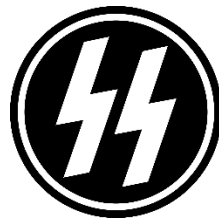


Camouflage & Dioramas

Waffen SS







*Faith
that will give you courage
to face the darkest allies of your fear.*





Preface

The camouflage of the Waffen SS is an interesting and intriguing subject. It continues to intrigue to this day and is interesting to study and collect.

The camouflage was applied to garments in the Waffen SS. I show these in various illustrations from my own collection as well as collected diorama illustrations.

Some of the illustrations are photographs of equipment items from my own collection and other copies from various books.

With protection of the individual soldier in mind, the German army introduced a camouflage tent material in the early 1930s. It was the second army in the world to incorporate this idea into production. The material presented a brown, green and tan printed fabric which, in principle, would blend with the landscape. Originally, the Italian army created the first brightly colored camouflage tent in 1929. It should be noted that the design, model, and shape of this material was not modified until 1982.

From 1935 the Waffen SS operated its own sphere of camouflage. Various designs were created by a celebrated German artist. All of the original models were reversible from summer to fall colors.





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Introduction

Aside from the Stahlhelm, the Tarnjacken (Smocks) of the Waffen-SS are probably the most iconic of all WWII German uniform items. They were cutting-edge for their time. Many armies didn't adopt universal camouflage until the 30 or 40 years later. The smock was designed in the late 1930's by a team of military officers and artists. Development of the camouflage patterns continued until the last days of WWII. Testing began in 1938 with members of the SS-VT. Positive feedback resulted in the smocks becoming general issue by the French Campaign in 1940. The SS Bekleidungswerk (later Texled) received a rush order for 50,000 smocks in April of that year.

Over the course of the War, the Waffen SS attempted to equip most of their front line combat troops with the smocks. The Panzer Divisions were largely successful in this task, while the Panzergrenadier, Gebirgsjager and Freiwillige units were only partially able to do so. Some were also issued to the Hermann Goring Division in 1942, and a few members of the Polizei Panzer companies apparently received them.

Smocks were made from the same reversible poplin cloth as the zeltbahns, helmet covers, and camo caps. A few later models were made from HBT but only in Oak Leaf or Blurred Edge camouflage. Not "44 dot". There are two main patterns of SS Smocks, each with a couple of variations. Both were baggy, pull-over garments, designed to be worn over the field tunic as well as the greatcoat. The first pattern, introduced in 1938, and altered slightly in 1940, was intended to be worn over the fieldgear. Thus, the elastic waistband was placed low on the skirt, to wrap under the cartridge belt. Two vertical openings were provided in the chest so the soldier could access his ammunition. This was rapidly proven to be more effort than it was worth, so most troops quickly switched and wore their gear outside the smock.

In 1942, several changes were made. Realizing that it was more practical to wear the gear outside the smock, the vertical openings were eliminated. The waistband was raised and two slash pockets were placed below it. Small loops, grouped in threes, were added around the shoulders for attaching foliage. Later smocks had the waistband lowered several centimeters and others had the pockets angled like those on the winter parkas.

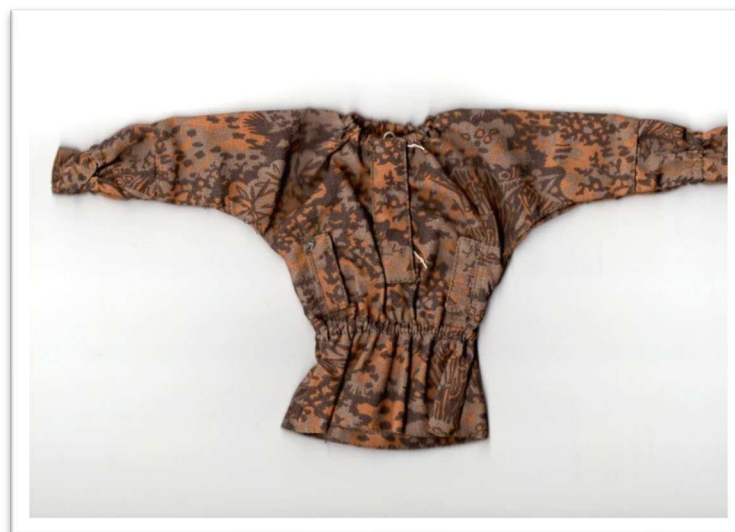
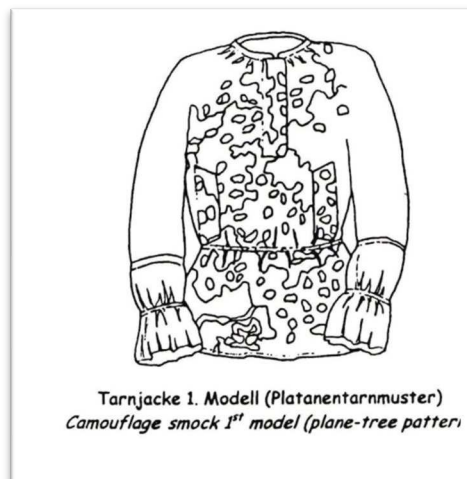
Size. I have measured over 50 original smocks. They are very consistent in size- they vary by no more than 2 inches. The chests are 54-56" around and the "wingspan" (cuff to cuff of the sleeves) is 72-74 inches. The smock was not a fitted garment. Small, short soldiers often appear to be wearing camouflage dresses. The design offers good freedom of movement and ample room for clothing underneath.

1. Waffen SS Camouflage garment

1.1. Production

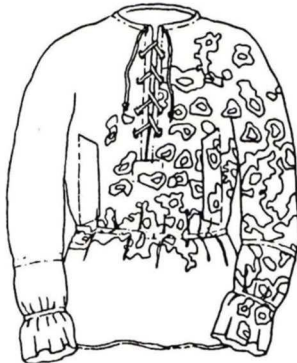
After much research, my hypothesis is that the majority of SS Smocks were made by one company. Texled. How do I make such a ludicrous claim? Simple math. An interview with several former inmates, published by the Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, reveals that the daily quota of Tarnjacken at Texled was approximately 3,000. By the end of the War, it was nearly 5,000. The Waffen SS had roughly 1 million troops over the course of the War- only the frontline combat troops received smocks. Even at the early War rate of 3,000 per day, Texled could have supplied every member of the Waffen SS with a smock in less than a year. In reality, I suspect less than 500,000 were made, putting this number easily within the capabilities of the firm. SS smocks exhibit a consistency in construction, rarely seen in other garments- sewing machine type, thread color, and pattern. It is my opinion that most, if not all, were made by this company.

1.1.1. M38 Smocks



1.1.2. M40 Smocks

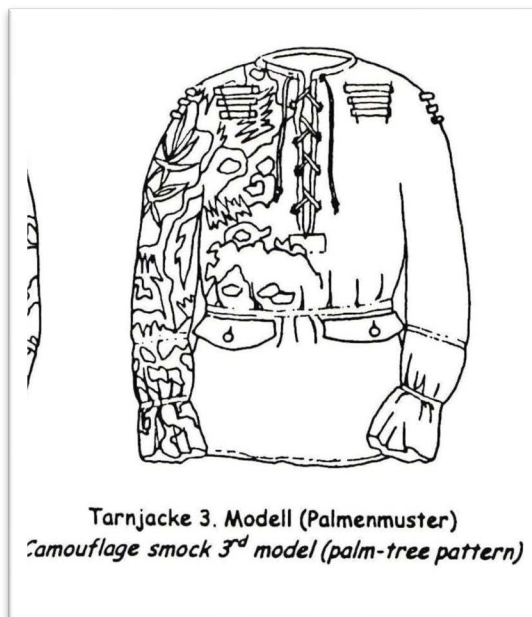
Tarnjacke 2. Modell (Eichenlaubtarnmuster;
Camouflage smock 2nd model (oakleaf pattern)







1.1.3. M42 Smocks



I have personally come to wonder whether "M42" is a misnomer. If introduced in 1942, it was very late indeed. After examining several hundred photos of the Kursk Offensive in July, 1943, I found only one M42 smock even at that point. And most of II SS Panzer Korps had recently been refitted so one could assume they would have had the newest gear. Regardless, most Living History events are only concerned with the period after June 5th, 1944 and by early 1944, the M42 was the predominate camo smock.

1.1.4. M42 type 1

Plane tree 5/6



Oak leaf



Overprint ½, 1944



Early Plane Tree



Details:



1.1.5. M42 Smock, Early Plane Tree

This pattern is actually unnamed. The only other example we have found in any reference is a camo cap in the Beaver books. However, the cap was too small to notice that this is an oddball pattern. It's similar to the "Ployspot" Plane Tree, but still different. Like other plane trees, this pattern is hand screened, and the repeat is very long. However, like only Polyspot and Lateral variants, there are no Zeltbahn cuts lines or numbers. The sleeves, flaps, placket and pocket facings are made from 5/6 plane tree which at first confused

many collectors when this thing turned up. Aside from the camouflage, this mint condition smock is typically textbook in pattern and assembly. Selvedge elbow seams, 6mm double needle flat felled sides, charcoal thread, etc, etc.

1.1.6. M42 Smock, 5/6 Plane Tree

Nice, typical Wartime smock that has seen some action. The camo loops have been removed, which is very commonly encountered. If you have ever worn a smock, you know why. The loops snag every branch and bush when one moves through the forest.









1.1.6. M42 Smock, Type I 1944 Production

At first glance, this smock appears to be a typical M42 Type I. However, it has several changes of interest. Firstly, I am able to date this one since it some parts are made from 44 dot HBT. It is likely made at Ravensbruck which made both smocks and 44 dot. The main change is that the waistband has been lowered several inches- note that it no longer ties in with the placket. This is a much more practical position- the and on most smocks sits on the wearer's ribs- which is probably the reason that so many soldiers cut the elastic.

Less obvious are several variations in the construction. The camo loops are made on a 2 needle belt loop machine- rather than a single needle with a folder. This is actually a better quality loop. The waistband, in addition to being lower, is now sewn on the green side of the jacket.