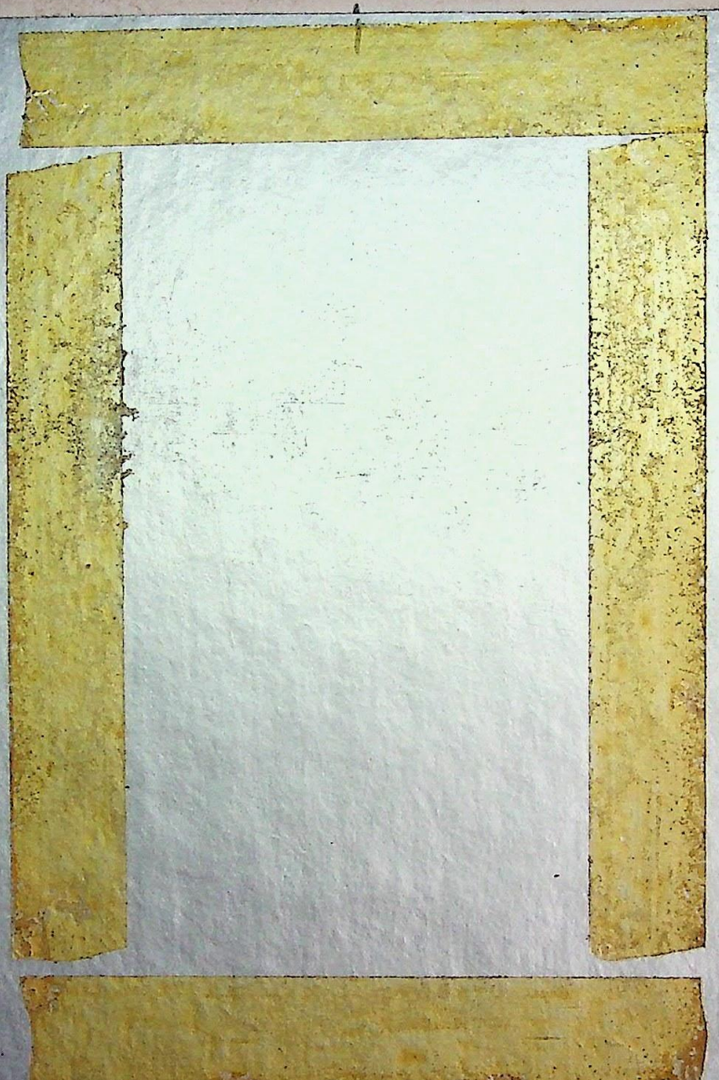
THE IMAGE OF HOLLYWOOD



1930-1950

Introduction

This Thesis **The Image of Hollywood 1930 - 1950** is mainly concerned with the image of Hollywood Costume during those years, the designers who created them and the stars who wore them. I have selected several designers as representative of Hollywood style and stars representative of the designers style. The names Adrian, Banton and Plunkett may not be as well known as Garbo. Dietrich and Crawford, but they shaped the image of Hollywood as much as the stars who stepped in front of the camaras.

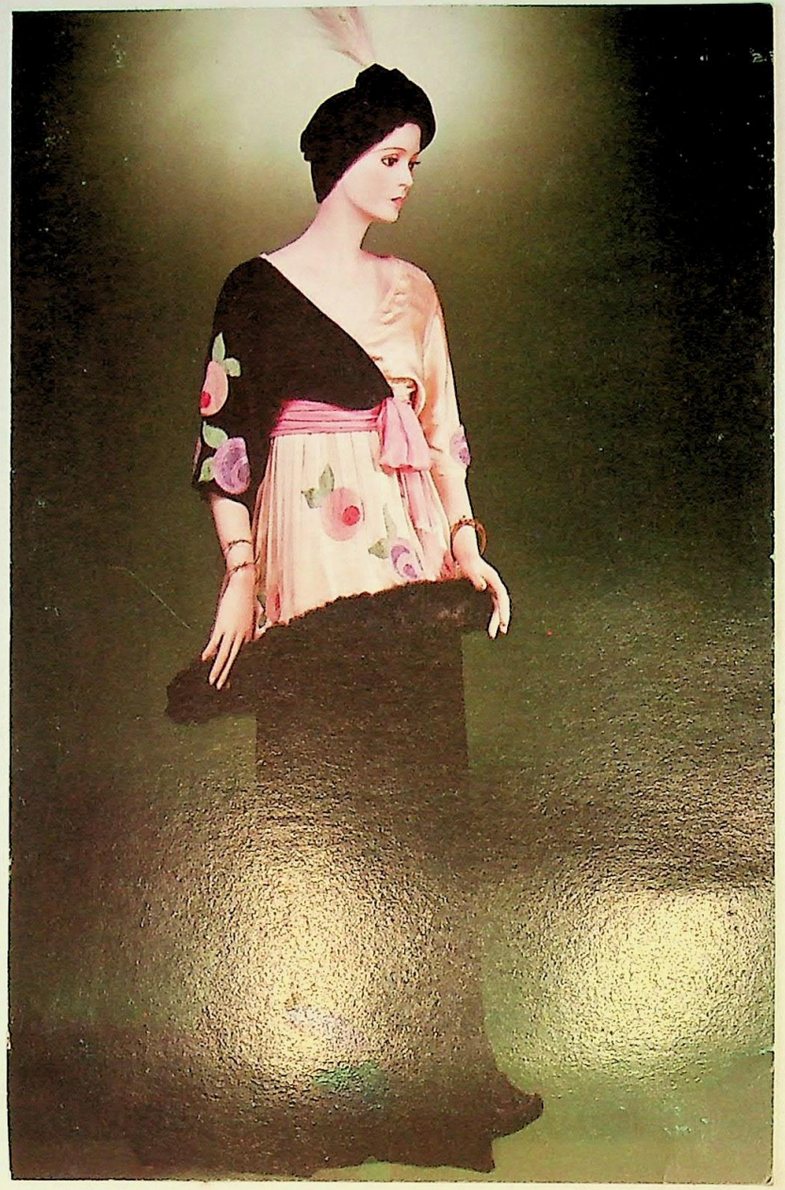
In 1903 Edwin Porter made a short film entitled The Life of an American Fireman. The short drama showed the dramatic rescue of a mother and child from a burning house. Later that year Porter produced and directed The Great Train Robbery a tale about Cowboys and Indians. These two films were among the first films to have a storyline, a beginning and a conclusion.

Other production companies immediately formed. In 1909 D. W. Griffith founded a company called Vitagraph for the production of two reel films. D.W. Griffith was responsible for many innovations, Intolerance 1916 was a particularly important film. For the first time in an American film lavish sets and costumes were used, a cast of thousands and a very wide range of scenes from slums to palaces. Griffith's films contained elaborate spectacles theatre had never been equipped to offer.

Griffith was influenced by the films of French and Italian filmmakers, Giavanni Pastrone (Fall of Troy 1910), Guiseppe de Liquoro (The Inferno 1910) and by Sarah Bernhardt's film Queen Elizabeth. In 1912 Adolph Zukor paid forty thousand dollars for the rights to a four-reel French-produced film version of Queen Elizabeth starring Sarah Bernhardt in a re-creation of her stage version of the life of Englands Queen. Zukor, an ex-furrier in Chicago had realised the potential of the two-reel film projector and transformed a small New York loft, calling it Crystal Hall, audiences sat on wooden benches watching the films to the accompaniment of an upright piano. Zukors venture proved successful and similar movie houses began sprouting up everywhere.

For the film Queen Elizabeth, Sarah Bernhardt had commissioned the leading french couturier in Paris at the time, Paul Poiret to design her costumes. For Bernhardt , Elizabeth Poiret adapted a rather romantic Italian Renaissance style. Bernhardts costumes were accented by large wide sleeves, high lace collars and long lace cuffs, long flowing capes and high-waisted long gowns added to the drama and impact of Bernhardt's performances.

The legendary Sarah Bernhardt in Queen Elizabeth designed by Paul Poiret.



'Sorbet' designed by Paul Poiret Paris 1911. Black and white satin wired lampshade-shaped tunic with applied bead motifs over a narrow draped black satin skirt. Poiret was to have a great influence on all the early Hollywood costume designers.

Poiret worked in Paris during the time when it was the very centre of the artistic world. The most important and influential event on design during that period exploded onto the stages of Paris, The Ballets Russes brought to Paris by the impressario Diaghilev in the Spring of 1909.

The dancing of Nijinsky and Pavlova, the superb décor and costumes of Bakst and the music of Rimsky-Karsakov and Tchaikovsky combined in an exotic mixture leaving audiences gasping and intoxicated with colour, sound and movement as they had never seen before.

Working in this atmosphere Poiret was inspired to create his mode, Orientale, he draped women's heads with turbans hung with pearls and Egret feathers, Kimonos hung with hug e barbaric paste jewellery were made into evening wraps. He freed women from stiff corseting allowing a new exoticism in dress. It was not long until Poirets interpretation of Diaghilevs vison found its way onto the screens of pre-world war 1 America. The Sultan's favorite in Scheherazade,—Ida Rubi nstein as Cleopatra preceded the movie vamp.

The fabrics Poiret made fasionable,- embroidered chinese silk, crepe, georgette, patterned metallic lame, hand painted satin, soft leathers, thread-of-gold and silver appliqued motifs and beading all became part of the movie star image, adding to and in some cases even creating their aura and mystique. During the early years the finest movie costumers were in a sense disciples of Poiret, most of whom worked or studied in Paris when Poiret was still an important fashion force. Poiret never designed for the American studios; however his influence on picture costume design was inestimable.

By the mid twenties most of the important film companies had either moved to Hollywood or originated there. Louis B. Mayer, a shoemaker joined with Sam Goldfish (later Goldwyn) a glovemaker, to form Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The Warner brothers who had started with a nickle-odeon peep show on New York's fourteenth street founded the studio that bears their name. Adolph Zukor headed Paramount Pictures.

Hollywood, Southern California became the American movie industry's base for a number of reasons , it was far from the cold weather and close to Mexico, a place where film producers felt they could escape the world-wide monopoly of the Motion Pictures Patents Company, a consortium of American and French movie-makers that legally controlled all film production. The location also provided the studios with plenty of cheap labour.

As long as movies had been made in New York until the late twenties department stores had supplied the wardrobe. Costume pictures at least in the beginning, had been filmed directly from stage productions. For other movies both actors and actresses were expected to supply their own wardrobe. Wardrobe departments were no more than a communal clothes-rack.

The studio workrooms were copied directly from those supplying the broadway stage most notably by D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. De Mille both of whom had theatre experience and tried to emulate theatrical professionalism in their productions. The studio workrooms developed into veritable factories that executed the designs of the designers. They employed as many as two hundred people - pattern makers, fitters, seamstresses, tailors, milliners, furriers, embroiders and in the bigger studios, armorers and jewellers.

Cecil B. De Mille was one of the first film directors to realize the importance of scenic and costume designers. De Mille who would become Diaghilev's counterpart in Hollywood came from a theatrical background in New York, where he had been a successful theatrical producer-director. De Mille quickly setthe standards for his own and other studios one of extravagance and flamboyance.

In 1919 De Mille directed Male and Female insisting that Zukor, head of Paramount bring the artist-designer, Paul Iribe from France to create the sets and costumes for his leading lady Gloria Swanson. By accepting De Mille's demand, Paramount became the first studio to realize the importance of creating special costumes for it's stars. "Give it art", became a new studio command as bigger budgets made more costly wardrobes possible, anything that hinted of European design was a sign of prestige.

Iribe designed for many of De Mille's films, which were praised for their decor and costume. Hollywood's major studios immediately began to search for design talents in theatres and fashion houses.

In 1920 William Randolph Hearst formed a company called Cosmopolitan Films to produce movies. He brought Joseph Urban, former designer for Vienna's Burgtheater and the Ziegfeld Follies in New York to California to serve as art director. MGM countered by bringing Erté, the fashionable French designer to Hollywood to costume it's stars. A former assistant to Poiret, Erté had a considerable reputation in Europe, and more important his name had prestige. His stay in Hollywood was brief, however. After creating the costumes for a sequence in Restless Sex 1920 Erte returned to France, unable to cope with the constant pressure of working in Hollywood, such as designing costumes that were never used. Erté wanted to design the costumes in black, white and grey as the movie was shot in black and white, this idea however met with considerable opposition, Erte was told the actors became bored if they were not surrounded by colours and that the boredom would be reflected in their eyes. He there-after had to draw all the costumes in colour, but this presented problems since the various colour depths do not produce corresponding shades of grey on film, luckily this difficulty was resolved by the use of a small blue glass, when the drawings were loked at under this glass, they appeared as they would on the screen.

A new type of designer was to emerge in the early years of Hollywood, one who was neither a fashion designer or a costume designer. The type of design Hollywood expected the designers to produce was to create a whole new genre. The costumes had to create an image and project that image to the very back rows of the movie houses.

One of the greatest Hollywood costume designers was Adrian.

Educated in Paris during the twenties, Adrian returned to New York at the request of Irving Berlin to design costumes for his revue Music Box. The costumes that Adrian designed led to other commissions and during this time he received his first offer to do a Hollywood film.

Natacha Rambova wife of the matinee idol Rudolph Valentino, saw a portfolio of Adrian's designs and invited him to join her in California. After settling in Hollywood Adrian started work on The Hooded Falcon however shortly after the film started it was completely cancelled.

Adrians first film credits came in 1925 for Paramount's Cobra and The Eagle both starring Valentino. Adrian designed costumes for thirty films - including The Merry Widow with Mae Murray and Cecil B. De Mille's King of Kings before MGM entrusted him with dressing Greta Garbo in A Women of Affairs 1928. Adrian joined MGM in 1929 as head designer and stayed there until his retirement in 1942. Although he often worked on as many as five movies simultaneously he was noted for his meticulous attention to detail. Even the linings of his clothes were silk, and it was rumored that the extras at MGM were better dressed than the stars of other studios.

Another major talent to emerge was Travis Banton. Born in Texas but raised in New York with an intrest in fashion and the theatre, Banton took classes in fashion design, while still a student he made his first contribution to the movies. After meeting Norma Talmadge and showing her some sketches he was commissioned to do one of her costumes for the 1917 film Poppy Banton then worked for Mme Francis, a successful custom dressmaker with a clientele of New York society women and actresses. When one of his sketches was chosen as a wedding gown for Mary Pickford for her marriage to Douglas Fairbanks his career was established. Banton then opened his own dress-making salon in New York's east fifties, his designs were brought to the atention of Florenz Ziegfeld and soon Banton was creating costume spectaculars for the famous Ziegfeld Follies.

Walter Wanger of Paramount signed Banton for an entire movie The Dressmaker from Paris, all about haute couture that ended with a fashion parade. After the film the studio's head Adolph Zulcor offered him a $ 150 a week contract as assistant to the then head of the costume department, Howard Greer.

Howard Greer arrived in Hollywood in 1923 to design the costumes for Pola Negris first American film The Spanish Dancer Greer had spent time working with the dressmaker Lucile who had Salons in Chicago, New York, London and Paris. He started off as a sketcher-apprentice in Chicago, in 1918 he transferred to New York. He was drafted to France by the army, when he got out he remained in Paris at Luciles salon. Lucile's salon was at the very centre of fashionable society of the time, Greer met Paul Poiret, mingled with such names as Jean Cocteau and Isadora Duncan.

Jessey Lasky president of famous players (later changed to Paramount Pictures) signed Greer for a period of six weeks. As it turned out, he stayed on for years. Greers first assignment was to costume Pola Negri in The Spanish Dancer, the fiery "La Negri" refused to be dressed by the regular wardrobe woman, Greer was hired to appease her, which he did with spectacular clothes. She was very happy with his pearl-and-crystal embroidered brocade and Lamé wedding dress with it's ermine trim, fifteen foot long train and towering mantilla of lace, according to the studio publicity it cost twenty five thousand dollars. Lasky showed his gratitude by rewarding Greer with a r ise and extending his contract. In 1924 Greer became chief designer at Paramount.

Until his departure from Paramount in 1927 Greer designed for all the top stars of the twenties, Billie Dove, Leatrice Jay, Louise Brooks, Clara Bow and Bebe Daniels. With his fine dressmaking from Lucile he was the first movie designer to organise and staff a studio wardrobe unit that maintained high profesional standards. It was in such high-caliber design departments such as Adrian, Banton and Greer would create some of the great movie costumes of the golden thirties and forties.

By 1930 wardrobe departments of major studios had grown to be small factories that employed as many as 200 workers pattern makers, fitters, seamstresses, tailors , milliners, furriers, embroiderers even armorers and jewellers were employed.

Like treasure from an Eastern potentate, stacks of crates in studio workrooms brimming with silk velvets, chiffons, metallic lame's and tons of beads, sequins and paste jewels (for special stars, real jewels were not out of the question) were available to designers.

Clothes were turned out in assembly line fashion; once a muslin pattern was perfected, cutters shaped the cloth, seamstresses basted it together and fitters worked on it - first on dress dummies and then fitting it on to the actresses body the designer personally often did the final fitting. As they grew in size their departments also became stratified each with a chief designer, head of wardrobe, several junior designers, sketchers and period researchers. Always a trusted and indispensable vendeuse stood at the designers right hand, a combination assistant, girl friday and trouble shooter. When a picture was completed, its costumes were hung on racks in wardrobe storerooms, later to be used for extras or remodeled for suporting players, thousands of costumes accumulated and by the 30's vast amounts of apparel were available for fill in for a production generally selected by an assistant designer.

Resident studio designers were provided with well appointed working quarters located in the costume department building, decorated to the individual's liking at company's expense. At MGM, Adrian frequently changed the decor of his offices during his seventeen year tenure, an ardent collector of antique furniture and obje t d'art, his eleg nt quarters became the envy of other studio designers.

Travis Banton's rooms in the wardrobe buildings at Paramount were painted and carpeted in greige a neutral colour between grey and beige, that enhanced his electic selection of period and modern furniture, crystal wall sconces and contemporary French paintings, with multi-view mirrors, satin covered banquettes and padded and carpeted fitting platforms, his quarters rivaled those found in the hushed atmosphere of Parisian salons.

Another responsibility of a head designer assistant was the preparation of a detailed wardrobe plot, showing precisely the sequence of ensembles a star was to wear in the scenes shot, each scene was numbered and in the plot a brief note was made as to which costume would be needed for each particular shot. The accuracy of such a directive was vital to the program of a film and it was nicknamed "the Bible", deviating from the plan and having the wrong costume ready for a scene would cause expensive delays, and the wrath of the producer and the director would descend upon the designer.

Each designer had his own way of working. Adrian first did a rough sketch of his idea, then draped the actual fabric he was using for the design on a dress dummy, padded to duplicate the star's dimensions, when he was satisfied with the results, he would sketch the gown and present it for approval. Banton, on the other hand, relied solely on his own sketches, when one was approved, he turned it over to drapers to create a muslin pattern on the stars personal dress form.

Normally a designers sketches were returned to his or her desk as quickly as possible to enable work on the costume to proceed. Often a complete model of the new design was made up in relatively inexpensive fabrics that approximated the final materials to be used. Sometimes duplicate costumes were made, particularly if a gown was to receive an unusual amount of stress, worn in a simulated rainstorm, splattered with some substance or other.

Rarely was an actress blessed with a mannequin's figure. It was the designers responsibility to create an illusion of physical perfection, concealing defects and stressing good points. Special under-garments were often made to achieve a sylphlike silhouette, but if a designer felt it necessary, he recommended the imperfect beauty be launched on a programme of diet, exercise and massage. Daily visits to the studio gym would be scheduled for the actress and a nutritionist would be consulted. In extreme cases, a doctor would prescribe medications to assist the actress in slimming down.

When a new contract actress arrived, a studio's expert drapers, armed with muslin pins and scissors worked to find the style of neckline, bodice, sleeve and skirt that was most flattering. Wearing a perfectly fitted garment of muslin, the actress was then photographed from every angle and the prints were studied by the designer, who decided whether a special type of foundation garment was necessary to enhance the figure. The photos were then filed and referenced to when she was to have a new wardrobe for a film. Then a dress form was padded and a Kapok-stuffed facsimile of the star's arm was added to the dummy. Each dummy was labelled with the name of the star, or star-to-be and joined all the others that lined the workrooms.

Fittings, each of which might last two to six hours, were the bane of a star's life. An actress often spent more time in front of the mirror, as workers scurried around her snipping and pinning and adjusting a new costume, than she did before a camera. A star of the magnitude of Dietrich, Crawford or Garbo could have as many as twenty costumes for a Film and each change required up to six fittings. Every wardrobe department contained a private room with a small bed where an exhausted actress could rest before continuing with the ardous ordeal.

Finished costumes were viewed in the blinding glare of spotlights that approximated the harsh illumination they would receive on the set. The designer, with his or her assistants examined each garment minutely and corrected telltale mistakes that would be magnified countless times on the screen. A forgotten basting thread or an off centre button-hole which would ordinarily go un-noticed could cause calamity in a closeup.

Mae West. About two thirds of the way through a gangland drama a new character suddenly emerges, swaying provocativily into a crowded speakeasy she hands her coat to the checkroom girl who impressed remarks, goodness! what beautiful diamonds, ' Goodness had nothing to do with it dearie ' replies Mae West and swayed on up the step. The film was Night after Night, the date 1932.

By the time Mae West made her first film she was already forty with a long career in burlesque behind her, her rather pudgy features were made up in what was already out of fashion, cupid's bow mouth and much eye shadow and mascara. The whole effect of her extraordinary appearance was enhanced by the fact that she avoided modern dress and was at all times decked out in the feathers and flounces of the gay nineties. The big hats, loud dresses and heavy jewellery were carefully chosen by lessons learnt from her days in burlesque where she had to make her prsence felt right to the last row. She carried this style over to the movies, where sparkling dresses and cartwheel hats gave her more prominence. Mae West was in fact quite a small woman, corsets pushed her hips and breasts into their pouter-pigeon shape, long skirts, trains and high heels made her taller than she was: 'The difference between me and other actresses' she said 'is that I dress for the men in the audience. I'm not afraid to give them what they want'. Two versions of the same gown were usualy made, one in which Miss West either stood or walked and one for the same occasions on which she would sit (more often recline) on a couch or chair. The gowns made for her when standing were fitted so tightly the actress found it impossible to assume any kind of sitting position without bursting her seams!

Schiaparelli was commissioned to dress their box-office queen Mae West in the 1937 film "Every Day's a Holiday". The Italian-born designer refused to sail the Atlantic to supervise the making of her dresses, however, and Mae was determined to remain in her ninth-floor penthouse apartment building, six blocks from the Paramount lot. Paramount sent a copy of their star's dress form to Paris, the copy however, had been inadequately padded, Schiaparelli's lavish creations arrived at the wardrobe dept. several inches too small to accommodate West, the studio workroom staff had to remake the entire set of costumes to meet the film schedule.

Mae West was a consumate illusionist, really quite small, she made herself tall with her long skirts, created an enormous bosom with careful corseting and managed to be the centre of attention with her huge hats. Travis Banton transformed her burlesque appearance into real glamour adding further to the illusion with satins and beads and cascades of plumage.

Mae West in a Travis Banton designed gown that was probably designed for standing in, if she sat down it would split.

Schiaparelli later adapted the hourglass shape of West's dress dummy to a bottle that she labeled shocking to describe her impression of the silhouette. The success of the perfume and the shocking pink colour of the ribbon on the bottle that was introduced into Schiaparelli's collection the following year became part of fashion history (1938).

One of the biggest and brightest stars of the early thirties who set the style for movie stars for years to come was Jean Harlow.

Jean Harlow projected a sex appeal totally different from that of Mae West. Known as "the platinum blonde" she was mainly known for her platinum hair, a fashion she began, and her bra-less bosom. Harlow was a perfect model for the bias-cut dress with it's clinging outline and deep cleavage. On Harlow, who was quite generously proportioned the dresses seemed to strain and pull with all the appearance of too-tight nightgowns.

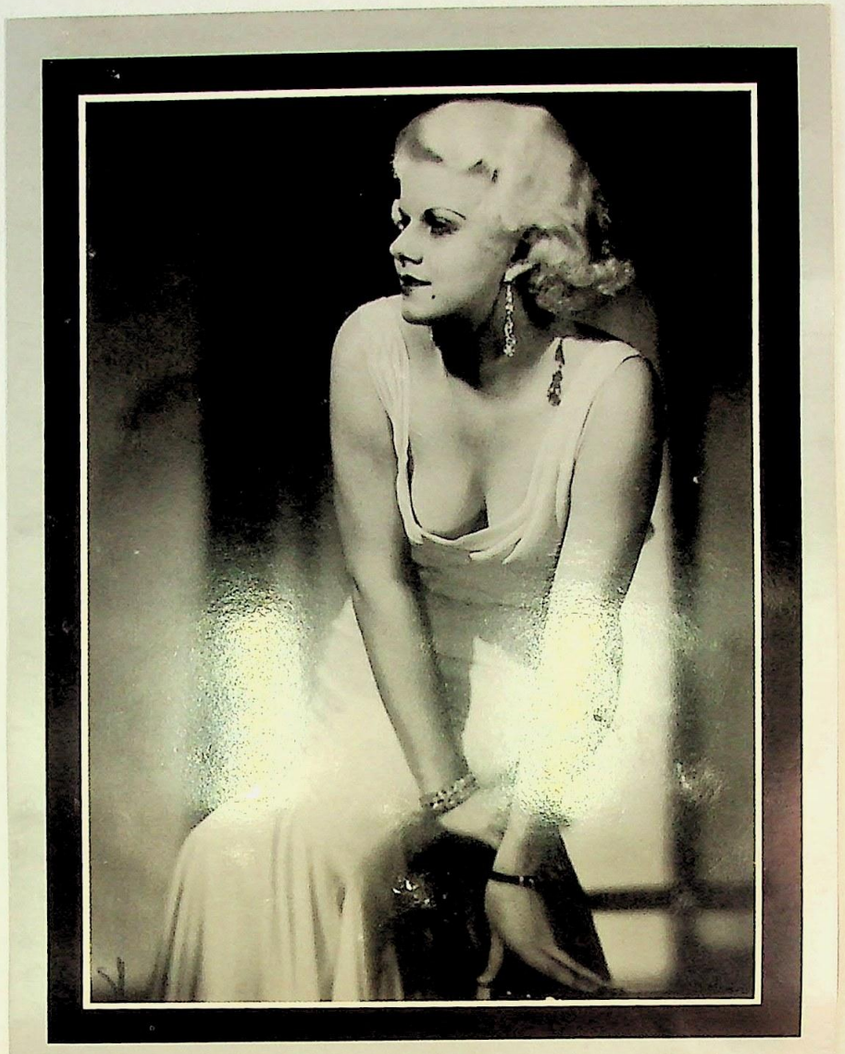
Most of Harlow's costumes, for that is what they were, having no relation to fashion, were designed by Adrian. Who played up the costumes resemblance to lingerie with furs and feathers massed about her shoulders, letting the dress fall and drape provocatively about her hips and pelvis, Adrian created a particular genre of costume forever associated with Hollywood style. White furs or feathers and skin tight satin, a look that had wide fashion influence. Harlow was not fashion but she was Hollywood.

Harlow, who died when she was 26 was the very incarnation of a Hollywood sex symbol of the 30's with a coarse lewd humour, she wise-cracked her way through almost 30 films in only nine years.

In the early days of Hollywood it was Max Factor who had the task of grooming the female stars into beauties. From Mary Pickford onwards! proclaimed a newspaper article in the early 30's" he found film faces for them all, he has made more plain girls beautiful than any man living".

Jean Harlow. Her bee-stung lips and platinum hair were born out of the black and white movie, and set the style for a generation.

Jean Harlow in a gown by Adrian that is so tight she almost looks as if she has nothing on.



Jean Harlow

Max Factor, a Pole, who had been chief make-up artist for the Moscow state theatre, came to Los Angeles in 1908.

In early days women would make up for camera with petroleum jelly powdered with flour or with cold cream dusted with cornstarch, or at best with a crudely coloured greasepaint stick like a thick mask.

Jean Harlow's image was to have a considerable impact on the general public, while few could imitate her clothes and jewels, her hairstyle and make-up were within reach of most women. Cosmetics were now generally available. In 1914 Max Factor launched 'Supreme Greasepaint' a range of eye-shadows and pencils with a booklet about how-to-apply make-up like the stars.

Jean Harlow's image - plucked eyebrows and platinum blonde hair was reflected in the beauty editors columns of the time, in answer to dozens of readers queries, they advised putting ether on the brows to ease pain of plucking and to massage the head with warm oil to counteract the dryness and splitting hair that was an inevitable result of such drastic bleaching. Blondes were popular till 1938. Jean Harlow had this warning for her admirers " very few people who admire blonde hair realize that every little speck of dust or grime appears on the surface as clearly as it would on a white dress or coat, platinum hair, she said, had to be shampooed every night and she let slip that the product she used on her hair was brillox.2

By 1934 85 million people a week went to the movies at five cents a ticket.

In 1934 America's Roman Catholic Bishops banded together to form the National League of Decency - long kisses, adultery, double beds, words like "dahm" and "hell" and even nude babies were banned from films. The censoring arm dictated how much cleavage a costume designer could allow an actress to reveal.

"You cant even show a baby's bare behind out here," Jean Harlow once roared, when warned her bias-cut Adrian gowns clung to her revealingly.

Mae West could no longer croon "I like a man who takes his time", the day of the family film was ushered in making Shirley Temple one of the top box office stars of the thirties, even titles cleaned up — 'Infidelity' became 'Fidelity'.

The greatest Phenomenon of the entertainment world was the introduction of the Movie Musical Extravaganza. Answering America growing need for a form of escape from the problems during the depression. If the opening of the cinemas gave the less privileged woman her first glimpse of glamour and beauty it was the musical that opened up a whole new world.

Warner Bros. released Forty Second Street (1933) starring Ruby Keeler and Dick Powell, the following year one of the chorus girls in the film, Ginger Rogers, left the chorus to become Fred Astaire's dancing partner in RKO's Flying Down to Rio (1934), beginning the movies most famous dance team.

Astaire and Rogers seemed made to dance for each other, alone in their own enchanted world on Moonlit terraces in "The Gay Divorcee" or in empty ballrooms with black mirror floors, on decks of yachts at midnight, always to a happy ending.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The King and Queen of "Caruoca", a popular dance at the time. They did much to popularise dance. Most of Ginger Rogers costumes were designed by Bernard Newman who specialised in Musicals.

Ginger Roger's costumes were always designed for movement, large full skirts that floated around her trimmed with long fly-away feathers. Her costumes were pure fantasy designed to be danced in. These costumes created one of the few indigenous fashions. They were mostly designed by Walter Plunkett who later went on to design costumes for Gone With The Wind. There was a general craze at the time for ballroom dancing, while the musicals could hardly have said to have started it, they certainly ensured its growth and popularity. Fred Astaire is said to have objected strongly to, what he thought, the over-dresed Ginger Rogers, complaining there was too much feathery froth and flurry for him to endure, In one dance routine a long heavily beaded cuff hits him squarely across the face; he carries on however without missing a beat, Hollywood insisted on glamour for its female stars at whatever cost or discomfort to her leading man.

Norma S hearer was a slickly presented product of the star system, she was short with slightly bow legs, but she made herself even become a hit at the box-office, Adrian designed a special silhouette for her that gave her a higher waistline and lower hemline concealing her legs and disguising her ample hips. Norma Shearer was expert at getting the advice and help of the studio craftsman, particularly Adrian and Sidney Guillaroff, who she had hired away from his own highly successful hairdressing salon in New York, of all the stars of the period she was most dependant on the visual power of costume. Much care, attention and money was lavished on enhancing her appearance. One of her most important roles was Marie Antoinette (1938).

For MGM's lavish Marie Antoinette (1938) Louis B. Mayer opened the coffers of this thriving studio to recreate the court of Louis XV1, much to Adrians delight. The film took almost 3 years to make and a staff of research experts spent months in Europe gathering antique prints.

Adrian was able to apply his sense of flair and elegance to period costume establishing a kind of "period chic" that was a unique Hollywood innovation. Erte said of Norma Shearer "her charm was quite extraordinary, even a slight squint did not mar the purity of her beauty on the screen, of course clever make-up, skilful lighting and fastidious direction, concealed this defect almosy completely". Possibly never before or since has so much research gone into the production of a period motion picture. Carefully packed, the costume material was shipped back to MGM, where Adrian meticulously studied it and then painted hundred's of sketches for his workrooms.

For the execution of Adrian's designs, special silk velvets and brocades were woven in Lyon, France's silk center, and hundreds of yards of gold and silver lace and intricate trimmings were imported from the few small factories in Austria and Italy. Eight embroiderers were brought from Hungary to decorate the costumes with intricate handwork. The former milliner of the Imperial Russian Opera costume department discovered in Paris, agreed to oversee the making of hundreds of hats and head-dresses for the film.

Sidney Guillaroff, MGM's famed hairdresser, (whom Crawford discovered working in Antoine's salon at Saks Fifth Avenue in New York) made Norma Shearer's eighteen wigs and Jack Dawn created her porcelainlike make-up. Dozens of copies of 18th century buckled shoes were made by hand, embroidered gloves and a fortune in jewellery, some set with precious stones and diamonds, were assembled.

Miss Shearer, a Canadian-born actress, also assumed a royal position on the set, as wife of Irving Thalberg. The thirty four costumes Adrian designed for her on Marie Antoinette were unsurpassed magnificence. One year before shooting, a seperate storage building was constructed on the MGM compound to house them. Miss Shearer would often arrange parties at the storeroom and model the gowns for her friends.

Adrians design for Norma Shearer for Louis B. Mayer's Marie Antoinete 1938. A film on the scale of Marie Antoinette was made about once a year to maintain the studios prestige even knowing it would probably never make back its production costs.

The film was not a box-office success, it was perhaps the most sumptous spectacle to come out of Hollywood in the 1930's. Using the dramatic constrasts of black and white for which he was noted, an imaginative interpretation of historical fact, daring proportions and lavish decorative details, Adrian created movie costumes of heroic grandeur.

In Marie Antoinette, along with Gone With The Wind, one of the last full blown costume movies, Adrians achievement in designing historical costume was to achieve the look and feel of the period with costumes that were sometimes quite inaccurate, accuracy was always sacrificed in the cause of glamour and impact. The costumes for Marie Antoinette border on caricature with aspects of baroque and Roccoc o mixed together in a glorious pastiche of 18th century style.

Marie Antoinette was a box-office failure, it served however as an indication of how well the studio was doing, a movie of unrestrained lavishness, such as Marie Antoinette was made by Louis B. Mayer about once a year in order to maintain the studio's prestige, knowing it would never make back it's production cost.

It must surely have been an ideal situation for any designer to find himself in where the sky was the limit, with endless resources of time, money and labour available Adrian responded to this always with flair and immagination and a style that was trul y unique whether the costume was historic or modern.

The single most important innovation in the filmmaking industry of the thirties was Technicolour. Up to then Hollywood designers thought, sketched their ideas and saw results in a neutral coloured atmosphere. When colour was used, it was applied to costume sketches to dramatize a designer's idea and to win the approvel of a director or star. Thus it often happened that costumes made for black and white films were executed in bizarre , even hidious colour combinations, lavender and orange, olive green and mustard. magenta and lemon yellow. It was the way a colour photographed that mattered; what tone of grey it produced on film was the sole determinant of its use.

Adrian was a master of this limited palette, his black and white films suggest colour in miraculous ways; audiences always sensed when Crawford was wearing red, Shearer a delicate pastel or Garbo a deep moody colour.

He also delighted in strong contrasts, between light and dark that added drama to the figure, and it is significant that he stated that he did not enjoy working for colour film, that it distracted and annoyed him to deal with the new techniques the process required.

An exemplary story of the famous red dress designed by Orry-Kelly and worn by Bette Davis in Warner Bros. 1938 Jezebel serves to illustrate how a movie designer could conjure up the illusion of a particular colour on black and white film.

Kelly made a costume from the brightest red satin he could find, but in subsequent costume tests it appeared listless and dull. After considerable experimentation the perfect "colour" was achieved with a rust brown fabric. The resulting gown was so sucessful it became Kelly's most famous creation. Generally, Kelly used fabrics that had a base colour of a warm tone brown, mustard muted purple or dull orange to achieve the particularly rich greys his designs photographed on film. He humorously referred to his colour range as consisting of "varying shades of muck".

The first successful colour film, was Becky Sharp (1935). It was the first feature length picture to be made entirely in the newly developed 3colour Techni process. The film had sets and costumes designed by the New York stage designer Robert Edmondo Jones . The film was a stunning demonstration of the possibilities of colour photography and created a mild sensation that at once jeopardized the future of black and white movies.

Bette Davis wearing Orry-Kelly's strapless red satin ball-gown in Warner Brothers 1938 Jezebel. For the black and white film, Kelly experimented for days seking a colour red that would suggest scarlet in a grey tone. After numerous tests, a medium reddish brown colour proved to be the most successful.

BY 1939 when Adrian costumed MGM's The Wizard of Oz, Technicolor had reached a high degree of development, though it still presented drawbacks for a designer. Hues and tints in early colour films could be erratic - either too harsh and intense or as pale as a faint wash. In particular pale blues almost completely disappeared, whereas bright blue leaped out from the screen, yellow might become greenish or cadmium orange in hue. A white costume surrounded by coloured ones photographed as a blur of brightness and needed to be softened by a bath of light grey dye, a process known a teccing, charts showing numerous numbered shades of grey became a standard reference for costume designers, working on colour films. The designer could select from fifty such tones. He would then confer with the movie's photographer and the costume would be tagged for dyeing (tec 14 for instance indicated it was to receive a bath of grey shade numbered 14) it was a long and often frustrating process, one which designers generally delegated to their assistants.

Trained colour experts were hired by the studies to assist designers in coping with this new problem. Most designers who had begun their film carreer designing in black & white never satisfactorily adjusted to the new innovation, and both Banton and Adrian expressed their preference for working in black & white.

Travis Banton, Paramount's former king of fashion was signed as Fox's head designer in 1939, he remained until 1941 when Charles Le Marie, a former Vaudiville actor who had turned to costume design for Broadway, became excutive designer and director of wardrobe, a post he held until 1959. Under his tenure freelance designers, Oleg, Cassini, Kay Nelson, Elenor Behm, Rene Hubert, Bonnie Cashin, William Travilla, Edward Stevenson, Perkins Bailey, Rene, Elois Jenssen, Mario Vanarellui, Ursula Maes, Miles White, Mary Wills, Yvonne Wood, Helen Rose, Adele Balkan, Leah Rhodes and Adele Palmer all shared costume design credits with him.

Universal had Vera West as chief designer from 1927-1947, Vera West who had designed for a Fifth Avenue Salon, she designed clothes that lent taste and distinction to the studio's stars, among Vera Wests most memorable costumes were those for Irene Dunne in Showboat (1936) and for Marlene Dietrich in Destry Rides Again (1939) and Spoilers (1942).

Walter Plunkett is generally acknowledged to be Hollywood's foremost designer of period costumes and is probably best known for his work in Gone With The Wind.

Born in California, Plunkett studied law there and later moved to New York to try his hand at acting. After a few small parts he returned to California to try his luck in Hollywood. He played a few bit parts there eventually starting work in the wardrobe department at FBO who specialised in westerns, a few months later FBO changed to RKO and Plunkett was made costume designer. The studio branched into more ambitious products and Plunkett was asked to set up a design department. Plunkett went on to design for a series of films. The most important of them was Flying Down To Rio with Astaire and Rogers. The same year Plunkett costumed Katherine Hepburn as Jo in Little Women. By 1935 Plunkett was tiring of Paramount and the films he was being asked to dress; he was overworked and underpaid. Exhausted and disgusted, Plunkett resigned and left for New York where he designed for a seventh avenue dress manufacturer. After a years sabbatical Plunkett designed costumes for Katherine Hepburn in RKO's Mary of Scotland. This film showed Plunketts talent for period costume and brought new appreciation at the studios. He decide to stay in Hollywood as a free-lance designer who could pick and choose his films.

The most expensive and discussed movie of the thirties was Gone With The Wind. The picture had it's premiere on December 15th 1939 in Atlanta, Georgia. People had been waiting years for the opening night. David O Selznick had bought the screen rights to M. Mitchell's novel in 1936 and then ballyhooed his project by conducting a nationwide hunt for a new face to play the heroine Scarlett O'Hara. About fourteen thousand girls were interviewed and the public wrote thousands of suggestions. When Vivian Leigh was finally chosen, screams of outrage arose because she was English not American.

Then came the world premiere, the theater was rebuilt to resemble Tara, even the usherettes wore hoop skirts. When Miss Leigh appeared on the screen, outrage turned to adoration. When the show was over, the president-general of the United Daughters of the Confederacy announced, "no one quarrel now with the selection of Miss Leigh as Scarlett, she is M. Mitchell's Scarlett to the life, the whole thing has me overcome",(Time Life)

Walter Plunketts most important assignment, and one which was the envy of most studio designers was Gone With The Wind(1939)

David O Selznick was a perfectionist who insisted that the costumes for Gone With The Wind be historically accurate and yet capture the Romanticism of the Civil War years. It was a difficult and risky assignment for Plunkett to undertake. He was however equal to the task and the costumes for Gone With The Wind remain as one of the great examples of period costume.

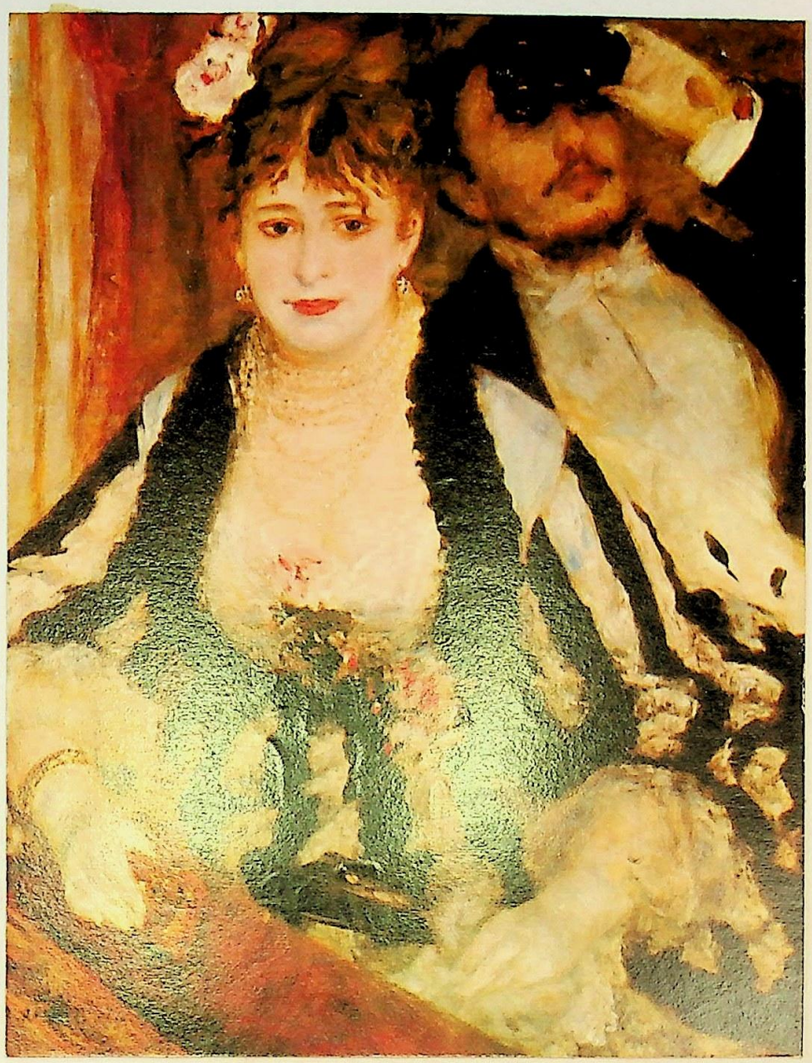
Scarlett's wardrobe was a masterpiece of sensitive design, each costume she wore summed up her character at that particular point in the film, Plunkett's costume clearly reflected the different phases in Scarlett's life.

Walter Plunkett was one of the handful of Hollywood designers interested in the use of historical Fabrics. The interest is best seen in the handwork on his ivory silk satin wedding dress for Scarlett.

Probably no other costume has symbolized so well the experience of a period as Scarlett O'Hara's dress made from her mother's portieres. Walter Plunkett had a bolt of green velvet specially faded to give the effect of curtains. He later admitted it was probably the most famous movie costume ever.

In his costumes for Gone With The Wind Walter Plunkett was able to suggest effectively the burgeoning materialism of the post-civil war period, largly through the use of details such as the openwork sleeves of Scarletts dress.

Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara in a costume by Walter Plunkett, it's bodice and apron front in heavy stripped satin. The hat was made by John Frederics. The complete outfit is said to have cost four thousand dollars. The Historical accuracy of Plunkett is most noticable in this costume when compared to the Renoir painting La Loge, painted in 1874.



La Loge by Auguste Renoir.

(1841-1919)

Walter Plunkett continued to dress Scarlett in velvet throughout the film to show her change from Southern belle, such as this mink trimmed blue velvet housecoat.

The use of velvet and lavish embroidery on this green house coat shows the development of Scarletts character in Post Civil War prosperity.

This claret velvet Ballgown with paste rubies sums up her affluence as Mrs Rhett Butler.

The first phase, during the pre-war days of the South, all Scarlett's costumes reflected a flirtatious innocence, a rather sharp Southern Belle. The second phase presents a more mature Scarlett, hardened by her wartime experiences, beginning with Scarlett ripping apart her mother's dining room portieres and making a sweeping gown to ensnare Rhett Butler. Plunkett had a bolt of green velvet faded to appear like worn curtains; from it he made what he later admitted was "probably the most famous movie costume ever made".

Plunkett contuinued to dress Scarlett in velvet for the rest of the film, indicating her dramatic rise to more affluent circumstances. A velvet bolero jacket for day, emerald green lavished with gold embroidery for a dressing gown, sapphire blue velvet lavished with gold embroidery for a dressing gown and a garnet-coloured velvet decorated with paste rubies and ostrich feathers for an evening dress. Constrasting with the Organdy and Tulle of the earlier costumes in the film, these rich costumes began an integral part of the unfolding story.

Adrians finest work was done in the thirties for Greta Garbo, they were the perfect combination. Adrian recreated for her some of the most famous women in history, Queen Christina of Sweden, Mata Hari and Marguerite in Camille. Adrian soon became one of the actresses true friends and she became his particular triumph. "At first they hung bangles and glass beads on her", Adrian said, "I saw that she was like a tree with deep roots - deep in the earth. Never put an artificial jewel or imitation lace on Garbo, it would do something to Garbo and her performance."4

Greta Garbo came to MGM in 1925 a shy plump girl from Stockholm; within three years she was transformed to the ultimate in glamour, beauty and sophistication.

A studio portrait of two of MGM's most valuable assets; Adrian, and his favorite responsibility, Greta Garbo. This publicity shot was taken in 1930.

Garbo's metamorphosis was not mainly cosmetic, although MGM's doctors kept her on a strict diet for the first few films she was fortunate to have a first rate camaraman, William Daniels. In addition, she had directors sensitive to her technique she was particularly concerned that her feet might show in any of the scenes. Beneath her elaborate gowns for the costume pictures, or even when she dressed for a contemporary role, she always wore comfortable house slippers.

Fewer than three years were involved in bringing about the transformation in the appearance of Garbo. The straggly eyebrows were plucked into a distinctive arch. The teeth were straightened and capped, the long bushy hair brushed into a long burnished bob.

After ten weeks of further tests and grooming, Garbo was finally cast in her first picture at MGM, "The Torrent". Impressed by the rushes of the film, studio officals began slowly to sense that they had inadvertently come upon someone who might have a big future in pictures.

Garbo spent her first few years being moulded in the image of actresses such as Pola Negri, Lillian Gish and Norma Talmadge as her earlier pictures show within five years most women were trying desperately to look like Greta Garbo. Greta Garbo's second film was released "The Temptress." The New York Herald Tribune thought that "Miss Garbo is not a conventional Beauty, yet she makes all other beauties seem a little obvious with each succeeding film" Garbo's unique face was creating new standards in beauty, a new brand of allure.

In The Temptress, Garbo played a very Pola Negri-ish looking actress who she greatly admired "How I hate dose vamps, dose bad womens! I want to play good girl" she protested.5

Garbo had advanced from the costumed leading lady of The Temptress 1926 to the polished leading lady of Wild Orchids 1926. By then the journalists were calling her "the Scandinavian Sphinx" and "the woman of mystery." Throughout Garbo's transformation she always retained her unique eye make-up. Much of Garbo's appeal came from her large luminous eyes. Deep-set and lanquorous, blue with full, dark irises and framed with incredibly long lashes, They were an integral part of her appeal.

Her make-up for the screen concentrated heavily on her eyes. Unusual and elaborate, the make-up was an adaption of a design and style originally used on the stage to emphasize the eyes. First while the eyelid was closed, the eyeball was outlined, then softened and blended. Next, a heavy black line was drawn across the bottom of the lid to blend into the eyelashes. At the corners, two additional lines were drawn down and out, making a triangle to extend their size and shape.

Adrian also emphasized Garbo's face and eyes with a series of startling hats; the much copied cloche for A Woman Of Affairs 1929, the pillbox for As You Desire Me, 1932, the turban for The Painted Veil, 1934, the skullcap for Mata Hari, 1931. "Garbo isn't very fond of the fashionable hat of the moment," Adrian said "Nor is she fond of the fashionable hairdress. As she does not wear her hair in a way that suits the current hats and is very fond of personal-looking ones, they are apt to appear rather unusual to eyes accustomed to the prevailing mode. The combination of individualistic hat and hair arrangement often give Garbo a rather extraordinary style effect."6

Adrian maintained his sway at MGM because of his carefully maintained friendships with the stars. His workrooms were in the wardrobe, the large stucco-covered barn on the back lot. Near the entrance were the workers, mainly Spanish-speaking - labour was cheap in the thirties - there were no unions - and the studio was able to hire tailors and fitters from $15 and $21 a week. Adrians studio was an enormous room with long shuttered windows edged in ruffled net. There he turned out fifty or so sketches a day. At one end was a spot-lighted platform where costumes being fitted could be tried out under the same lights with which they would be filmed.

Camille 1936, was Adrian's most important picture with Garbo, and one of Garbo's most successful. The film was produced by Irving Thalberg and budgeted at one and a half million dollars. Doing the costumes for Camille Adrian later said, "was an exercise in charm". That charm could be expressed in everything from forty-yard crinolines to snoods, fringed parasols, bustles and pyramided skirts.7

Greta Garbo's costume for Camille 1936, designed by Adrian, striking use was made of Black and White strong patterns were allways a feature of Adrians designs.

No Expense was spared for costumes made during Hollywoods golden years. An excellent example is this cream silk and gold lame evening coat embroidered in gilt and edged in mink, that was worn in only one sequence of Camille in 1936, a black and white movie.

The studio often made duplicates even triplicates of even the most expensive costumes in a major movie such as Camille1936. Some might be used for publicity, but at least one was held in reserve in case a scene might have to be reshot or some damage might occur to the original.

Garbo's fashion impact on women everywhere was tremendous: they copied her makeup style and look, and her shoulder length bob. They wore her beret, her slouch hats and walked in the rain with trench coats turned up around their faces. Mannequins in dress shops, ladies of fashion, college and office girls, all found in Garbo a new pattern of beauty and style of dress, with the result that she altered the appearance of a whole generation. With the advent of talking pictures her accent made it necessary to cast her in European roles, with foreign locales, dressed in a fashion difficult for the average woman to duplicate in everyday life. It as easier to imitate a Joan Crawford, a Katherine Hepburn or a Bette Davis than the exotic Garbo in Mata Hari, Inspiration or As You Desire Me. Most of her succeeding pictures, Queen Christina, Anna Karina, Camille and Conquest were costume dramas and the clothes did not lend themselves to easy adaptation. Their influence was felt however, fashion designers did adopt and simplify some of them. Her 'Empress Eugenie' hat from Romance appeared incongrous with the street clothes of 1930 but millions of women wore it anyway. The high collars designed for her long slender neck and the accoutrements she slithered about in as a Dutch spy, a Russian Noble-woman, or a Parisian actress might have been problems, but women wore them anyway and Garbo remained a notable inspiration and influence.

Women plucked their eyebrows, fine pencilled wings to widen their forehead, chopped their hair into straight short Garbo bobs and tried to immitate Garbo's cool aloofness, the mysterious and untouchable quality she exhuded on the screen.

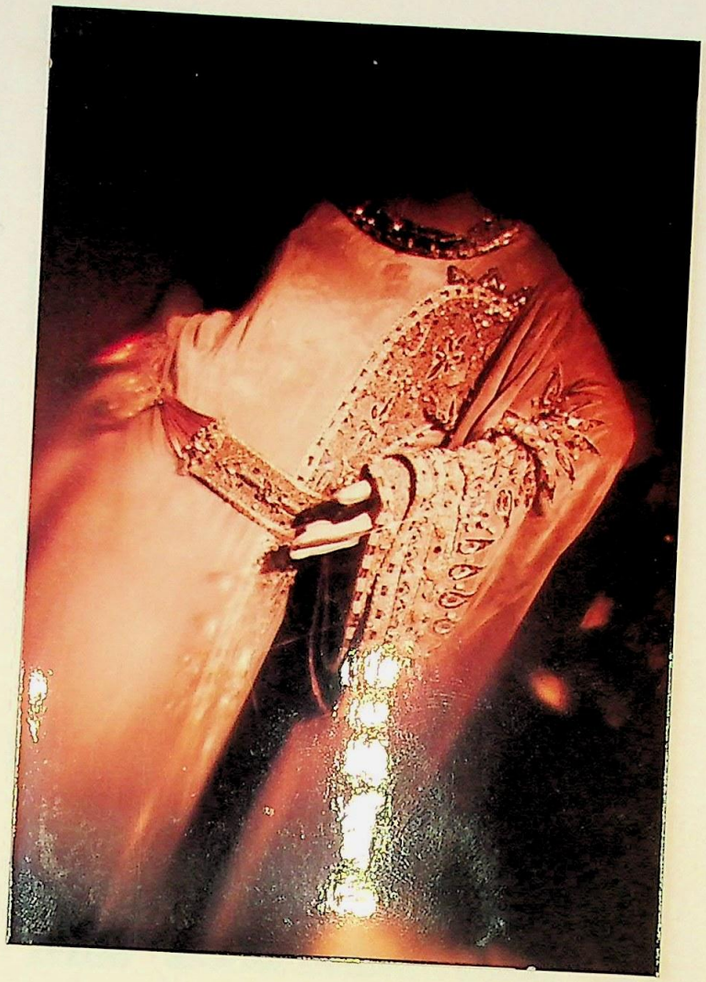
Max Factor is said to have had specially made-up Garbo for the screen because she was a "heavyweight kisser" unlike Mae West who was said to be a lightweight kisser and whose powder and rouge were hardly disturbed by her romantic moments before camara. Max Factor called his cosmetic line, society make-up, he used stars to illustrate his leaflets.

Garbo's fashion impact on women everywhere was tremendous; they copied her makeup style and her shoulder length bob. They also wore her berets, all found in Garbo a new pattern of beauty and style of dress.

Garbo's appeal mostly came from her large eyes, and she made full use of them for the camara.

Garbo's extravagantly long eyelashes made an extraordinary design on her face, creating long shadows that tipped her cheek bones, something that was not un-noticed by Crawford and Dietrich.

Garbo photographed by Cecil Beaton 1934, who considered her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.



Adrians costume for Garbo in Mata Hari 1931. The costumes were amongst the most exotic costumes he ever created and show a strong Poiret influence.

In Mata Hari (MGM 1932) as the infamous spy of World War 1, Greta Garbo appeared in some of the most extravagant costumes Adrian ever concocted.

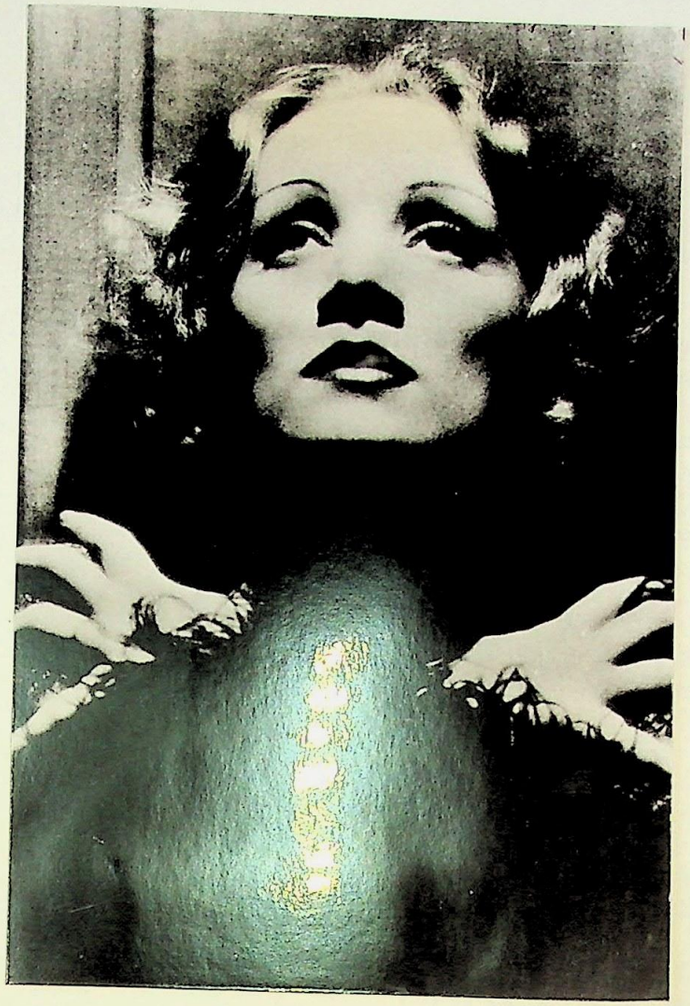
Lingerie was among the most glamorous genre to emerge from Hollywood costume. This negligee of taupe silk like the one Greta Garbo wore in her famous love scene with John Barrymore in Grand Hotel 1932 is a masterpiece of finish.

Garbo's last film Two-faced Woman 1941 marked the end of both her career and Adrians. In that movie Louis B. Mayer insisted that Garbo's screen image be brought down to earth, a badly written scenario, uninspired direction and Mayer's constant interference all foreshadowed a future that neither Garbo nor Adrian cared to face. After a particularly trying conference with Mayer over the costumes for Two-faced Woman, Adrian tore up the sketches on his drawing table and resigned. Garbo left the studio when the film was completed. Mayer fumed and screamed with rage, threatened law suits and finally wept at the loss of his top designer and star, "I got out," Adrian stated later, "when I began to see the tin underneath the gold plate." 8

Shortly after leaving Adrian set up a custom salon on Wiltshire Boulevard, located in a white building with his signature scrawled across the side in bronze script. Adrian grossed more than two million dollars a year. He also manufactured expensive clothes that were retailed throughout the country.

One of the few Hollywood momentoes that Garbo is said to have kept is a pair of mauve kid gloves that she wore as Camille. Adrian sent them to her after the film was completed. Hand sewn and lined in silk, the gloves bear an inimitable Adrian touch; motifs of flowering vines worked in minuscule steel beads and seed pearls adorn each cuff; upon close examination the delicate tendrils reveal the intertwined initials GG.

In 1913 the German director Josef Von Sternberg brought to Paramount a plump caberet singer who had starred in his German-made film The Blue Angel. In a scenario similar to that of Garbo, Dietrich was transformed into "The Orchid of Paramount" a creature of unequaled beauty and allure who was to capture the imaginations of audiences everywhere and make her into one of the biggest stars of the decade.



Marlene Dietrich in Shanghai Express. Her eyebrows plucked and penciled into a new, butterfly wing arrangement. Dietrich was shadowed, furred and feathered a startling image of Mystery and allure.

Von Sternberg was facinated by Dietrichs appearance, in his movies with her he was constantly heaping on the costumes. In Blonde Venus 1932 Dietrich appeared dressed as a gorilla and removed the head; then she put on a frizzy white Afro wig to sing "Hot Voodoo", she later appeared in a white tie and tails. In Shanghai Express 1932 everything was given over to pattern and light and shadow, her wardrobe seemed endless.

The costume designer for the film Shanghai Express was Travis Banton, the designer for all of Dietrich's films while she was at Paramount. Paramount's 1932 tale of love and danger aboard the Shanghai Express had the inscrutable Dietrich in one of her most exotic roles - an international delight known around the Near, Middle and Far East as Shanghai Lily, for stalking the corridors of the intrigue laden wagon. Travis Banton disguised her as a black swan, hidden in a jungle of Coq feathers, veiled and hung with a rope of glittering crystal beads. Dietrich's handbags and gloves in the film were specially made for her by Hermes at the request of Banton, loose on one of his frequent shopping sprees in Paris.

Bantons predilection for extravagant materials was encouraged by Adolph Zukor, founder and head of Paramount, Zukor had been a successful furrier in Chicago, his directives to Banton advised him to use a lavish hand in applying it to his costumes. Banton happily replied giving his creations wide cuffs, collars and borders of fur, and fur muffs, hats and scarves as accessories whenever possible. The designer used yards of mink, sable, ermine and chinchilla to romanticise Dietrich and draped the plump shoulders of Mae West with triple skin scarves of white fox, one beige evening wrap that Dietrich wore for a series of publicity photos featured a high collar, cuffs and a hem bordered with red fox 23 skins were required.

As Catherine of Russia in Sternberg's 1934 The Scarlet Empress, Dietrich wore a series of gorgeous albeit not historically accurate ensembles, two specially memorable pale pink satin dress with wide panniers banded with clouds of Ostrich feathers, and a white Hussar's uniform (with tights and short white gold-tasseled boots).

Marlene Dietrich in Shanghai Express note the gloves, the underside is of sheer fabric. Dietrich costumes often concealed and then suprisingly reveled. All her costumes in the film were by Travis Banton.

Marlene Dietrich in Shanghai Express. The gloves, bags and accessories were made by Hermes in Paris bought when Banton was on a shopping spree there.

Marlene Dietrich in Blonde Venus 1932, wearing a frizzy white wig she sang "Hot Voodoo" to a rather startled Cary Grant.

Travis Bantons costume design for Blonde Venus1932 . The elaborate beaded front edge and cuffs are a typical Banton device.

Dietrich as the Scarlett Empress one of the most Spectacular and sensual films ever created, the costumes were rich to an incredible degree.

The Devil is a Woman, 1935 was the last movie Dietrich was to make with Von Sternberg and one which they both regarded as their best together. Travis Banton designed the costumes for The Devil is a Woman, and went further to elaborate his sense of Dietrich's glamour. Banton employed a whole range of textures and surfaces. He echoed detail with detail, the lace of a mantilla caught in the lace of a parasol that was amplified by the lace through which the camara peered, there were embroideries on embroideries, sparkle on sparkle, ruffle on ruffles.

Cecilia Ager wrote in Varity of The Devil is a Woman, "not even Garbo in The Painted Veil has approached for spectacular effects, Dietrich in Spain, with fringes, lace, sequins, carnations, chenille, nets, embroideries and shawls. Miss Dietrich is hung, wrapped, draped, swathed and festooned----her costumes are magnificent in the way they achieve a definate clear-cut line despite their wealth of ornature, the way their knick knacks fall into a pattern designed with flair and imagination solely to flatter and adorn. Her costumes are completely incredible, but completely fascinating and suitable to The Devil is a Woman. They reel with glamour, Miss Dietrich's mask-like makeup and bizzare coiffures abound with beauty hints, when she lowers her shiny, heavy eyelids, it may be seen that eyelashes are affixed only to the outer halves of her upper eyelids, intensifying thus the wide-spacing of her eyes and yielding them a provocative upward slant. Her lower lids are deliberately not accented with black which would define the bounderies of her eyes and so limit their size. Her natural eyebrows have been blotted out and soaring new ones etched far above----Though her head is bedecked with an infinate variety of Spanish combs, flowers, shawls, fringes and veils, they've been arranged so as to frame her face, never to intrude their fripperies upon it's expertly enhanced, submissive beauty. Miss Dietrich emerges as a glorious achievement, a supreme consolidation of the sartorial, makeup and photographic arts."10Dietrich choose The Devil is a Woman as her favorite "I was more beautiful in that than in anything else."11.

Marlene Dietrich in The Devil is a Woman 1935.

Travis Banton's collaboration with Von Sternberg on The Devil is a Woman 1935 produced his most outrageous and expressive designs, intricately constructed costumes that seemed more to disquise than to reveal.

Travis Bantons costume design for Marlene Dietrich in Von Sternberg's The Devil is a woman 1935.

Dietrich exerted a tremendous influence on the change in appearance of screen glamour, from the thirties to the present . Each studio tried to have a Dietrich of its own, there soon appeared a succession of browless languid ladies, all of them hollow cheeked seen through filters of cigarette smoke and shadows. None of the pseudo-Dietrichs could match her style or appeal though her lighting, make-up, hair and clothes were studiously copied. American girls were also influenced; no self-respecting beauty was photographed without deep hollows in her cheeks and sensitive shadows on her face.

Marlene Dietrich was the ultimate product of the studio system, slickly presented and packaged, her image represented Hollywood at its best.

Dietrich wore many of Bantons most extravagent costumes, Banton's forte was beading and he created some of the best examples to come out of Hollywood, due to the availability of cheap labour, beaded dresses were turned out quite quickly.

It was not unusual for six or eight beaders to labour for several weeks painstakingly covering delicate silk chiffon or crepe with minuscule bugle beads for a gown that might appear for no more than a minute in the edited film: Often the scene in which such a costly garment was worn ended up being cut from the film entirely. Sometimes such discarded costumes could be used in another film made by the original actress, but more often than not they were put in the stockroom where clothes went after filming. Claudette Colbert recalled often seeing one of her beautiful Banton dresses from an earlier film on an extra in a later picture.

Happily some of the most extravagent costumes made for movies have survived. The crew at Paramount, for example, guarded a precious cache of priceless beaded dresses that Travis Banton designed for the studio's top stars during the thirties, among them a two-piece chiffon dinner gown solidly covered with a paisley design worked in gold bugle beads accented with paste rubies, emeralds, topazes and diamonds, together with a matching sable-banded stole. The ensemble was worn by Marlene Dietrich in Angel (1937) the last film for which the actress and Banton worked together. Requiring weeks of work the costume was cost listed at eight thousand dollars on the wardrobe records (it would cost at least fifty thousand to make today). Even more remarkable is the fact that it was only one of several such gowns in the film that were seen only fleetingly.

Finished costumes were guarded like treasures until the moment they were to be used in front of the camaras. Once dressed, a star was attended by her personal dressers and maid, as well as several wardrobe workers whose job it was to see that the precious garment was protected from soil and damage, wrinkles in fact became a matter of great concern; to prevent them the "leaning board" was invented; a padded wooden plank, much like an extended ironing board was equipped with armrests and placed on supports at a ninety degree angle. This contrivance which included a footrest at the bottom, allowed an actress to relax in a leaning position with some semblance of comfort between takes - without wrinkling her gown.

There are many classic stories of designer-actress feuds. It is said once that Travis Banton looked out of his window at Paramount to see Nancy Carroll arriving for a fitting "Here comes my cross!" Some weeks earlier during a fitting Miss Carroll had indicated her displeasure with an elaborately beaded gown Banton had designed for her by quietly tearing his gown off her body in shreads and walked out without a word. Benton quickly turned Miss Carroll over to his assistant Edith Head as soon as he could. Explaining his actions to Zulcor, Banton claimed the actress had got .n so plump he could no longer dress her, consequently "papa" Zulcor ordered Carroll to go on a near-starvation diet.

Marlene Dietrich, wearing a Fabergé-inspired creation that Travis Banton designed for Paramounts 1937 Angel. A stole of the same beaded chiffon edged with thick bands of Russian Sable add the final touch.

Travis Banton brought his fondness for beading from couture where it was used as a mark of luxery. In this gown for Marlene Dietrich in Angel 1937 the use of beading is unrestrained. The beading is used not merely as decoration but to create the fabric design.

Yves Saint Laurent copy of a Travis Banton design, worn by Marlene Dietrich in the 1937 film Blue Angel. The Yves saint Laurent dress appeared in 1983 October issue of American Vogue and shows the extent of Hollywoods influence.

Banton's sketch of the gown for Desire shows how successfully his sketches translated from sketches to garments.

Marlene Dietrich gowned for Paramount's 1935 Desire by Travis Banton, swathed, draped and enveloped in chiffon that flowed around her like water.

Travis Banton and Marlene Dietrich in 1937, Banton considered Dietrich the greatest inspiration any designer could hope for and she reciprocated by consulting him about every detail of her wardrobe, off-screen and on.

No one else made such a speciality of an accessory as Dietrich did with a cigarette, she made it an indispensable part of the whole picture.

Every year Banton went off to Paris to shop for fabrics and accessories. He bought lames, silk chiffons, velvets, silk crepes, sheer wool crepes and tweeds of all kinds from the fabric shops. At Hermes he ordered dozens of pairs of exquisite kid gloves and handbags. On one trip a furor erupted when Schiaparelli discovered that Banton had bought her favorite suppliers entire stock of bugle beads and rare fish-scale paillettes. As a peace offering, Banton sent the designer enough to finish her line for the season.

Banton returned home to New York in the early fifties where he designed for a number of Seventh Avenue dress manufacturers.

The forties was one of the most turbulent decades in the history of the American cinema and a period of drastic change.

After the spectacular culmination of the golden thirties with the success of Gone With The Wind, ending the decade (MGM 1939). The forties began badly with the outbreak of war, European and British markets no longer yielded the limitless profits of previous decades and when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour in 1941 revenue from the Far East disappeared as well. The studios imposed a series of austerity measures upon themselves , which after the money-no-object extravagance of the thirties came as a shock to the system. The number of studio personel was halved and stars were forced to face salary cuts. To aggravate matters the forties also saw to abolition of "block booking" system thus giving exhibitors the right to choose what products they wished to show, without being forced to take the good with the bad. Also having to contend with strikes for better wages (during 1945) and lay-offs and communist witch-hunts by the chairman of the House of Un-American activities committee. The end of the decade brought two more crisis, television , which in America reduced the weekly audience attendance from eighty million to seventy million. The consent decree also created problems finally prevented the major studios from as well as distributing their films in their own cinema chains across the country. It was, in fact the beginning of the end for the old Hollywood system.

Technically the studios product improved immeasurably during the forties thanks to the developemnt of celluloid laquers. Black and White prints had a gloss and brilliance to them, in striking constrast to some of the grainy efforts of the thirties. During the early forties the studio produced many war propaganda films, Sergant York 1941, Air Force (1943) and Watch On The Rhine (1943).

Despite such a turbulent time the studios still produced films and stars. One of the biggest stars of the coming decade was Joan Crawford.

In 1925 a twenty-one year old dancer arrived in Hollywood. Ther was little to distinguish her from other pretty girls under contract to the studios. A competition was run in a magazine to find her a new name, her name was then changed from Lucille le Sueur to Joan Crawford. During her first few years as a stock contract player she became the favorite of the publicity department and began appearing with increasing rapidity in every magazine in the country. Joan Crawford was the ultimate flapper a blazing symbol of youth and vitality. Her appearance changed from film to film, as not yet important enough for the studios top grooming, she experimented to her hearts content with whatever make-up and hairstyle caught her attention. Her hair was dyed black, red, blonde - every conceivable colour variation and style. Her eye and mouth make-up was just as varied and a "new" Joan Crawford appeared in the papers and magazines every month.

Our Dancing Daughters was the turning point in her career. It was a box-office smash and made her studio realize that she was ready for stardom. In it Joan was a windblown flapper, dressed by Adrian. The sets, designed by Cedric Gibbons, created an architectural sensation; they were the last word in art nouveau and moderne, with this film Crawford challanged Clara Bow, and became the idol of millions of girls who copied her every gesture, costume and make-up change.

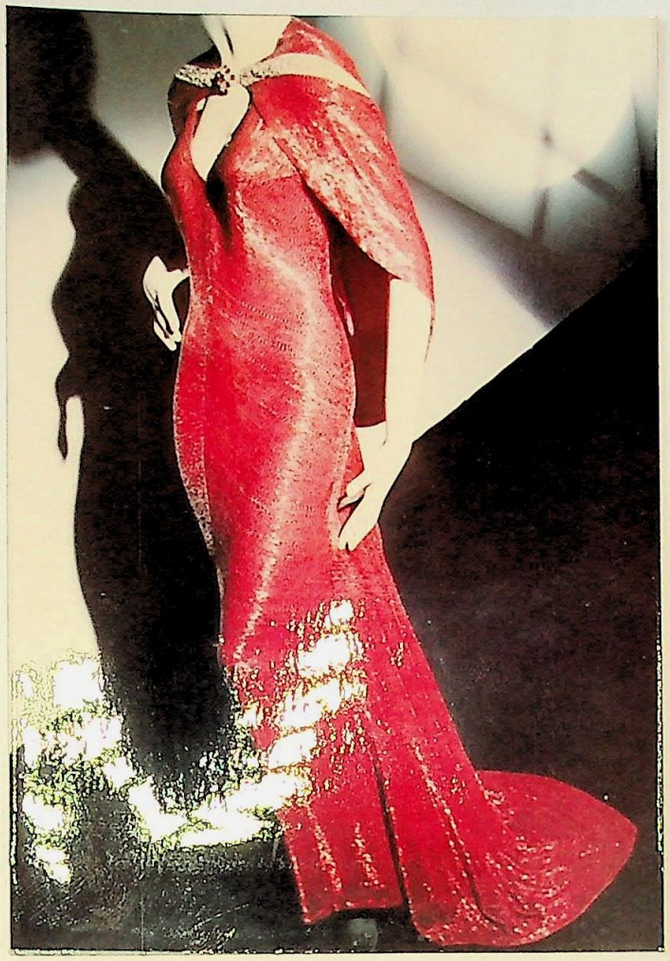
By 1930 Crawford had rapidly changed her appearance, she was rapidly being called "the perfect camera beauty," now exposed were the modeled bone structure, the fine forehead and slender neck. By 1932, Crawford was running neck and neck in popularity with Garbo. After Joan Crawford played Sadie Thompson in Sadie 1932 with her lips alarmingly enlarged by a new makeup style, the mouths of women were never the same, gone forever was the small rosebud mouth, passe was the cupids bow of the twenties, women everywhere began to enlarge their lips, painting above and below the natural lipline.

By 1933 and from then on, The Crawford Look was making a big impression on women as her contemporaries, ladies of fashion and models all took on the Crawford style; eyes heavily lined and darkened, looking as hugh as possible; the mouth enlarged, the jaw square in a face with the bone structure emphasized and of course the large square shoulders. It was a look that was to continue to dominate for succeeding decades, de riguer for any beauty. From 1932 till 1937 she was called "the most imitated women in the world." Joan Crawford was five feet four inches tall with size twelve hips and forty inch shoulders. When Adrian saw Crawford he said "my God you're a Johnny Weissmuller" and then proceeded to exaggerate her shoulders. Adrian had recognized the screen impact of the carefully delineated military torso with its echoes in other masculine attire. His signature, the padded shoulders, evolved from this triangular look.

Erte said of Crawford "Miss Crawford cut quite a different figure, in those days from the sleek and sophisticated image she later aquired, her beautiful face was set off by long dark hair which she wore parted in the middle; she also had a well-developed bust and significent hips she reminded me of a lucsious Italian Madonna." 12

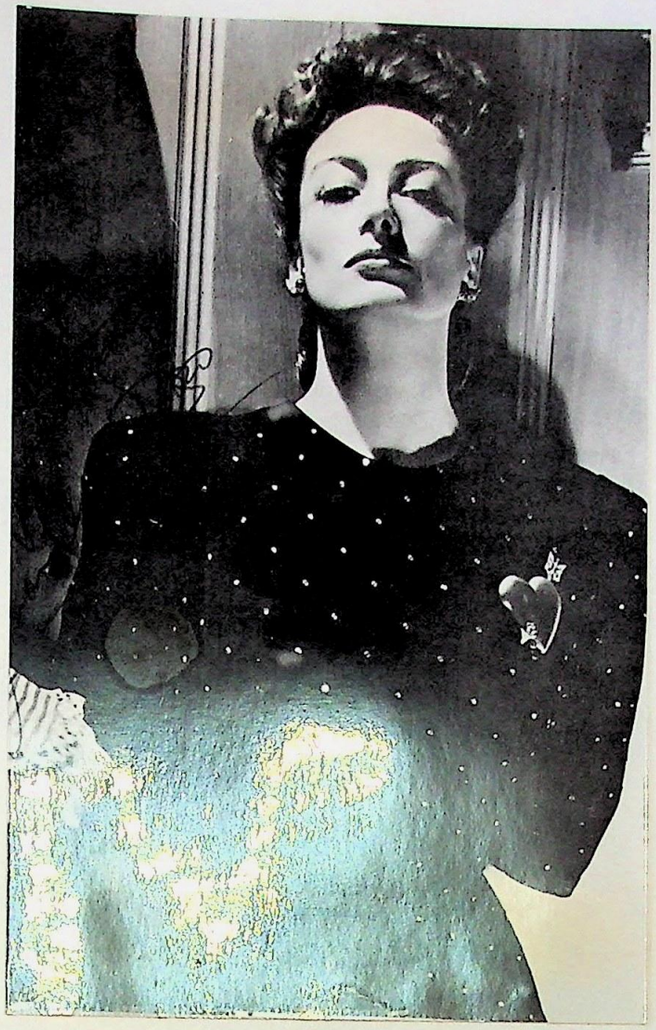
Adrians most famous creation for Joan Crawford was the gown made of layers of white Organdy ruffles in Letty Lynton 1932, the dress was widely copied by New York Seventh Avenue (Macys claimed to have sold fifty thousand inexpensive copies of the Adrian design). It was however the wide-shouldered narrow-hipped silhouette that Adrian borrowed from Schiaparelli that became the most important fashion trade mark. Designers who dressed Joan Crawford afterwards continued to stress the basic formula.

Joan Crawford wearing the sensational ruffled gown Adrian gave her for MGM's 1932 Letty Lynton. Among the most famous costumes Adrian designed, the Lynton dress was copied with tremendous success. Adrian's creations were particularly in tune with what American women wanted.



Adrians design for Joan Crawford in The Bride Wore Red 1937 (a black and white movie). The colour of the beading was subtly shaded across the gown to enhance the star,s body.

Joan Crawford in an Adrian design a broad shouldered suit and picture hat, both of which she made fashionable at one stage Crawford was known as the most copied girl in the world.



Joan Crawford 1942. Crawford was at the peak of her image, large square shoulders, heavy eyebrows and melon mouth.

Joan Crawford in typical pose, cigarette poised in one hand a glass in the other, the ultimate in sophistication and glamour.

The influence of Joan Crawford and Hollywood spread across the Atlantic in 1933, Julian Lee established Marley Gowns an inexpensive medium range, by 1939 he was producing ten thousand a week. He pioneered popular priced beaded dresses, a table of about 12 beaders carried out hand beading. He also produced what was known as a Joan Crawford dress with a long white roll collar caught up at one side above the waist, and the Ginger Rogers coat with a caracul collar and three caracul buttons both sold in their thousands.

Chanel was brought to the Hollywood Movie at the urging of Gloria Swanson. She was signed to costume three films, including Swanson's first talkie, "Tonight or Never", 1931. Mme Chanel was welcomed to Hollywood with the same band of Roses-and-Champagne fanfare that had greeted Erte Chanel's wardrobe for Miss Swanson was elaborate and very expensive; it included an afternoon ensemble of black satin lavished with Ermine and a satin evening gown with a wide collar and immense cuffs of Sable another evening gown, made of black velvet with diamond and emerald brooches, was worn under a full-length evening coat cuffed and bordered with a fortune in chinchilla. Despite such luxurious conceptions Chanel did not make the transition from her Rue Cambon salon and the movies well, their failure as film costumes pointed up the differences between the world of high fashion and that of fantasy fashion created expressly for motion pictures. Chanel had stated that she believed Hollywood overdressed it's stars; she came to California determined to put her couture on screen, exactly as she created for her clients in Paris. Instead her understated garments seemed drab and unexciting when magnified on the screen.

Ranking close to Adrian and Banton was the designer Orry-Kelly who undertook the direction of the Warner Bros. costume design department in 1932. After a brief career designing clothes for Broadway actress's, Kelly came to California and quickly established himself at Warners as a talented versatile designer suited to dressing Jack Warners stars. His favourites were, Bette Davis, Olivia De Havilland, Kay Francis, Mary Astor, Ingrid Bergman and Rosalind Russell. It was for Bette Davis he did his most successful work, she was not easy to costume. Bette Davis co-operated with Kelly when he required her to wear specially designed corsets or brassieres to mould her silhoutte into the proper shape for a period role. Miss Davis was adamant however about being unencumbered by elaborate undergarments, and her full bosom and plumpish figure presented problems with the skill of an engineer, Kelly restructured her figure with cleverly cut, well made garments that successfully created the desired image. Miss Davis's penchant for changing her appearance with each new role presented a tremendous challange to those involved with preparing her for camera.

For period films Davis and Kelly worked together with superb rapport, Each strove for accuracy and discomfort was forgotten for the star's appearance in such un-forgettable films as Jezebel 1938, The Old Maid 1939, The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex 1939, and The Little Foxes 1941 (Samuel Goldwyn). In period design Kelly followed fact more closely than did his peers Adrian and Banton (who both respected his work) and stressed perfectly - executed dressmaker's trimming and fine handiwork. Embroidery and applique were kept on a smaller scale than that used by Adrian, the historical shape of the garments was strictly adhered to. When production chief Hal Wallis insisted that Miss Davis wear smaller farthingales in Elizabeth and Essex than the true queen wore, Davis wore a smaller hoop for the costume test photographs which Wallis approved, when she stepped before the camara, the star wore hoops of the proper size. Miss Davies never shied from doing whatever was necessary for the sake of authenticity, allowed the hair above her head to be shaved so she might better resemble her historical counterpart.

Orry-Kelly's design for Bette Davis in The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex. The costumes for the film were quite restrained, unlike most Hollywood "historicals" and showed Orry-Kelly's talent for accurate historical interpretation.

In a sense Orry-Kelly bridged the gap between realism and the exaggerated world of the movies with greater success than his theatrically oriented rivals did,. Boisterous, temperamental, addicted to alcohol, often almost impossible to work with, overshadowed by Adrian and Banton, Orry-Kelly must be recognised as Hollywood's most important and astute costume designers. After Orry-Kelly left Warner Brothers in 1944 to open a private business, faithful Bette Davis wrote that "it was like losing my right arm."[13] In 1934 "Fashions of 1934 featured Bette Davis as the assistant to a New York courturier who plunders the latest Parisian Haut Monde designs and calls them his own. Bette Davis's face was made up by Perc Westmore in such a way as to neutralise the very features which were to make her famous. Davis looked something like a Jean Harlow done in a platinum wig and bee stung lips. The costumes were designed by Orry-Kelly.

Davis made a more successful transformation in the 1942 Warner Brothers film Now Voyager, she played a New England spinster who blossoms into a fashionable woman of poise and charm. In a celebrated scene where she returns home completely transformed, the camara starts at her feet and rises from her stillettos to her head in a large picture hat. Paul Henrei played Davis's doomed affair, ("lets not ask for the moon," she tells him in the film's celebrated final line," when we have the stars"[14] and, by lighting the two cigarettes at the same time before handing one of them to her, he set a new trend in lover's smoking habits.

The film Fashions of 1934 was directed by Busby Berkeley. The finale consisted of fifty girls clad in Ostrich plumes forming themselves into human harps and then into sixty feet long feathered galleons with fans as oars. The film Fashions of 1934 came during the phase when Bette Davis was being forced into the standard studio image of a star, currently with the biggest box office draw, in the case of 1934, Jean Harlow a move she fiercly resisted until the studio recognised her as a star in her own right.

In 1936 Edith Head wrapped Dorethy Lamour in a boldly patterned sarong, modestly pagan, Heads wraparound design was immediately adapted by Bathing suit manufacturers and Heads name became a household word.

Edith Head began at Paramount in 1923 as a sketch artist for Howard Greer, she then became Travis Banton's assistant. She said of Banton "Travis was a marvellous designer any talent I might have, would have lain undiscovered if he had'nt lighted the way for me. In my opinion he was the greatest.15 Banton gradually assigned certain stars to Head, he either did'nt like or had'nt time time for, when he retired in 1938 Edith Head was made chief designer, a title she held for twenty nine years. Edith Head more than any other designer influenced fashion trends. Women could be seen on the beaches from Coney Island to Cannes, reclining in Dorothy Lamour's exotic sarong.

"Fashion goes native!, siver screen magazine declared, "Have you the secret wish to become a beautiful island enchantress? well, lovely Dorothy's Lamour's slinky native sarongs will soon be avilable to every plain Jane! This delectable creation (that accents one's most feminine qualities) has swooped fashion to new romantic heights."16

Miss Lamour later said "I played dozens of roles and wore lots of beautiful clothes, but when people thought of Lamour, she was always wearing one of Edith's Jungle Kimonos----they became a trademark, I could never seem to get out of them, even today, when people see me for the first time, I think they expect me to be wearing one."17

Head also started a fashion rage when she gave Audrey Hepburn a simple self-tied boat-neck linen afternoon dress in Paramount's 1954 Sabrina (for which Head won that years Academy) that was widely copied by New York dress manufacturers. Her simple Jeune fille designs for Liz Taylor in several films also greatly influenced fashion trends in America for several generations of young women.

On occasion mainly for promotional value, a major studio would hire a renowned french designer for a special star or a fashion oriented production, such a practice however was not really a success as, for the most part couture apparel did not photograph as dramatically as designs created in Hollywood. Paramount's 1937 Artists and Models Abroad, with Jack Benny, Joan Bennett and Gail Patrick was such a fashion-show extravaganza, in it Travis Banton's gowns were supplemented by a parade of gowns created in Paris by Pacquin, Worth, Jean Patou, Schiaparelli, Maggy Rouff, Lanvin and Alix, Edith Head was also a contributer, unfortunatly, many of the dresses from France had to be revamped somewhat to give them the kind of glamourous impact movie audiences had come to expect on the screen. The beginnings of World War 11 in Europe considerably shrank Hollywoods market and studio's cut back, accordingly. It was inevitable in a period of massive adjustment that the star system should also suffer; Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer and Joan Crawford left MGM as their contracts ended.

The most serious problem faced by a studio designer, however, was the sudden scarcity of luxurious materials needed for the execution of movie costumes. The bugle bead, that minute shimmering bit so indispensable to creating glamourous gowns, was the first to disappear. Before the war such beads were imported in great quantities from Czechoslovakia, but Hitler's annexation of that country had cut off the supply even before America entered the war. Any remaining caches of beads, jet, paste jewels and sequins were hoarded and guarded jealously by designers, who bartered and traded with rivals for these now-rare commodities. Fabrics of all kinds became almost impossible to find; the days were gone when fine satins and crepes, metallic lames, brocades, velvets and rich weaves could be used with abandon. By 1942 the reserve stocks of fabrics had almost been depleted, and studio workrooms were running under make-do conditions. Used costumes that had been exiled to wardrobe storage were remodeled or taken apart snd reused, and many of Hollywoods most famous creations were sacrificed to nec essity. Ribbons, lace edgings, silk flowers and feathers were used over and over again as trimmings. The restrictions and economies enforced on studio wardrobe departments during the war years greatly affected the future of costume design in film.

Except for the musicals costume played a very small part in getting the movies message across. Few roles created for women called for the sort of flamboyant and extravagant costumes that adorned Hollywood stars in the thirties. One of the most influential was Bette Davis who went to great pains to make her screen image conform to what real women were wearing and never used costumes as an ornament or camouflage. Indeed in Now Voyager, 1942 she used the unplucked eyebrows, dumpy figure and dowdy clothes of her character to dramatize her neurotic withdrawal, taking off her glasses and shedding pounds to show the transformation of the character.

Another star to emerge during the forties was Lauren Bacall. A sleek sophisticated ex-model, discovered on the cover of Harpers Bazar, she presented a somewhat Garbo-inspired appearance, a long sleek bob topped off with a beret with the large mouth and bushy eyebrows of Joan Crawford, she epitomised the new woman in films.

The most popular movie phenomenon to emerge from the war years however did not begin in Hollywood. The pinup had begun in calenders, on magazine covers in the illustrations by Varga and Petty for Esquire, and in the pickup of studio publicity photographs by Yank, the armed forces newspaper. The pinups were not established stars.

Betty Grable emerged one of the two biggest stars of the pinup in what was probably the most widely reproduced photograph ever taken - wearing a one-piece bathing suit, high heels, hose, an anklet, hair swept up in a mass of curls, preening back provocatively at the camera over her shoulder, hands on her hips. The other was Rita Hayworth, snapped by Life sitting up in a mussed bed, her hair tousled, wearing a satin and lace negligee. These were the new superstars, it did nt matter whether they acted or sang or danced. Rita Hayworth was the essential bombshell. She received virtually none of the grooming and polishing others went through at MGM short of tinting her hair a fiery auburn and electrolysis to give her a high graceful forehead. Her career was a collection of B movies. Her appearances with Fred Astaire enhanced her reputation.

Lauren Bacall 1946 in a very Garbo-like pose, long sleek bob, beret and heavily lidded eyes.

Rita Hayworth only ever made two movies of any great importance. The first was Gilda 1946 which contained the elegant striptease - pulling off her opera-length gloves - as she sang "put the Blame on Mame Boys" in a black satin sheath by Jean Louis. The other was Shanghai 1948 in which Orson Welles returned to Von Sternberg's visual concepts.

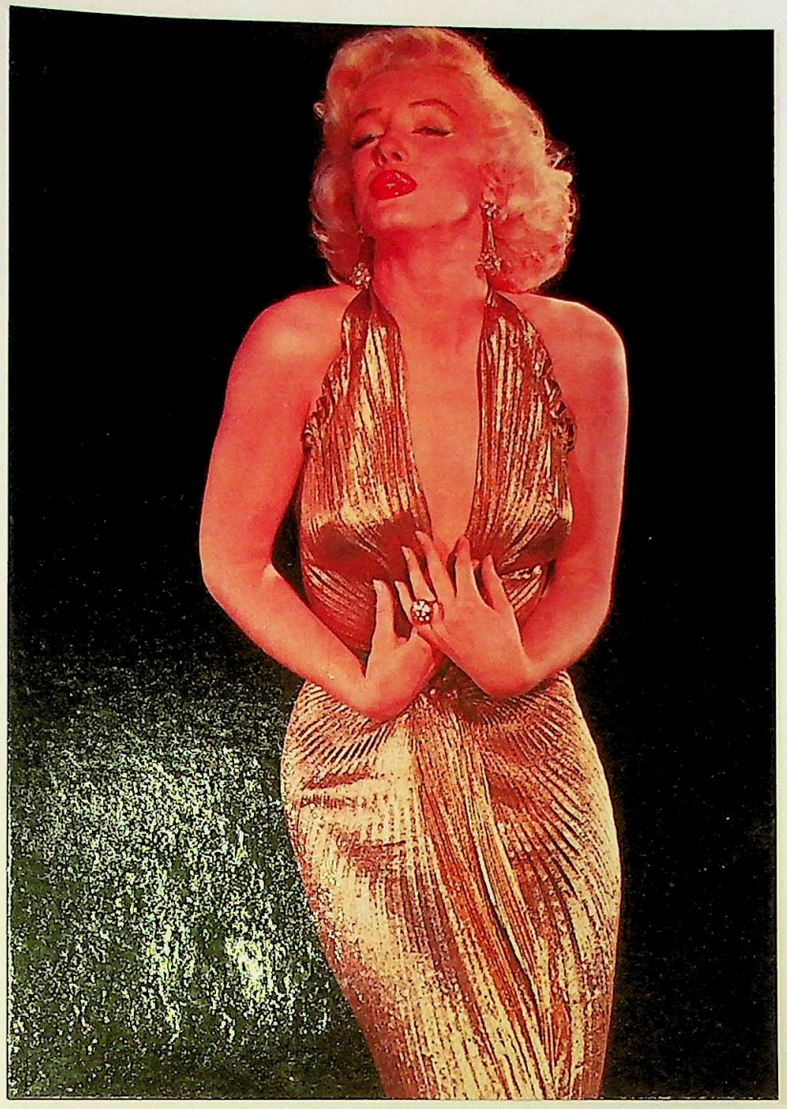
The costumes for Gilda were an exception to the austerity of the Forties movies, Jean Louis, the French-born couturier who began designing for Columbia in 1944 costumed Hayworth with sensuous elegance. He devised gowns with silk tulle enriched by lace insertions and beaded crepe sheaths that were slit to the knee and above. Always in a manner benefiting her love-goddess image.

In 1948 came the court decision that ended studio ownership of the theater chains and thus the guarentee of a market for the studio product. In addition the weekly attendance figures for movies dwindled to less than sixty million, the lowest figure since 1933. Another decisive factor had been added to Hollywood's many problems. The sale of television sets had doubled, tripled and quadrupled in the last years of the forties. So for the first time in its brief history, Hollywood began to retrench. The pressure for financial success at the box office, so great that the fees for stars - salaries and percentages - were the main items of studio expenditure. A more realistic approach to filmmaking filtered in from Europe and for the first time productions began to leave the sound stages en masse. Essentialy the new problems of filmmaking became management problems. If they did not show a profit, they had little chance of getting their next production financed, sets and costumes came to be regarded as frills.

It was Twentieth Century Fox who found what was possibly the last great star in the old tradition: Marilyn Monroe. She was cast in Twentieth Century Fox's Gentlemen Prefer Blondes wearing costumes by William Travilla.

Rita Hayworth, wearing her famous Jean Louis, black satin gown in Columbia's 1946 film Gilda Jean-Louis handled the satin so it became an integral part of Hayworth as she sang and danced "Put the Blame on Mame, Boys"

A typical pinup pose of the early fifties, a new negligee style swimsuit was invented by Hollywood and became the uniform of all starlets.



Marilyn Monroe in a pleated gold lame dress 1953, designed to make the most of her figure with a plunging neckline.

Marilyn Monroe's dress from Seven Year Itch 1955. Bought off the rack, the halter-neck dress of white pleated crepe was photographed again, it was the Letty Lynton dress of the fifties.

Marilyn Monroe in a very Dietrich-like pose.

Marilyn Monroe in the second-skin tight dresses that were to make her famous and set a new trend for the ideal figure, i.e. large bust, nipped-in waist and well-proportioned hips.

William Travilla had designed costumes at Columbia Pictures from 1941 to 1943, then transferred to Warner Brohers, where he remained from 1946 until 1951, he then signed with Twentieth Century Fox where he remained until 1958. Travilla's often understated designs suited her to perfection. Monroe's loosely brushed hair, makeup that seemed unstudied and a constant effervescence made her the most unique screen image to be seen in decades.

The image of Hollywood had changed drastically, gone was the glamour and exoticism of stars such as Garbo or Dietrich. The look that epitomised the stars of the fifties, such as Elizabeth Taylor, Debbie Reynolds and Doris Day, Deborah Kerr and Lana Turner was a look of expensive good taste combined with simple allure.

A strong influence of French couture was to be seen on many movies of the fifties, Christian Dior, Hubert de Givenchy and Schaiparelli all now designed for movies fashion designer clothes that had previously looked too drab, due to the change in taste now seemed very apropriate. The designer who met the greatest challange of the late forties and early fifties was Edith Head at Paramount. Head was called on to costume Gloria Swanson for her return to the screen in Sunset Boulevard. The story of a movie queen, a has-been, on the verge of madness.

Together, Head and Swanson worked out the problems of costuming a still beautiful actress as a faded and forgotten movie star. Head prepared and discarded many sketches, the two women considered and rejected countless bolts of fabric, shoes, accessories and jewelry. The clothes in the film were contemporary but with old Hollywood touches. Extravagant fur was used as a trimming, chiffon, velvet, tulle, brocade, taffeta and leopard-printed crepe were used. Sunset Boulevard premiered in 1950 in New York. It was pronounced a smash hit.

Twenty four years later, in 1974, Gloria Swanson again returned to Paramount to make a television documentary about the making of Sunset Boulevard. Swanson was asked to wear a costume from the film. Not only had the ensemble vanished, but not one white peacock feather could be found to decorate the new ermine toque made for her. Swanson was agast "Imagine" she said " Not one single white peacock feather in all Hollywood."[18]

The above story could well serve as the swan song of the old Hollywood. The star system was gone and the people who created the stars, the photographers, makeup men and designers were gone too. Never before or since had such industry gone into the creation of an image, a flickering image on a screen, that enthralled a generation and that still exists as testament to the talents of the people who helped create it.

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