

KOZAKOWY'S THE STORY BEHIND
4. 1760 BLACK STAYS OUTFIT



Introduction

I remember that I really wanted to push my modding further before starting this particular project. The process was slightly different than it was before. I did a lot of preparations before starting this one - collecting images, doing sketches and debating how it should look like, and what are the actual possibilities of modelling it. It was also the first texturing project when (thanks to the earlier experiments with the Black Corset Dress and the 1660 Gown) I was quite certain what I am doing and what I am aiming for. All in all, let's say that this is a first grown up and really planned outfit mod. Let's get into it, shall we? *(Below You can see Agnes modelling the outfit in one of the first shoots in the Temple Of Divines)*



1. Johanna Samuelson's 1760 Black Stays

After doing a couple of gowns as outfit mods, I thought it would be nice to change the scope a little bit. I wanted to do a more practical outfit, yet still elegant. Let's say for a villainess chasing her enemies. ;) Again, I thought about Milady De Winter from Three Musketeers and about her outfits here.

While looking for some inspirations over the web, I came across this beautiful historical stays project by Johanna Samuelson *(to the right)*.

The stays were a very popular part of womenswear across the centuries - they provided bust support before the bra was invented and also helped to create a smooth fashionable silhouette. They were made in different colors and materials (the lower class gals could sew their own stays out of cheap materials and reinforce them with cane and the upper class ladies got their wonderfully crafted stays with whalebone inside).

I found this particular piece a really nice and harmonious design. I loved the front with this v-shaped decoration as well as the bows and the black shift underneath. Everything seems like having nearly the same feel as a fabric. What is different with each part or element is its texture.

What I didn't like were the tabs at the waistline. I wanted to shape them a bit differently, these seemed a bit too small in my opinion.

But in general, this particular inspiration image presented quite precisely what I was looking for with this project. This shows of course only the chest area. Other parts like boots, sleeves and accessories still were to be designed.



I also found (recently) some nice closeups for the Johanna Samuelson's project, that show some details of the stays. I didn't include all of them in the mod but it's always nice to study some real life garments while creating the virtual ones (see images below).



2. Dark Garden Corsetry

Having the first basic inspiration image in mind, I started to look for some nice stays tabs to incorporate in the project. I also remembered that a San Francisco based corset brand - Dark Garden had some really nice stays collection.

This is the „Baroque” stays model from Dark Garden (to the right). I really liked the tabs and the waistline here. I also liked the idea of using a silk Jaquard as the fashion fabric.

I even thought that this rose color was nice for a pair of stays that were ment to be worn as an outer garment, but the first intention was black, so maybe I'll be back to this idea in a retex version of this (below a contemporary version of hybrid stays form).



3. The Process

As I mentioned before, it all started with a photo of a design found online. But when I made the decision about modelling it, I also did a quick sketch of the whole silhouette (*to the right*), also to mark some details I'd like to add. It helped a lot to tidy up my ideas.

This sketch isn't very pretty, but it helped me a lot to list out the things that I'd like to include in the project, like adding some belts here and there, adding puffy sleeves, the collar and knee-length boots.

Of course, the design changed slightly during the modelling process, since it's always different when you model on a certain body type and see things in the right proportions. I often decide about adding/removing things during modelling.



The strange thing is, that first, I started to model a slightly different stays form than in the sketch (*to the right*). It's because I had some problems to model a nice waistline and tabs. It took quite some time to figure out a nice way to form the bodice but wasn't happy at this point.

I also did puffy pants instead of a skirt in the first version. I really don't know why, but I'm quite certain it had something to do with the „Musketeer” vibe. The pants looked nice as a separate element, but they looked strange combined with other parts of the outfit.

As for the boots - to make things easier, I started with some previous ones. Namely, the boots were taken from the Steampunk Outfit. I hesitated for quite along time before making a proper pair of boots for this project, but the challenge was worth taking it.

I was also browsing through some lace materials at that time and found some really nice lace textures at textures.com. (*Below you can see a lace texture I used later on the collar*).



The puffy pants version quickly transformed into another option, which is much closer to the final model. The bodice was still long and the tabs were smaller, but the new pants were much tighter and the skirt was more like a mini skirt and I liked very much this fantasy historically inspired outfit approach (*to the right*).

I also started to add some details like bows (I downloaded the bow model from 3dsky site and optimized it a bit) and belts. The last ones were modelled using 3dsmax's sweep modifier with automatic UVW mapping generation.

The belts and the short skirt gave the whole thing a more rogue vibe, which I really liked. I imagined that this outfit could be used by a villainess in a boss sword fight ;)



I also experimented a bit with the display settings in 3ds Max, even before creating the actual materials. Assigning simple colors to the geometry helped me to have a better image of the whole design even at this modelling stage - so, it's also a nice thing to do if you have some dilemmas about adding removing recoloring or rescaling a particular element (*to the right*).

The collar has been added to the design. I wasn't sure if it would fit the whole outfit, since it reminded me more a „Party Clothes” element than a part of the riding/adventuring attire. But finally I got used to it and it became a nice spice to the whole thing I guess.

You can also notice in the image to the right, that a strip of lace has been added to mimic a shirt underneath the stays. First I added some noise to ripple the top edge a bit, but I ended up refining the geometry it manually to prevent the lace from intersecting the body.



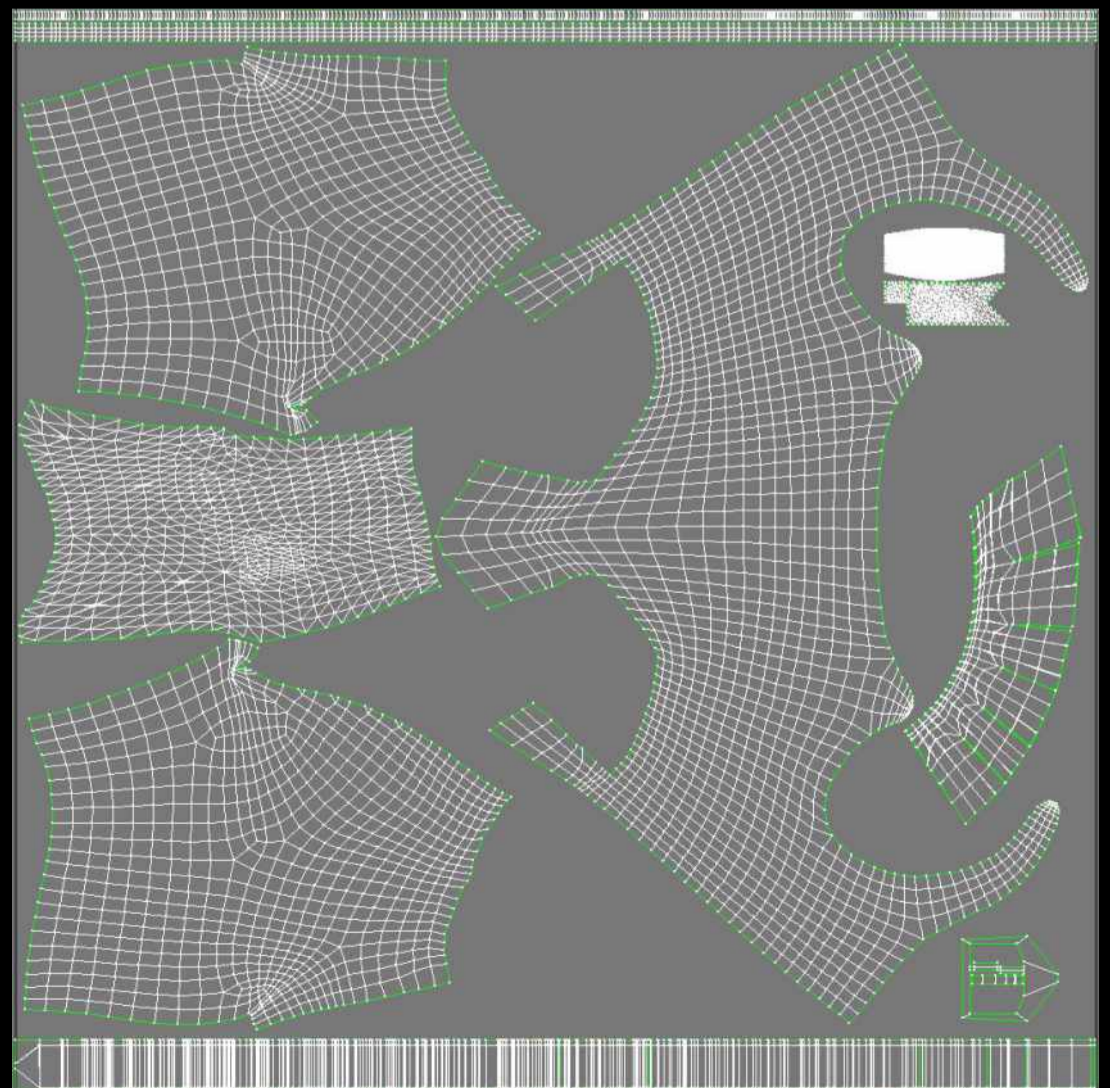
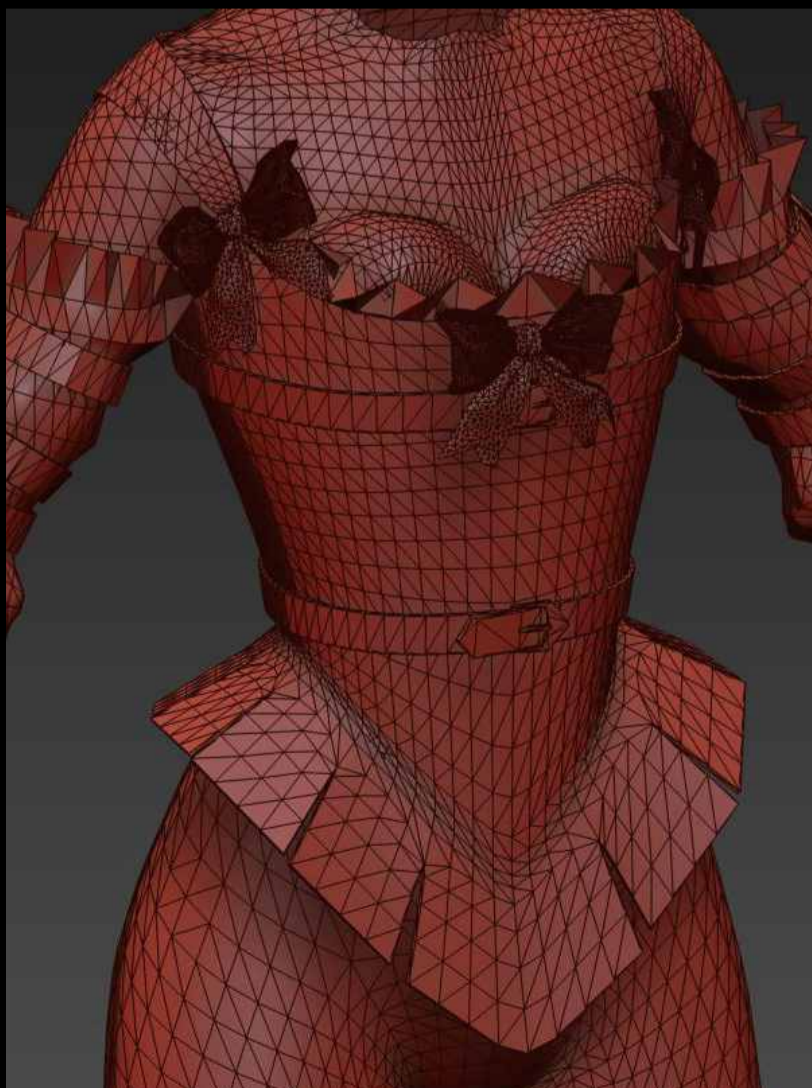
Finally, I redesigned the waistline and the stays tabs - made them wider and more prominent. Creating the visible waistline was possible thanks to chamfering the edge a little bit before applying the TurboSmooth modifier to the whole thing. I also added some chaos to the tabs to make them look more natural.

Also, adding even more belts and bows gave the whole ensemble a more interesting feel. You can imagine like you could attach many different kinds of small handy weapons to these belts.



Below you also can have a look at the mesh. This model though has already been triangulated by the Nif export plugin, but the quads (rectangles) in the mesh are still visible. From this point I went to UVW mapping the whole thing (*Below*).

At that time I tried to orient the UVW map as rotated 90 deg clockwise, since experimentally I checked that this orientation and inverting the red channel in the normal map made the normals work properly in game. Later I abandoned this method since updating the tangent space of the whole geometry in Nifscope did the trick instead. But here you can still see the rotated UVWs.



KOZAKOWY'S THE STORY BEHIND

As far as boots are concerned, first, the design has been equipped with the Steampunk Outfit boots, but I soon realised, that they don't quite fit the 18 century fantasy rogue vibe. That's why I started to think about an alternative solution to that.

The art history is always a nice inspiration, so I looked for some kickass 18 century boots.

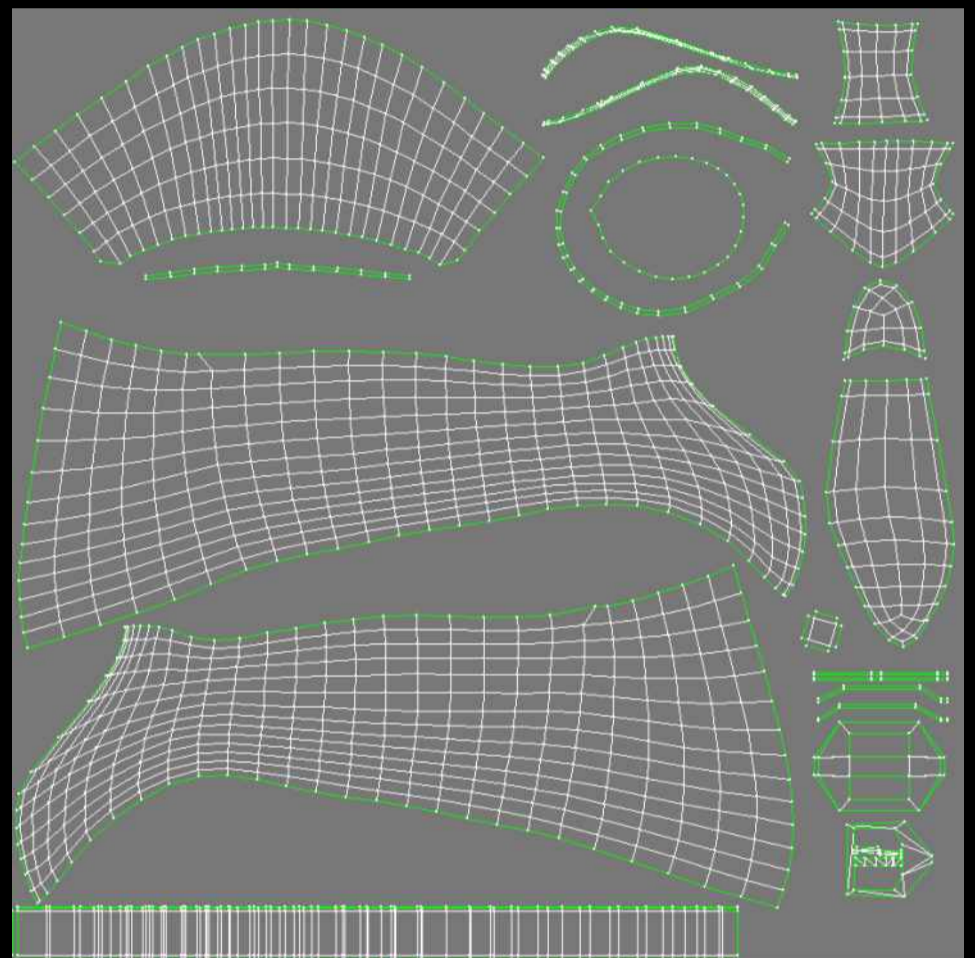
I really liked the shape of the high heels in the historical examples (*to the right*). The clamp in the front was a nice accent as well, thus I decided to shape the Black Stays boots heels alike. It wasn't easy and the sculpting took quite some time, but I was really happy with the effect.

The UVW map is quite chaotic here (*to the right*). I didn't have any idea of arranging the elements in a particular way and it was a mistake. It's not that much noticeable but the normals don't work in a proper way in some places. Today I would try to arrange every element upwards.

I also added some nice details to the boots like belts, to make them fit the whole outfit more. I also placed the buttons in the back to mark the boot opening.

(You can check out how the boots mesh looks in the images below)

4. 1760 BLACK STAYS OUTFIT



As for material creation, I can say that this project was really fun. First, probably because I just love black materials and this awesomeness you can achieve inserting some more shiny details onto a black surface. Yummie! *(to the right)*

This was probably also my first Substance Painter project when I knew what I was doing (more or less).

It was in the material creation stage, when the idea of adding a jacquard pattern to the fabric appeared. I still find this pattern quite cool, but I also think the plain black version looks ok.

I remember that painting the boning channels and boning on the surface of the stays was very relaxing, and the effect of it was quick and very rewarding. I used stitch generator alpha to paint the stitches with the „Follow Path” mode on and spacing set around 100.

I also did the binding on the bows, which was a nice detail. Also the belts were fun to do. I did the edge wear for the first time on a belt I guess - it was fun to play with these effects.

It was also probably the first time I experimented with rendering in Substance Painter.

Today I find it like a kind of reward after finishing a certain painting stage - to look at your design on a render with dof and nice lighting.

You can check out the diffuse map for the stays, pants, bows and belts *(bottom right)*. You can clearly see the black Ambient Occlusion spots - today I would say that they are too dark but if it looks ok.in game, why bother.



I remember also being really happy with how the boots material finally turned out in Substance Painter (*to the right*).

I started with doing the base leather material using one of Substance Painter's factory presets.

When I use a Substance Painter preset I usually edit it extensively, mostly deleting most of the elements and leaving only the necessary ones ;)

I had an opportunity to play with metal and leather wear masks this time and loved the effect. The belt edges are a bit worn as well as it were in the body portion.

Comparing with the boots modelling proces, the material painting was relaxing and very rewarding. Again, my favourite color range and playing with paramterers - I just love this part of the process .

You can see the buttons in the back of the boots - I made them quite reflective and it worked really nice (*to the right*).

I'M. not that happy with the back opening though. I think it could be more visible and get some extra ripple here and there. But maybe I'll be able to fix this in a retex version ;)

I really like though how the diffuse map looks (*bottom right*). The amount of wear is very satisfactory :) I don't like clean diffuse textures that much.



4. To Sum Up

All in all, the Black Stays Outfit was a pleasant project to do. There were few challenges, but the result was really satisfying. Also, it's my most downloaded mod among my LE stuff. I cannot tell why I just left this project as it is after I finished it. It has also a pretty good retex potential. I want to get back to it soon to do some minor tweaks and new material variants. *(Below you can see Agnes modelling the outfit in the Temple Of Divines)*



Hope you enjoyed this episode of The Story Behind. Also feel free to ask me questions about modding and inspirations. I'll be more than glad to answer. Do it via private message on Patreon, posting in the Patron Room Discord Server or simply commenting under the Patreon post.

Take care!

K.

