Small children are often portrayed wearing an apron of fine, white, lace-edged linen. Wendela uses several terms for them and some of these aprons are coloured or made of wool. Just like grown-ups, children wore collars or neckerchiefs. Of these Wendela also mentions several kinds.

During the 17th century people used to wear white linen showing at the wrists, either the cuffs of the shirt or special undersleeves. Wendela mentions several kinds and also loose oversleeves worn to prevent soiling of the garment's sleeves. Most of the lace mentioned is not specified. Other items entered are headgear, gloves, muffs and stockings. No mention is made of shoes.

As Wendela Bicker kept the record for her own administration, many of her succinct descriptions remain obscure. It is impossible to reconstruct one child's wardrobe from the information given, nor do we learn how the different garments were combined. So reference to pictorial and written sources remains essential.

An appendix with a full transcription of the entries in the book of accounts is added to the article.

The freemason's apron 1735-1835

An introduction to a ritual garment

Andrea Kroon

The Order of Freemasons was founded in London in 1717 and the first Dutch lodge dates from 1734. The order is only open to men and its activities feature certain rituals during which an apron is worn. In the collection of the Dutch Masonic Order some 2500 masonic aprons are preserved.

The notion of wearing an apron is derived from the building trade: masons used to wear leather aprons. The basic shape of an animal skin can still be discerned in the earliest aprons, which reached to the knee. The way the bib of the apron was worn distinguished the different grades within the lodge. The apprentice would wear it folded back, the journeyman wore it upwards, fastened with a button, the master wore it folded over.

The masonic apron has developed both in shape and in decoration. From the late 18th century onwards the bib was sewn on separately. The small square apron with rounded corners and a triangular bib came into style after 1850. From this shape the modern straight-edged apron was developed. In the early 18th century the apron was quite often decorated with coloured ribbons, braid, and gold and silver fringes. In the middle of that century the first aprons with figurative decoration appear, coinciding with the adoption of softer materials. After 1775 the standard apron was made of white silk trimmed in the colour of the lodge. Decoration was applied by way of embroidery, painting or printing. At the end of the 18th century we find many aprons with similar themes and composition of the decoration. In the course of time complex iconographical themes would come to decorate the apron. One of the oldest surviving Dutch aprons dates from shortly after 1782. It is made of white linen and the decoration is printed.

A typically Dutch shape of apron was the 'escutcheon' which developed in the second quarter of the 19th century and lasted until 1875. Its style of decoration with gold thread embroidery is also typically Dutch.

The production of masonic aprons must have been a regular industry. The most popular method of decoration was embroidery, but quite a few surviving aprons are printed. Bills have been preserved for aprons supplied to the Leiden lodge. Sometimes the apron was made by female members of the freemason's family. In a ladies' magazine from 1826, a picture of an apron was published together with embroidery instructions.

During the second half of the 19th century the decoration of the aprons was toned down and now has disappeared altogether. Modern aprons look very much like the earliest examples.