



Notes for guidance – Patterns for Performance Award

The Patterns for Performance award encourages students to design a period garment for a character in a performance. The Awards are an important part of the Costume Society's output that promotes the high standard of craft and artistry that they produce.

- The competition is for a design and costume interpretation based on a character for a performance – dance, theatre, opera or film.
- The starting point for the design should be a Janet Arnold period pattern from one of her *Patterns of Fashion* books or a Norah Waugh pattern from *The Cut of Men's Clothes* or *The Cut of Women's Clothes*.
- Please note, if you use the new editions of *Patterns of Fashion* published by The School of Historical Dress, you must correctly cite the creator of the pattern if not Janet Arnold. There are many new contributors who use Arnold's methodology to create new knowledge about historical dress. It is good academic practice to correctly credit your sources.
- Wherever possible students should have viewed an original garment of a similar style, as the patterns can be challenging to interpret. Students should also consult further scholarship such as the work being undertaken by Jenny Tiramani. Access to museums and archives can be difficult with many major collections closed for moves and renovations. This will be considered in the judging. Please refer to the list below for possible alternative sources.
- The design and final costume must interpret, extend, expand or develop the original pattern to be used as a costume for performance. The theme of your design could be conceptual or historical, but you must consider the portrayal of character, functional requirements of the costume in performance and the genre of performance chosen.
- You should aim to select a character from a specific text, script or screenplay.
- You are asked to submit a PDF document which includes the costume design and supporting research. (We suggest creating a PowerPoint file to enable you to add text, which can then be saved as a PDF)
- The page count is 20 pages. Your document should be carefully curated and demonstrate your design process through research, analysis and resolution. You should also include pages related to the toile costume you make.
- The design must also be made up as a toile in calico (or another suitable fabric) and photographed being worn by an actor or model. Please note that the weight and drape of the toile fabric should be as close as possible to the requirements of the final design.
- You should include slides showing the Janet Arnold or Norah Waugh pattern that you have chosen and an explanation justifying any changes that have been made to the original pattern to support the backstory of the character, narration of the performance within the context of the script and performance requirements. For example, scaling up to fit an actor, adding new fastenings that facilitate quick change, the use of gussets for dance performance, development of the decoration to suit character traits etc.
- Judging will take place during the summer of 2025, usually at the Costume Society's Annual General Meeting.
- The judges will be looking for a design that is, in their opinion, appropriate for the character chosen, while at the same time retaining a sense of period style from the

original Janet Arnold or Norah Waugh pattern. They will be looking at the style and movement achieved in the garment, as shown in the photos, and how this develops the sense of the character in the period chosen.

Deadlines

Monday 8th December 2025

Deadline for submitting Application form

Please complete your application using this Google form;

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUTDvg6HxAoAcB2zDUVcYPTdAHDwCuc5hGNZE1pY2-AXLvRQ/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=107959030321066385689>

Monday 25th January 2026

Deadline for submitting final PDF

Please email to: patternsawards@costumesociety.org.uk

Shortlisting

The Awards team aim to shortlist by the end of February 2026. Three finalists will be selected and offered the opportunity to develop their toile into a fully realised costume. This costume should be made from appropriate materials and decorated to match the submitted design. The final costume must be entirely constructed by the student.

The finished costume should be filmed in high resolution being worn by an actor or model (max time 3 minutes and saved as an MP4). It is important to demonstrate the quality of movement intended for the character wearing the garments.

You will also need to submit up to five high resolution jpegs (min 300 dpi) to assist in the judging process and for use on social media.

We also ask the three finalists to make a short 3-minute film (MP4) showing their finished costume and discussing the process of designing and making it. Why was the Janet Arnold or Norah Waugh pattern chosen? What were the problems encountered when using it? What has worked best in the making? What was the most difficult and how were these problems resolved? The films will be used as part of the final judging. They will also be uploaded to the Costume society YouTube site for viewing by members.

The three selected finalists will be invited to bring their finished garments and accompanying research for judging in July 2025 as part of a Costume Society event (dates, format and location to be confirmed).

The deadline for both films, photographs and Image Release Form is: 8th June 2026

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Viewing original garments from Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion*.

Sadly, many of the garments featured in Janet Arnold's books are now too fragile to be handled, and we encourage students to find similar garments of the same date to view.

Like Norah Waugh and Janet Arnold, you will have to find under-explored collection pieces to inform your work. It is worth checking with your local museum, as many hold collections of historic garments. Many Universities and Colleges also have useful collections of historic dress.

Collections that may be of use:

[John Bright Collection \(London\)](#)

<https://www.thejohnbrightcollection.co.uk/>

[Gawthorpe Hall \(Burnley\)](#)

<https://www.gawthorpetextiles.org.uk/>

[Hopkins Foundation Collection](#)

https://hopkinscostumetrust.org/wiki/Main_Page

[Worthing Museum \(Sussex\)](#)

<https://wtm.uk/collections/costume/>

[Olive Matthews Chertsey \(Surrey\)](#)

<https://chertseymuseum.org/Fashion>

[Nottingham Museums](#)

<https://nottinghammuseums.org.uk/category/collections/costume-textiles/>

[The Blandford Fashion Museum](#)

<https://blandfordfashionmuseum.co.uk/home/>

[Platt Hall](#)

<http://www.platthall.org/>

Performance Costume Collections:

[The Royal Opera House Costume Collection online](#)

<https://www.rohcollections.org.uk/collectioncostumes.aspx>

Suggested Bibliography

Cut and Construction of Historical Dress

Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 1: The content, cut, construction and context of Englishwomen's dress c.1720-1860*, London: The School of Historical Dress, 2021

Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 2: The content, cut, construction and context of women's dress c.1860-1940*, London, The School of Historical Dress, 2022

- Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 3: the cut and construction of clothes for men and women 1560-1620*, London: Macmillan, 1985/1987
- Janet Arnold, Jenny Tiramani & Santina M Levey, *Patterns of Fashion 4: the cut and construction of linen shirts, smocks, neckwear, headwear and accessories for men and women c.1540-1660*, London: Macmillan, 2008
- Janet Arnold, Jenny Tiramani, Luca Costigliolo, Sebastien Passot, Armelle Lucas and Johannes Pietsch, *Patterns of Fashion 5: The content, cut, construction and context of bodies, stays, hoops and rumps c. 1595-1795*, London, The School of Historical Dress, 2019
- Janet Arnold, Jenny Tiramani, Luca Costigliolo, Sebastien Passot, Armelle Lucas and Johannes Pietsch, *Patterns of Fashion 6: The content, cut, construction and context of European women's dress c.1695-1795*, London, The School of Historical Dress, 2022

Norah Waugh, *The cut of women's Clothes: 1600-1930*, London: Faber and Faber, 1994

Norah Waugh, *The cut of men's clothes: 1600-1914*, London: Faber and Faber, 1994

The following books may assist in the interpretation of the Janet Arnold patterns:

- Melanie Braun et al, *Seventeenth-Century Men's Dress Patterns, 1600-1630*, London: V&A & Thames & Hudson, 2016
- Caroline Johnson, *The King's Servants: Men's Dress at the accession of Henry VIII*, Guildford: Fat Goose Press, 2009
- Ninya Mikhaila & Jane Malcolm-Davies, *The Tudor Tailor*, London: Batsford, 2006
- Linda Baumgarten & John Watson, *Costume Close-up: Clothing Construction and Pattern 1750-1790*, Colonial Williamsburg & Quite Specific Media, 1999

The following books/ productions may support the interpretation of a character for performance:

- Deborah Nadoolman Landis, *Hollywood Costume*, London: V&A Publishing, 2012
- Deborah Nadoolman Landis, *FilmCraft: Costume Design*, Octopus Publishing Group, 2012
- Deirdre Clancy, *Designing Costume for Stage and Screen*, Batsford Ltd, 2014
- Bettina John, *Costume Design for Performance*, The Crowood Press, 2021.
- Aoife Monks, *Costume at the National Theatre*, National Theatre Publishing, 2019
- Tom Verica et al, *Bridgerton*, 2020-2023, Netflix
- Yorgo Lanthimos, *The Favourite*, 2018, Searchlight Pictures
- Sofia Coppola, *Marie Antoinette*, 2006, Columbia Pictures

The following titles will provide background on the scholarly context for making, re-making and examining historic dress as research methodologies:

- Alexndra Kim and Ingrid Mida, *The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object Based Research in Fashion*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015
- Hilary Davidson, *The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice*, *Fashion Theory*, 23:3, 329-362, 2019
- Hilary Davidson, *Reconstructing Jane Austen's Silk Pelisse, 1812-1814*, *Costume*, 49:2, 198-223, 2015

This article is open access and can be found here:

<https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/10.1179/0590887615Z.00000000076>

You should read widely about dress in the period that you are reconstructing, and we encourage you to use the wealth of material published in *Costume* the Journal of the Costume Society. The full archive of which can be accessed by society members here;
<https://costumesociety.org.uk/journal>