Dolores Abernathy

Westworld (2017)

Costume By Lydia Barnes

Background

Westworld is a western theme park / live rpg with lifelike robots ("hosts") that real people ("guests") can interact with. Dolores was the first robot the park creators made. The park itself exists in the future timeline of 2020s-2050s, where there is all kinds of crazy futuristic technology. Despite taking place in the future, the park creators crafted it to be as historically accurate as possible for the guests' experience. All of this is important because it drives the decisions I had to make while making this costume.

Accuracy

There are several aspects I considered when making construction decisions for this costume. Accuracy is by far the most important for me:

1) Historical accuracy: The story world is set somewhere in the late 19th century, with pretty standard victorian era clothing.
2) Actual accuracy: Accuracy to the literal existing costume itself, as in what the show's costume team made in real life.
3) Theoretical accuracy: In the show, this costume is not ACTUALLY late 19th century, it was made in the 2020s to *look* vintage. So it's possible they would have made mistakes or shortcuts on historical accuracy, like using modern synthetic materials.

For the most part I stuck to actual accuracy, with a few changes or assumptions for historical accuracy. Theoretical accuracy is just fun to think about.

Underwear

Like I would with any historically themed outfit, I made all of the underwear first so I could create the proper silhouette to start from.

Chemise

Dolores very clearly wears a chemise in a few scenes. I was able to get most of the details pretty easily from screenshots. One detail I could not confirm was whether it is a short or long chemise, or even possibly a onesie pantaloon set. There is a scene where she is in her second outfit (pants and shirt), and she takes her shirt off and you can see she’s wearing the same chemise. I figured to be able to wear that with pants, it must be a short chemise.

I used very thin 100% cotton, and a very close lace I found on Etsy. I had to create the neckline lace by combining two laces. I draped the overall shape rather than use a pattern since it's pretty straightforward. I also added the tiny pintucks, which replaced the need for front darts. I also even added the bizarre double seams/dart on the side (which you can see in first ref pic). I used french seams because I read they were often used for underwear.

I may replace the blue ribbons in my progress pics if I can find something better by the con.

1896

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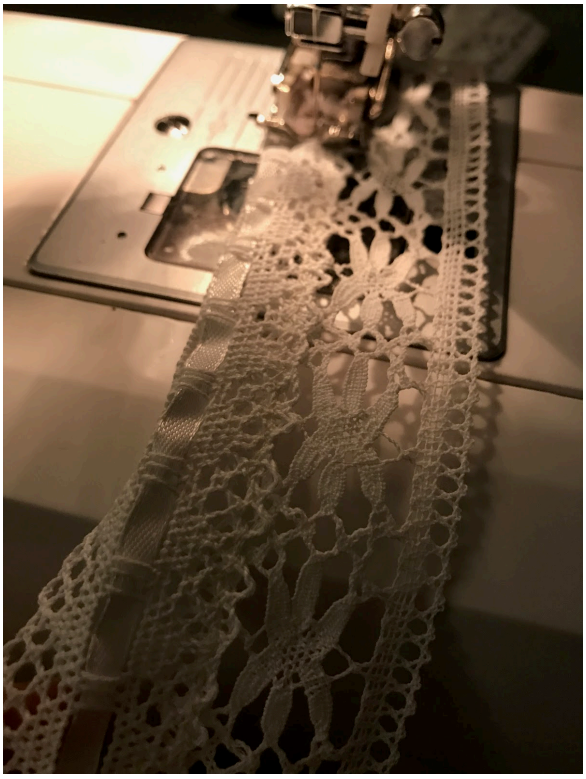
Some victorian undaroos.

(references)

(mine)

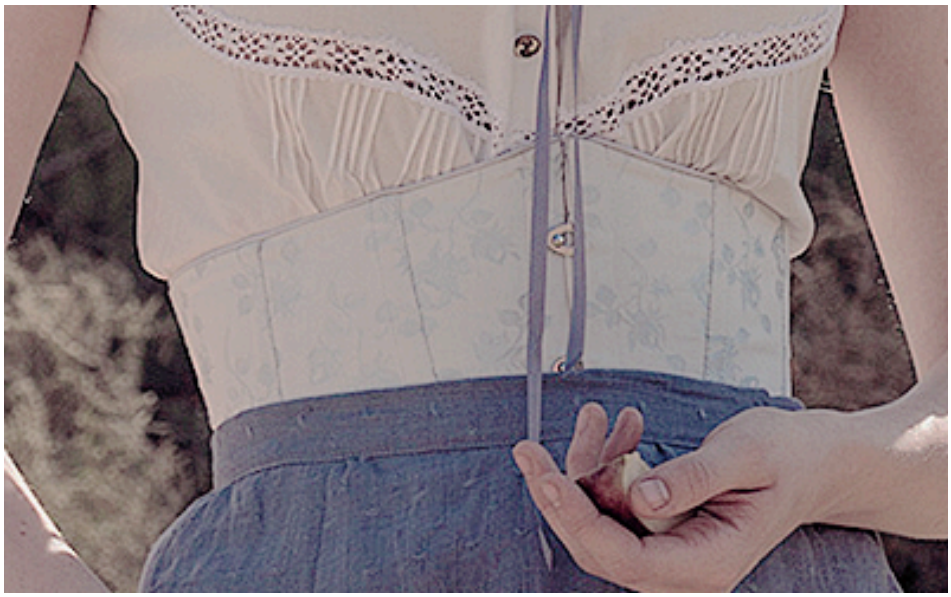


Corset

I can only see the top of the corset in one scene. So I just had to go with historical accuracy to make the assumption about the pattern. I used my standard waist cincher pattern that I modified for myself previously. Thanks to the internet, I was able to get the screen accurate fabric.

I made the bias binding out of pale blue casa satin, and the lining is a pretty cotton I liked. I used ¼ in spiral steel for most channels and flat steel boning for the closures. The inner boning layer is coutil.

(references)



(mine)

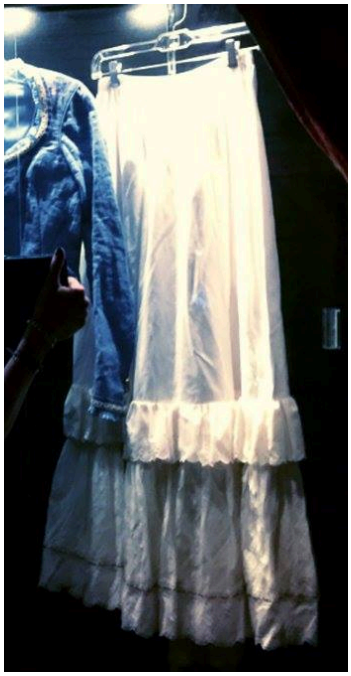
Petticoat

The petticoat was a little hard to nail down. In the show you only see the bottom of it when she lifts her dress a little. You can barely make out some eyelet trim with blue ribbon in a high res pic. I did find a low res image of the actress at an exhibit. With this I could see the basic structure. Without any more info to go on, I looked up some historical petticoat instructions. I ended up using the same pattern guide I used for the overskirt (which I will cover later), except I did darts all around instead of pleats. Then I added a very long rectangular section and gathered it for the bottom fuller part of the petticoat. The top is sewn to twill tape that ties in the back.

For lace I just got creative since I couldn’t find a detailed pic. I found some sheer vintage eyelet lace at an antiques fair that I cleaned up and used for the top layer. I used generic cotton eyelet lace + ribbon lace for the bottom layer. I tried to eyeball the pattern the best I could, at least I was able to find one with similar scalloping. I used french and felled seams throughout.

Underneath I am using a bum pad I had already made for another costume. We never see if she’s wearing one, but she definitely has some volume going on under there.

(references)



(mine)

Dress

Fabric

The blue dress overall from what I can tell is pretty historically accurate. The first thing to address was the fabric. According to the costume designer, the original dress from the pilot was made from vintage fabric that doesn’t exist anymore according to her. For the copies they made, they 3D printed the fabric. Since I’m just a little ole’ hobbyist without access to a time machine or magical 3D fabric printer, I had to make do with existing modern fabric.

I found a white cotton clip dot fabric with the dots in a diamond pattern matching the spacing of the dots in the source. Nailing the color was a difficult task. It’s hard pinpoint the exact blue, since it appears very light/pale in some scenes and darker and more saturated in other scenes. I aimed for a light not-too-saturated kind of slate blue. I made many swatches before picking a color I liked. Then of course when I did the batch (in my washing machine) it came out too dark. So I used dye remover and bleach to lighten it to a gross looking light grey. Then I re-dyed after more tests. After 2 dye baths, I got the color I wanted. I feel like I pretty much nailed it. Even though the dye process was very annoying, the good part is it stressed the fabric out a bit so it doesn't look super new and crisp, since her’s has a bit of a worn look to it.

Skirt

I used a victorian overskirt pattern from my favorite sewing book, The Cut of Women’s Clothing. For the most part it is a big rectangle that you pleat at the back for volume. I’m almost 100% sure her skirt is the same style. The main difference is hers closes in the front-side with a hidden placket, and the back has no seam.

I flatlined the entire skirt with a cotton that I dyed with my reject fabric dye. I had no goal for the color, other than I just didn’t want it to be white since the fabric is a bit thin and it might lighten the overall look. I pressed open the seams and bound the edges down by hand. I did the same skirt opening with placket and used hooks for the closure. I did about a 2-3 inch hem on the bottom just turning it up and sewing into the flatlining.

(references)

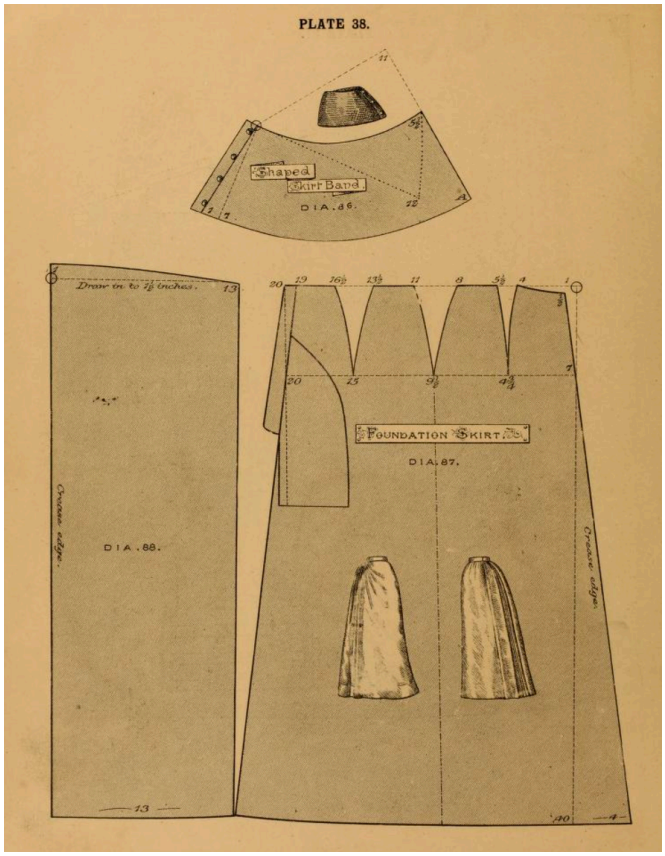
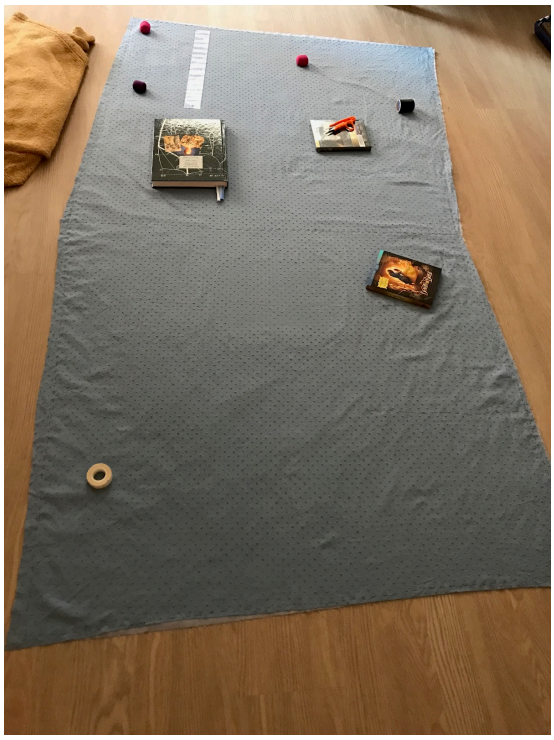
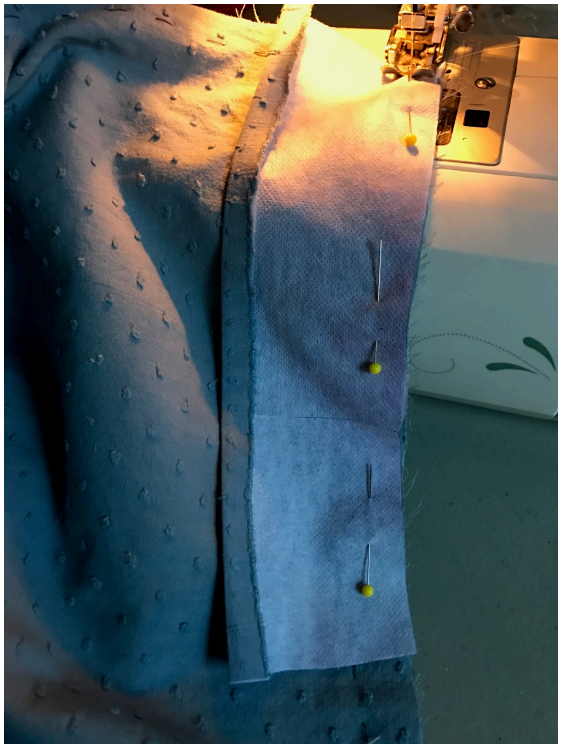


PLATE 38.
Shaped
Skirt Band
DIA. 86.
Draw in to 1½ inches.
DIA. 88.
Cross edge.
FOUNDATION SKIRT.
DIA. 87.
Cross edge.

(mine) 



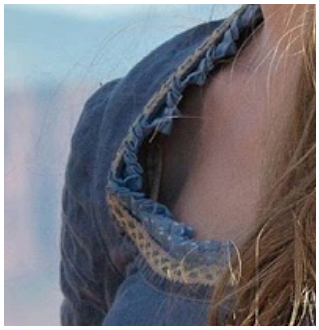
Top

I used a Truly Victorian bodice pattern and modified the neckline and bottom. Its pretty spot on for her bodice. I did make a change to the front. For some reason, I admit I don’t know why (fit maybe), there is a horizontal seam in the middle of her front darts. I noticed this in a screenshot and just had to do the same thing, because what had been seen could not be unseen.

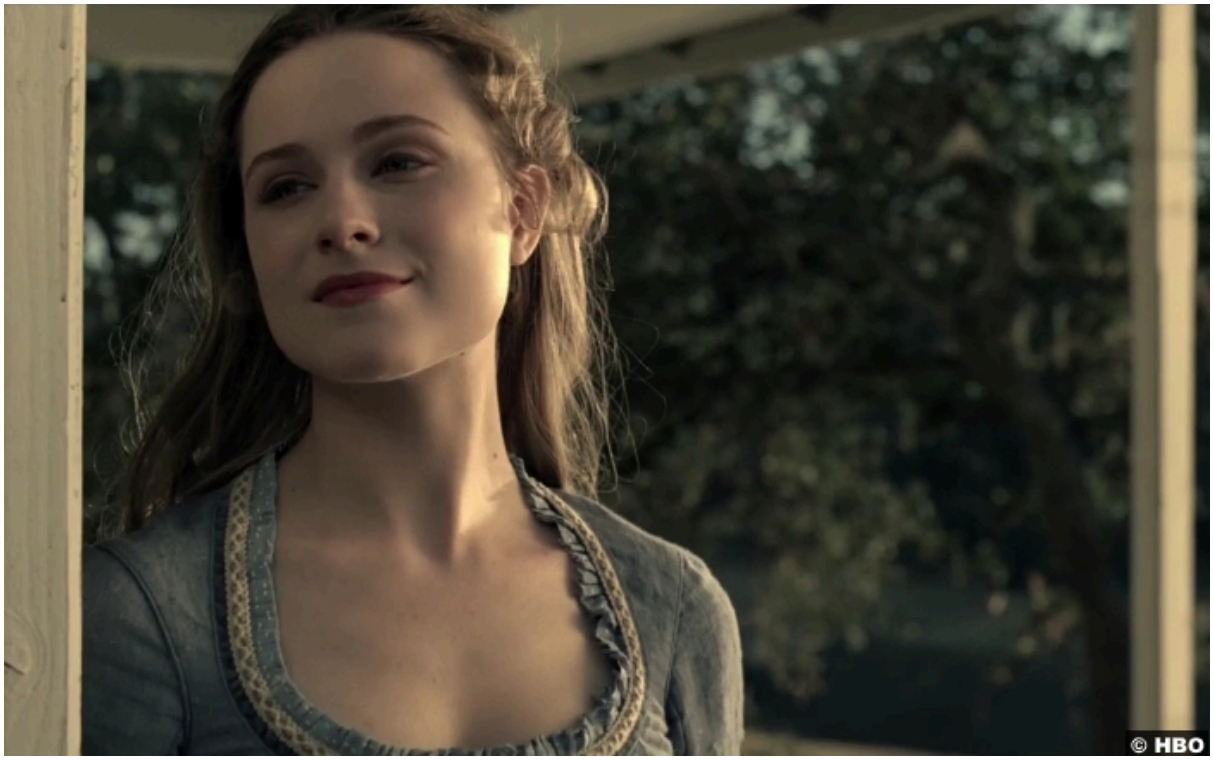
I flatlined the bodice with the same fabric as the skirt. I did not line it or bone it. You can see it’s not lined in a gallery pic (see the pressed open center back seam). I also can tell from watching her move in the show that the top has no boning, even though it typically would. I pressed open the seams and hand bound them down. The front has hand bound horizontal button holes (like the source, which I could barely make out in a screenshot). I made the piping for the arm scye and bottom with the dress fabric and cheapo clearance Christmas cording.

The sleeves have a hidden placket opening. I played around with closure options. The buttons are in a very awkward placement (directly along the closure line) so there definitely aren’t normal button holes. I ended up using snaps and just sewing the buttons on for decoration. Speaking of buttons, I found screen accurate vintage pearl buttons on Etsy. I just weathered them a bit with black paint.

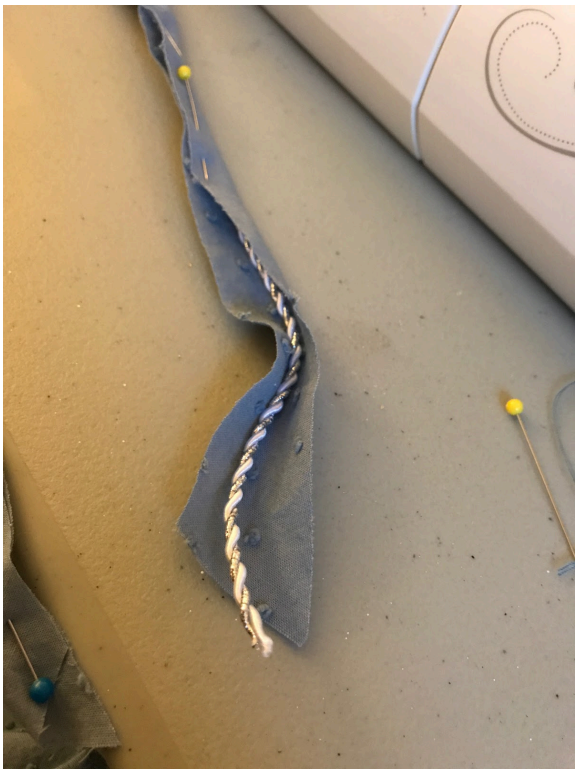
Another thing I altered was the neckline. I had to make a hard executive decision on this one. So annoyingly and confusingly, her chemise has a smaller neckline than her top. In order for the chemise to not show super obviously, I made its neckline slightly bigger than the source, and made the bodice neckline slightly smaller than the source. My theory is the actress doesn't actually wear the chemise under the blue dress for practicality reasons, you’re just supposed to think she is. You can totally see a bra strap in this pic.



(reference for top and trim)



(mine)



21 22 23 24 25
38 39 40 41 42 43

Trim

The trims were a doozy. They get their own section.

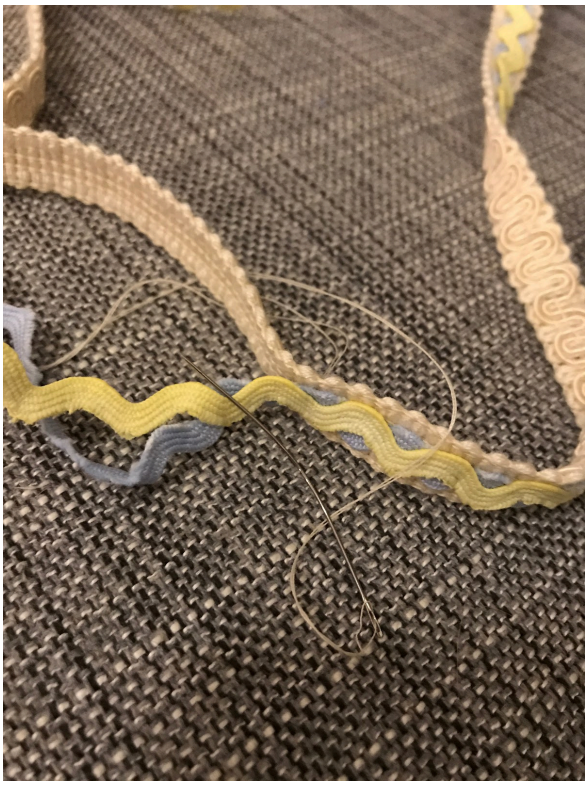
Gimp trim: I found a non-shiny, natural looking gimp trim about the right width for my base. After hunting around for the screen accurate version of course, which I couldn't find. I bought white thick rick rack and split it to make it thinner (since the smaller size rick rack had waves that were too tight). This was very difficult and much like I imagine dismantling a bomb would be. There are little ridges in the rick rack and I had to follow a ridge with my tiny scissors to get an even width. I dyed a blue one with iPoly dye that I already had and water painted a yellow one bc I didn’t want to go buy yellow iPoly dye. I then hand sewed them on carefully to the base trim. Of course I did the entire thing and realized the rick rack was still too thick, and ended up cutting it down yet again and sewing together again.

Velvet trim: I found very nice quality vintage teal velvet trim at an antiques fair. I ended up dying it to make it match the source a little better. Hand sewing it on was like dismantling many more bombs. I probably legit undid it 6 times because I couldn’t get it to lay flat. I finally got it fairly decent, but not perfect. I tried many different techniques (ironing, basting, gathering, etc) and in the end just winging it by hand had the best result.

Dotted pleated trim: Originally I wanted to use my clip dot fabric. I tried so many different ways of dying the base blue while keeping the dots white. I tried painting around them (too much imprecision on my part to work), using dye resist (seeped anyway), and dying whole and trying to lighten the dots. It all was terrible so I did the logical thing and made my own fabric. I dyed a strip a slightly lighter blue than the dress. I sewed the little dots on myself with embroidery thread. I am crazy and actually enjoyed this one.
I hand rolled and sewed the hem with invisible thread, and hand pleated and starched it.

(bad attempts, plus the embroidery test)

(reference pics are in top section, here are progress pics)



Rit
Open top flap,
then tear along p
ed edges for complete instructions inside.
orresponding
1.3 kg of fabric.
nel pot with just
c to move freely.
dye packet and Color
d stir.
½ to 1 hour.
s for 100% silk,
with eyes.
l information on all of
website:

Final dress!

Accessories

Pouch

I made the pouch out of 3-4oz leather. I used craft foam to guesstimate the pattern. I made a form out of craft foam to wet mold the base of the pouch over. I sewed the two main pouch pieces together by hand using an awl and a hole punch wheel to make even looking holes for the thread. I finished it with an antiquing gel and satin sheen leather finish.

(reference)

(mine)

Belt

In an interview I found with Ane Crabtree the costume designer, she revealed that they used a premade kit from Tandy Leather to make the belt. Didn’t take long to find it from there. I bought the kit (which is really just unstained a leather strip with the tooling, and snaps set in) and did the rest myself. I used the same antique gel as the pouch. It didn’t go as easy as I thought it would. Hers has dark stain in the recesses of the design and lighter for the raised parts. My first pass with a test piece dyed the whole the thing the same color. So I watered some down and painted in the recesses about 4-5 layers. Then I did many layers over the whole thing. Now it has the same look. I smoothed out the edges with a wooden edge beveller and stained them. I used an awl for the buckle holes.

The final version is not quite ready yet (at the time of submitting this portfolio) because I am still wearing it down. You can see hers looks like it’s been worn a gazillion times (and it has been, she’s been around the park for 30 years). I tried tooling the creases by hand but it looks bad, so I am just bending the belt back and forth. By the time the con comes around I’m hoping it’ll look pretty worn.

(reference)

(mine)

Buckle

I wasn’t lucky enough with this one and couldn’t find the screen accurate source for the buckle. I decided to cast it, which I did for the first time. I sculpted the buckle out of Apoxy Sculpt, then made a mold. The Smooth On site told me everything I needed to know, and it went pretty well without incident. I used a white resin that I mixed with black dye. Before pouring I brushed gold powder on the mold. The black and gold combo created the bronze-ish color I needed. While the resin was setting I placed a metal bar in the middle. I also bent the mold while it was still flexible to get the slight bent shape. After taking it out I used a Dremel to finish the edges, then painted the back gold and used black paint to darken the little crevices so they stand out more. I used a similar metal bar for the center prong.

(reference)

(mine)

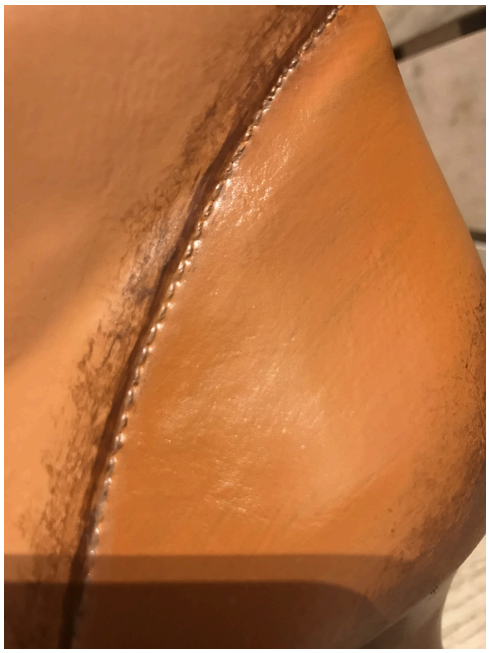
SHOES

The shoes are tricky because I can’t nail down what she’s actually wearing. I’ve combed through the show staring intently at them. It seems sometimes she has a flat heel and sometimes a french heel. They are definitely boots. The best reference pics I have are a set photo and a couple bad gallery shots. At some point I just decided to do something that just “makes sense.” I found a decent pair of victorian costume boots. Buying reproductions or real vintage boots was just too pricey. I painted them to be a tan color and dry brushed in some dark browns to antique them a bit, using inspirational boots as a guide.

(reference)

(Inspo)

(mine)



Wig

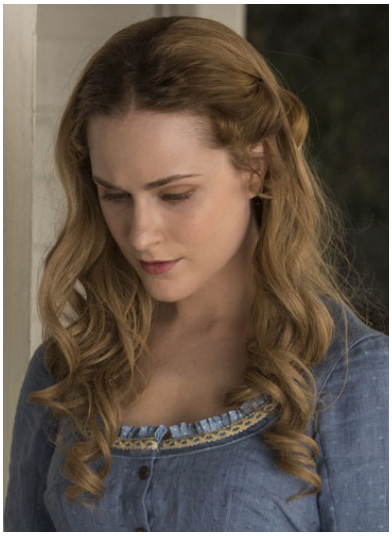
For her wig I used an Arda Dany lace front wig in champagne blonde. The length and base color were great, but I still needed to do a lot of work to make it look more realistic.

First thing I did was the dye job. I used Jacquard Dye-Na-Flow fabric paint, which works great on wigs. I used ecru first and brushed the top to about halfway down with it, layer by layer, to add a hint of golden lowlights to it. It's not very noticeable in pictures but it was mostly for me to practice with anyway. The hard part was the roots. I mixed black and ecru for a grayish color. I went weft by weft and very carefully painted in the roots, used my fingers to blend it in, and a hairdryer constantly to dry it. If I didn’t dry it often enough it would seep down the strands too much due to the water content. The whole thing took many hours.

Next I did a fair amount of extra lace front ventilating along the hairline, for the purposes of styling baby hair. Dolores has a ton of baby hairs, and I didn’t want to take away from the hairline that was already there. I did a wavy line to match hers, as baby hairs often grow in funky patterns. Then I dyed them to match the roots.

At the time of these pictures I have not styled it yet. I am going to wait closer to the con so the curls don’t have much time to relax out. I am just doing my usual method of using curlers and a hair dryer.

(references)



(mine)

(base wig)

(more golden now)

(dying roots)

(adding babies)

(dye roots again)

Fin

Thanks for reading this very long portfolio! See you at the con!