

Heimdall:

Guardian of Asgard



Cosplay by Kristy Podelnyk

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September 2017
Rose City Comic Con

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About the Cosplayer: Meet Kristy Podelnyk

When I was fourteen, I got my first job working in the entertainment industry. As a teenager desperate for summer work, I was thrilled that my efforts were worth \$18 an hour - triple minimum wage! But let's face it, working in "entertainment" can sound pretty darn sketchy, especially for a tween, so let me clarify the exact nature of my work. My main duty as an entertainer was to dress up in cartoon character costumes and attend children's birthday parties. I would play games, paint faces, and as a grand finale, make awkwardly misshapen balloon animals. It's actually quite embarrassing - but the kids would eat it up. And, sometimes I got cake!

If you've read this far, you might be trying to connect some dots. "Oh! That's why she likes cosplay now."

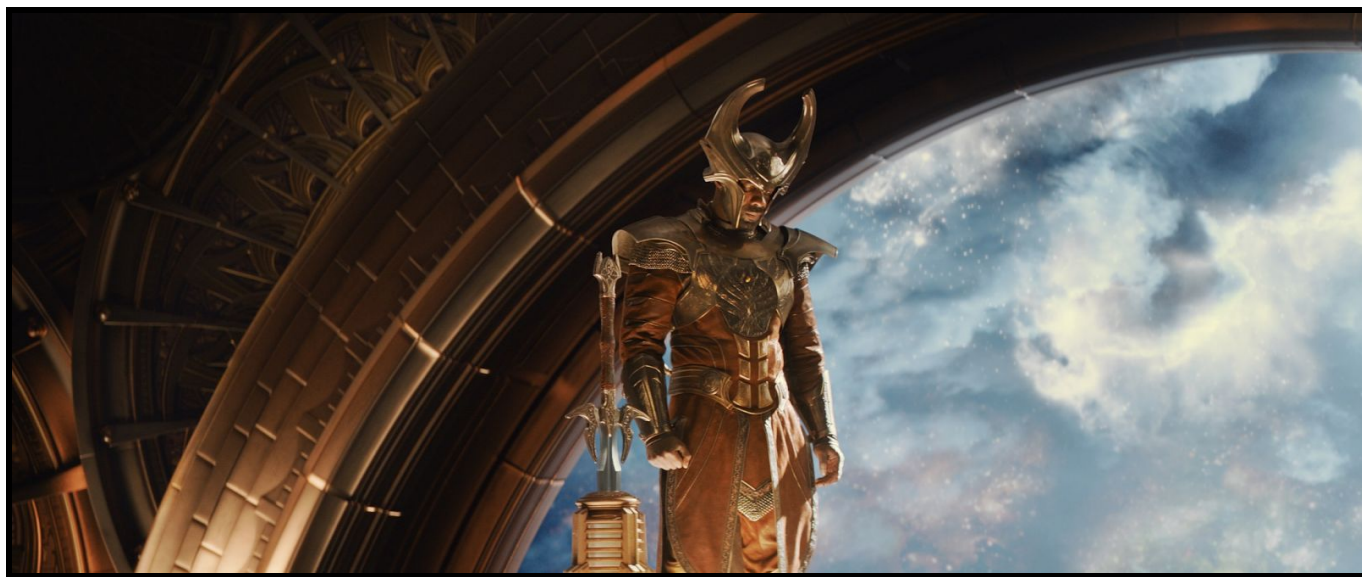
Sorry friend, that's not actually the case.



I worked as an entertainer for two years before handing the torch to the next generation of desperate teenagers seeking summer employment. I was moving on to mall retail! I didn't look back. However, I did walk away with a deep appreciation of costume fabrication. Dressing as Pikachu© for corporate barbeques wasn't my cup of tea, but I sure loved exploring the depths of the costume closet.

The reason I bring up this awkward chapter of my life is to share a little about myself. I have a deeply rooted love for art, creativity and fantasy. I always have. Cosplay isn't only fun, it gifts me opportunities to dive deep into what I enjoy most: to design, create and construct. And, in the pages that follow you will find an account of my latest cosplay endeavors.

Who is Heimdall?



Guardian of Asgard. Sentinel of the Bifrost. General badass. Heimdall is a character of both Norse mythology and the Marvel Universe. For the purpose of this cosplay, we will focus on the latter.

Heimdall was re-introduced to movie audiences around the globe in *Thor*, *Thor: The Dark World* and the upcoming release, *Thor: Ragnarok*. Played by Idris Elba, Heimdall is the all-seeing protector of the Rainbow Bridge, the link between the realms of the universe. A dedicated warrior and servant of Odin, Heimdall protects Asgard from intruders with both his cunning and sword skill.

For this project, I decided to cosplay Heimdall as portrayed in *Thor: The Dark World*. If you haven't yet, you should take this opportunity to look at my pictures from the previous "Background" section. You may notice some differences between cosplayer and character. It was for this reason I decided my interpretation of Heimdall needed to be exquisitely detailed, well-constructed and artfully interpreted. Idris Elba masterfully portrays Heimdall as an intelligent, powerful and dreadful warrior. I challenged myself to engineer and build a costume that emphasized Heimdall's commanding nature using my petite female form.

There are a number of reasons I was drawn to Heimdall as a cosplayer. The most notable was the complexity and design of the costume. Heimdall isn't your average foot soldier. He's highly skilled and terribly intelligent. His strength lies not only in his physical form but also in his wisdom. His costume is as complex as his character. Heimdall wears layers of leather, elaborately embroidered with celtic knots. His armor and chainmail look to be crafted by a highly skilled metalworker - each piece uniquely adorned with decorative scrollwork. His two most identifiable pieces, his sword and helmet, are one-of-a-kind. All around, Heimdall is a powerful figure in the Marvel Universe, and as such, his costume is a masterpiece of engineering. I was drawn to Heimdall by these qualities and also because of the challenge this cosplay proposed. Between sewing, armor fabrication, prop production and painting, I had a full plate of different techniques to use in order to complete this ambitious project.

With special thanks
to my partner, Aaron.

Materials, Supplies & Techniques: How'd She Do That?

For this cosplay, my goal was to create the best costume I could. I wanted to use techniques I was familiar with to produce high-quality pieces. Furthermore, I wanted to incorporate Easter Eggs into each piece - unexpected designs or details that only a closer look would reveal. Overall, the cosplay took 250+ hours to complete. Below is a list of all the materials I used to create Heimdall.

Materials List

Sewing	Armor Fabrication	Prop Production
★ 3 yds Polyester Lining	★ 3,240 in ² 5mm EVA Foam	★ Cardstock
★ 3 yds Faux Suede	★ 1,296 in ² 2mm EVA Foam	★ Free Form® Air
★ 1 yd Faux Leather	★ 50 hot glue sticks	★ 3 sheets 8.5x12 EVA Foam
★ 3 yds Interfacing	★ Mod Podge	★ 3/8" L200 Foam
★ 10 yds Trimming	★ Contact Cement	★ 1/4" L200 Foam
★ 5 yds Piping	★ 30 1" D-Rings	★ 3/4" Dowel Rod
★ 10 yds Soutache Braid	★ Jacquard Metallic Paint	★ 1 can Plasti-Dip
★ 3 Spools Thread	★ 2 cans Plasti-Dip	★ Jacquard Metallic Paint
★ 10 ft Boning	★ 2 cans Gold Paint	★ 1 can Clear Coat
★ 3 yds Ribbon	★ 2 cans Clear Coat	★ Contact Cement
★ 14 Grommets	★ 3 yds Polypropylene Webbing	★ Sandpaper
★ 7 inch Zipper		★ Bondo

Tools List

Sewing	Armor Fabrication	Prop Production
★ Sewing Machine	★ Heat Gun	★ Rotary Tool
★ Serger	★ Rotary Tool	★ Power Sander
★ Iron	★ Hot Glue Gun	★ Jigsaw

Sew Much to Do, Sew Little Time: Creating the Costume



Sewing is hard. Like, really hard. And this cosplay challenged both my patterning and sewing skills. I'm not new to sewing in any sense - I'd actually consider sewing one of my strengths. But, it's one thing to slap a garment together loosely following allowances and an entirely different endeavor to sew a hand-crafted piece with decorative precision. So, here's my account of how I went about creating Heimdall's costume.

Wendy Partridge, lead costume designer of Thor: The Dark World, was tasked with creating a costume that allowed Heimdall full mobility while exuding the strength and loyalty of the character. As a result, Heimdall's costume required multiple components. This is where I began my process of reinterpreting Heimdall's sewn costume to fit a female form (shown left).

My Heimdall sewn costume is composed of three parts:

- Corset
- Skirt
- Bolero

Unlike the rest of the costume, the corset is made of dark brown faux leather and lined with silky brown polyester. The pattern for the corset was adapted from Simplicity pattern 1345. Each panel is boned for more structure. Fourteen grommets line the back panel for adjustable sizing. The corset is finished with hand applied soutache braid and celtic knot trimmings.

The skirt pattern was adapted and hand patterned from New Look pattern 6106 (shown bottom right). Made of weathered faux suede, each fabric piece was reinforced with lightweight interfacing and lined with silky polyester. All seams are serged and finished. Handmade faux suede bias tape lines every free edge. Each edge is also decorated with celtic knot trim (shown right, middle) and gold embroidery thread. Finishing touches, such as the soutache braid and gold lamé, were hand sewn. Last, but not least, the skirt includes a back panel zipper for easy dressing.

The bolero posed one of the most challenging pieces to construct for this costume. In addition to hand patterning and quilting sleeves (shown top right), the entire jacket had to be lined for wearing comfort. The bolero pattern was adapted and modified from Burda pattern 7308. The sleeves were lengthened while the neckline was redesigned to include a collar. Finishing touches, such as gold bias tape and bronze mesh were added to the bolero to create the illusion of chainmail.

All together, the sew costume required around 70 hours to sew and the use of a sewing machine, serger and hand sewing. Each piece is lined, tailored to fit and hand detailed. I'm particularly proud of this costume - it is well sewn AND when you look closely there are "Easter eggs" scattered throughout the pieces.

Resources:

Admin. "Fabricating the Gods: Wendy Partridge Talks about Thor: The Dark World." Flickering Myth. 08 Apr. 2014. Web. 18 July 2017.

THOR: THE DARK WORLD - Movie Production Notes...CinemaReview.com. Web. 18 July 2017.

Building Barriers: Fabricating the Armor and Helmet

Fabrication is a skill I am currently growing. And like any diligent gardener, I'm still learning about how to best prepare my substrate, plant my ideas and grow my craft. It's a work in progress, and I've learned a lot from building Heimdall's armor - so many learning opportunities (aka big, fat mistakes) that I will carry forward with me. To begin, I worked to adapt Heimdall's armor to a female form yet still maintain the power of the character. In all, Heimdall's armor includes:

- 2 Vambraces
- 2 Greaves
- Breastplate
- Belt
- Helmet
- 2 Pauldrons
- 2 Sabatons

All of Heimdall's armor is made from 5mm and 2mm EVA craft foam (shown upper left). Patterns for the vambraces, greaves, sabatons and breastplate were adapted from Svetlana Quint's Female Body Armor Patterns. The pauldrons, belt and helmet were self patterned. After initial fabrication, detailing was added - borders, celtic designs and texture (shown bottom right and left).

In the cosplay community, building foam armor is pretty well established. There are lots of tutorials and resources available for patterning and construction. So, instead of talking about the body armor, I'd like to spend some time sharing how I went about creating Heimdall's helmet (shown upper and middle right).

Heimdall's helmet is an iconic piece - just as identifiable as Darth Vader or Magneto's helmets. To begin, I had to use a little math. Idris Elba, the actor who portrays Heimdall, is 6'3". I, Kristy Podelnyk, small-town cosplayer, am a whopping 5'2". In heels. I had to figure out exactly how big to make my helmet so that I looked the part but didn't wind up looking like Lord Helmet (shown right). When I was satisfied with my numbers, I used a pepakura pattern to make a helmet prototype. From there, I reverse engineered a paper pattern for Heimdall's helmet. When I was satisfied with that, I cut my pieces from 5mm EVA craft foam and began construction of the actual helmet. To help with fit, I also added a smaller helmet adapted from Svetlana Quint's patterns, to fit snugly against my head.

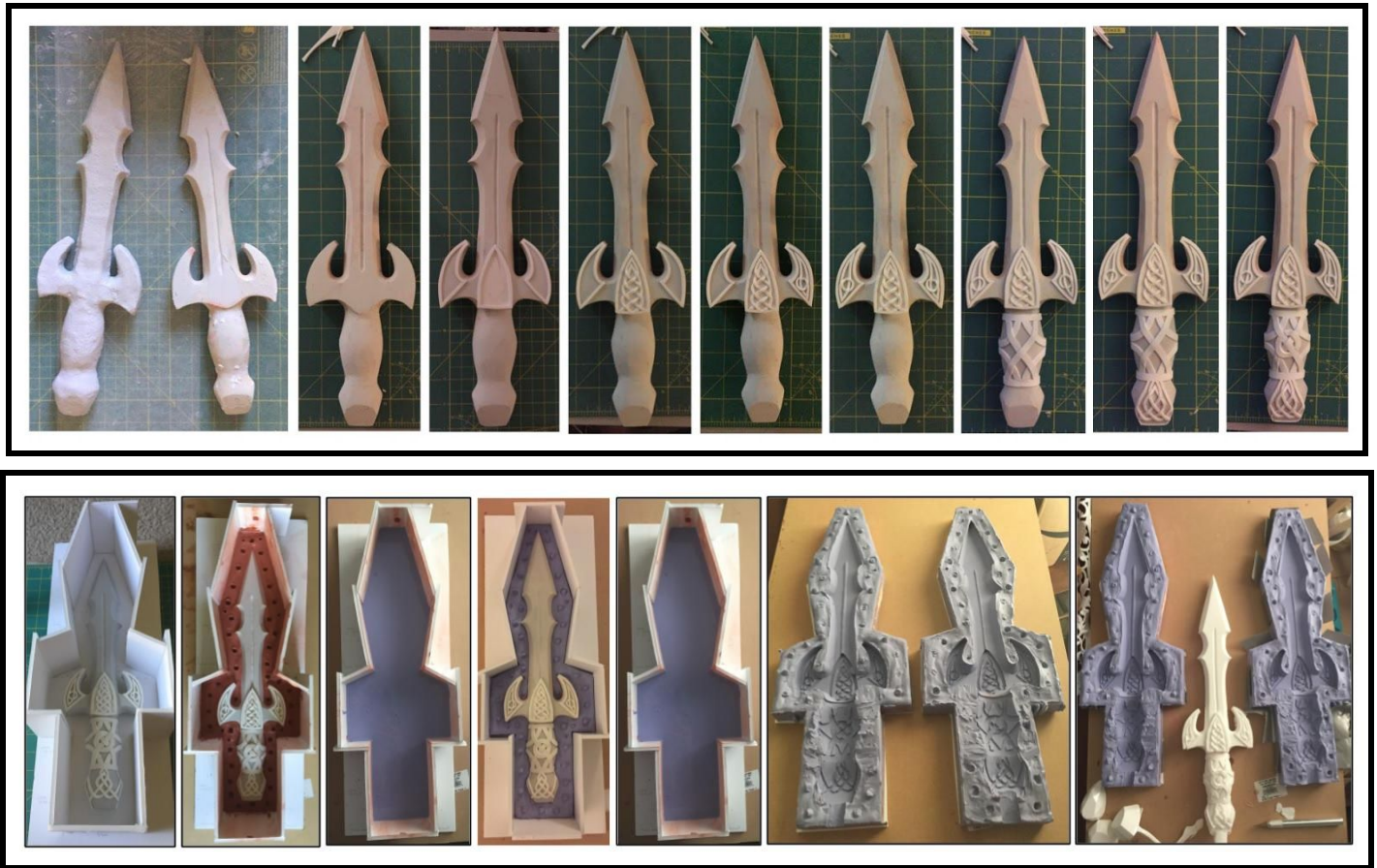


A real challenge was creating a smooth dome at the top of the helmet. I ended up using some aluminum foil to create the shape and then I added and sculpted Free Form Air to create a super smooth surface. All the other details were added by building up layers - I would sketch the shape of what I wanted to add onto painter's tape, compare it to the helmet then cut the shape from foam.

At the end of the day, I'm okay with my fabrication work. I learned a lot about patterning, shaping and construction. And, I've become really comfortable using my rotary tool. As with the sewn costume, I included a number of "Easter eggs" throughout the fabricated pieces, which I am particularly proud of because it makes me feel like I am representing Heimdall's character with integrity.



Making a Point: Constructing Heimdall's Daggers & Sword



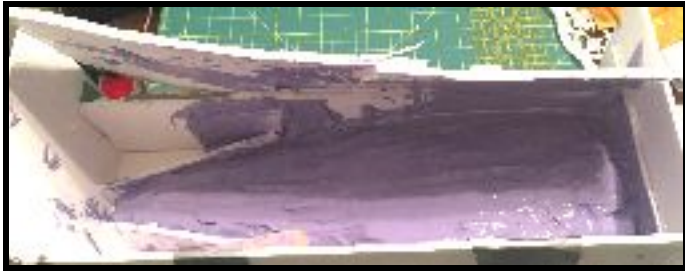
Heimdall is a character powerful not only in form, but also in weaponry. In *Thor: The Dark World*, Heimdall carries two weapons: a pair of twin daggers across his back and a broadsword that reaches his chin. Each piece is a reflection of its wielder - deliciously terrible and cunningly lethal.

I wish I could say building Heimdall's props was a breeze, a casual walk through the metaphorical park. Nope. Not even a little. Prop building is a skill that I find particularly challenging. Unlike sewing and armor fabrication, I'm not as familiar with the landscape of prop building. And some of my most significant hurdles are simply situation based - it's tough to work with tools and raw materials in a tiny apartment.

To approach building the props, I set some goals for each piece:

- Daggers: I wanted each dagger to be nearly identical, intricately detailed, lightweight and durable.
- Broadsword: I wanted the broadsword to be wieldable, convention safe and memorable.

I started with the daggers. I decided I wanted to fabricate one dagger from pink insulation foam and then mold/cast replicas. I began by patterning, cutting, sanding, sanding, sanding and then doing some more sanding for good measure. The first dagger was too small. The second was lopsided. The third was pretty close. Using self-adhesive craft foam, I wove celtic knotwork around the hilt and handle. Then, I covered everything in Mod Podge and clear coat. I was ready to mold!



If you're wondering what a \$150 dollar molding mistake looks like, then look no further (shown here). My silicone was bust AND my master was destroyed in the process. But, I'm not one to give up so, I tried again. I sculpted dagger #4 from Free Form® AIR, wove the celtic knotwork with self adhesive craft foam and super glue, and sealed the whole

piece with clear coat (shown top). I decided to mold and cast one last time (shown bottom). The results were okay, but the resin dagger was too heavy and too big in my hand. In the end, I sculpted a fifth dagger and sealed it with Epsilon Pro.

The reason I bring up my journey of pitfalls is to provide some transparency to the process. A finished product is amazing to look at, but it doesn't really share the journey of the cosplayer. Just like looking at a tutorial - you never really get a sense of how much time someone can spend working *in the wrong direction*. I have a real gift for this.

With the broadsword, I had concerns about weight, safety and durability. Alongside those concerns, I really wanted the beauty of the piece to resonate with fans. I created a pattern in Inkscape and then constructed the sword from L200 foam with an MDF core and Free Form® AIR blade. The hilt was adorned with self-adhesive craft foam. All edges were sanded smooth with a rotary tool. For the handle, I sanded the MDF into shape and then finished the pattern with more self-adhesive craft foam. The whole piece was sealed with Epsilon Pro. Just like the daggers, every fabrication step was sandwiched between hours of sanding - my neighbors hate me and my power sander now. Altogether, the sword weighs less than 5 lbs. This convention will be a true test of its durability.



Coloring Outside the Lines: Painting & Weathering

Ve Neill, esteemed judge of the award-winning SyFy show, Face Off, will be the first to admit “a good paint job can save a bad piece.” To show my fandom of Heimdall, I wanted to create a high quality costume that also boasted a stunning paint job. I didn’t want to, as Ve might say, “save a bad piece,” instead, I wanted my paint to highlight the craftsmanship of my work. I also wanted my painting to tie everything together - the costume, armor and props. Small order, right? I thought so too.

To start, I sealed all my fabricated pieces with Plasti-dip. After three thorough coats and a 24 cure, I used rattle can metallic gold as a base coat for the armor (shown top). The gold was a great color, but it muted all the detail I had painstakingly added, so I used Jacquard Lumiere paints to add highlights, lowlights and weathering effects.

In my mind, Heimdall is a warrior in every sense of the title. He is fastidious in both duty and care for the tools of his trade. I was leary to over-weather the armor because I could easily envision Heimdall caring for his own with precision and diligence. Any damage or grime would be minimal - polished clean and mended. So, instead of heavily weathering each piece I decided to use a cel shading technique to make the intricate details stand out. You can see the difference in the unfinished and finished sabatons (shown lower left).

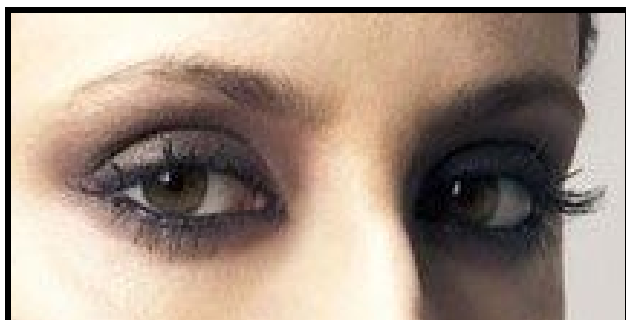
In Thor: The Dark World Heimdall’s helmet is uniformly flat gold. I wanted to honor the work of the Wendy Partridge, the lead costume designer, but I also wanted the costume to look cohesive. I settled on adding small highlights, lowlights and weathering, but to a much smaller extent than the rest of the armor. I started with a rattle can gold base coat (shown bottom, middle) and then used the same Jacquard Lumiere paints to gently build up subtle colors, layers and textures (shown lower right).

The last pieces I painted and weathered were the weapons. After finishing construction of the twin daggers and the sword, I used Mod Podge and Epsilon Pro to seal each surface. And then, more of my favorite: sanding. Until the end of time. For all eternity. Until each blade was smooth and ready for primer and, more sanding! When I was satisfied with each piece, I used a combination of spray paint and acrylic paint to lay down base layers of color. Then, I went back over each piece with acrylic paint to complete the weathering.





Masterful Mimicry: The Look of Heimdall



One look at Heimdall and you can tell, he isn't a make-up kind of guy. So, my challenge was to translate Heimdall's natural, fierce look into the slightly softer, yet equally unyielding feminine form.

It's important to note here that I have never been intimidating in my entire life.

Cute? Check.

Sweet? Check.

Stern? Maybe...on a tough day...in the right lighting.

And, since I'm typically shorter than everyone around me, I've never really found it necessary to make myself seem larger than life.

I approached the hair and makeup of Heimdall with two goals:

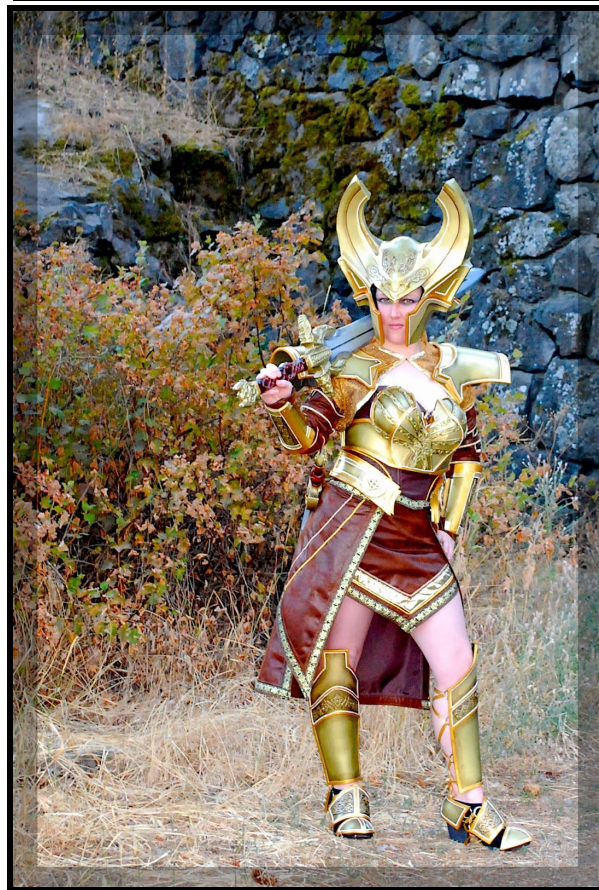
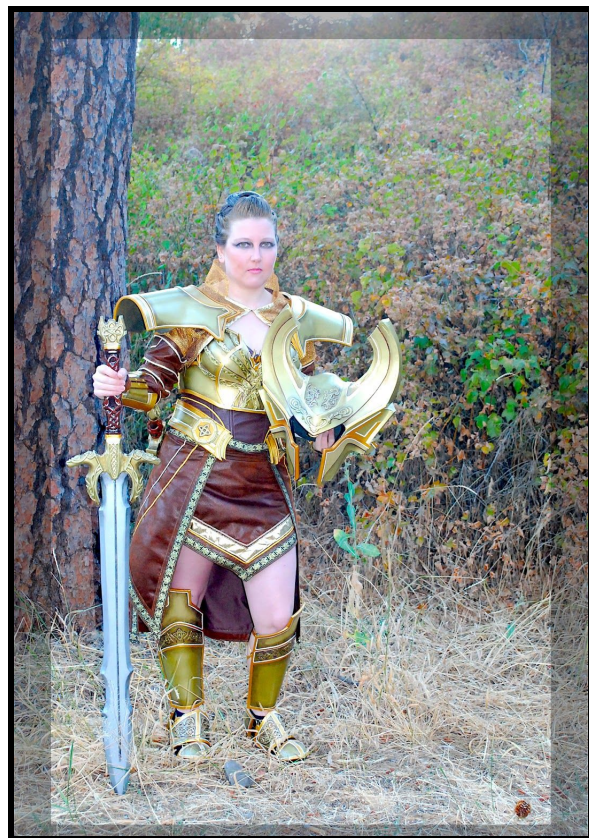
- It needed to be easy to apply/style and wear all day.
- And it shouldn't be the first thing people see. Rather, it should be an Easter egg uncovered upon closer inspection. Remove the helmet and ta-da!...an imposing female Heimdall!

I drew my inspiration from a couple of darker looks floating around the hair/makeup tutorials on Pinterest. For my face, I stuck with my natural ivory foundation, using contouring and highlighting to create the illusion of cheekbones. I'm pretty round-faced (think hamster with cheeks full of food) so I contoured liberally. I opted for a natural lip and decided to focus my energy and attention on my eyes. I used a deep smokey look all around my eyes and contrasted the dark hues with bright gold inner lid liner.

I normally wear my hair short and unstyled. My natural tresses are mousy brown with a wild wave down one side. Definitely not intimidating. To create Heimdall's look, I twisted my hair into small cornrows along the side of my head. Drawing inspiration from Katheryn Winnick's character from Vikings, Lagertha (shown right), I added a bouffant mohawk to create depth (and, cushion for my helmet). Finally, I tousled the remaining strands into a tangle of waves. To help hold the form, I used Manic Panic NYC Dye Hard temporary hair color and styling gel in glam gold. The messier the golden tangles, the better!



Tying up Loose Ends: The Finished Costume



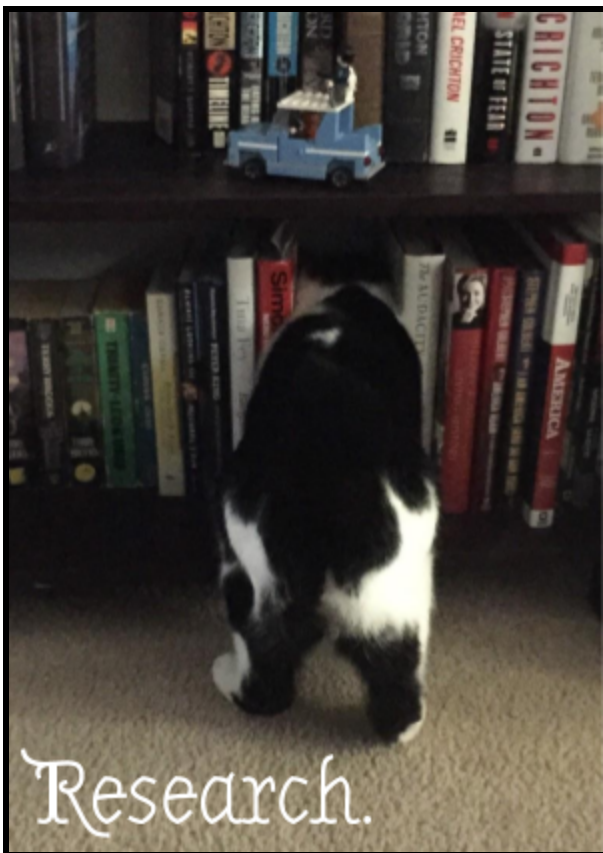
It's important to have help in every step of the cosplay process...



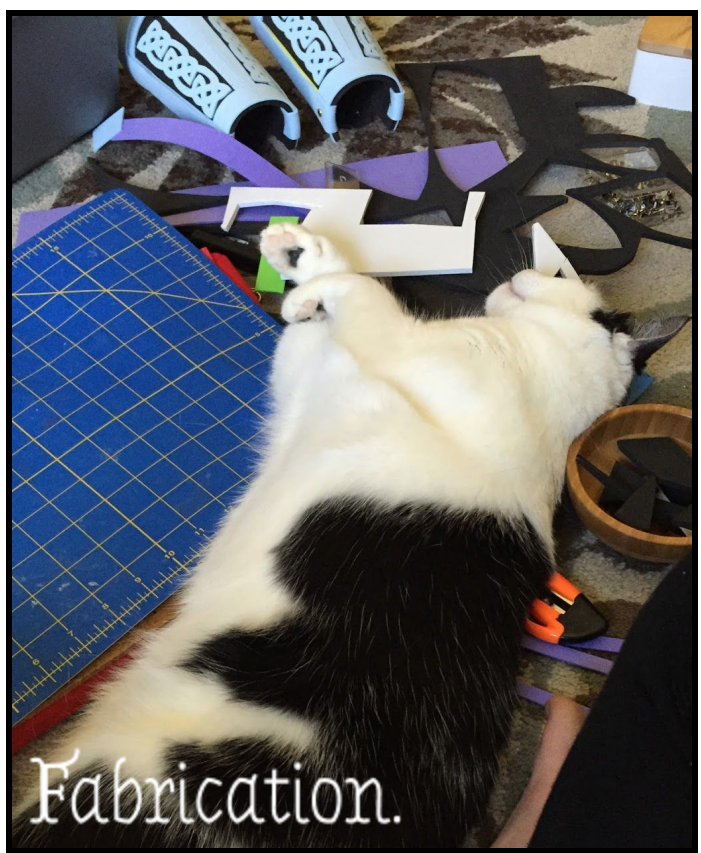
Prototyping.



Painting



Research.



Fabrication.

Heimdall:

Guardian of Asgard



Cosplayed by Krísty Podelnyk