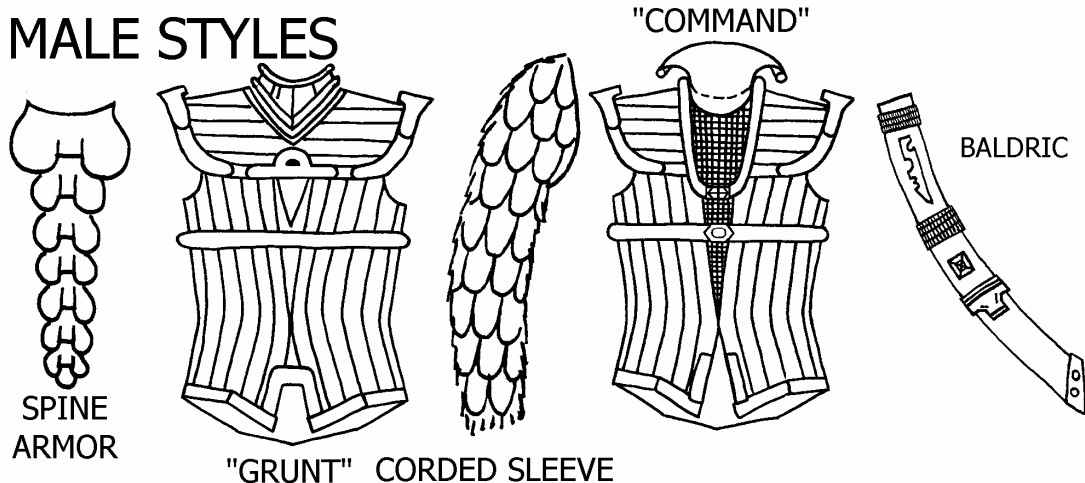


BATTLE VEST DESIGN, Personal Expression vs. Recognition

First, a little tale of confusion: I was at Toronto Trek several years ago, in the green room preparing for the masquerade, when I started a conversation with another contestant. She was dressed in what looked like a cowgirl outfit--she had on a fringed buckskin jacket and skirt, cowboy boots--even a hat! Except for her Klingon bumps, she could have been Annie Oakley or Calamity Jane. It took her half an hour to explain the persona that justified the outfit, and even then it was implausible. The trouble was that she only had 90 seconds onstage to convey her character. If her persona was confusing to fans, imagine how strange she would appear to mundanes!

We all understand that part of what draws us to be Klingon is the fantasy aspect of the experience. Creating our persona is part of the fun, but beware! When you are marching in a Fourth of July parade, you will have NO time to explain that the reason you are a Klingon wearing Vulcan robes covered in a hula skirt, is that you were raised by Hawaiians but that you adopted the Vulcan philosophy after an extended stay on the planet Vulcan. Save the convoluted life story and the outfit that goes with it for that LARP, RPG, or SIM campaign, where you'll have hours, days, or weeks to explain your persona. Create a public persona that is easily recognizable by mundanes as Klingon, and can be described in one sentence, and you'll have more time to BE that character, not just explain about it.

I strongly suggest that your public costume have the design elements I describe below. These were drawn from visual media--the movies and TV, because that is what most of the public has seen. At this point, even the original series Klingon look has become obscure because of lack of airplay. I have always approached my costuming as an archaeological exercise. What were the designers trying to say with the design? How did the wardrobe department execute the design? With a practiced eye I look for details in design and construction. Only when you understand the concept of the Klingon battle vest can you personalize it and yet keep it looking Klingon. The descriptions below are general. There are exceptions, which I'll try to note.



THE YOKE-- Also called shoulder pads or armor, this element extends 1 1/2-2" beyond the natural shoulder line and usually extends down the shoulder to about 1" above the nipple. Contrary to many opinions, most yokes follow the natural shoulder line. Exceptions are warrior vests based on STVI designs which are square from the neckline out, and much more squared at the bottom corners. (Check out B'Elanna Torres in "Barge of the Dead".) Stripes run horizontally on most yokes. Exceptions are Vixis, STV (no stripes), and B'Etor, STVII. Chang and Gorkon in STVI exhibit the yoke motif as cap shoulder extensions and the line of stripes changes direction at the yoke line. Most yokes have metallic looking trim on the edges. Set costumes had leather trim with rub-n-buff finish. On uniforms that open in the front, the neck is bound in a padded tube and sometimes has a stand-up collar. Exception: Lursa, STNG wears a gorget over a flat neckline.



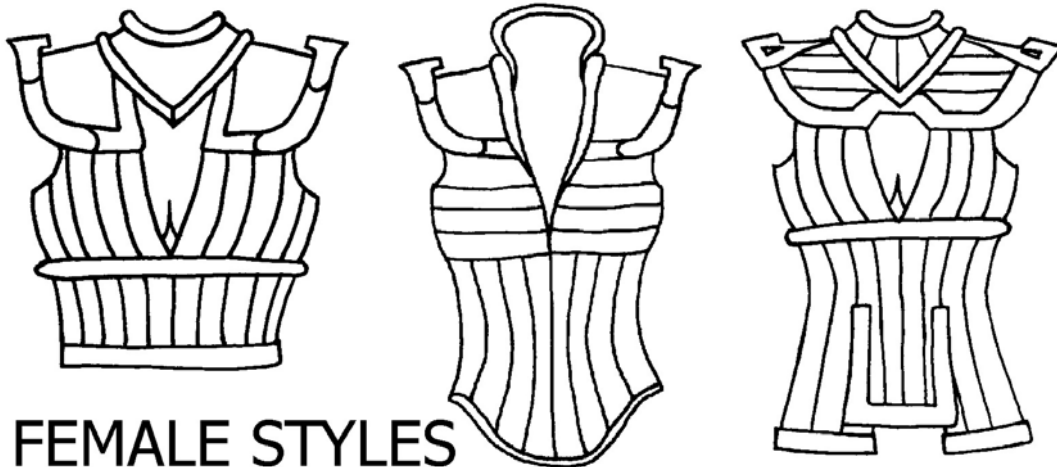
SPINE ARMOR-- Seven lobed metallic looking plate scales run from just below the neckline and taper to the waist. I add a third lobe to the bottom scale. Others make this single lobe a separate scale.

CHEST TUBE-- A Padded tube is attached just under the pecs or bust. It may or may not have a buckle in the front. Exceptions: STVI uniforms didn't have 'em.

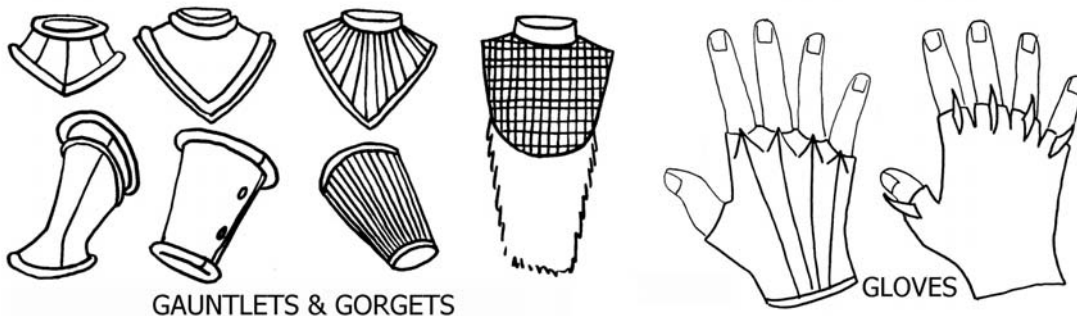
FUR SLEEVES-- Fur Sleeves are most common, some plain black, others brown or black with a scalloped design added with cording. Exceptions: Klaa and Vixis, STV are too buff for sleeves. Gorkon, STVI has red fur sleeves. Chang, STVI has black and silver velvet sleeves.

SHOULDERS-- The baldric, or honor sash is worn from the right shoulder to the left hip. The aguilet and lanyard are worn on the left shoulder to the right hip. They have been shown suspending the disruptor holster or cha'Dich blade scabbard. The metallic trim on the yoke has protruding epaulets which help contain the cloak, baldric and aguilet in place.

BODY STRIPES-- Most stripes on the body of the vest run roughly up and down, starting in the front at an angle that vee's in towards the center front at the waist then out again to the hem. Exceptions: Vixis, STV, and K'Elyr STNG, "The Emissary", both wore vests that had horizontal stripes across the bust. In STVI, Chang and Gorkon had stripe patterns in curves using welting on quilted vests. On vests designed for STV and earlier the stripe pattern narrowed at the waist then widened again for the hips. On vests constructed with welting (pre-made vinyl striping), varying the spacing accomplished this narrowing. On vests constructed with wide stripes, each stripe was separately drafted and made from 3 pieces to allow for changes in width and direction. The process is very time consuming--I'll show you some alternate strategies in another article.



PEPLUM-- (What?) It's the part of the vest that hangs below the belt. Most designs have an uneven hem on the peplum, angling lower in front and back and higher at the hip. STVI vests have straight hems with slits at the side for movement. Most peplums (peplae?) have metallic looking trim. Exception: Vixis, STV, has a curved, bound, uneven hem. Chang, Gorkon, STVI have no trim, anywhere.



NECKWARE-- I call the separate neck accessory a gorget. The "grunt" v-neck uniform is seen with a high, stiff gorget, but for comfort, the flatter "lobster bib" version seen in STVI can be substituted. Women's styles tend to be a hybrid of

the two. I also categorize the metallic dickey worn with open front style vests as a gorget. This can be made of plate maille dress purse fabric, tissue lame, studded material, or the plastic perforated tile specialty fabric used so often. Earlier forms of this accessory had fur below the neck tube, but later versions went to the waist. They were done with or without a low collar.

WRISTS, HANDS-- I use gauntlet to describe the leather cuff at the wrist, sometimes extending over the hand, edged in piping or tubing. Gloves are fingerless, with leather, plastic or metal claws. Hands may be adorned with spiked rings.

The mind boggles, I know, and we haven't dealt with weapons, boots, cloaks or pants yet. But that's what so cool about Klingon uniforms--all the detail! Stay calm, take a few deep breaths. Don't panic. Just e-mail me with questions, <http://www.qidar.com>.