

FASHION IN CINEMA: REFRAMING THE FIELD

Marketa Uhlirova

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Abstract

In this critical appraisal I set out to demonstrate my contribution to the field of fashion in cinema, and use the particular interdisciplinary scope of my work as a lens through which to reframe this field. As many have argued already, problems of fashion and costume in cinema have traditionally been overlooked and marginalised within cinema as well as fashion studies. Here I show not only that it is now a thriving area of research but also that it can – and indeed should – be recast as a more complex and dynamic field that reflects a wider array of activity within the academy (also including cultural studies, visual studies, media studies and art history) and without (including fashion and film curation and cultural production). My submission combines curatorial and textual work – three Fashion in Film Festivals and associated publications, plus three articles on fashion film – which, taken together, bridge historical, theoretical and practice-based enquiry. Throughout the appraisal, I seek to demonstrate that I have created a unique interface between academic fields and non-academic practices, at times collapsing such distinctions altogether. I argue that the particular interdisciplinary junctures I have orchestrated have led me to produce (and stimulate, through collaboration) new theoretical and empirical knowledge in the context of scholarship, and simultaneously to challenge, via curatorial interventions in the public domain, wider orthodoxies in the realms of fashion communication as well as fashion and film exhibition. My work has consistently aimed to broaden the understanding of the interactions between fashion and cinema, exploring these across the late-nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. More specifically, it has sought to highlight specific problems of fashion's representation and performance in cinema that had been

previously neglected or underdeveloped. Through a combination of archival research, curation and historical-theoretical enquiry, I have offered new perspectives in fashion, cinema and visual studies, above all by extending the analysis of dress to non-narrative cinema forms (commercials, newsreels, fashion films, artist and experimental films, early cinema), and by highlighting intermedial connections between fashion, cinema and other areas of popular visual culture (dance, theatre, magic theatre). With this shift of focus, I have helped reconsider the cinema studies debate on the dichotomy of spectacle and narrative (and fashion's position within) by moving it away from conceptualisations that take for granted the dominance of narrative cinema, and aligning it with early and experimental cinema scholarship which has explicitly challenged such a hegemony.

To Christel Tsilibaris and Roger K. Burton.
And to Everyone who Contributed to the Fashion in Film Festival.

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Acknowledgements

Doing PhD by Published Work is a bit like digging up old graves, as Esther Leslie recently put it to me. It can be surprisingly excruciating because, after all, these are not just any old graves but *one's* old graves. I certainly approached the assignment with a mix of trepidation and curiosity that, indeed, seemed morbid at times. Colleagues and casual acquaintances who went through this process before me – suddenly springing up from everywhere – have largely commiserated, eyes rolled upwards, typically offering memories of how awkward it was to have to deal with aspects of their own work that now seemed somewhat dated, even wrong. Yet, I found it just as unsettling to experience those flashes of panic upon realising that I was possibly smarter then than I am now (only to confirm there is no such thing as progress). That said, the process has been incredibly enriching overall: it has allowed me to take stock of, consolidate and better understand a body of my work with a strong common root yet fanning out in all sorts of directions; it has forced me to situate and rationalise my research interests more explicitly than I had ever had to, and, in doing so, to consult much new writing from across different fields; and finally, it has made me re-read texts I had assumed I knew already – something that proved humbling as well as rewarding when I realised how much I had missed the first time round.

There are many I want to express my gratitude to for their support throughout the period of writing this work: first and foremost I thank my supervisors Oriana Baddeley, Ian Christie and Roger Sabin for their guidance, critical rigour, insights and, last but not least, for expanding my vocabulary by a new word – *PhDness*. Sharing half-baked ideas with others can be

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I am immensely grateful to Faye Morey for her life-saving assistance with scanning vast amounts of Fashion in Film Festival-related material, and for her talents in helping me lay out, with stoical patience, the three digital portfolios that form part of this submission. I thank Ruth Massey and Peter Close for their assistance with all matters of language: not only did both proof-read my drafts with great attention to detail, catching a number of errors and typos, but they also suggested stylistic changes that I am sure make this a better read. Finally, thank you to my family: to my partner Joe Hunter and our two princes Otto and Edgar for putting up with me when I was there but not really there, and for their love and mischief (all along, Edgar has thought a PhD is some kind of place one goes to – ‘Mum is *at* her PhD’ – and he is probably right about that), to Hana and Karel Uhler, and John and Jill Hunter; and to the following dear friends and colleagues for their much-needed moral support: Renate Stauss

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List of Works Submitted

Digital Portfolios

no. 1: *The 1st Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma*. (FESTIVAL)

no. 2: *The 2nd Fashion in Film Festival: If Looks Could Kill*. (FESTIVAL)

no. 3: *The 3rd Fashion in Film Festival: Birds of Paradise*. (FESTIVAL)

no. 4: Tsilibaris, Christel & Marketa Uhlirova (eds.). 2006. *Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma*. London: Fashion in Film Festival. (CATALOGUE)

no. 5: Uhlirova, Marketa. 2013. '100 Years of the Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories'. *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 17, 2: 137–157. (ARTICLE)

no. 6: Uhlirova, Marketa. 2013. 'The Fashion-Film Effect'. In: D. Bartlett, S. Cole and A. Rocamora (eds.), *Fashion Media: Past and Present*. London: Bloomsbury: 118–129. (ARTICLE)

no. 7: Uhlirova, Marketa. 2014. 'Fashion Film and the Photographic'. *Aperture* 216 'Fashion Issue'. Fall: 58–60. (ARTICLE)

Hard Copy Submissions

no. 1: Uhlirova, Marketa (ed.). 2008. *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Images of Fashion, Crime and Violence*. London: Koenig Books. (BOOK)

no. 2: Uhlirova, Marketa (ed.). 2013. *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle*. London: Koenig Books. (BOOK)

Introduction

In this critical appraisal I argue that my contribution to knowledge has been to shed new light on the relations between fashion and cinema, by creating a new interface between a range of fields and practices. The body of work submitted combines two aspects of my practice, curating and scholarly writing, both of which have been concerned with conceptualising different junctures between fashion, cinema and wider visual culture. Curating has been especially central to my work, as a framework for enabling interactions between fields and disciplines, both academic and non-academic. It has made possible a series of probes and provocations within a range of contexts, while also making me attuned to current creative practices and the film archive as a vital site of discovery and critical reflection. As both a curator and scholar – roles that I see as intertwined – I have attempted to re-draw the boundaries of the territory, re-orient enquiry beyond restricted bodies of cinema, and overcome entrenched hierarchies and their implicit cultural assumptions.

Interrogating how fashion and dress interact with cinema, my work has been *interdisciplinary* by design. It has, however, never been restricted to the ‘prescribed’ areas of fashion and cinema studies alone. It has also variously drawn on the knowledges, concepts and methods of media studies, cultural studies, visual studies, art, theatre and dance history, as well as considering artistic and fashion industry practices as highly relevant forms of knowledge production. I hope to show that this unusually plural interface has generated novel insights, created new tensions and, at times, redefined the nature of the problems to be explored. One factor that undeniably provoked a revision of my chosen field was the new context of a transforming fashion culture in the digital age. The new millennium saw the fashion industry

gradually embrace digital technologies in many of its aspects, from design and manufacture to dissemination and consumption. Static and moving digital fashion imagery and other ‘new media’ forms soon proliferated at a rapid pace, co-existing and variously converging across a range of platforms both on- and offline. This complex and intense multimedia reality, with fashion film as one of the newly visible forms, prompted me to push beyond the horizons of existing thinking about fashion in cinema, and, later, to adopt another critical approach based on the idea of border-crossings – *intermediality*. For it was one thing to create new interdisciplinary configurations between different fields to uncover and interpret new connections between fashion and cinema, but it was another to consider the extent to which these were themselves entangled with other media forms outside of the cinema, sometimes to the point of hybridity (as exemplified by fashion film).

One of the main concerns of this critical review, then, is to demonstrate what new questions and insights these two frameworks – interdisciplinarity and intermediality – have enabled. Combining intellectual enquiry with curatorial practice, I position my work not only within academic debates but also within the context of creative cultural production, and I argue that it has established a framework in which history, theory and practice can closely interact. I analyse my theoretical grounding and methods, the research undertaken and the principal findings vis-à-vis existing knowledge and debates. Broadly, my work has been concerned with two areas: firstly, the analysis of different aspects of fashion’s staging and representation in cinema, from historical and theoretical problems of how clothing and fashion perform in film, to aspects of costume design, character styling and art direction; and secondly, a critical interrogation of the digital fashion film, and especially questions of its (multiple) histories and intermedial contexts. Historically, my work has spanned the entire 120 years of cinema’s

existence as well as some of its 'pre-history'. Throughout, I have gravitated towards the theoretical concept of the 'cinema of attractions', referring primarily to early cinema's 'attractional', non-narrative mode of (re)presentation (Gunning 1986; Gaudreault & Gunning 2006), as a highly relevant category for an analysis of fashion in cinema.

Much of the work submitted was carried out under the umbrella of the Fashion in Film Festival, which I co-founded in 2005 with curator Christel Tsilibaris and costume designer and curator Roger K. Burton. Embedded from the start in the university context of Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London), the festival remains a unique curatorial project internationally to probe the relationship between fashion and cinema through sustained, focused scholarly enquiry anchored in archival research. Its interdisciplinary approach has to a great extent reflected its most immediate art college context (Central Saint Martins is itself home to a great mix of disciplines that together bridge practice, history and theory), as well as the support of diverse other academic and non-academic institutions.

In its 10-year run the festival has grown an international profile, establishing itself as the leading cultural venture of its kind. Its highlight has been a biennial festival season in London, hosted by a mix of prominent cinema and arts venues (London's ICA, Tate Modern, BFI Southbank, Barbican Centre and The Horse Hospital), with a touring schedule which has included further prestigious venues nationally and internationally (including Bristol's Arnolfini, New York's Museum of the Moving Image and Copenhagen's The Danish Film Institute). The festival has also been invited to contribute special film installations and projects to exhibitions and other non-cinema spaces (Victoria and Albert Museum's Library, 2008; Vienna Design Week, 2008; Arnhem Mode Biennale, 2011). The festival has published

two books with Koenig Books/ Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, one of the most influential arts and design publishers internationally with a strong scholarly strand, and self-published two catalogues (one of them as an e-book available online: Evans & Uhlirova 2014). It has been funded by an array of public funders nationally and internationally (including Film London, Arts Council England, British Council, and Arts & Business in the UK, and National Endowment for the Arts in the US), as well as commercial sponsors (including Oasis, Kirin Ichiban and Bond no. 9).

As the festival's director and chief curator, I was responsible for formulating the concept of each project, leading the intellectual agenda, shaping the scope and inviting involvement by others; the programming itself was then done collaboratively with the festival co-founders, and/or a small group of guest-curators. Conceived as a forum for debate, the festival has all along had a strong conversational ethos, putting great emphasis on symposia, panel discussions, new artist commissions as well as lectures and film introductions. Both the curatorial and the conversational aspects were then also carried through to accompanying publications, which I edited (or co-edited) with the aims to further expand on the research questions posed by the programmes, and to embed the issues raised by the programmes within critical scholarly debate.

Specifically, the PhD submission comprises three film festivals accompanied by catalogue/book publications, and, in addition, three texts on fashion film, two of which were published in peer-reviewed publications, and the last in a specialist photography magazine. These exhibitions and publications do not constitute the full scope of my work in the field of fashion in cinema. Rather, they have been brought together because they constitute a body of

work that best illustrates my effort to conceptually broaden this field and enrich our understanding of how cinema, fashion and costume intersect. What follows is a brief outline of each work submitted, in chronological order (I then revisit all of these works in greater detail in chapter 3):

1. *The 1st Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma* (14–27 May 2006) was a 14-day programme hosted by London's ICA, Ciné Lumière and The Horse Hospital, and later touring Kino Světozor, Prague (27–28 September 2006), Museum of the Moving Image, New York (17–25 March 2007), and Arnhem Mode Biennale (15–17 June 2007). It was co-curated by Christel Tsilibaris and myself, with guest curators Roger K. Burton, Alistair O'Neill, Ed Barber and Adrian Garvey; and David Schwartz in New York. The programme explored how fashion is represented in film, as an industry, a culture and an idea. It comprised 60 films and videos representing different kinds of moving image from across the history of Western cinema, including documentaries, artist and fashion films, avant-garde and early films. The festival also brought to light a number of previously unseen advertising and newsreel films, based on archival research Tsilibaris and I conducted in the UK (BFI, Imperial War Museum), USA (Library of Congress, MoMA), Italy (Archivio Storico Istituto Luce), and the Czech Republic (Národní filmový archiv), supplemented by online research (Prelinger Archives, Pathé-Gaumont Archives and British Pathé). The festival was accompanied by a printed catalogue, published and distributed by the festival (Tsilibaris & Uhlirova 2006). It featured 23 essays by 20 prominent art, cinema and fashion scholars, including Charles Musser, Lynda Nead, Stella Bruzzi, Pamela Church Gibson and Alistair O'Neill. (For more detail on the festival and to view the catalogue, see digital portfolios nos. 1 and 4).

2. *The 2nd Fashion in Film Festival: If Looks Could Kill* (10–31 May 2008), co-curated with Associate Curator Christel Tsilibaris and a group of guest curators, was a 3-week programme hosted by London's BFI Southbank, Ciné Lumière, ICA, Tate Modern and The Horse Hospital, and later touring Arnolfini, Bristol (28–30 November 2008) and Museum of the Moving Image, New York (4–13 May 2012). The programme comprised 28 films from film archives internationally, seven new artist commissions, a lecture and a symposium, as well as numerous film introductions and debates. It interrogated cinematic representations of fashion, crime and violence. The curation grew out of my extensive primary research in film archives in Spain (Filmoteca Española), Czech Republic (Národní filmový archiv), USA (Library of Congress), Germany (Bundesarchiv, Deutsche Kinemathek), UK (BFI) and France (The Cinémathèque Française), as well as Tsilibaris's research in Belgium (Cinematek) and France (Pathé-Gaumont Archives). Accompanying the programme was a book (Uhlírova 2008a) featuring 27 commissioned essays by international cinema and fashion scholars including Tom Gunning, Elizabeth Wilson and Román Gubern, and a section of short essays on newly commissioned artist films by curator and writer Laura McLean-Ferris. (For more detail on the festival, see digital portfolio no. 2; for the book see hard copy submission no. 1.)

3. *The 3rd Fashion in Film Festival: Birds of Paradise* (1–12 December 2010) was a major festival season, which comprised a film programme curated by myself and hosted by London's BFI Southbank, Tate Modern, Barbican Centre and The Horse Hospital, and two special projects co-curated with the festival's Associate Curator Inga Fraser: the exhibition *Hemline: The Moving Screen* at Somerset House (1–12 December 2010); and *Kinoscope Parlour*, a London-wide installation of six peephole machines (15 November – 14 December 2010). The film programme later toured New York's Museum of the Moving Image (with

curatorial contribution by David Schwartz), Arnolfini, Bristol (5–11 March 2012), and Glasgow Film Theatre (12–18 March 2012). Another iteration of the festival programme were two research seminars hosted by CUNY and co-organised with Eugenia Paulicelli (15 April and 2 May 2011), and a two-day symposium ‘Secrets of the Orient’, hosted by the Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University, and organised by Ronald Gregg, with Eugenia Paulicelli and myself (11–12 November 2011). Drawing on archival research in London, Paris, Amsterdam, New York, Bologna, Washington and Vienna, the festival explored costume as a form of cinematic spectacle and ‘special effect’ throughout the history of European and American cinema (which was then also extended to recent Asian cinema in the Yale symposium). Focusing on early costume films, 1920s–1940s spectaculars and underground queer cinema of the 1940s–1960s, the programme stressed the centrality of dress in cinema’s invocations of sensuous pleasure and poetic enchantment, and in exhibiting the medium’s basic properties such as movement, light and an aptitude for transformation. The culmination of my research was the book *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle* (Uhlirva 2013c). It comprised 13 new scholarly essays by historians of art, cinema, fashion and dance, including Giovanni Lista, Juan A. Suárez, Eugenia Paulicelli, Karl Toepfer and Catherine Hindson. Mapping a previously uncharted area of silent and queer underground cinema, the book made explicit the links between cinema and other media of popular spectacle, from dance, theatre and magic theatre to window display. (For more detail on the festival, see digital portfolio no. 3; for the book see hard copy submission no. 2.)

4. My article ‘100 Years of Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories’, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* (Uhlirva 2013b), was the result of a paper delivered at the international conference *Fashion Media: Yesterday,*

Today and Tomorrow, held at London College of Fashion on 21–22 October 2013. The article outlined a ‘preliminary history’ of fashion film where no such history previously existed. Challenging above all the fashion industry’s assertions of fashion film’s ‘newness’, the article demonstrated that the phenomenon is better framed as a heterogeneous and multifaceted form that can be traced as far back as the beginnings of cinema. The article then carefully considered fashion film within multiple contexts and fields – of fashion, cinema, new media, entertainment, experimental film, performance and, more generally, visual cultures of movement. (For the article see digital portfolio no. 5.)

5. My book chapter ‘The Fashion-Film Effect’, published in the edited anthology *Fashion Media: Past and Present* (Uhlířová 2013a), was a companion piece to the above article. The text offered one of the first theoretical treatments of fashion film, widely perceived as a new genre of fashion image-making, and a product of the digital era. The chapter assessed such positioning critically, challenging the notion of fashion film as a homogenous genre and arguing, with reference to media theories, that the digital age was a time of the form’s institutionalisation rather than emergence. Highlighting fashion film’s affinity to (still) fashion photography, it then drew parallels between recent productions and costume-led films in the early days of cinema (c. 1894–1910), which similarly introduced movement to mediate a visual world largely known from static imagery. (For the article see digital portfolio no. 6.)

6. My shorter magazine article ‘Fashion Film & the Photographic’, published in a special ‘Fashion Issue’ of the quarterly magazine *Aperture* (Uhlířová 2014), can be seen as an extended footnote to the above articles; however, I include it here because it put forward a new argument. Examining digital fashion film’s proclivity towards the ‘photographic’, the

article drew attention to specific intermedial continuities and overlaps between fashion photography and film in recent years (evident in their production, circulation and aesthetics). (For the article see digital portfolio no. 7.)

While these individual works differ in empirical focus, theoretical framework and method, they are united in a shared effort to extend the debate about fashion in cinema to new territories within fashion and cinema studies, while also directly implicating other fields within it. In addition, they are all connected in simultaneously considering problems of fashion's (re)presentation in cinema and questions of what roles cinema has played in the context of fashion. Chronologically, the works submitted span an eight-year period between 2006 and 2013, during which time the nature of the field into which I entered changed considerably. While initially the key reference points for the study of fashion in cinema were film scholarship, the costume exhibition and nascent discourses on the moving image within the fashion industry, by the end of this period there was much evidence of a keen interest in cinema by fashion historians as well as curators, not to speak of the virtual explosion of festivals and festival strands showcasing fashion film globally. At any given moment, my work was a response to this changing context, but also – I believe – one of its stimulants.

1. Fashion in Cinema as a Field

The last decade has witnessed an unprecedented surge of interest in examining the intersections between fashion and cinema, evident in numerous publications, exhibitions, conferences, and also, in 2012, the foundation of a dedicated academic journal.¹ The area has now been explored in many different ways, by many different practitioners: academics spanning numerous humanities disciplines and with a varying degree of commitment to theory, exhibitions curators, journalists as well as costume design and fashion professionals. Projects have ranged from analyses of the interrelations between cinema, stardom and consumerism, to studies of costume design and cinema's influence on fashion, to semiotic and psychoanalytical readings of costume in cinema, to critical accounts of fashion film.

Yet this recent flourishing of activity is in great contrast to the persistent marginalisation of this area of study within traditional fashion and cinema scholarships (Jobling 2013). Writing in 1996 and with particular reference to the (sparse) analysis of costume design in film theory, Pam Cook highlighted such critical neglect as 'scandalous' (1996: 8) and 'symptomatic' of a complex set of cultural ambivalences towards fashion and dress (41–63). And, as others have observed, the deep-rooted perceptions of costume as a subservient element in cinema have also not helped the issue (for a critique of this see DelGaudio 1993: 14 and Bruzzi 1997: xv). According to Jane Gaines (1990b), costume in classical realist cinema was assigned a paradoxically invisible role – the general expectation was that it would 'recede' into the cinematic illusion, resisting the temptation to 'distract' from the all-important narrative

¹ *Film, Fashion & Consumption*, edited by Pamela Church Gibson and published by Intellect.

(though this order was of course frequently disrupted). Finally, historians have been faced with the challenge of notoriously scarce historical records documenting costume and production design (Tolini-Finamore 2013: 110–11, Landis 2007: xvi).

More recently, the growing body of research projects on fashion in cinema has begun to shift perceptions within the academic mainstream, though only slowly. The apparent neglect of fashion and costume in major historical surveys of cinema,² and, in turn, the continued disregard of film as a ‘fashion medium’ among many fashion historians certainly indicate two matching blind spots. It is also worth noting that – to think in terms of academic nomenclature – there has been little sense of fashion in cinema constituting a *bona fide* field of study.

Rather, it has generally been thought of as an ‘interdisciplinary niche’ within film studies (Moseley 2005b: 2).³ Its lack of distinct identity can be directly attributed to the way in which it has evolved over the last few decades – unevenly, unprogrammatically, and from within different disciplines and practices that were sometimes at odds with each other. Writing about film as a resource for fashion historians, Lou Taylor (2002: 177) observed that the study of fashion in film is ‘deeply divided’ between theoretical and object-based approaches, referring to a gap (and a sense of antagonism) between those who pursue nuanced intellectual arguments and those who mount exhibitions of costume and focus on empirical research. This, combined with a general lack of consensus on issues as central as the demarcation of an object of study (is it costume? fashion?), begs the question of how exactly to grasp this area as

² See, for example, Abel (1994) and Salmon (2014) for two major studies that focus on important fashion film producers such as the early twentieth-century French film companies Pathé frères and Gaumont.

³ Even where it has been construed as more of an autonomous entity (Jobling 2013; Warner 2012, 2014), its horizons have again been limited to cinema studies.

a 'field': What exactly constitutes it? What are its aims and methods, key debates? Where are its boundaries? What are its theoretical foundations?

In sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's definition (1993: 72), a field is postulated as 'a structured space of positions', constituted by struggles among these positions over power and (all kinds of) capital; struggles 'which often take the form of a battle between established producers, institutions and styles, and heretical newcomers' (Hesmondhalgh 2006: 215–16). But, as Bourdieu reminds us, 'a fight [within a field] presupposes agreement between the antagonists about what it is that is worth fighting about' (73). Thus, a field establishes a common ground, a space of encounters, both conceptual and physical. Its relational dynamic catalyses interaction, with a potential for engendering cross-fertilisations and new developments. Fields are far from static, homogenous entities with universally shared values, approaches and stakes. Both cinema and fashion studies have certainly been faced with their own 'identity crises' brought about by a growing diversification in interdisciplinary approaches that went hand in hand with an increasing tendency to specialise in distinct subfields. Over the past two decades, further challenges have been posed to both by a burgeoning digital media environment, which has markedly reshaped the very industries and cultures of fashion as well as cinema. This has led some to conclude that these fields are best thought of in terms of their multiple identities (see eg Taylor 2013; Entwistle 2015; Grieveson & Wasson 2008: xxix).

More than ever, today's academic fields are fragmented in nature, with plural and frequently shifting trajectories; they are continuously being redefined from within the academy as well as

from without.⁴ With all this in mind, I want to use my own body of work on fashion in cinema, with its different facets, as a lens through which to put forward a new, more inclusive delineation of my chosen field. I propose a constellation in which academic scholarship in cinema and fashion studies is juxtaposed with a range of non-academic practices and contexts – exhibitions and publications focused on film costume; exhibitions of fashion deploying film as artefact; and finally, developments within the fashion industry. Fashion in cinema, I argue, is a composite field, located in the overlaps and interstices of a number of other fields, which I outline in the following sections. While I separate these under distinct headings, they are simultaneously being stitched together to make up a single map. The separation made between these fields serves above all the purpose of highlighting different positions held historically, although it is of course increasingly problematic to suggest that today's fields exist in isolation. Not only do they inform one another to a greater or lesser degree, but crossovers between them are routinely enacted through a variety of collective and individual projects. In the realm of fashion and cinema, a growing number of scholarly works (and their authors) defy being neatly positioned within either field (e.g. Paulicelli, Stutesman & Wallenberg 2017; Paulicelli 2016; Bruno 2002, 2014), and I consider much of my own work in this interdisciplinary paradigm. Similarly, the traditional separation between theory and practice no longer holds true here, as much recent museum curation has been academic in nature (in fact, often driven from within the academy), while arts and design education in general has also been increasingly academicised.

⁴ Bourdieu (1993) repeatedly refers to 'the newcomer' to describe an interventionist force in a field. I think, however, that this overemphasises the role of agents and their intent at the expense of wider contexts that so often set the ground for 'newcomers' to effect a change.

1.1 Perspectives within Cinema Studies

Within cinema studies' considerable interest in fashion and costume, perhaps the most enduring concern has been the connection between cinema spectatorship, dress, female commodification and consumerism (Allen 1980, 1990; Turim 1983; LaPlace 1987; Gaines & Renov 1989; Desser & Jowett 2000). This line of interrogation can be traced to Charles Eckert's founding text 'Carole Lombard in Macy's Window' (1978), which made a forceful case for an 'almost incestuous' (4) relation between the American economy and cinema as a means of stimulating consumer desire. In what became a much-repeated trope (see e.g. Doane 1989; Gaines 1989; Friedberg 1993), Eckert made an analogy between the cinema screen and a 'shop window', considering it as an ideal space to display and mediate a broad spectrum of merchandise among which fashion and cosmetics were singled out as especially prone to commodity fetishism. Coupled with the giant luminous screen (see also Gustafson 1982), fashion produced glamorous and seductive images that stimulated (almost invariably) female desire to possess and consume. And it is in this context of a special cross-industry relationship that the practices of product placement and commercial 'tie-ins' could flourish. Since Eckert's account of women as largely passive and submissive consumers (see Cook 1996: 46–47 for a critique), the alliance between screen fashions and consumerism has also been interpreted as potentially a liberating force for articulating modern female identities (Higashi 1994; Berry 2000), and in the context of a participatory milieu of today's 'transmedia universe' (Gilligan quoted in Geczy & Karaminas 2016: 52–53).

Related to this investigation, but distinct in its agenda, has been a body of work on costume and fashion embedded within feminist film theory and its ideological critique of cinema. First emerging in the mid-1980s, much of this scholarship has articulated positions, associated with

third-wave feminism, which sought to reclaim fashion – and the diverse identities it furnishes – as a subject vital to women’s history. Following a rejection of ‘artificial’ female adornment prevalent among second-wave feminists, it was felt that fashion had fallen into an impasse, and consequently remained ignored, if not deemed illegitimate, within the academy. This critique very much resonated with Carol Ascher’s and Elizabeth Wilson’s contemporary texts on fashion (1981 and 1985 respectively) while also responding to Laura Mulvey’s earlier – by now classic – text ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975), which had aligned women in cinema with passive spectacle. This revisionist scholarship, exemplified by Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog and their 1990 collection of essays *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, drew attention instead to fashion as a rich area in cinema studies that was in need of a critical re-evaluation. A new emphasis was placed on the positive aspects of fashion’s constructedness and artifice (‘fabrication’), with its potential for pleasure, subversion and resistance. Aligning her enquiry in cultural studies (as well as feminism), Gaines (1990a) introduced *Fabrications* as an attempt to rescue film costume from a debate that deemed it a tool of passive female spectacle and male oppression. The book has since become a significant milestone for the field, not least because it offers the first reflexive account of this area of study as such.

Feminist studies of fashion and costume in film have largely revolved around three major themes (often interlinked): firstly, the role of fashion and costume in the construction of stardom, celebrity and spectatorship (Gaines & Herzog 1985; Stacey 1991, 1994; Berry 2000; Vincendeau 2000; Moseley 2002, 2005a); secondly, the role of fashion and costume in the creation of cinematic female ‘types’ (Gaines 1990b; Turim 1994; Higashi 1994; Berry 2000); and thirdly, the role of costume (and its mobilisation of disguise and masquerade) in the

politics of representation, as an eloquent means of both, affirming and subverting various aspects of identity – gender, national, sexual, social, class or racial (Studlar 1990; DelGaudio 1993; Harper 1994; Cook 1996; Bruzzi 1997; Street 2001; Moseley 2005a).

Alongside these theory-driven investigations, there have been several important historical overviews of costume design as well as monographic studies dedicated to leading Hollywood designers. Directed at a wider public, more empirical (though not always entirely reliable) and for the most part celebratory in their tone, they remain on the margins of cinema studies. Yet, it is fair to say they have gone some way towards filling in the gaps in knowledge and providing invaluable research material for further thinking. Most notably, these have included publications by Elizabeth Leese (1976/1990), David Chierichetti (1976, 2003), Dale McConathy and Diana Vreeland (1976), Edward Maeder (1987), Regine and Peter W. Engelmeier (1997), Deborah Landis (2007, 2012a, 2012b) and Jay Jorgensen (2010, and 2015 with Donald L. Scoggins), some of which were catalogues accompanying major film costume exhibitions in museums including the MET in New York and the V&A in London. Over the last decade and a half, research into costume design has also begun to receive scholarly treatment (as in, for example, Jacobsen and Sudendorf 2000; Vogler 2007; Gaines 2011; or McLean 2016), and since 2009 has had a passionate champion in Christopher Lavery, founder and principal contributor to the website *Clothes on Film*.

Regardless of their angle, the vast majority of existing enquiries into film costume and fashion have focused on Hollywood cinema, and women within it (see, however, Hansen 1986; Bruzzi 1997; Street 2001; or Rees-Roberts 2012). As the dominant cinema and the epitome of commercial entertainment propped up by the star system, the classical Hollywood idiom has

been 'a key source of idealised images of femininity' (Stacey 1994: 9). Its visual-narrative style combining realism and escapist fantasy has created a particular economy of desire and identification, deemed especially fit for a critical undressing. But even those who looked to other cinemas – British costume drama (Harper 1994; Cook 1996), European cinema (Bruzzi 1997; Street 2001) or French cinema (Vincendeau 2000) – have largely limited their scope to narrative fiction film. Among rare exceptions have been Elizabeth Leese's 1976 book *Costume Design in the Movies*, which for the first time sketched a brief history of fiction as well as short non-fiction film directly linked to fashion design and commercial interests of salons and brands (1990: 9–17); Jenny Hammerton's 2001 book *For Ladies Only?* focusing on fashion as one of the major themes in the British Pathé cinemagazine *Eve's Film Review*; and, more recently, Eirik Frisvold Hanssen's 2009 study of colour in fashion newsreels during the silent era. For the most part, however, a whole gamut of pre-classical and non-classical cinemas have been left out, presumably because they do not readily invite the kind of ideological analysis applied to fashion integrated in narrative film.

In reaction to this limitation, the Fashion in Film Festival introduced into the debate an array of film forms that had been virtually untouched by it: avant-garde, experimental and underground film, artist film and video, documentary, industry/process film, and advertising shorts. It also showcased a variety of newsreel and cinemagazine items produced internationally between the 1910s and 1960s. The point was not only to reveal that there was a much greater wealth of material relevant to the study of fashion in cinema than had previously been considered, but also to capture the new lines of enquiry that this material opened up. Indeed, the study of these neglected cinemas brought into focus a set of problems that had been underdeveloped in previous scholarship: namely, a need for closer attention to the visual

manifestations of dress in cinema, especially to do with spectacular acts of display and performance; a need for a distinction between the *representation* and *presentation* of fashion/dress in cinema, as theorised especially in studies of early cinema (more on this in chapter 3), and, related to this, a need for an analysis that treats film costume not only as a ‘functional’ device of characterisation and plot, but also as an autonomous ‘attraction’ – as a significant, sometimes dominant, element of the mise-en-scene (cf. Bruzzi 1997: xvi–xvii, 3); and finally, a more nuanced understanding of the transformative effect that fashion and cinema have on each other.

1.2 Perspectives within Fashion Studies

Compared with their counterparts in cinema studies, fashion scholars have been strangely reluctant to interrogate the relations between fashion and cinema. They have resisted seeing cinema as a source of historical information for fashion as much as they have resisted analysing it as a *fashion medium*. Traditional histories of fashion typically referred to cinema only sparingly, if at all (again, almost invariably privileging classical Hollywood), treating it either as a means of dissemination with great mass appeal for audiences (Laver 1969; Hollander 1975/1993; Wilson 1985/2003; Breward 1995), a ‘space’ for negotiating identities (Wilson 2003: 143–5), or a source of imagery mined by fashion designers and photographers (Arnold 2001; more recently, see also O’Neill 2015 and Butchart 2016).

Though few and far between, these accounts have nevertheless recognised cinema’s impact on fashion, acknowledging its capacity to reinforce, if not always originate, new trends in dress, styles, cosmetics and mannerisms. In her 1975 book *Seeing through Clothes*, the art historian Anne Hollander argued that the movies and movie stars created a ‘common cinematic

experience' used by audiences as a reference point for their own sartorial and gestural self-expressions (1993: 344). Referring to the spread of cinema in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Hollander also suggested something more radical: film's influence on fashion, according to her, went beyond individual styles, causing a decisive shift in the perception of the female body. In providing a vocabulary of movements for imitation, from walking to dancing to moving hands, cinema created a new feminine beauty ideal in a dynamic, moving body (1993: 154).

The longstanding neglect of cinema in the field of fashion studies can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, there is the fact that, as far as the fashion industry was concerned, cinema had always been at one remove from its day-to-day business; it hadn't played as integral a role in its communications, marketing and promotion as photography and printed magazines had. Film production and distribution were rarely controlled directly from within the industry and so cinema was always perceived as a more or less separate realm. Even fashion film – a form that in many ways closely approximated the fashion magazine – came to be curiously displaced from fashion history (Uhlirva 2014: 59).

Secondly, fashion historians have been generally sceptical towards film as a reliable form of evidence. Film fashions have been largely deemed as notoriously inaccurate, as costume designers tend to take liberties with historical and geographical 'truth', creating exaggerations or mere suggestions of fashion (Hollander 1993: 295, 342; see also Gaines 1990b). Warnings have been issued especially in relation to historical costumes, which inevitably distort fashions of the era(s) represented, prone as they are to being influenced by current beauty

standards and sensibilities in dress, hair and make-up (Maeder 1987).⁵ And, much as this debate about film costume's accuracy may be a red herring for fashion history, it follows that film has been relegated outside of its remit in a broad dismissal that at the most basic level overlooks the distinction between two conceptions of cinematic dress – *costume* and *fashion* (something I address further in chapter 2). It is only in the last decade that fashion scholars have begun to turn more sustained attention to films that record and document fashion (see, for example, research projects and events such as 'Beyond Espionage: Fashion under Socialism' 2008; *Screen Search Fashion* 2009; *Fashion on Screen Study Day* 2009; Bartlett & Uhlirova 2009; Evans 2011, 2013; Uhlirova 2013b; Tolini Finamore 2013), and investigate fashion's complex relations with film costume (Berry 2000; Ganeva 2007, 2008, 2009; Uhlirova 2010; De Perthuis 2012; Tolini Finamore 2013).

There is no doubt that this shift of perspective is at least in part a result of broader cultural transformations of fashion in the digital era, with the newly prominent fashion film demanding theorisations and raising novel questions of fashion mediation. I was among a handful of scholars to have analysed the rise of digital fashion film in relation to current fashion image-making, spectatorship and commerce (Rees-Roberts 2011; Khan 2012; Needham 2013), though I have situated it historically and critically examined its generic properties and aesthetics (I discuss my particular contribution in this area in chapter 3). Contemporary fashion film is ostensibly a hybrid form (Uhlirova 2013a) and its particular incarnations and ways in which it is experienced continue to evolve with the ongoing introduction of new digital media and platforms. Witnessing this phenomenon has impacted

⁵ Similarly, as Harper (1994) and Cook (1996) show, historical inaccuracies and distortions in dress and décor were seen negatively among film critics and historians, and were generally perceived as expressions of poor taste.

on my thinking about fashion in cinema in a broader sense. If the digital has created conditions in which film could meaningfully co-exist across a range of different platforms (online, seen on various devices; in cinemas; in shops; in the street) and become interrelated with other forms (printed editorials and ad campaigns; fashion shows), could the study of historical forms of fashion in cinema be similarly opened to wider visual culture contexts?

The digital age, and especially the Internet, has also had a profound impact on another aspect of the study of fashion in cinema – that of access to the film archive. Until recently, film databases in most archives had not been publicly accessible, and where they were, they usually lacked sophisticated metadata that would make collections searchable by specialist interest. Certainly, looking back at my own experience in dealing with film archives (especially national ones), access to their databases has frequently been an awkward and delicate matter (not to mention costly), typically hinging on the cultivation of personal relationships of trust with archive curators and facilitators. Gradually, however, the large-scale (and still continuing) digitisation projects undertaken over the last two decades by archives, libraries and museums globally have instituted a new regime of greater access to historical material, including moving image works previously deemed of little value (Christie 2015). Thousands of films have now been released on DVD and later Blu-ray, and countless more migrated online, deposited on institutional as well as sharing platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and Europeana. In the process, film archives have transformed themselves into more open and sharing institutions, with many databases now also available online.⁶ Indeed, one of the indisputable benefits of digitisation for today's researchers is that they can

⁶ It is worth remembering, however, that on the whole, digitization in archives was less a result of internal institutional initiatives than external demands by cultural policy makers to make historical heritage directly benefit the public.

freely access and readily compare unprecedented amounts of material across multiple collecting institutions worldwide.

On the face of it, sustained empirical study of archival film is the one aspect that most palpably distinguishes the recent fashion scholarship on film from earlier enquiries into fashion by film scholars (on which the former has otherwise substantially drawn). But, at a closer scrutiny, it becomes evident that there is a more substantial difference in their overall approaches. Fashion scholars, keen as they have been to embed film analysis within historical narratives of fashion (as opposed to the other way round), have generally shown greater interest in connecting cinema to other non-cinematic visual cultures. Looking at the problem ‘from the opposite end’, they have moved away from film-centric narratives to demonstrate how cinema operated alongside other modern public presentations of fashion – the department store, theatre’s fashion play, the fashion show and advertising. They have considered cinema as part of the process of ‘theatricalisation’ of fashion marketing (Ganeva 2009: 126), with similarities drawn especially between the fashion show and film (Evans 2011; also Ganeva 2007, 2009). This last point is most extensively developed in Caroline Evans’s latest book on the rise of the fashion show and modelling. Here, cinema is not only examined as a means of fashion dissemination and an important source for identifying characteristic modelling styles, but, even more compellingly, it is also foregrounded as analogous, visually and structurally, to fashion’s ‘immaterial’ expressions in motion and time, such as walking, gesturing and posing (Evans 2013).

1.3 Exhibitions

Since the 1990s, the fashion exhibition has experienced an exponential boom in cities internationally, gaining in public popularity while also ascending to an increasingly prominent position within the art and design museum. This wave of interest in a previously neglected branch of the 'decorative arts' is hardly accidental, as it has coincided with a period of major interrogation of the museum's social relevance and funding structure in an increasingly uncertain economic landscape. In this milieu, the museum has legitimised fashion as a newly attractive subject, not least due to its undeniable capacity to increase visitor numbers and stimulate cultural tourism. Nevertheless, fashion's newly acquired cultural prestige and its 'sudden' public visibility has in turn raised alarm bells among some arts critics, for whom it presented hard evidence of the increasingly spectacularised museum (cf. Anderson 2000 and Foster 2015). What these critics typically fail to consider, however, is that fashion emotionally connects with audiences in their masses not only because of its glamour and spectacle but also because its objects can tell a good story.

Within the fast-expanding field of fashion curation, film has often been deployed in a bid to enliven – and indeed spectacularise – exhibitions, to some degree probably in response to recurrent criticisms of museum dress displays as being too static and graveyard-like (Loscialpo 2016: 228–9). Despite the growing interest in film, however, a willingness to recognise it as an artefact in its own right has been rather scarce. Overwhelmingly, dress has been posited as the fashion exhibition's principal object; in contrast, photography, film and magazine publications have typically taken a back seat and little has been done to reinforce their presence in the gallery space. Indeed, the fact that the otherwise progressive Centre for Fashion Curation at London College of Fashion has so far excluded film and photography

from its remit speaks volumes of this bias (see Centre for Fashion Curation web page 2017), as does the fact that Antwerp's MoMU, one of Europe's former fashion museums, does not currently consider exhibition proposals where dress is not the dominant artefact.

Though one can easily find historical explanations for such an attitude,⁷ it has certainly continued well into the digital era and has been largely shared by both curators and audiences. The fashion exhibition's endorsement of the garment with its 'aura' and 'authenticity', rooted in the habitual valuing of 'unique' physical objects over those reproduced or reproducible (Benjamin 2008),⁸ betrays an underlying assumption that dress is most adept at asserting its physical presence in space and showing off its unique aesthetic qualities, craft and materiality. Other visual media, it would appear, must be put in its service to illustrate and contextualise it.

Similarly, garments have traditionally dominated exhibitions focusing on film costume, an area that exists somewhat independently of the fashion exhibition. The interest in film costume was arguably sparked by the fashion curator Diana Vreeland whose 1974 exhibition *Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Design* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute became a blockbuster (Taylor 2002). What is highly ironic though, especially with regard to considerations of uniqueness and aura, is that a number of the costumes in this exhibition were copies made to replace lost historical originals (Martin & Koda 1993: 18–20). More recently, the dominant role of dress and the subordinate place of film in the costume exhibition has persevered, as, for example, in Deutsche Kinemathek's exhibition

⁷ Before the advancements of digital technologies it would have been technically challenging (or, with video, aesthetically limiting) to sustain continuous display of moving image in extra-cinematic contexts.

⁸ Something that disregards the fact that garments themselves are so often produced in multiples and copies.

Filmkostüme! Das Unternehmen Theaterkunst (29 March – 2 September 2007), or the V&A's major exhibition *Hollywood Costume* (20 October 2012 – 27 January 2013).

It is precisely this apparent hierarchy between garment and image that the Fashion in Film Festival sought to counter when it first launched. In fact, one of the initial incentives was to create a fashion exhibition, but in the cinema, with film as the privileged object.⁹ With particular reference to the fashion exhibition, the festival sought to emphasise film's own materiality – not in the sense of film itself as object, but rather, screened-image-as-object (Herzog 2016: 216). In this sense, the elevation of authenticity and aura admittedly returned through the back door, though here issues of materiality were closely bound with those of image quality. In 2006, cinematic projection was the best way to achieve optimal viewing conditions, especially where 35mm prints were concerned. At the time, the majority of the festival's venues were well equipped for analogue projection and prioritised analogue material over digital, as the latter could not live up to the standards of the former. This landscape has, however, changed radically in the last few years, with the standardisation of digital-only projection, and the almost universal adoption of the professionally encoded DCP as the preferred format.¹⁰

⁹ Since then, the festival has also, on occasion, staged extra-cinematic film presentations, for example the installation 'The Colour Inventory', which I co-curated with Inga Fraser at the 2011 *Arnhem Mode Biennale*, or the 2008 programme 'Beyond Espionage: Fashion under Socialism', co-curated with Renate Stauss at the National Art Library, V&A, as part of a Friday Late programme that accompanied the exhibition *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–70*. Both were opportunities for the festival to connect with new fashion and design audiences.

¹⁰ Just as most commercial cinemas have disposed of 16, 35 and 70mm projection facilities, it is interesting to observe how analogue projection has made a reappearance as something of a rarefied phenomenon. It has become a major marketing strategy – apparently successful – promising a unique encounter with film as the 'real', 'physical' object. This again demonstrates how much audiences continue to invest in the notion of the aura.

The imbalance between dress and other visual media displaying fashion has recently begun to shift, with film displays becoming increasingly prominent in exhibition scenography. Major touring exhibitions such as *McQueen: Savage Beauty* (originating at the MET, 4 May – 7 August 2011), *David Bowie Is* (originating at the V&A, 23 March – 11 August 2013), and particularly MET's *China: Through the Looking Glass* (7 May – 7 September 2015), have done much to shake up the usual object hierarchies, with giant screens blatantly dominating some of the exhibition spaces. In the case of *China*, film became central in the curator Andrew Bolton's rationale for the show, with its status further reinforced by the appointment of the celebrated film director Wong Kar-wai as the exhibition's 'artistic director'. The installation featured some daring confrontations between fashion, art and objects of popular culture, among which cinema enjoyed remarkable exposure. Still, it is interesting to note that Bolton's justification for film here was as a 'filter' through which Western fashion designers have absorbed ideas of Chineseness (Bolton cited in *The First Monday in May* 2016), something that once again affirmed the fashion exhibition's usual order of the text and its context.

The alliance between fashion and cinema has been a specific focus of a handful of curatorial projects staged before or alongside the Fashion in Film Festivals. Arguably the most wide-reaching among them was the 1998 edition of the *Florence Biennale*, titled *fashion/cinema* (21 September – 1 November 1998). Combining an international scope with manifest national interest,¹¹ it comprised seven thematic exhibitions held in seven historic venues across the city

¹¹ One of the biennale's key missions was to promote, conserve and restore several 'masterpieces' of Italian cinema, for which Italian fashion houses provided funding: nine major Italian fashion houses were each asked to select one feature film for conservation, based on a sense of aesthetic affinity between the film and the brand (Mondadori 1998: np).

of Florence. As the first major project of its kind, the biennale brought fashion and cinema together in broad terms, covering a diverse range of subjects, from costume design (*Costumes from the Oscars*) and shoes (*Cinderella*), to then-contemporary films selected for their strong visual style (*Cine-Moda*), to a retrospective exhibition of fashion and cinema (*The Last Word*). It also featured an ambitious – and prescient – exhibition of 22 newly commissioned fashion films and videos by 22 pairs of avant-garde fashion designers and image-makers, many of whom were established contributors to *i-D* magazine (*2001 Minus 3*, curated by *i-D*'s editor Terry Jones). These films were showcased in the cavernous space of Florence's disused train station Stazione Leopolda, on monitors or screens, many of which were incorporated in inventive spatial installations.¹²

Between 2003 and 2007, there were also several remarkable seasons of a Brazilian film festival *Filme/Fashion*, founded by the fashion journalist Alexandra Farah in São Paulo.¹³ With a repertory scope and a thematic approach, the festival highlighted 'film fashion' as a major expressive feature in cinema, and in some of its seasons introduced a substantial proportion of Brazilian film. Elsewhere, in France, a retrospective season *Le cinéma français des années 20: corps et décors*, hosted by Musée d'Orsay (8–24 February 2008), brought to light visually striking examples of set and costume design in French popular cinema of the 1920s. The season explored the intermingling features of exoticism, modernism and fantasy in this period, and, much like the Fashion in Film Festival, threw the spotlight on a body of film

¹² For example, Raf Simons's installation was a reconstruction of his Antwerp apartment, which also included TV monitors playing the commissioned films. For the duration of the exhibition, Simons has three teenage boys live in the space (Jones 2017). Among the creative pairs invited to contribute a film were: Gideon Koppel and Comme des Garçons, Donald Christie and Hussein Chalayan, Ellen Nolan and Veronique Branquinho, and Sølve Sundsbø and Alexander McQueen. The designers and image-makers proposed the concepts for the installations, which were then co-developed and executed in situ by the acclaimed set designer and art director Dante Ferretti.

¹³ The festival published illustrated catalogues with detailed information on the films programmed (see for example Farah 2003). I became aware of this festival only later, around 2008.

that had typically been marginalised in accounts of cinema history and applied art alike. In parallel to these initiatives, two major exhibition projects have also focused on fashion film as a rapidly expanding area of creative practice, both highlighting the seminal role British image-makers as its trailblazers: *SHOWstudio: Fashion Revolution* at Somerset House (17 September – 23 December 2009) and British Council-sponsored *Dressing the Screen* at UCCA Gallery in Beijing, China (26 October – 11 November 2012).

1.4 Fashion Industry

The Fashion in Film Festival launched its first season in 2006, at a time when fashion was on the cusp of being dramatically reshaped by advancing digital technologies. The combination of increasingly accessible media and improved conditions for online viewing and broadcasting would soon cause many sectors of the industry to embrace the digital, and develop new business strategies based on online presence and interactivity. One of the central elements of this transformation was a growing importance of the moving image in fashion communications. Perceived as a novel means of expression, film was at first explored primarily by independent designers, stylists and photographers, and from around 2008 it began to be adopted more widely by brands and fashion magazines as a device for promotion, sales and storytelling. The festival was informed by these developments, which were then at an early stage. Fashion film was being most distinctly championed by *SHOWstudio*, a website founded in 2000 by Nick Knight and Peter Saville, whose first years were characterised by a relatively broad range of experimentation probing the creative possibilities of the new media (Uhlirva 2013b). From the start, fashion film was one of the website's key editorial strands and, with the tag 'Home of Fashion Film and Live Fashion Broadcasting', is now part of its name. In systematically commissioning, producing, exhibiting and archiving fashion film,

SHOWstudio has played a critical role in establishing it as a viable means of showing fashion to a global audience, both professional and non-professional.

In response to this rising fashion-film culture, the Fashion in Film Festival aimed to connect the contemporary productions with their historical antecedents as well as other forms of filmmaking focused on clothing and fashion. It sought to stress that there were wider contexts at work, including those of commercial cinema and artist film, and to make these links explicit, it featured fashion photographers/filmmakers, designers and commentators (Jean-Francois Carly, Shelley Fox, Boudicca, Penny Martin, Dylan Jones) alongside artists (Erwin Wurm, Jack Smith, Cindy Sherman, Eloise Fornieles, Brice Dellsperger) and filmmakers (Slava Tsukerman, William Klein).

Since mid-2000s, platforms for commissioning and exhibiting fashion film have proliferated in a variety of forms, from DVD-based magazines (*FLY*), to online iterations of established fashion magazines (*Dazed Digital*, *tank.tv*, *Purple Television*), to major video channels, both curated (*Nowness*) and sharing (*YouTube*, *Vimeo*). There has also been a veritable explosion of film festivals focused expressly on the fashion, with the aim to foster creative exchange among image-makers working in the industry. Some have followed aspects of the Fashion in Film Festival's mixed-cinema approach (Diane Pernet's Paris-based *You Wear it Well* and its newer iteration *A Shaded View on Fashion Film*; Ditte Marie Lund's *Copenhagen Fashion Film*, initially an offshoot of my festival; and Constanza Cavalli Etro's *Fashion Film Festival Milano*) while others have zeroed in on contemporary fashion film only. The fashion film festival formula has become virtually ubiquitous over the past five years, spreading from

the leading fashion centres to other large cities globally, such as Berlin, Miami, San Diego, Madrid, Istanbul, Mexico City and Santiago.

2. Terms, Theoretical Frameworks and Methods

This chapter first outlines the key terms that underpin the work submitted, and that are also used in this critical appraisal: *cinema*, *fashion*, *costume*, *clothes*, *fashion film*, and *fashion in cinema*. As these are widely implicated in existing debates about fashion in cinema, it is important to clarify how my framing of them is situated within such debates, and where it departs from them. Nota bene – I have not always used these terms consistently; my understanding of them has formed and deepened over time and continues to evolve. Thus, I take this chapter as an opportunity to articulate my own grasp of them with greater precision (while not wishing to ‘fix’ them in any definitive way). In the following section I single out *interdisciplinarity* and *intermediality* as two theoretical frameworks that most consistently inform the work submitted and, I hope, help demonstrate its cohesiveness. Finally, I discuss *curating* (mostly in relation to writing) and *the archive* as two methods of critical importance to my accessing, producing and communicating new knowledge. As the meanings of both ‘curating’ and ‘archive’ have over the past decades considerably expanded and, arguably, inflated (see Steedman 2008 on the archive and Foster 2015 on curating), I think it is pertinent to explain my approach to them in some detail. All these terms, concepts and methods examined here do not, of course, exhaustively capture my approach to fashion in cinema, but I hope they do provide a structure within which to better understand my particular contribution to the field.

2.1 Cinema

I use the term *cinema* to refer to a broad array of different contexts, institutions as well as technical and material bases, which have historically enabled the production, circulation and

exhibition of moving images, both analogue and digital. Such a generous, 'post-medium' framing of the term is far from universally accepted and the question 'What is cinema?' continues to be a matter of intense disputes. There is no doubt, however, that the traditional hegemonic definition of cinema has been under attack since at least the 1960s, from emergent artistic practices of expanded cinema (Uroskie 2014). Recently, the ontological debate has escalated in response to the digital turn and its wide-reaching transformations of moving image-making and dissemination. Indeed, the digital pixel is widely seen to have delivered the final blow to any traditional notions of cinema, resulting in pronouncements of cinema's death on the one hand, and attempts to radically reconfigure its meaning on the other. New critical concepts such as *post-cinema* (Shaviro 2010; Casetti 2016; Hagener, Hediger & Strohmaier 2016) and even *extended cinema* (a reformulation of Gene Youngblood's *expanded cinema* in Biserna, Dubois & Monvoisin 2010) have been coined to designate a historical break, and to offer a new lens through which to reframe our understanding of moving image history.¹⁴ In seeking a less historically situated and more synthetic term, however, I have come full circle to 'cinema', plain and simple. My preference for this term resonates above all with recent media scholarship that gestures towards cinema's capacity to be continuously reborn and reinvented (Gaudreault & Marion 2013). In this view, 'conventional' cinema and cinema-going is displaced from its dominant position and recast as merely one of many possible forms of the moving image, now understood as a heterogeneous field with considerably broader horizons. Thus conceptualised, the term 'cinema' allows for

¹⁴ 'Moving image' has, incidentally, also been proposed as a replacement for medium-specific definitions of cinema – see Carroll (1996) – but, with its different proto-cinematic genealogies, even this seemingly neutral term is not without its vicissitudes.

likely future transformations of the field that may, again, present new challenges to the current ‘post-cinema’ *dispositif*.¹⁵

While the Fashion in Film Festival has always approached cinema in this way, it has often operated with the term ‘film’ instead, beginning with its title (a choice that was made for reasons of simplicity, and with reference to the long tradition of ‘film’ festivals). As it directly invokes a particular kind of film-object made and stored on a particular material basis (nitrate, celluloid, polyester), ‘film’ may seem a vexed and confusing term to use in relation to a festival that also showcased artist video and digital works. The same could be argued about ‘fashion film’, a term the fashion industry began spontaneously using alongside ‘fashion video’ until the latter eventually petered out. Interestingly, unlike ‘cinema’, the term ‘film’ has not undergone the same kind of critical revision and continues to be used in an inconsistent and unstable way (Herzog 2016: 215–16).

2.2 Fashion

I use the term *fashion* in a similarly broad sense, to refer to multiple and ever-changing cultures, practices and meanings of dress and appearance. In this definition, ‘fashion’ encompasses haute couture as well as street styles; processes of production, consumption and representation; and everyday embodied practices of dressing/wearing and identity construction (Entwistle 2000; Craik 2009; Davies 1994). It is both, material culture and

¹⁵ *Dispositif* is a somewhat contested and therefore open concept, defined differently by Michel Foucault, Jean-Louis Baudry, Giorgio Agamben, Deleuze & Guattari and others. Here I use it to denote an arrangement or configuration of heterogeneous elements (including technological aspects, modes of address, spectatorial positions etc.) that at any given time shape the ways in which such elements relate to one another (for a comprehensive and nuanced critical overview of the term see Kessler 2007).

a symbolic realm of meanings (Kawamura 2005). My work is for the most part concerned with the latter, exploring fashion and dress across a plethora of cultural representations, be they visual or textual. I approach fashion as a *discourse* (Foucault 2002: 120–121) – one that is historically and culturally contingent and that amply interacts with other discourses outside of itself. In other words, fashion both represents and is itself represented; it produces and transforms cultural meanings as much as it is itself culturally produced and transformed. Far from being a discrete, self-contained industry and an autonomous semiotic system, it is a far-reaching and pervasive phenomenon whose expressions have been central to, and symptomatic of, much broader social and cultural processes (Benjamin 2002; Wilson 2003; Lipovetsky 2002; Breward 2003). Fashion studies has only recently begun to fully map out the vast field of enquiry which fashion constitutes (Black et al. 2013; Rocamora & Smelik 2016), and it is in this context that my work has interrogated different ways in which fashion is constructed in cinematic texts and, in turn, the ways in which it actively shapes them.

The Fashion in Film Festival has taken a great many perspectives on the subject, in showing both narrative fiction and documentary films about fashion or subcultural milieus (*Fig Leaves*, 1926; *Blood and Black Lace*, 1964; *Model*, 1980; *Zoot Suit Riots*, 2001); films in which fashion designers created costumes in dialogue with their own practice (*Rapsodia Satanica*, 1915/17; *American Gigolo*, 1980); films developing comedic or fantastic narratives around garments (*The Gay Shoe Clerk*, 1903; *The Extinct World of Gloves*, 1982); fashion films both historical and contemporary (*Shoes from the Famous Galleries Lafayette*, 1912; *Shelley Fox 14*, 2002); films which make explicit statements about the protagonist's fashionability (*Das Spielzeug von Paris*, 1925; *The Merry Widow*, 1925); newsreels and industry films narrativising elements of the fashion industry and commerce (*Mannequins for Sale*, 1938;

Tough Stockings, 1960); propaganda films where political issues are rhetorically dressed as fashion (*Tin Hats for All*, 1941); crime and detective films where a fashionable garment is the object of crime, a murder weapon or a clue (*Desire*, 1936; *The Tenth Victim*, 1965); films which highlight the performative nature of self-fashioning (*The Devil is a Woman*, 1935; *Normal Love*, 1964; *Lupe*, 1966; *The Liberation of the Mannique Mechanique*, 1967; *Pink Narcissus*, 1971); and finally, films which foreground costume but nevertheless indirectly relate to fashion, for example, in anticipating later techniques of showing and filming the latest novelties in dress (*Annabelle Serpentine Dance*, 1895; *Transformations*, 1907). Such multiple ways of figuring fashion in cinema highlight that there is a need for greater accuracy in our understanding of terms that are key to the debate: the triad fashion – costume – clothes; and the pair fashion film – fashion in film.

2.3 Fashion – Costume – Clothes

A debate around *film costume*'s ontological difference from *fashion* emerged already during the silent era, especially its later part when the costume designer began to solidify his/her position within film studios. To this day, accounts of film costume routinely pivot around this difference. Costume design, it is generally agreed, operates on a different register from fashion: it grows out of a distinct design tradition based in a distinct industry with its own needs. If fashion encapsulates the thrill of the moment, and is – in its fundamental mutability and transience – always ready to challenge its immediate past, then costume is at a remove from such a mindset privileging the cutting edge. And it is due precisely to their difference, the logic follows, that fashion and costume have historically engaged in both productive dialogue and rivalry (Gaines & Herzog 1985; Gaines 2011; Stutesman 2011). With the professionalisation of the costume designer in the late-1920s came attempts to theorise the

métier (see, for example, Adrian 1938 and Manuel 1949). Understandably, costume designers were keen to distance themselves from fashion in a bid to stress that the thriving medium of cinema warranted a different dressmaking expertise. One of the most commonly cited points of difference between fashion and film costume was the issue of misaligned temporalities: due to cinema's longer production cycle, costume design wasn't compatible with fashion's fast pace. In popular as well as trade publications, an emergent discourse around costume design emphasised cinema's specific demands on the costume designer, from the need to construct believable characters to storytelling, to actors' physical attributes, photography or overall mood. Recently, the argument for a conceptual isolation of costume design from fashion has found its most vocal advocate in Deborah Landis, herself a practising costume designer as well as author of numerous books on the subject. While costume is not in her view an autonomous field (because dependent on film production), it is certainly autonomous from fashion (2007: xvi; 2012a: 8).

Isolating specific aspects and processes of costume design from those of fashion design, such discussions have had great methodological import. Perhaps most significantly, they have carved out room for this much-overlooked field to be studied and appreciated in terms of its own industrial contexts. They have shown how costume design contributes to the shaping of a film's overall aesthetic, reinforcing narrative progression and heightening drama and emotion while, crucially, situating characters and underscoring their own changing psychological states. They have also shed light on the creative processes and motivations of the costume designer, for whom photographic aspects of clothed bodies overshadow problems such as production quality or a wearer's experience.

There are, however, issues with any rigorous divorcing of costume from fashion, not least because positing the two as binary opposites threatens to ignore the true complexity of their interrelations. At its most basic, what gets overlooked is that the category of costume does not always apply to the ‘raw material’ of dress that cinema shows. Film also presents fashion *as* fashion. This is mostly true for non-fiction film forms such as newsreels, documentary film, industry film and advertising. Yet, on closer inspection, it can also be the case with fiction film. *The Kidnapping of Banker Fux* (1923) and *The Ambassador’s Daughter* (1956) are two examples of narrative-driven film, in which a couturier – in this case, Paul Poiret and Christian Dior respectively – was invited to explicitly present his current fashion collection as a diegetic fashion show (Uhlirva 2008b; Delpierre, de Fleury & Lebrun 1988). Not only did these films showcase clothing as current fashions, but they also cleverly deployed them in their marketing campaigns.

If today’s costume designers will typically insist that their process begins with the script and character description, this was not always the case. As has been demonstrated in the case of Hollywood cinema of the silent and early sound periods (Tolini Finamore 2013; Berry 2000), great attention was paid to the *fashionability* of costumes, seen to be as central to a star’s on-screen image as fashion was off-screen. Such considerations routinely impacted on the kinds of characters and narratives that appeared on film. Though Poiret’s and Dior’s blatantly self-referential displays are rare in fiction film, fashion was often functionally integrated into narratives, with its presence not only made apparent cinematically but also advertised through affiliated media, especially fan magazines and later television. Various practices of interweaving between fashion and cinema have been well documented, from silent era actors and actresses sourcing their own film wardrobes at salons and dressmakers (Chierichetti 1976;

Gaines 1990b) and the tradition of inviting fashion designers to design or supply clothing for film (Leese 1976; Harper 1985; Bruzzi 1997; Farah 2003; Tolini Finamore 2013; Laverty 2016), to underground filmmakers' creative improvisation with second-hand fashions (Gregg 2013; Suárez 2013), shopping sequences featuring fashion houses and brands (Jeffers McDonald 2010), actresses' self-presentations on the red carpet (Church Gibson 2012), and other structured systems of cooperation between the two industries, including product placement and commercial tie-ins mentioned in chapter 1. The success of such practices has been predicated on the idea that a costume's fashion-display capacity can work in tandem with its function to construct a character, even if this is not always a harmonious marriage.

Another issue with costume analyses such as Landis's, focused as they are on authorship and the creative processes of design, is that they tend to eclipse other important lines of enquiry. Left out are above all considerations of costume's performance in motion and time, and its signification and meaning within the filmic text. Indeed, it is at the level of reading that the fashion–costume divide routinely collapses. As Hollander noted with reference to early twentieth-century fashion plays, 'people went ... to see clothes, not costumes' (1993: 345). In other words, it was enough for costumes to give a convincing impression of voguishness, or make a style statement (which could also signal new trends); their lack of 'authentic' origin or accuracy in fashion terms did little to stop them from being admired and imitated off screen. Older discourses of 'cinema fashions' were based precisely on such intertextuality, inherited from the theatre and reappearing throughout the history of film and television (including recent productions such as *Sex and the City*, 1998–2004; *The Devil Wears Prada*, 2006; or *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, 2009). As has been argued from various vantage points, cinema has gone far beyond merely disseminating contemporary fashions, creating instead a parallel

fashion system of sorts (Eckert 1978; Gaines & Herzog 1985; Stutesman 2011). For the Fashion in Film Festival, fashion has always provided a reference point against which to examine costume – and vice versa. The festival has approached both as repositories of styles, symbolic languages, objects of popular fascination and, last but not least, sensibilities that inform one another.

To complicate things yet further, there is another realm of dress in film, which does not quite fit either category of costume or fashion, and which I will call simply *clothes*. To be sure, clothes is a broad and general term whose meaning partly overlaps with both fashion and costume. But in this particular case I use it to establish a conceptual differentiation from the hallmark qualities of fashion and costume – fashionability and characterisation respectively – to highlight instances where clothes are foregrounded more simply as *things*. There are many cases where clothes figure as important signposts in film narrative or, elsewhere, they find themselves at the centre of aesthetic, material or poetic explorations. Not that the signifying processes involved in reading fashion-fashionability and costume-characterisation are completely absent here (indeed, they are still manifest) but, rather, they become secondary. The Fashion in Film Festival has explored such instances extensively. Its 2006 season *Between Stigma and Enigma* drew attention to films in which clothes were often separated from their wearers, deliberately divorced from their normal functionality and shown instead as objects of wonder, voluptuous pleasure, or protagonists in scenes of comical mischief. Such techniques were found among artists (Hans Richter, Kenneth Anger, Marie-France & Patricia Martin), early filmmakers (Georges Méliès, Ferdinand Zecca) and animators (Jiří Barta), but also, crucially, in commercials and newsreels (see Uhlirova 2006b). Dissociated from their habitual perceptions, clothes in these films were imbued with fantastic properties and a will

of their own. The next festival, *If Looks Could Kill* (2008), underscored the role of dress as a strategic plot device used in crime and horror film narratives. It unearthed a wealth of films from across the twentieth century where garments and accessories such as gloves, bras, stained blouses, shoes or handbags were magnified within narratives as pieces of evidence, warning signs or murderous weapons. A similar approach was later taken by Jonathan Faiers whose book *Dressing Dangerously* (2013) set out to show how much cinema relies on clothes and sartorial detail to signal various excesses, abnormalities and dysfunctions, from infidelity to crime and destruction.

2.4 Fashion in Cinema – Fashion Film

Within this consideration of the key terms used in the field, I also want to make a distinction between *fashion in cinema* and *fashion film*, especially as the latter remains loosely defined and is sometimes used interchangeably with the former. ‘Fashion in cinema’ seems relatively unproblematic in that it simply points towards instances where fashion is presented or represented in the cinema. How far this enquiry extends then depends on the breadth of the definitions of fashion and cinema. To the festival this has meant a comprehensive exploration of how all kinds of moving image have shown all kinds of fashion and dress. In contrast, the definitions of the term ‘fashion film’ have been less straightforward, especially as it has gained renewed currency within the fashion industry of the last decade. There, it has come to refer to short, largely non-narrative works whose primary function is to display current collections and communicate brand stories. Freely disseminated on the Internet and, to a lesser extent, other offline circuits, fashion films have been compared to the music video (Uhlirova 2014; Geczy & Karaminas 2016) in that they typically channel saturated visual and aural effects into short, intense spectacles. Self-initiated or commissioned by brands (Prada,

Dior, Gucci, COS) or magazines (*SHOWstudio*, *Tank*, *Purple Magazine*, *Dazed Digital*), such films have been made by fashion image-makers and designers (Nick Knight, Quentin Jones, Hussein Chalayan), experimental filmmakers (John Maybury, Kenneth Anger), as well as acclaimed Hollywood and art-house film directors (Baz Luhrmann, Spike Jonze, David Lynch).

While this way of framing fashion film has quickly spread into vernacular use, it is important to remember that there have been other perspectives, some predating the heyday of digital fashion filmmaking, that have situated this term outside of the immediate confines of the fashion industry. ‘Fashion film’ has also been used to refer to early film newsreels (Leese 1976), feature-length fiction film, especially when set in the fashion milieu (Bruzzi 1997), and feature-length documentaries on fashion (Rees-Roberts 2017), or indeed all kinds of fashion moving imagery including recorded fashion shows and backstage videos (Needham 2013; Fury 2015). The term remains conceptually flexible and I suspect future studies will take different approaches to it. In my own account I have largely accepted the industry’s definition as a starting point, although I have extended this historically to include short films going back as far as early cinema (Uhlířová 2013a, 2013b). And the Fashion in Film Festival’s 2015 season *Frame by Frame: Dissecting the Fashion Moving Image Now* (which I co-curated with Hywel Davies, 17–24 March) broadened the enquiry yet further by drawing attention to the prominence of other fashion moving image genres emerging in the contexts of fashion journalism and social media (Instagram assets, backstage video, filmed fashion show etc.) that differ from but co-exist alongside ‘fashion film’.

2.5 Interdisciplinarity and Intermediality

I argue that my work on fashion in cinema has expanded and deepened *interdisciplinary* interactions between, and beyond, the two areas of study (as I show in chapter 3) and has ultimately contributed to a reconfiguration of the field. I have stimulated the creation and exchange of new knowledge by producing a novel interface between fashion and cinema studies, cultural and visual studies, literature, the histories of art, popular theatre and dance, curating, and artistic as well as fashion industry practices. In combining the roles of curator and academic, I have acted variously as a cultural producer, facilitator, scholar, and mediator between different fields and spheres. My desire to curatorially orchestrate interdisciplinarity came from a realisation that there was no common ground for a meaningful dialogue between the academy and the worlds of fashion, cinema and art, because most individual scholars and practitioners strongly privileged their own disciplinary lens (for example, for film scholars the focus of analysis was generally film while for fashion scholars it was fashion; the ‘habitus’ of fashion filmmakers was more fashion than film while artists perceived themselves as fashion industry ‘outsiders’, etc.).

With interdisciplinarity being an increasingly prevalent framework of enquiry in the academy today (Moran 2010),¹⁶ we can now more readily appreciate how innovative ideas have so often emerged from attempts to reconfigure old knowledge by opening it to external influences. The study of fashion in cinema has been – by its very nature – interdisciplinary to a greater or lesser degree, and yet it took some time before its impact was felt within the broader fields of fashion and cinema. The momentum it has recently gathered is due,

¹⁶ Moran refers to the present as an ‘interdisciplinary age’, noting that ‘almost all academic journals, in their statements, now claim to be interdisciplinary’ (2010: viii).

I believe, to a greater proliferation of fashion films, fashion exhibitions and festivals such as mine, which have in turn had the effect of galvanizing a lively exchange between a range of fields and disciplines.

To interrogate interdisciplinarity in the study of fashion in cinema requires us to look beyond a mere sum of its parts. As I have already indicated, the field is not easily reducible to a combination of fashion and cinema studies; it is more complicated and dynamic than that, if only because both these fields have in themselves become progressively more interdisciplinary. Tellingly, a good deal of fashion in cinema research has found its grounding in feminist and cultural studies – both fundamentally interdisciplinary formations, which have openly rejected the confines of disciplinary positions (Rodman 2013). Scholars of fashion in cinema can now be found in a variety of academic disciplines, beginning with visual studies and ending with others less tangibly related: English and Germanic studies, and the histories of art, design and photography. Also, interdisciplinarity has been practised in a number of different ways – by individuals and collectively, through scholarly texts as well as curatorial projects and creative practice – in which the positions, strategies and degrees of interaction have varied widely (Lattuca 2003).¹⁷

The Fashion in Film Festivals set out to stage a dialogue reaching across these different perspectives and backgrounds, not necessarily with the sole hope of catalysing cross-pollinations, but also in recognition of the fact that synthesis is not always desirable or possible – that there are benefits to simply allowing diverse viewpoints to co-exist and

¹⁷ Lattuca proposes a useful typology of interdisciplinarity, which comprises four principal approaches: ‘informed disciplinarity’, ‘synthetic interdisciplinarity’, ‘transdisciplinarity’ and ‘conceptual interdisciplinarity’. She also argues that scholars in the humanities tend to combine and move between these different types.

confront one another in order for them to articulate their difference. Involving individuals from different academic and non-academic communities has been a means of situating enquiry within multiple conceptual frames, which ultimately meant having a broader reach and allowing for a more complex set of meanings to play out.

While interdisciplinarity has provided something of a ‘default-setting’ for considering fashion in cinema, there is another productive (and, it must be said, increasingly popular) concept – that of *intermediality* – that more specifically deals with the border-crossings between media themselves in the ‘real world’. The term ‘intermediality’ emerged from 1990s debates in the humanities that observed an increasing convergence of different digital media practices and platforms (Lehtonen 2001; Fornäs 2002). In examinations of the past, the concept also drew attention to the intermeshings between different media that had previously been segregated into discrete histories. Above all, it helped account for ways in which ‘new media’ have tended to define their identities in relation to older media (Gaudreault & Marion 2002). It was quickly adopted by various fields, including performance, literature, music, cinema, art and popular culture, and has become an ‘umbrella term’ that contains a range of different critical approaches, some based on older debates on intertextuality (Rajewsky 2005: 44–8).

The attraction of intermediality is that it is anti-linear and considers media within a complex ecosystem of mutual relations. Digital fashion film readily offered itself as a case study; a blatantly multimedial, cross-industry form, its different expressions can be variously posited as extensions of fashion photography and advertising, fashion show, shop window, fashion television or music video. Fashion film has included (and sometimes combined) live action footage and various animation techniques; it has been produced by fashion image-makers,

filmmakers, artists and animators; and it has featured fashion models, actors, non-actors as well as music performers. It has *remediated* (Bolter & Grusin 2000) previous forms, and can itself be accessed and experienced across a range of media and cultural contexts, from personal mobile devices to fashion shows, cinema projections and retail spaces.

Far from being limited to the study of contemporary fashion film though, intermediality provided a useful methodological framework in the search for its historical precursors. Namely, it proved useful in conceptualising its multiple genealogies that run through different bodies of fashion moving imagery – be they newsreels produced by film companies, promotional films commissioned by fashion designers, or fashion photographers’ attempts to extend their work into a new dimension (Uhlirva 2013b). Intermediality also informed my account of costume spectacles in early cinema, helping trace particular visual tropes back to earlier representational practices of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (Uhlirva 2013e). Finally, various intermedial convergences and transpositions were investigated in several articles included in the 2008 festival book *If Looks Could Kill*, although the term ‘intermediality’ was not explicitly used. Among the relations examined here were cinema – stage magic – literature (Gunning 2008), cinema – comic books (Sabin 2008), and fashion show – cinema – advertising (Uhlirva 2008b).

2.6 Curating

My work combines curatorial practice and writing as two distinct but complementary means of reflection and communication. Over the last three decades, art curating has undeniably undergone an extensive re-evaluation within the academy (O’Neill 2012), and, more recently, this has also been true for curating in the fields of fashion and design. Exhibitions and

exhibition making are increasingly viewed as *media* and as ideas-generating devices involving routines similar to those of academic practice: ‘collecting, assembling, sifting, structuring, and interpreting’ (Schnapp & Presner 2009: 9). Especially within the digital humanities debate it has been argued that curating is ‘on a par with traditional narrative scholarship’ (ibid). At the same time, curating is also being pitched as a creative discipline close to artistic practice, and is just as frequently critiqued precisely on that issue (O’Neill 2010). With regard to these debates, I want to assess the role curating has played in my work as a method of investigation that is both comparable to, yet also significantly different from the traditional practice of academic writing. I also want to outline the point of departure, basic structure and key tenets of my approach to curating the Fashion in Film Festivals.

While it is certainly welcome news that curating now enjoys a similar status within the academy as scholarly writing,¹⁸ it is also important to distinguish between their respective processes and capacities. Writing is usually a solitary enterprise, which relies on highly structured analysis to investigate ideas in depth, pursuing nuanced and systematic argumentation. Curating, on the other hand, is at once more organic and idiosyncratic – because more immediately engaged in negotiating the shifting sands of the cultural landscape. Not that writing excludes dialogue – it is always necessarily part of one – but the exchanges involved in curation are much more plural and layered. Policies and agendas of the institutions involved, and their resource limitations, audience expectations (and venues’ own ideas thereof), lenders, archivists, artists, venues and funding bodies – all these are factors that render curating a fundamentally contingent, unstable and at times precarious cultural work

¹⁸ The fact that it is recognised as a legitimate research output for the purposes of the Research Excellence Framework in the UK is one powerful piece of evidence.

(Gill & Pratt 2008: 24–26).

For the Fashion in Film Festival to thrive, it had to build a strong following and form a solid rapport with partner venues. It had to communicate ideas in an accessible and desirable way while also seeking to secure prestigious cultural associations and high profile ‘talent’.¹⁹ Added to this were yet further pressures to meet the agendas of public funders by ostensibly aligning the festival’s requisite ‘high quality’ and ‘innovative’ programming with their cultural policies of audience provision and development (which are themselves, problematically, driven by governmental agendas), and their respective remits (artistic, social, business etc.). Finally, a number of the festival’s seasons were part-funded by commercial sponsors, which sometimes meant fighting hard to protect its ethos and core values while giving sponsors a sense of involvement and ownership. It is impossible to underestimate just how much of the festival’s curatorial approach has been shaped by the need to carefully navigate these sometimes conflicting demands. Indeed, the tasks of forging relationships, responding, critiquing, negotiating, and brokering deals have always been closely intertwined with intellectual work and specialist knowledge creation. It is this situatedness of curating, its continuous engagement with a complex web of factors – or, at least, a sensitivity to them – that defines it as a quintessentially reciprocal activity (O’Neill 2010: 16, 2012: 95; see also Ferguson, Greenberg and Nairne 1996).

But curating not only follows a different process to that of writing, it is also a different *way*

¹⁹ Over the last ten years the festival has featured, or collaborated with, the following high-profile figures: photographer and film director William Klein, author Liz Goldwyn, fashion designers Bella Freud, Boudicca and Pam Hogg, model Lily Cole, journalist Dylan Jones, musicians Daniel Pemberton and Jarvis Cocker, design critic Alice Rawsthorn, film curator Stuart Comer, and author Hilton Als among others.

of thinking. For the most part, academic writing is committed to producing and circulating knowledge through established disciplinary means, bound by linearity and other formal rules. Exhibitions, in comparison, allow for more open-ended, flexible, multidirectional experiences, which can more readily accommodate elements of experimentation and risk-taking. Fundamentally, in the environment of an exhibition, it is the objects that usurp much of the power to ‘speak’, as they directly confront the audience and encourage them to construct their own narratives. Thus, objects in exhibitions defy being easily tamed into single curatorial interpretations and can work against those.

When in 2006 Christel Tsilibaris and I chose to describe ourselves as ‘curators’ rather than ‘programmers’ (somewhat unusual in film exhibition at the time), it was in part a calculated move to position ourselves close to the art world, or, more specifically, at the borderline between cinema, art and fashion. There were a number of reasons for this. Both of us had a background in curating contemporary art – in fact, we met when studying on the Masters program at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York in 2001 (very much at the height of the professionalisation and academisation of curating). So it followed that the history of art and the debates around contemporary art curating were our natural habitats and the inclusion of artist film was an obvious decision. At the same time, Roger Burton, Tsilibaris and I also felt that it was vital – and in many ways all the more thrilling – to extend our curatorial remit to realms beyond art: that to place artists’ unorthodox perspectives side by side those of commercial cinema and fashion would reveal many surprising parallels and contrasts.

Most importantly though, the choice of the curating label was, to us, an expression of our

investment in the critical (and self-critical) aspects of constructing a film programme. In response to traditional practices of repertory film programming, which typically involved standard models of organising works monographically, by movement or school, by genre etc., we wanted to emphasise a more active and reflexive process of generating ‘new discursive space[s]’ (O’Neill 2010: 14) around cinema, fashion and art. It was the dialogical aspect of curating, its capacity to question received values and provoke new conversations, that most appealed to us. In practice this meant creating new configurations between diverse and previously unconnected objects by bringing them into proximity, or, in Hans Ulrich Obrist’s words, of ‘making junctions, [allowing] different elements to touch’ (2014: 1).

The festival’s film selections have been informed by formal and aesthetic concerns as well as ideological ones and the curation identified different tactics for grouping works together, including: using one work as a lens for magnifying certain aspects of another; exposing, through repetition, particular presentational and representational patterns across works of diverse origin; and highlighting differences in works of a similar kind. Quite frequently all of these elements were at play simultaneously. However, working almost exclusively within cinematic exhibition, the festival could not make such connections evident spatially. Instead, it had to rely on temporal sequencing (where single events would combine multiple film works), conversations and discussions. The website, the printed brochure and programme notes then became means of visually mapping out the festivals’ themes and juxtapositions.

The principal focus of the festival curation has always been fashion and dress. It has provided a unique lens through which to look at cinema, enabling a new appreciation of films remarkable first and foremost for what they show sartorially, and for how they show it.

In a sense then, dress was not only an end in itself, but also a means of bringing to light films that tended to be ignored by cinema programmers and scholars alike. It became a framework within which to put on the same level – at least rhetorically – canonical masterpieces with lesser-known works. In doing so, the festival programmes inevitably resisted – and perhaps even undermined – habitual divisions such as commercial/non-commercial, mainstream/avant-garde, art/entertainment, auteurist/industrial, fiction/documentary, or film/video.²⁰

The festival's model of curation combined a subjective curatorial voice with a more collective approach. Conversation became a core part of the festival's method and identity, extending a sense of ownership of ideas to a larger community. All the projects grew out of a single perspective and concept, which was then co-shaped in dialogue with others (though each festival had a different collaborative structure where guest curators' involvement varied). Guest curators were either invited as experts, or were organically 'recruited' among colleagues, as a result of conversations we were having. Together the festivals have mobilised an eclectic group of speakers, from scholars with different specialisms across numerous disciplines, to curators, filmmakers, costume designers, fashion designers, image-makers and journalists, to artists and dancers. As all three festivals toured, the programmes changed according to each new local context, as did the speakers and musical accompanists.

The catalogues/books became natural extensions of the festivals, acting as additional framing

²⁰ NB, it did not take long to realise that fashion was hardly neutral ground on which to challenge these divides. With alarming frequency, the mere mention of the word 'fashion' in the festival name proved to be an immediate obstacle in gaining entry to certain elite arts organisations, addressing funders and sponsors (ironically, this was the case especially in dealing with luxury fashion brands), and even winning the trust of certain audiences.

devices that would analyse in greater depth ideas foregrounded in the film programmes and make available the wealth of visual research conducted in their development. Much like the curation, the publications staged focused ‘debates’ around given problems, allowing for different approaches to speak to one another. Nearly all articles and chapters were newly commissioned from authors (mostly scholars, only occasionally practitioners) who were asked to tease out aspects of a film, or a body of films, that related to the overarching festival concept. The books provided a space where films could be analysed within broader cultural contexts with a stronger historical dimension.

The publications accentuated the importance of images, which have in each case combined film stills, film frames and various contextual illustrations.²¹ As the festival continuously strove to highlight the aesthetic aspects of the fashion-film image and its construction, it seemed essential that visual and textual elements should be considered on an equal footing. To my surprise, there were very few academic books on film whose standard of illustrations honoured the fine material quality of the film image – as if any undue emphasis on imagery had an inherent subversive potential to distract from intellectual seriousness.²² The festival’s books thus found themselves in a curious gulf between scholarly literature and glossy ‘coffee-table books’. The 2013 book *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle*, was ostensibly an attempt to bridge this gap through the combined use of textual ‘illustrations’ and free-standing ‘plates’, and through a highly considered book design by Laurenz Brunner studio. Many of the images were newly commissioned frames, scanned directly from archival prints to provide the best possible quality, texture and level of detail (although admittedly,

²¹ For more on this distinction see Thompson (1993) and Uhlirova (2013d: 24–5).

²² Interestingly, art history and fashion publishing have different traditions where this is less an issue.

some of this was later compromised by the chosen printing parameters). The project was a crystallisation of my belief that knowledge is not imparted merely through the recognised channels of scholarly analysis, but also comes from an engagement of the senses.

Archival research has been another decisive aspect of my work,²³ placed as it has been at the very heart of the Fashion in Film Festival's narrative. In that respect, there is an affinity between my approach to curation (though more modest in scale) and that of other 'archival' film festivals, such as Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, Pordenone Silent Film Festival, the British Silent Film Festival, and the biennial Orphan Film Symposium in New York. Showcasing recent restorations, preservations, arrivals and discoveries, these festivals primarily address a tight-knit circle of film professionals, historians and enthusiasts. In contrast, the Fashion in Film Festival has sought to actively nurture a sense of openness towards diverse communities including not only academics and staunch cinefiles but also professionals of the creative industries, gallery-goers, students and non-specialists (targeted, for example, through local outreach projects). Addressing such a mixed audience has meant the need to stay attuned to different aesthetic sensibilities, interpretive strategies and capacities while challenging received ideas of cultural value. In the long term, it has also inspired a more dynamic approach to curation that has avoided repeating a well-defined formula from season to season.

²³ My extensive work in film archives over the last 12 years has directly fed into much of my work. The following projects specifically addressed the archive in the following ways: as a repository and construct ('The Fashion-Colour-Cinema Inventory' film installation at *Arnhem Mode Biennale* between 1 June – 3 July 2011, co-curated with Inga Fraser); as an institution presenting numerous obstacles and practical difficulties to researchers ('On the Archive', presented at the *Annual Conference of the Centre for Fashion, Body and Material Culture* at London College of Fashion, 31 May 2007); and in relation to issues of allure and fetish ('The Allure of the Archive', a keynote paper presented at the *Fashioning the Archive* seminar organised by Fashion Research Network at the Royal College of Art, 25 June 2014).

In embracing different film forms, views and presentation strategies, the festival has strived to broaden the contexts in which cinema can appeal to the senses, entertain and provoke new tensions. The curation has always been motivated by a strong sensitivity to the contemporary, with archival features often shown in novel contexts that would cast film heritage in a new light. Such strategies have included: direct confrontations of works old and new (e.g., in several events in 2006); lectures or film introductions that took contemporary cultural perspectives (e.g., Tom Gunning's on 'the suit of invisibility' in 2008 or Sarah Cheang's on orientalism in 2010); new accompaniments for silent films by contemporary musicians (e.g., The Wolfmen and Muteme in 2006–7);²⁴ and the staging of film works in exhibitions and other extra-cinematic presentations. As part of our 2010 festival *Birds of Paradise*, for example, Inga Fraser and I organised *Kinoscope Parlour*, an exhibition of six peephole machines across 12 London locations featuring short films by early filmmakers such as Georges Méliès, Gaston Velle, Segundo de Chomon and Alice Guy-Blaché. We asked the product designer Mark Garside to devise the machines by reinterpreting Edison's kinetoscopes of the 1890s for today's audience in ways that would foreground the wizardry of early cinema while calling attention to a sense of active viewing.

2.7 The Archive

Throughout the years of curating the Fashion in Film Festival, I have developed a particular fascination for the archive – in its multiple sense as a place, corpus, repository, idea, system, and habitus. Primarily, I have been attracted to it as a site where one gains a kind of exclusive, direct access to culturally 'unprocessed' objects in their physical form. Though celebrated by

²⁴ The Wolfmen was a band then headed by guitarist and composer Marco Pirroni, formerly of Adam and the Ants; Muteme was an electronic label set up by the Czech musician Ales Cerny.

some (see, for example, Farge 2013, Steedman 2008), such an attitude towards the archive is more frequently cautioned against, especially in recent critical thought. There are now ample writings which, following influential texts by Michel Foucault (2002) and later also Jacques Derrida (1996), probe the archive in relation to concepts such as mediation, historical truth, fragmentation, power, authority, desire and above all seduction. For one, the historian Dominick LaCapra has warned against what he calls archival ‘fetishisation’ (1985: 92) – an undue reverence for the archive (and archival object), which acts as a substitute for the lost past (see also Shanks 1992: 99–100). Such commentary has left little room to argue *in favour of* the archive as a generative space where new ideas, insights and connections emerge. And, since the archive is traditionally considered a ‘textual territory’ (Freshwater 2007: 8), it is understandable that just as little has been said about it as a space of pleasure, an *affective space* where non-textual artefacts are experienced aesthetically.²⁵ Perhaps, as Zeb Tortorici (2015) writes, the dangers of archival seduction need to be reframed in more positive terms that link the traces found within the archive to an awareness of our own desires, sensibilities and processes as researchers.

For me, the archive has often proved instrumental precisely because of its capacity to impress upon the researcher (sometimes quite viscerally) the physical reality of objects, and because of its potential to introduce elements of serendipity and discovery that open up new and unexpected paths.²⁶ Back in 2006, it was archival research that ultimately defined the broad

²⁵ Where pleasure and enchantment have been evoked, it is typically in the context of seduction, sexual arousal and conquest as potentially illicit forces. For more, see Helen Freshwater’s fascinating study (2007), which reveals a staggering number of sexual references (also of rape, sexual acts, voyeurism, fantasies) used by traditional historians and critical theorists alike in describing archival pleasures.

²⁶ For example, the festival’s 2010 season *Birds of Paradise* developed from a link I drew between two archival experiences at the Film-makers’ Cooperative in New York in 2007, and The Library of Congress in Washington in 2009.

scope and remit of the Fashion in Film Festival, ‘moving [its programming] beyond obvious examples’ and ‘address[ing] a much broader field of historical enquiry’ (O’Neill 2008: 272). Searching in databases under strategic keywords such as ‘fashion’, ‘mannequin’, ‘clothes’, ‘hat’, ‘glove’ and ‘skirt’ pointed us towards a plethora of previously neglected, even esoteric cinema works. A discovery of this bounteous supply of material internationally then demanded a more comprehensive and ‘democratic’ perspective that would encompass an eclectic mix of cinema forms (fiction and non-fiction) and genres (comedy, melodrama, musical, crime, gangster, science fiction, film noir, horror, thriller).

In my research I have mainly focused on film as the primary object of study, but all along this has been supplemented with research into film stills, press books, costume sketches, surviving costumes, press clippings, film and fan magazines, and newspapers, as well as non-filmic material such as visual and textual documents relating to dance performances, fashion shows and magic theatre shows. Film stills research has proved to be a particularly fruitful avenue for quickly identifying films containing certain visual elements under scrutiny (costumes, sets, poses) and for describing costume design with greater precision. In the 1920s, hand- or typewritten press snipes began to be attached to the verso of some publicity stills, variously detailing a particular scene, a star’s current activity or clothing worn in the photograph. Undigitised by most archives and picture libraries, the press snipes are a practically unknown historical source that clearly indicates the importance of costume as a marketing tool for cinema.

Of all the archives I have worked in, it is the film archive I have always found most curious.

Opaque and fortress-like, it is shrouded in mystique, in many ways positively Kafkaesque.²⁷ Here, endemic issues of the absence, displacement or public unavailability of material, databases and data are compounded by layers of institutional, legal and bureaucratic impenetrability. Traditionally, film archives saw themselves as guardians of cultural heritage, with a mission to collect, preserve, catalogue and restore (Patterson 2017). And although their duty was never solely to service holdings but also to present them, the archival ethos was invariably defined by internal pursuits more than outward-facing or collaborative activity. So far so familiar; arguably, this is true of many other types of public archives and collections.

Yet, the culture of film archives has been marked by certain frustrating specificities, namely, a tendency to ‘work behind closed doors and only grant access to ... holdings on strict conditions’ (Heftberger 2014: 136), and often at a considerable cost to the researcher. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the internally appointed figure of the archivist (be they curator, researcher or facilitator) plays the role of a guide who identifies (or not) what is available and viewable, and suggests what is relevant. The film archive, much like film projection, mobilises an intricate dialectic of darkness and light: if finding material is a gesture of retrieval from obscurity and momentary illumination, it is also always marked by a keen awareness of absence, loss and disappearance. For any object viewed, there are more that are unavailable in their status as unique copies or because too fragile. Yet more have been destroyed, misplaced, uncatalogued or mislabelled. Thus, while the archive holds a promise of open possibility, this nevertheless surpasses a researcher’s real ability to access, know and

²⁷ See Houston 1994 for a link between the film archive and a fortress that is both metaphorical and literal – archival vaults are often located in disused military complexes, including fortresses. See also Patterson (2017) who documents changing attitudes, during the 1980s and 1990s, towards making the BFI archives more accessible. Although he sees this as a historically specific phenomenon, I would argue that many elements of this attitude continue to thrive in the digital era.

‘possess’. This is why, to me at least, the film archive engenders a powerful sense of longing.

The recent large scale digitisation of archival, library and museum collections has been accompanied by assertive declarations of ever-growing volumes of accessible artefacts, improved database searchability, and unprecedented user expansion. This rhetoric of access, encouraging though it may be, however betrays an underlying assumption that digital surrogates are fully-fledged objects of study and that remote virtual access can supplement an encounter with the real thing. It is only a logical consequence of this attitude that digitisation can now serve (as it often does) as an excuse to withhold analogue objects completely, even where fragility of the original is not a pressing issue. Yet, to think that the experiences of virtual and analogue objects are equivalent would be a fallacy.

As others have argued, there is a qualitative difference in how researchers extract meaning from analogue and digital objects (Sassoon 2004; Conway & Punzalan 2011).²⁸ And this is especially the case in visual archives, where the material and textural properties of artefacts, and one’s ability to handle them, are critical to the reading of them. Finally, there is also something to say for the archival experience itself, which affects one’s perception of objects. Certainly, in film research, the archive is a privileged site where multiple realities of film-as-object and film-as-projected-image ostensibly interact. This encourages an interrogation of film’s dual status as a durational and static object, one that is simultaneously immaterial and material. And, as Esther Leslie and Giuliana Bruno have so eloquently shown, where

²⁸ It has even been suggested that digitisation has created new archival collections entirely (Seamus Ross cited in Conway & Punzalan 2011), calling for a new kind of visual literacy. The medieval manuscript scholar A.S.G. Edwards (2003) has gone so far as to declare that ‘[a] willingness to trust surrogates is a willingness to abandon scholarly responsibility’.

the objects of the filmic gaze are those of fashion, textiles and jewellery, a sense of film's own physicality truly comes to the fore (Leslie 2013; Bruno 2014).

3. Work Submitted

This chapter seeks to reconstruct in more detail the aims, theoretical underpinnings and achievements of the works submitted while embedding them in the context of the field. I will treat this chapter as an opportunity to make more explicit and critically reflect on ideas I explored in individual works, some of which were not fully articulated at the time. I will also consider the implications of these works in the context of the debates about fashion and cinema.

3.1 *The 1st Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma & Catalogue*

The first season of the Fashion in Film Festival, *Between Stigma and Enigma*, aimed to make evident and critically reflect on issues of fashion's representation in the moving image across its entire history. The season flipped around the more common question of how cinematic costume/fashion serves to construct characters and identities, asking instead how fashion's own identity is constructed through the moving image. Where previous studies scrutinised the ways fashion '[mediates] ideas, desires and beliefs circulating in society' (Wilson 2003: 9), the festival brought into focus the ways in which it is *itself* mediated, given values and meanings within cultural discourses external to it. Strikingly, cultural histories of fashion on the whole tended to omit cinema from such considerations, while examples drawn from literature or painting were used quite liberally (cf. Wilson 2003; Hollander 1993). Indeed, during the research for the first festival, Tsilibaris and I soon realised we were uncovering a largely untapped repository of eloquent expressions about fashion that demanded to be seen and analysed, especially because cinema has been one of the most powerful cultural forces in modern history.

The programme highlighted the pervasiveness of fashion as a subject of cinema and, through its thematic sections, showcased a whole array of its representational patterns and stereotypes. Fashion was found to be frequently ironised, parodied and otherwise belittled as excessive, immoral, overindulgent, frilly or simply unimportant (because quintessentially a female domain), very much in line with the – by now, fairly standard – lamentations among fashion studies scholars about their subject’s longstanding cultural vilification. And yet, when the focus was shifted away from such ideological articulations in narrative and dialogue (informed by cultural studies, cf. Hall 1996 and 1997), and towards visual analysis (informed by art history and visual studies), a more complex reading emerged. What was not being told, but was nevertheless manifest, was the (enigmatic) capacity of dress and fashion to profoundly captivate cinema, through a flagrant insistence on the qualities of surfaces, tactility, sensuality, play, glamour and fantasy. And indeed, these are qualities that have so readily been confounded with indulgence, excess, irrationality, superficiality etc. Thus, the central polemical concern of *Between Stigma and Enigma* became an examination of the interaction between these two counterpoints – the ‘stigma’ and the ‘enigma’ of the title (cf. Uhlirova quoted in Jones 2006) – while the precise nature of cinema’s attraction to fashion was then explored in all the subsequent festival seasons, each taking a different angle. Such a dialectical conceptualisation of the fashion–cinema relationship differed from previous accounts that framed it more simplistically as a relationship of ‘synergy’ (Berry 2000: xv) or ‘parallel development’ (Mondadori 1998).²⁹

²⁹ Again, more recently, the term ‘symbiosis’ was used by Geczy & Karaminas (2016: 44).

Though not expressed directly at the time, the festival was a nod to a critical distinction made by cinema historians between *representational* and *presentational* modes of cinema.³⁰ Originally introduced by Noël Burch in his analysis of Japanese cinema, the category of presentation (conceived in opposition to representation) has served to differentiate cinema's early non-narrative mode from later narrative strategies – what Burch identified as the 'dominant' 'Western' mode of representation (1979: 20). With further theoretical elaborations by Gunning (1986), Gaudreault (1997) and Paul Willemen (2010), among others, the notion of cinema's 'presentational mode' has since been closely aligned with the concept of the 'cinema of attractions', essentially describing an aesthetic regime in which a primary focus is on direct acts of exhibiting and self-manifesting, as opposed to recreating a coherent reality on the principle of mimesis.³¹ The festival followed a somewhat similar logic but, rather than isolating the two distinct regimes, it attempted to consider them in conjunction.

The two lynchpins of the festival programme, Howard Hawks's silent comedy *Fig Leaves* (1926) and William Klein's satire *Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?* (1966), each singularly exemplify an irresolvable contradiction in cinema's presentation/representation of fashion. *Fig Leaves* portrays fashion as the devil in a cautionary tale about the unbridled consumerism of the New Woman. Though essentially parodic, the film's representation of the sumptuous fashion salon and the effervescent couturier-artiste nevertheless reassert perceptions of fashion as a rarefied, magnificent and otherworldly realm, a wonderland promising beauty and reverie. Similarly, *Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?* is, on the face of it, a biting satire of

³⁰ A distinction between narrative and attraction was evoked in the festival's press release (see digital submission no. 1), and then in the catalogue via a Mulveyesque separation of narrative and spectacle (see Bruzzi & Church Gibson 2006; Garvey 2006). The distinction between presentation and representation was more explicitly addressed later, in the book *Birds of Paradise* (Uhlir 2013c).

³¹ Other scholars to have made an explicit link between the 'cinema of attractions' and fashion include Ganeva (2007), Hanssen (2009), and Evans (2011).

the fashion industry, with its main targets being the emerging cult of the supermodel and the surrounding media clamour. Yet, the film simultaneously flaunts fashion as a liberating realm of creative expression. Fashion here is shown to possess an aptitude for breaking new grounds and effecting radical change, from championing new ideals of femininity to absorbing into its language seemingly incongruous influences of avant-garde sculpture. A longstanding fashion insider (as a fashion photographer for *Vogue* magazine), Klein knowingly casts fashion into the role of an enigma impossible to grasp.

Exploring, on the one hand, the habitual negative connotations encoded in fashion representations, and, on the other, fashion's sensuous and even magical qualities, the festival season revealed the potential of the latter to work against the grain of the former. It showed how the fashion-film image produces meaning while at the same time defying it, how it can be perceived as part of a system of significations but also on its own aesthetic terms, irreducible to any simple interpretation.³² The season deliberately juxtaposed artist and popular cinema in a bid to demonstrate that moments of aesthetic-poetic disruption and absurd humour are not restricted to art and artistic techniques. This was made evident in several of the festival screenings, most notably 'The Enigma of the Object of Fashion' and 'Shoes, Eroticism and Fetish'. As I wrote for the catalogue, with reference to cinema's 'magical' power to bring to life inanimate objects: 'The idea of objects coming to life has a long tradition in the popular imagination and cannot be confined to avant-garde practice. The entire

³² For more on this argument, see Roland Barthes's contrasting of poetic language with the workings of representation and myth. Poetry, he argues, 'clouds' language, rendering it 'disorderly'; it resists and disrupts the seemingly transparent linkage between the signifier and signified, and reverts to a 'pre-semiological system' (2000: 133–5). Whereas Barthes ultimately rejects the possibility of poetry to escape myth, Jacques Rancière (2013) separates the two as historically distinct 'regimes': according to him, a so-called 'aesthetic regime of art' succeeds a (historically earlier) 'representative regime of art'. The aesthetic regime is a mode of perception that actively challenges an assumed transparency of representation which separates meaning from the senses. See also Tanke 2011.

history of film offers worthwhile examples which testify to our compulsion to fill inanimate objects with human qualities. Across genres, the moving image imbues objects with a power to take on unexpected roles and to communicate their own properties.’ (Uhlirova 2006b: 26)

This and other aspects of the stigma-enigma question were interrogated in three essays I contributed to the festival’s accompanying catalogue publication of the same title (Tsilibaris & Uhlirova 2006). The first, ‘The Wonderland of *Fig Leaves*’ (Uhlirova 2006a), explored how Hawks’s 1926 film harnesses the Biblical rhetoric of original sin and paradise to flaunt the spectacle of luxury fashion while at the same time wittily tapping into topical social issues of changing gender roles and marital dynamics. The second, ‘The Enigma of the Fashion Object’ (Uhlirova 2006b), drew attention to the objecthood of clothes that comes to the fore when clothes are momentarily stripped of their normal function. The essay probed ‘the enigma that emanates from the filmic treatment of [their] materiality ... and ... the methods in which the moving image captures them’ (ibid: 26). Applying the avant-garde sensibility of the Dadaists and Surrealists to a number of different film practices including commercials and industry/process film, it highlighted above all those instances where clothes ‘lend themselves to irrational, slippery and perhaps even menacing acts of imagination’ (ibid). And the third, ‘Wardrobe Emergencies’ (Uhlirova & Bakhit 2006), explored the politicisation of fashion at times of war, focusing on WWII newsreel footage found in British and international film archives. The essay described some of the common tropes of representing fashion at ‘times of centralised power and heightened ideological polarisations’ (ibid.), arguing that fashion offered itself as a seductive and entertaining instrument of social and political propaganda, used to address – and ‘dress’ – unappealing issues such as material scarcity, safety, discipline or a need to preserve morale.

3.2 The 2nd Fashion in Film Festival: *If Looks Could Kill* & Book

The second festival, *If Looks Could Kill*, brought together a wide-ranging programme of (largely feature) films illustrating the roles of fashion and styling in crime narratives. The focus of the season emerged organically from the previous festival programme, where questions of fashion's general stigmatisation pointed towards its darker associations with criminal and violent behaviour. But I would also stress other important triggers that helped channel my thinking on the subject and define the scope of the season: firstly, two recent studies by my colleagues at Central Saint Martins, Rebecca Arnold and Caroline Evans, which analysed the surge of sombre and disturbing themes in contemporary fashion, such as decay, deathliness, trauma and violence (Arnold 2001; Evans 2003);³³ secondly, Bret Easton Ellis's 1991 novel *American Psycho*, which I had just read and which struck me with its elegantly drawn parallel between obsessively detailed descriptions of violence and equally obsessive descriptions of aspirational men's fashion; and finally, Tom Gunning's intertextual analysis of the popular French novel and film series *Fantômas* focusing on the portrayal of a mysterious criminal who defies identification by physically transforming through a series of disguises (Gunning 2004). I invited all four authors to become the festival's guest curators and all but Ellis accepted.

The curation was guided by three central questions: 1. Why does fashion so readily lend itself to victimisation within crime narratives? 2. How does costume contribute to defining the look of major crime genres, from detective, gangster and horror films to comedy, melodrama, thriller and film noir? And 3. What specific narrative roles does clothing assume in crime

³³ In fact, I was intimately familiar with Caroline Evans's book *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness* (2003) on which I had worked as a picture researcher.

genres? Through these questions, several distinct themes emerged, which helped map out recurring character types, settings, plots and situations: criminal looks and gestures; identity, disguise, and masking; interplay of visibility and invisibility; the links between beauty, excess and destruction; garments as clues, objects of corrupt desire and weapons; and links between subcultural styles and juvenile delinquency. These then informed the festival's strands 'Dress, Attitude, Delinquency', 'Peeling the Groomed Surface', 'Criminal Desire', 'Criminal Gestures and Transformations' and 'The Masks of Villains', while simultaneously helping shape the structure of the accompanying book.³⁴

Taken as a whole, *If Looks Could Kill* foregrounded the compelling interplay between the seductiveness of fashion and the menace of crime, as seen through the lens of cinema. Its thesis was that in the fabrication of criminal scenarios, cinema 'turns to fashion for elegance, sharpness and frisson (the drop-dead effect), but also mines it as a subject – be it a dreamlike world of pleasure and sumptuousness, or a ghostly labyrinth of surfaces, mirrors and illusions' (Uhlířová 2008a: 12). Fashion, I argued, becomes an ideal subject of crime as its 'insistence with the surface ... often signals something sinister underneath' (ibid). Its decadence and cool aloofness make crime appear 'more captivating in its insensitivity, cruelty, even brutality' while also rendering it more sensual (ibid). Importantly, the festival sought to show that this was not solely the preserve of female characters but also – and just as often – male ones. Indeed, the theme of crime offered itself as a means through which to redress some of the gender imbalance in previous studies of fashion in film.

³⁴ Due to the complexity of the programme and space limitations, these strands were removed from the printed programme, appearing online only.

These ideas were explored in an eclectic mix of film titles found primarily through a targeted archival search by Tsilibaris and myself (supplemented by extensive conversations with film archivists, curators, writers and scholars, some of whom – including the festival co-founder Roger Burton – were then invited as our guest curators). The material found included both virtually unknown films and works already celebrated (or dismissed)³⁵ in other contexts – as diverse as Albert Capellani's *A Man with White Gloves* (1908), Henri d'Ursel's *The Pearl* (1929), Frank Borzage's *Desire* (1936), Richard Fleischer's *Follow Me Quietly* (1949), Arne Mattsson's *Mannequin in Red* (1958), Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* (1964), Vicente Aranda's *Fata Morgana* (1965) and Cindy Sherman's *Office Killer* (1997). The programme's contribution was not necessarily in unearthing rare films alone,³⁶ but, rather, in asking our audience to examine – and indeed re-examine – a body of crime and horror cinema exclusively through the prism of fashion and style, which had not been done before (Fury 2008). To that end, the festival featured an extensive programme of talks, introductions, panels and a symposium involving speakers spanning the fields of fashion, cinema, literature, design and cultural studies, popular culture, art history and artistic practice. These contributors played an important role in directing attention to the festival's themes while situating the analysis of fashion in cinema within a broader debate about popular visual culture.

In extending the issues raised by the festival, the accompanying book *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Images of Fashion, Crime and Violence* made the festival's interdisciplinary scope

³⁵ Here I am specifically referring to the critical treatment of Cindy Sherman's *Office Killer* (see e.g., Anderson 1997 and Elley 1997) though other films in the programme also had a mixed reception among critics and audiences.

³⁶ The programme included at least two UK premieres and one London premiere (as far as I could ascertain) but there were also a number of films that had not been seen since their original release.

even more manifest, with its newly commissioned essays furnishing fresh perspectives from which to interrogate dress in film. My own contribution was an essay examining the complex meanings of fashion in Karl Anton's crime comedy *The Kidnapping of Banker Fux* (Uhlírova 2008b). Combining a close reading of the film with a study of the production company's marketing strategies, the popular press and fashion history, I argued that the film's tongue-in-cheek critique of the flapper and her materialistic values casts fashion in the role of a modern-day criminal, whom women are supposedly inclined to fall prey to. I also showed that, paradoxically, the film embraces fashion as a highly desirable pursuit, not only for the flapper characters but also for the film itself. Within the narrative, fashion is treated as a vehicle of social mobility and cosmopolitanism, while outside of it, it acts in the same way, helping propel the film onto an international market. The film's most obvious marker of such aspirational cosmopolitanism was its (now lost but well documented) fashion show sequence of Paul Poiret's latest designs, presented by the couturier himself.

3.3 The 3rd Fashion in Film Festival: *Birds of Paradise* & Book

The third festival, *Birds of Paradise*, was an extensive exploration of the importance of costume in fashioning cinematic spectacle. It brought together instances where cinema foregrounded dress, jewellery and adornment as visually dominant (or at least strikingly prominent) features – from voluptuously swirling fabrics in early cinema's serpentine dances to the sybaritic self-presentations by queer filmmakers of the American underground. The season again responded to the questions posed in *Between Stigma and Enigma* but, this time, it attempted to articulate in more concrete terms how the 'magical' effect of clothes in cinema may be achieved through staging, choreography and cinematic techniques (questions rarely explored, though see Herzog 1990). With a particular emphasis on action, motion and

metamorphosis, the festival zeroed in on costumes' unique individual performances – their 'sartorial theatre of ever-changing shapes, volumes, designs and textures; of materials mingling and layering; of light shimmering over reflective surfaces' (Uhlírova 2013d: 16) – that furnish cinema with 'bewitching moments of perceptual richness and sensuality' (ibid).

The season aimed to open up a new line of questioning through a speculative grouping of three case studies that together best illuminated costume's spectacular and performative possibilities. The case studies probed three distinct film forms, all of which can be framed in terms of the 'cinema of attractions', at least to an extent: early cinema (for the purposes of this research ending around 1910); music hall and orientalist extravaganzas in popular cinema of the 1920s; and experimental/underground cinema with its peak in the 1960s. Rather than laying claim to a sweeping historical study, the 'selective, fragmented and extendable' programme showcased 'some of the most crystallised film moments in which costume was lovingly treated as an exquisite aesthetic effect' (ibid).

The different film forms were variously interlinked in the programme, in a bid to reveal tangible correspondences among them (which the book further reinforced through contextual study). For example, an event titled 'Underground Opulence' at Tate Modern brought together early films by Gaston Velle (*Tit for Tat*, 1906), Segundo de Chomón (*Transformations / Metempsychosis*, 1907) and Ferdinand Zecca (*The Pearl Fisher*, 1907) with underground films by Kenneth Anger (*Puce Moment*, 1949/66) and Jack Smith (*Normal Love*, 1963). Here, the aim was to 'reconnect the avant-garde queer sensibility of underground film not with its literal inspirations ... but, rather, with some genres in early film which ... anticipate some of the richness of the underground camp aestheticism' (*The 3rd Fashion in*

Film Festival: Birds of Paradise programme brochure 2010). The programme highlighted the prominence of certain types of fabric and sartorial motifs with a strong dramatic and transformative potential (feathers, veils, capes, winged sleeves, lace or sequinned fabrics), as well as a repertoire of bodily movements, poses and gestures that most frequently accompany spectacular costume displays: opening of arms, walking down a staircase, dancing and parading. Not only did these help establish the need to witness how costume gradually and fluidly reveals itself in time,³⁷ but they also underscored connections between cinemas that were not necessarily historically proximate: As one reviewer wrote: ‘Focusing on the objects themselves such as veils or fans provides material continuity between ... early twentieth-century films that revelled in experimenting with new media and ... underground films of the 1960s that experimented with the boundaries of modern art and queer representation’ (Abrego 2012: 380).³⁸

Although others before me had gestured towards examining particular films in which costumes claim centre stage (Harper 1985; Herzog 1990; Gaines 1990b and 2000; Church Gibson 2005), the true extent and significance of this for the study of cinema had never been fully intimated. Stella Bruzzi was the first to explicitly raise the issue in her 1997 book *Undressing Cinema*. Having made the brilliant observation that clothes can at times ‘interject’ in and ‘disrupt’ the ‘normative reality of the [filmic] text’ (18), acting as ‘mechanisms for display’ (3), she went on to restrict such instances of spectacular display largely to couturiers’

³⁷ This point was again emphasised later in the book, in my introduction as well as in the way film frames were arranged in sequences of two, three or six to illustrate different stages of moving or transforming garments, or different optical effect created by light against the reflective surfaces of fabrics and jewels.

³⁸ Later, in her review of the book, Emily Brayshaw noted that the third section dedicated to underground cinema ‘appear[ed] to be incongruous within the wider anthology at first glance [due to a historical gap between this and the previous sections].’ ‘However’, she continued, ‘the excesses of queer underground cinema in this era built on the so-called “ornamental modernism” ... which included the highly-stylized Orientalist aesthetic ... popular in early music hall and revue stages as well as the silent cinema’ (2015: 422).

involvement in cinema. Arguing that fashion's insistence on calling attention to itself is fundamentally at odds with the 'ethos' of costume design (which is to be seamlessly integrated within the story), she used the notion of spectacle to conceptually separate fashion from costume. Bruzzi's perspective, much as it may resonate with narrative fiction film, does not, I maintain, apply to cinema in general. This is why my own investigation stressed the significance of early cinema around the turn of the century as a once-emergent form of visual representation in which narrative coherence was of little consequence and in which there was no one clearly defined blueprint for the function of dress within. Furthermore, cinema in this period was manifestly affiliated to earlier spectacular traditions of popular theatre, all of which helped bring into focus a new conception of costume as a semi-autonomous visual element within the cinematic image.

The ideas and films explored in the festival programme were given fuller treatment in the edited volume *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle*, published after a three-year interval in 2013. As well as seeking to theorise the problems of spectacular costume, it also set out to conjure up something of the perceptual enchantment of cinematic projection.³⁹ This book was more tightly curated and more ambitious than the previous publications, and my contribution to it was also considerably bigger. As well as commissioning 12 new chapters I wrote a substantial introduction, a chapter, and edited – with assistance from Assistant Curator Inga Fraser and some contribution from authors – a selection of over 300 images, for which I also wrote extended captions. In the introduction (Uhlirova 2013d) I made a case for spotlighting specific film forms in order to recast costume as a significant visual

³⁹ Hence the designer Laurenz Brunner's decision to print directly onto black paper in our plates sections. Using a layer of silver in lieu of white gave all the subsequent colour a metallic sheen, producing a luminescent effect that made images seem to pop out of the pages.

element in cinema across its history. I also suggested using spectacular costume as a means of reassessing the correspondences between these cinemas and other forms of visual culture, especially popular theatre, dance, fashion and orientalism.

My chapter ‘Costume in the Early Marvellous Cinema: The Aesthetic of Opulence and the Teasing Image’ connected different bodies of literature on popular theatre and the cinema to trace the theatrical phenomenon of costume-centred spectacles to what I called ‘early marvellous cinema’. Focusing on serpentine dance, trick and *féerie* film of the first two decades of cinema, the chapter suggested that here opulent displays of dress amount to a discrete aesthetic concern within the ‘the cinema of attractions’, a category that more broadly denotes early cinema’s impulse towards exhibitionism, technological wonder, direct address and the supply of thrills (Gunning 1986; Gaudreault & Gunning 2006). Zeroing in on films in which costumes and accessories dramatically amplify and animate bodies in space, I argued that the ‘marvellous cinema’ mobilises a spectacular tradition which was first established in baroque theatre and which continued into the early twentieth century in certain forms of popular theatre, especially the *féerie* and stage magic. Above all, I drew attention to the practices, common to early cinema, of staging dazzling costume transformations and of blurring the boundaries between the body, its adornment and surrounding decor.⁴⁰

3.4 Articles on Fashion Film

When digital fashion film emerged during the first decade of the twenty-first century as an exciting and apparently novel form of fashion image-making, it seemed to hold much

⁴⁰ I argued that the costume transformation in many ways prefigured fashion films which began to proliferate from c. 1910. See also Tamar Jeffers McDonald (2010) who connected this trope to that of contemporary Hollywood cinema.

potential for exploration, not only among its makers but also among media and image theorists. Yet it took quite some time before it was addressed in any real depth in critical writing, the majority of which has so far come from the field of fashion studies rather than cinema or the media. My own interest in this form of image-making began with the planning stages of our first festival, and eventually led to several publications and a festival season (co-curated in 2015 with Hywel Davies). More recently, it has culminated in an AHRC-funded research project – *Archaeology of Fashion Film* – which I am now co-investigating together with Caroline Evans and Jussi Parikka.⁴¹ My work in this area has been principally motivated by a desire to have a better grasp of the image-making practices that are shaping the fashion industry today, although thanks to the festival I have also always had a parallel fascination with historical fashion moving imagery. I have published three articles on the topic, all of which I am submitting as part of the thesis: ‘100 Years of the Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories’ (2013); ‘The Fashion-Film Effect’ (2013); and ‘Fashion Film and the Photographic’ (2014). I consider these articles to be among the first attempts to draw up historical and theoretical frameworks for analysing fashion film as a multifaceted form of image-making and fashion communications.⁴²

‘100 Years’ was originally conceived as a response to an assertion – commonly maintained within the fashion industry and echoed in academia (Rees-Roberts 2011; Khan 2012;

⁴¹ The project runs between 1 September 2017 – 31 August 2019, and combines archival research with theoretical debate that includes cinema, media fashion scholars, film archivists and fashion communications professionals. Using media archaeology as a method, it aims to chart different historical genealogies of fashion film.

⁴² Especially the first two texts have been cited in much subsequent writing on the subject. ‘100 Years’ has also been included among ‘classic theoretical texts on fashion’ (see Lehnert, Kühl and Weise 2014) while ‘The Fashion-Film Effect’ gave title to the exhibition *Mode Bewegt Bild: The Fashion Film Effect* in Museum Angewandte Kunst (2 October 2015 – 31 January 2016), curated by Mahret Kupka (Museum Angewandte Kunst 2015; Kupka 2015).

Needham 2013) – that fashion film is a ‘new’ product of the digital age. At the same time, the text was inspired by my growing awareness of a tendency within the industry post-2010 to territorialise fashion film, accompanied by a new sense of conservatism within the field (especially as big brands were now jointly channeling fashion film towards established advertising conventions characterised by big budgets, sleek production and star presence). In response to these perceptions, the article sought to expand our understanding of fashion film by uncovering an array of its precursors. It argued for fashion film’s 100-year-old history, drawing attention to different kinds of moving image produced and disseminated from the beginning of the twentieth century: advertising films, newsreels and cinemagazines, industrial and educational films, experiments by fashion photographers and artists, and films conceived as fashion shows (on this last point see also Evans 2011).

Where other studies stayed rather close to home in considering the fashion industry as the sole context for the production, dissemination and reception of fashion film, my approach suggested its re-positioning within plural historical frameworks: those of cinema (including video and television), fashion photography (considering its intermittent flirtation with motion) and other practices of fashion promotion and display, and art performance. This meant forging a new dialogue between different modes of filmmaking, and different discursive environments around these, that have so far been separated by historians working in different fields (if they were discussed at all). However, rather than claiming any kind of unified history of cause and effect or linear progression, I merely traced and juxtaposed these diverse practices and their different traditions and ambitions as possible historical genealogies of today’s fashion film.

In my article ‘The Fashion-Film Effect’, written simultaneously with ‘100 Years’, I pushed for a working definition of fashion film where there had been none, examining the genre boundaries of what is an overtly heterogeneous and hybrid form. Drawing on recent film and media scholarship (Casetti 2009; Gunning 1986 and 2002; Cubitt 2005; Shaviro 2010) I interrogated digital fashion film’s emergence and institutionalisation within particular conditions of fashion moving image cultures post-2000. Explicitly addressing the question of fashion film’s sudden proliferation in the digital era (which to many equaled birth), I argued that its ‘newness’ rests less on the novelty of presenting fashion in the moving image *per se* than on its consolidation as a *bona fide* fashion medium, which was newly enabled by the digital turn.

As media theorists of the last two decades have amply demonstrated, there is of course nothing unique about this kind of ‘delayed emergence’ of an aesthetic form (Uhlirva 2013b: 119). Every new medium develops dynamically at the interface of new creative ambitions, technological-aesthetic developments and the institutions (such as the fashion industry) that frame their social use. My point in fact echoed the argument made by early cinema scholars that new media are always born twice (Gaudreault & Marion 2005: 5). As André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion proposed, the ‘first birth’ refers to the invention and introduction of a new apparatus, surrounded by a chaotic plurality whereas the ‘second’ refers to an incremental process of media institutionalisation. This ‘double birth’ model has recently been revised and swapped for that of a ‘third birth’, to account for the continuous transformation (rebirth) of cinema vis-à-vis today’s widespread media convergences, making room for the multiple platforms for moving image witnessed in the digital era (Gaudreault & Marion 2013: 158).

In the second part of the article, I sought to articulate what unique effect cinema and dress produce when they come together as one. Anne Hollander already touched on this notion of a joint effect in her discussion of 1930s films, in which, she observed, certain fabrics, jewellery and hairstyles became the norm in the portrayal of the ‘new cool, self-sufficient female image’. She noted that the formula for white gold and platinum jewellery and hair, lamé, satin, sequins, black lace and marabou in dress was ‘built on the newly powerful sensuality of colourless texture in motion in which American dreams were now being acted out’ (1993: 343–4). Similarly, Giuliana Bruno (2011, 2014) and Esther Leslie (2013) have made a case for a specific kind of material confluence between the surfaces and textures of dress fabric and those of the film as both material and image. Taking digital fashion film as an opportunity to refocus from filmic image onto dress, I showed how some fashion filmmakers place great importance on carefully staging the physical features of garments while at the same time extending these ‘into new mental spaces where experimental effects of impressionistic or poetic cinema play a significant role’ (Uhlírova 2013a: 123). I sought aesthetic parallels between digital fashion film and early cinema’s costume spectacles, and in doing so, identified movement, rhythm and transformation as the crucial aspects of the ‘union’ between cinema and dress. However, I argued that the relations between costume and the moving image in the two historical periods differ in one significant aspect: while in early cinema clothing was seized as a vehicle through which to showcase filmic properties such as motion and change, this was fundamentally reversed in contemporary fashion film, where film became an instrument for showing off fashion.

Finally, my shorter article ‘Fashion Film and the Photographic’ for *Aperture* magazine examined the relationship between contemporary fashion film and photography. It argued that while fashion photography has frequently been described as ‘cinematic’, and numerous fashion spreads have

been explicitly based on various references from the cinema, there was little consideration of the import photographic conventions have had on digital fashion film. Exploring a handful of examples of current fashion communications, the article pointed towards the complex intermedial relations between the photographic and filmic practices and conventions.

Conclusion

In this critical appraisal I have sought to situate my work within the growing field of fashion in film, and to outline my main contribution to it. At the same time, I have taken the exercise of reviewing my work as an opportunity to suggest a reframing of this field. Moving the study of fashion in film beyond the immediate horizons of cinema and fashion studies, I have proposed a broader constellation involving multiple disciplines and practices that have coexisted for some time now, and that I have also variously tried to bring into dialogue. I argue here that my contribution to knowledge has been primarily to expand the conceptual, methodological and material boundaries of my field. Creating a new and unique interface between a range of academic fields and practices has led me not only to discover a wealth of new film material and gain novel critical insights, but it has also prompted me to challenge some of the ways in which established fields have staked their ground, privileged certain forms while neglecting others, and operated within particular aesthetic regimes. All along, this has meant questioning the assumptions upon which these fields have been based.

On the most general level, my work has consistently aimed to broaden the enquiry into the interactions between fashion and cinema, exploring these across the late-nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. But, more specifically, it has also sought to highlight specific problems of fashion's representation and performance in cinema that had been previously ignored or underdeveloped. Not too long ago, the film historian and theorist David Bordwell (2005: 8) called for more serious attention to be paid to problems of filmic staging, as well as the various crafts that come into play in the creation of the totality of a *mise-en-scène*. Dress is an essential component of the film image, evidently a pivotal attraction for audiences

and often an element meticulously considered by filmmakers themselves, especially in relation to set design. Yet, as Bordwell shows, discourses around cinema have from the outset tended to marginalise it (as ultimately an inheritance of the theatre), focusing instead on other, more ‘purely cinematic’ aspects of the ‘filmic language’ such as editing. Indeed, as Ian Christie notes, ‘the “vision” of most films is routinely attributed to their director, in a tradition that was intensified by the critical revolution of the 1960s that launched “auteurism”’ (Christie 2017: 408). Certainly, when I began working on the subject, I realised that problems of fashion and costume’s performance in cinema had generally been brushed aside in critical reflections, and were exceptionally rare as the focus of film programmes and exhibitions. The possibilities for exploration seemed endless, and all the more enticing through the lens of the burgeoning digital fashion film, which played an important role as a recent catalyst in this field.

Two concerns that I have perhaps most consistently pursued in my work are those of representation and meaning on the one hand, and those of form and presentation on the other. I have been particularly drawn to instances where fashion and film enter into complicity to enrich one another with new perceptual dimensions, and to transform each other’s aesthetic and material properties. This interest has culminated in my explorations of costume spectacles in early and queer underground cinemas, and in my attempt to theorise the peculiar ‘fashion-film effect’ produced by other kinds of fashion- or costume-centric films. As I hope the Fashion in Film Festivals have shown, the relationship between fashion and cinema is complex and full of contradictions. Yet it is clear that cinema thrives on the potential of dress and adornment to captivate the senses through their decorative surfaces and mutating forms,

and that, conversely, these find a natural ally in film as a medium that can greatly magnify their appeal.

My extensive exploration of non-narrative cinema – much of it identified through archival research – has been key to this enquiry. It is also, I would argue, at the core of my contribution to the debate about fashion and spectacle in cinema, which has gathered pace over the last two decades among film scholars (for a summary of this, see Warner 2012). Whereas previous accounts (beginning with Gaines 1990b and Bruzzi 1997) anchored this debate in narrative fiction film, treating spectacle variously as a form of distraction, interjection or aberration within the narrative (following Mulvey 1975), I focused instead on a range of non-narrative filmmaking practices (fashion film, early and advertising cinema, cinemagazine, experimental cinema) where spectacle and scopic pleasure were the norm. Thus, I have contributed to the reframing of the spectacle/narrative dichotomy by moving it away from conceptualisations that take for granted the dominance of narrative cinema, and aligning it with early and experimental cinema scholarship which has explicitly challenged such a hegemony (Gunning 1986: 63).

I also argue that, as a cultural mediator and producer who has worked collaboratively with numerous organisations and individuals, my contribution has reached beyond the academy, especially to the fields of film and fashion curation, the film archive, and the fashion industry. My work has raised awareness of, and given new cultural value to, much film material that had been persistently neglected. This process has all along been a reciprocal one – while seeking to intervene in these fields and practices, I have of course also been stimulated by them in return. Ultimately, I believe that the encounters I have staged between multiple

approaches, knowledges, critical positions and ways of thinking and working have significance for all those fields concerned, as they have provoked new ideas, shone a spotlight on new problems, and suggested new avenues for further research.

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Exhibitions, Film Seasons and Online Resources

A Shaded View on Fashion Film. Accessible online:

<https://www.ashadedviewonfashionfilm.com>.

China: Through the Looking Glass. 7 May – 7 September 2015. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Clothes on Film. Accessible online: <http://clothesonfilm.com>.

Copenhagen Fashion Film. Accessible online: <http://copenhagendfashionfilm.dk>.

David Bowie Is. 23 March – 11 August 2013. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Dressing the Screen. 26 October – 11 November 2012. UCCA Gallery in Beijing, China.

Fashion-Colour-Cinema Inventory at *Arnhem Mode Biennale*. 1 June – 3 July. AkzoNobel Factory.

Fashion Film Festival Milano. Accessible online: <https://fashionfilmfestivalmilano.com>.

Florence Biennale: fashion/cinema. 21 September – 1 November 1998. Florence-wide.

Filme/Fashion. Between 2003 and 2007. São Paulo.

Filmkostüme! Das Unternehmen Theaterkunst. 29 March – 2 September 2007. Deutsche Kinemathek.

Hollywood Costume. 20 October 2012 – 27 January 2013. The Victorian and Albert Museum.

Le cinéma français des années 20: corps et décors. 8–24 February 2008. Musée d'Orsay.

McQueen: Savage Beauty. 4 May – 7 August 2011. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Romantic and Glamorous Hollywood Design. 1974. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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<http://screenarchive.brighton.ac.uk/search/Fashion/Keywords::keyword/>.

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SHOWstudio: Fashion Revolution. 17 September – 23 December 2009. Somerset House.

The 1st Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma. 14–27 May 2006. London-wide.

The 2nd Fashion in Film Festival: If Looks Could Kill. 10–30 May 2008. London-wide.

The 3rd Fashion in Film Festival: Birds of Paradise. 14 November – 12 December 2010. London-wide.

The 5th Fashion in Film Festival: Frame by Frame: Dissecting the Fashion Moving Image Now. 17–24 March 2015. London-wide.

Talks, Panels and Events

Bartlett, Djurdja & Marketa Uhlirova. 2009. 'Cold War Fashion' Q&A. 8 January.

Fashion Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. 2013. London College of Fashion. 21–22 October.

Fashion on Screen Study Day. 2009. Victoria and Albert Museum, Lecture Theatre. 21 May.

- Fury, Alex. 2015. 'Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion Show Meets Film' panel discussion (featured speaker). *The 5th Fashion in Film Festival: Frame by Frame: Dissecting the Fashion Moving Image Now*. 18 March.
- 'Beyond Espionage: Fashion under Socialism'. 2008. Screening of socialist fashion newsreels at Victoria and Albert Museum Friday Late. 31 October.
- Uhlirova, Marketa. 2014. 'The Allure of the Archive.' Fashion Research Network Seminar, Royal College of Art. 25 June.

Filmography

- A Man with White Gloves (L'homme aux gants blancs)*. 1908. France. Dir Albert Capellani.
- American Gigolo*. 1980. USA. Dir Paul Schrader.
- Annabelle Serpentine Dance*. 1895. USA. Dir William Heise.
- Blood and Black Lace (Sei donne per l'assassino)*. 1964. Italy/Monaco/France/Germany. Dir Mario Bava.
- Confessions of a Shopaholic*. 2009. USA. Dir P. J. Hogan.
- Red Heels (Das Spielzeug von Paris)*. 1925. Austria, Germany, France. Dir Michael Curtiz.
- Desire*. 1936. USA. Dir Frank Borzage.
- Fata Morgana*. 1965. Spain. Dir Vicente Aranda.
- Fig Leaves*. 1926. USA. Dir Howard Hawks.
- Follow me quietly*. 1949. USA. Dir Richard Fleischer.
- Ladies Shoes from the Famous Galleries Lafayette*. 1912. France. Pathé Frères.
- Lupe*. 1966. USA. Dir Jose Rodriguez-Soltero.
- Mannequin in Red (Mannekäng i rött)*. 1958. Sweden. Dir Arne Mattsson.
- Mannequins for Sale (Mannequins à vendre)*. 1938. France. Pathé Frères.
- The Merry Widow*. 1925. USA. Dir Erich von Stroheim.
- Model*. 1980. USA. Dir Frederick Wiseman.
- Normal Love*. 1964. USA. Dir Jack Smith.
- Office Killer*. 1997. USA. Dir Cindy Sherman.
- Pink Narcissus*. 1971. USA. Dir James Bidgood.
- Puce Moment*. 1949/66. USA. Dir Kenneth Anger.
- Rapsodia Satanica*. 1915/17. Italy. Dir Nino Oxilia.

Sex and the City. 1998–2004. USA. Executive Producer Michael Patrick King.

Shelley Fox 14. 2002. UK. Dir Shelley Fox / SHOWstudio.

The Ambassador's Daughter. 1956. USA. Dir Norman Krasna.

The Devil is a Woman. 1935. USA. Dir Josef von Sternberg.

The Devil Wears Prada. 2006. USA. Dir David Frankel.

The Extinct World of Gloves (Zaniklý svět rukavic). 1982. Czechoslovakia. Dir. Jiří Barta.

The First Monday in May. 2016. USA. Dir Andrew Rossi.

The Gay Shoe Clerk. 1903. USA. Dir Edwin S. Porter.

The Kidnapping of Banker Fux (Únos bankéře Fuxe). Czechoslovakia. 1923. Dir Karl Anton.

The Liberation of the Mannique Mechanique. 1967. USA. Dir Steven Arnold.

The Pearl (La Perle). 1929. Belgium. Dir Henri d'Ursel.

The Pearl Fisher (Le pêcheur de perles). 1907. France. Dir Ferdinand Zecca.

The Tenth Victim (La decima vittima). 1965. Italy. Dir Elio Petri.

Tin Hats for All. 1941. UK. Pathé News.

Tit for Tat (La Peine du talion). 1906. France. Dir Gaston Velle.

Tough Stockings. 1960. UK. Pathé News.

Transformations/ Metempsychosis (Métempsychose). 1907. France. Dir Segundo de Chomón.

Zoot Suit Riots. 2001. USA. Dir Joseph Tovares.

Curriculum Vitae

Marketa Uhlirova is an art historian and curator with an interest in the display, representation and mediation of fashion and dress, especially in the moving image. In 2005 she co-founded the Fashion in Film Festival, the first major exhibition, research and education project to explore the common ground between the worlds of fashion, cinema and art. Her film programmes have been hosted by arts venues internationally, including Tate Modern, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Barbican Centre, BFI Southbank, V&A, Danish Film Institute and Museum of the Moving Image, New York. She has also collaborated on conferences, symposia and film programmes with scholars at Yale University, The Graduate Center, CUNY and University of Chicago.

Selected curatorial projects

- 2017 *Fashion in Film Festival's 10th Anniversary Season. Wearing Time: Past, Present, Future, Dream*, a two-week festival season curated with Tom Gunning. Barbican Centre, Curzon Cinemas, Rio, Prince Charles Cinema and other London venues. Touring Museum of the Moving Image, New York (April 2018). Season included the world premiere of *The Inferno Unseen* (2017) a film I co-edited with Rollo Smallcombe.
- 2016 *Wearing Time: Returns, Recalls, Renewals*. A four-day film season curated with Tom Gunning for Fashion Projects, Bal Harbour, Miami.
- 2015 *The 5th Fashion in Film Festival. Frame by Frame: Dissecting the Fashion Moving Image Now*. Season co-curated with Hywel Davies. Central Saint Martins, Somerset House, Hackney PictureHouse.
- 2013 *The 4th Fashion in Film Festival. Marcel L'Herbier: Fabricating Dreams*. Season co-curated with Caroline Evans and Dionne Griffith. BFI Southbank, Barbican Centre, Ciné Lumière, The Horse Hospital.
- 2010–2011 *The 3rd Fashion in Film Festival: Birds of Paradise*. London (Tate Modern, Barbican, BFI Southbank, Somerset House, Horse Hospital), New York (Museum of the Moving Image, CUNY) and New Haven (Yale University), Bristol (Arnolfini) and Glasgow (GFT).
- 2008 *Beyond Espionage: Fashion Under Socialism - Friday Late* at the V&A. Programme of cold war newsreels co-curated with Renate Stauss.

The 2nd Fashion in Film Festival: If Looks Could Kill, BFI Southbank, Tate Modern, The Horse Hospital and Ciné Lumière. Touring: Arnolfini, Bristol (2008) and Museum of the Moving Image, New York (2012).

- 2006 *The 1st Fashion in Film Festival: Between Stigma and Enigma*, co-curated with Christel Tsilibaris. ICA, Ciné Lumière and The Horse Hospital, London. Touring: Kino Světozor / Tranzit collaboration, Prague, Czech Republic; Museum of the Moving Image, New York; Mode Biennale, Arnhem (all 2007).
- 2005 (Guest Curator) *The One*, New General Catalog 224, New York. Featured the work of Kateřina Šedá.
- 2001 *I Want You to Be There* (incl. Peter Campus, Vito Acconci, Tony Oursler and Mike Kelley), Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York

Selected publications

- 2017 CHAPTER "Voyage through Space, Time and Utopian Modernism in Ikarie XB 1," in: Lucie Česálková (ed.), *Czech Cinema Revisited: Politics, Genres, Techniques*. Prague: Národní filmový archiv.
- Jun 2016 INTERVIEW "Considering Pop Culture's Fascination with Invisibility," *AnOther*. I interviewed Noam Elcott about his book *Artificial Darkness: An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media* (Chicago University Press, 2016).
- Nov 2015 INTERVIEW 'The Fashion Film Effect', I was interviewed by Mahret Kupka, Mode Bewegt Bild website, Museum fur Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt am Mein, Germany
- Nov 2014 INTERVIEW In conversation: Alistair O'Neill, co-curator of Guy Bourdin: Image Maker, fashioninfilm.com.
- A/W 2014 ARTICLE "The Fashion Film and the Photographic", *Aperture*, "Fashion Issue".
- 2014 ARTICLE "Clothes to Come: Between Sci-fi Costumes and Fashion", in: James Bell (ed.), *Sci-Fi: Days of Fear and Wonder*. BFI Compendium of Science-fiction Cinema, 2014.
- Jul 2014 INTERVIEW A Round Table with Film Curator Mariann Lewinsky, fashioninfilm.com.

- 2014 EDITED VOLUME, with Caroline Evans: *Marcel L'Herbier: The Dossier*. With articles by Tag Gronberg, Nick Rees-Roberts, Mireille Beaulieu and Joan Tumblety. Published June 2014.
- 2013 EDITED BOOK *Birds of Paradise: Costume as Cinematic Spectacle* (Koenig Books, London). Contributed "Introduction" and article "Costume in Early 'Marvellous' Cinema: The Aesthetic of Opulence and the Teasing Image".
- 2013 JOURNAL ARTICLE "100 Years of the Fashion Film: Frameworks and Histories", *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 17/2, 2013.
- 2013 BOOK CHAPTER "The Fashion-Film Effect", in *Fashion Media: Past and Present*, ed. D. Bartlett, S. Cole, A. Rocamora, Bloomsbury, 2013. Reprinted in *Bulletin Moravske galerie*, 70, 2015.
- 2010 ARTICLE "Fashion and Czechoslovak Cinema of the Interwar Period" *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (Berg). A shortened version published on <http://www.zenyvumeni.cz> (online resources dedicated to woman and gender issues in the arts).
- 2009 INTERVIEW "Móda bez diktátu: Trendy leží na ulici". I was interviewed by Michaela Beránková and Tomáš Havlín, *Nový Prostor*, June 2009.
- Jun 2009 JOURNAL ARTICLE "Fashion's Vampirism and Silent Cinema", *Dějiny a současnost: History and Culture Journal*, Prague.
- May 2008 EDITED BOOK/ARTICLES *If Looks Could Kill: Cinema's Images of Fashion, Crime and Violence* (Koenig Books and Fashion in Film Festival).
- Jan 2007 ARTICLE Interview with designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Revue Labyrint*.
- Dec 2006 JOURNAL ARTICLE Oral History Interview with Boudicca, *Fashion Theory, The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 2006.
- May 2006 EDITED CATALOGUE *Between Stigma and Enigma: [1st] Fashion in Film Festival* catalogue. Co-editor, with Christel Tsilibaris.
- Feb 2006 ARTICLE Interview with Katerina Seda, *Umelec International*, trans. into Chinese for *Umelec: Best Of* (April 2009).
- Dec 2004 ARTICLE "John Galliano" in Valerie Steele (ed.), Scribner's *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*.

- Mar 2004 JOURNAL ARTICLE Exhibition review: "Rapture: Art's Seduction by Fashion since 1970 and LaChapelle: Photographs." *Fashion Theory, The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, vol. 8, issue 1, March 2004, pp. 89-97.
- 2003 EDITED MAGAZINE ISSUE, *Móda a umění* (Fashion and Art), *Revue Labyrint, Časopis pro kulturu*, no. 13-14, 2003.
- Oct 2003 ARTICLE "Window Gallery: Farewell Glamour", *Art Monthly*, no. 270, October 2003, pp. 24-25.
- 2002 ARTICLE "Tacita Dean", *Prostory pro život* (Spaces for Life), *Revue Labyrint, Časopis pro kulturu*, no. 11-12, 2002.
- ARTICLE "Unraveling Muniz", *Umelec (International), Magazine for Contemporary Art and Culture*, 6/2002, no.1, p. 94.
- 2000 INTERVIEW "Interview with Catherine Yass", *Detail*, July.
- Oct 1999 ARTICLE "Stealing Beauty" (Review of Stealing Beauty exhibition, ICA, London), *Detail*.

Selected public talks, conference papers and panels

- Jul 2017 PAPER "Fit for the World of Tomorrow: Designing the New Man in Ikarie XB-1". *Fashion & Politics: Historical & Contemporary Perspectives* conference, LCF.
- Apr 2017 CHAIR FANTASTIC FASHION SYMPOSIUM featuring Ellen Lens, Luca Nemolato and Pauline Terreehorst; and "EYE on Fashion and Art", panel discussion featuring Esther Dorhout Mees and Jakob Kok. Imagine Film Festival, Eye Filmmuseum Amsterdam.
- Dec 2016 TALK "On artists' approaches to filming fashion and dress", Fashion on the Move, a study day on fashion film at LCF.
- May 2016 PAPER "Theatres of Poses," *Posing the Body: Stillness, Movement, and Representation* conference. The Courtauld Institute of Art.
- Jan 2016 TALK "Fashion Time – Film Time," with Tom Gunning, Bal Harbor, Miami.
- Jun 2014 KEYNOTE PAPER "The Allure of the Archive," *Fashioning the Archive* seminar organised by Fashion Research Network at the Royal College of Art.

- Feb 2014 CHAIR "No More Stuff?" panel discussion with Barry Curtis (Royal College of Art), James Wallman (author of *Stuffocation*), Cyndi Rhoades (Worn Again), Claire Pajaczkowska (Royal College of Art) and Rebecca Earley (Chelsea College).
- May 2013 LECTURE "Your Guide to the Fashions of the Future," with Ken Hollings during the 4th Fashion in Film Festival. The Horse Hospital, London.
- Jan 2012 TALK "Věra Chytilová's *Daisies*: Colour, Fashion, Cinema". *Test Presents* series, Town Hall Hotel, London.
- Nov 2011 SYMPOSIUM & PAPER Symposium co-organiser, "Secrets of the Orient: Duration, Movement and Costume in the Cinematic Experience of the East". Yale University, New Haven. Paper: "Entertainment Goes Oriental-Mental: Costuming late-19th and Early-20th Century Stage Magic, Theatre and Cinema".
- Dec 2010 CHAIR "Gossamer Wings" panel, BFI Southbank, featuring Vanessa Toulmin, Bryony Dixon and others.
- Feb 2010 PAPER "Workwear in Paul Fejos's *Lonesome* (1928)," Workwear International Symposium, The New School, Parsons, New York.
- May 2009 PAPER "The Fashion Machine", Fashion on Screen Study Day, V&A (Organized by Royal College of Art and Screen Archive South East at University of Brighton).
- Jan 2009 IN CONVERSATION with Djurdja Bartlett accompanying a screening Cold War Fashions, BFI Southbank.
- Nov 2008 IN CONVERSATION "Beyond Espionage: Fashion Under Socialism," Cold War Culture International Conference, V&A. Screening + Q&A led by David Crowley, Co-curator of Cold War Modern.
- Nov 2008 TALK "The Rat: Who was the Apache?" Arnolfini, Bristol.
- TALK "The Kidnapping of Banker Fux", BFI Southbank.
- SYMPOSIUM "Taking Stock: Cinema's Reservoir of Criminal Looks", featuring Kitty Hauser, Lorraine Gamman, Claire Pajaczkowska & Barry Curtis and others, ICA London.
- Jun 2007 PAPER "Film archives: To whom do they belong exactly?" Paper for Centre for Fashion, the Body and Material Cultures Annual Conference.

- Mar/Jun 2007 TALK "The Enigma of the Fashion Object," Museum of the Moving Image, New York and Arnhem's ModeBiennale. Moderator, Q&A session with Slava Tsukerman, Yuri Neyman and Marina Levikova, the makers of *Liquid Sky*, Museum of the Moving Image.
- Mar 2007 PAPER "William Klein's Graphic Vision", The American Institute of Graphic Arts Annual Conference, New York.
- Nov 2006 TALK+SCREENING at The Death of Taste conference, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, incl. a conversation with filmmaker and artist Dick Jewell.
- Sep 2006 TALKS "Banality, Superficiality and Boredom? Fashion Model and the World of Fashion in Cinema", and "The Enigma of the Fashion Object: Cases of Clothes that Have Their Own Life", TRANZIT / Kino Svetozor, Prague.
- July 2006 TALK "The Boredom and the Surface of Fashion: the Swinging Sixties Models and their Observers". Talk at Photographers Gallery, London.