

Entry for “Miss Ellen’s Portieres” Competition

L’Eminence Rouge – **Cardinal Richelieu**

This costume was made for a local “Three Musketeers Ball”. Phil decided he would like to attend as an unlikely character and selected Cardinal Richelieu.

The design of the vestments worn by Cardinals today is essentially the same as that during Richelieu’s time. Vestments are worn by the clergy when they are “on duty”. They may wear other garments when not exercising their functions of ministry, but we are not certain what Richelieu wore off duty, or if he ever considered himself to be in that state. His portraits all show him to be in “Choir Dress”.



The vestments shown in paintings of Richelieu consist of:

- The Cassock – a full-length form fitting garment of scarlet watered silk (moiré) with 33 covered buttons symbolizing the 33 years of Christ’s life on earth.
- The Rochet – a white long-sleeved garment that reaches below the knee and is elaborately decorated with lace and/or embroidery. This is the only garment that may vary in its design and intricacies. All others must be exactly the same for every cardinal.
- The Mozzetta – a scarlet elbow length capelet with 12 covered buttons for the 12 apostles.
- The Biretta or Zuchetto - either a scarlet square hat with ridges or a scarlet skull cap. There are paintings of the Cardinal wearing both styles, but he appears more frequently in the Zuchetto, so that is the one we chose

After looking at the existing contemporary portraits of the Cardinal, I decided there was nothing for it but to use curtains for this costume. Since we were to attend a ball, it did not make sense to re-create the sumptuous cloak (cappa magna) that he wears in some of his formal portraits, which meant that the

most visible layer of the costume would be his heavily decorated Rochet. It was also going to be very difficult and expensive to find scarlet watered silk to provide the appropriate background for it.



The making:

The first item I tried to source was the red moiré fabric for the Cassock and Mozzetta. I was fortunate to find some cotton moiré drapery panels.

Once I knew that I had the scarlet moiré, I began to pursue the Rochet. Portraits of Richelieu make it obvious that all his versions of this garment were pretty lavish.



The cost of lace or embroidered trims of even a 6-inch width would be well beyond what I planned to spend for a costume that would not be making frequent re-appearances. I dragged Phil out to Target, Kmart and a few other mid-priced home goods suppliers to look at sheer curtains. We found a suitable single panel and matching valance in a discontinued items bin.



The panel was used for the front and back of the Rochet and the valance made the sleeves. The yoke and large collar of the Rochet were made from the leftover scraps.

The trickiest maneuver was insuring that all the bottoms of each piece lined up exactly with each other at the correct length since I wanted to preserve the full embroidered design of the curtains on all edges.

He wore it to the ball with great acclaim and nobody guessed he was wearing "draperies".

