

Costume

INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF COSTUME DESIGN

While it is sometimes difficult to be sure of costume design information because the silent-film period gave designers no screen credits and, during the 1950s, the studios disposed of many records, four elements can be said to form the foundation of film costume design as it is in the early twenty-first century: the establishment of its own studio department; the freedom given to designers to create extravagantly; the influx of, and competition with, international influence; and the recognition of design as a force on fashion. Though built by émigrés who had worked in the garment business (Carl Laemmle was a haberdasher, Adolph Zukor (/knowledge/Adolph_Zukor.html) a furrier, Samuel Goldwyn (/knowledge/Samuel_Goldwyn.html) a glover, and Louis B. Mayer (/knowledge/Louis_B_Mayer.html) a shoemaker), early Hollywood put little emphasis on costume. Actors used their own clothing and a woman with a better closet would get a better part. This continued well into the 1930s for men like Fred Astaire (/knowledge/Fred_Astaire.html) and Cary Grant who often wore their own, custom-made wardrobe. However, an initial office of costume design was inaugurated in 1915 by designer Clare West who, with two years' work on *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916), attained the unprecedented credential of "studio designer," raising the status of what was formerly known as "head of wardrobe." At that time, "wardrobe" was a division of the "drapery department," which bought or rented clothes or basted them together because, during the quick film productions of the 1910s, a movie outfit could be discarded after a day. As early as 1921 *The Woman's Home Companion* cited the "studio designer" as an important asset and urged stars, who still regularly wore their own clothes on screen, to tap into it. A design contract was also

probably given to Peggy Hamilton who, by 1918, costumed at Triangle (D. W. Griffith's studio) and was the first to outfit Gloria Swanson. But, as with many designers of the era, she moved on within a year or so.

Cecil B. DeMille was one of the first to realize that audiences wanted extreme couture and would pay to see their fantasies on a sexy star. In 1918, knowing that her talent would "make people gasp," he hired West to oversee Famous Players-Lasky's costumes. She stayed until 1925, through at least ten DeMille pictures. He encouraged lavish creativity and West's work, which fans and stars adored, helped film costume to gain greater artistic stature and to shift away from the pervading European sensibility. In the teens, dazzled producers brought in foreign artistes such as Paul Iribe (1883–1935) and Erté (1892–1990) to work with in-studio designers like Rambova, West, and Adrian, once the French couturier Paul Poiret's (1879–1944) outfits for France's production of *Queen Elizabeth* (1912) with Sarah Bernhardt, which was distributed by Paramount, opened the floodgates for "art" in Hollywood design. But by the 1920s, as costume design became a major component of the film industry with an expanding department and huge budgets, the Parisians lost out to the success of artistically wild, barely wearable, or eminently practical, super-styled clothing made by American costume designers, marking the beginning of an American fashion autonomy. The "costume department" was not truly established until the late 1920s, after which all studios had one, inevitably headed—often for decades—by a legendary designer. Some departments had different designers for female or male roles; others had a single overseer. After the 1950s' costume design renaissance with musicals, especially at MGM, the design department disappeared with the demise of the studio system, taking with it many in-house craftspeople.

Other film industries, such as those of Latin America and Asia, built their costume design on regional outfits and elaborate textile traditions. The musicals made during Mexican cinema's Golden Age (1930–1950) and the Brazilian *chanchada* films (1935–1959) took excessive liberties with traditional dress, which fans loved. The costumes of India's Bollywood musicals are similarly steeped in ancient tradition and equally known for adaptations. Some films are even famous for breakthrough deviations, such as *Mughal-e-Azam*'s (1960) invention of a Rajput (</knowledge/Rajput.html>) queen's bra-cup blouse. Typically, famous master costumers for Indian dance construct film outfits, but there are many Indian costume designers who are specific to the film industry, some of whom work internationally.

Japan's and China's costume design also emerge out of a fabric history involving high-toned color and ornate weaves and embroideries, and their films have capitalized on this tradition. From its inception, Japan's film industry has produced popular period films. The country's first color film, *Jigokumon* (*Gate of Hell* , Teinosuke Kinugasa, 1953, Academy Award[®]), set in feudal Japan, was exceptionally costumed by Sanzo Wada, who also acted as color consultant. Kusune Kainosho made the costumes for the classic ghost story, *Ugetsu Monogatari* (*Tales of Ugetsu* , Kenji Mizoguchi, 1953; 1955 Academy Award[®] nomination). *Ran* (1985, Academy Award[®]), Akira Kurosawa's epic *King Lear* adaptation, was costumed to enormous acclaim by Emi Wada, who later worked with the English director Peter Greenaway on his color-drenched *8 ½ Women* (1999), *The Pillow Book* (1996) and *Prospero's Books* (1991). Hanae Mori (b. 1926), originally a couturière, worked for years with Yasujiro Ozu and Nagisa Oshima, both directors with strong *mise-en-scène* . Hanako Kurosu designed for many of Japan's Shochiku company films. Japan's samurai and yakuza (gangster) films have also mutated over the decades, with costumes changing from the 1950s realism to the late 1990s cyber-fashion.

ADRIAN

b. Adrian Adolph Greenburg, Naugatuck, Connecticut, 3 March 1903, d. 13 September 1959

Adrian, head of MGM's costume department from 1928 to 1941, was one of the greatest influences on costume design, tailoring, and international couture that America has produced. Born in 1903 in 【4 834 cm】 Connecticut, of German parents, Adrian studied at Parsons in New York City and spent 1922 as a student in Paris. There he met Irving Berlin, who asked him to design special artwork for his Broadway production *Music Box Revue*. This brought Adrian back to New York and gave him the experience of working with legendary director Hassard Short. By 1923, Adrian had taken on the show's overall design. In 1924 production and costume designer Natacha Rambova (/knowledge/Natacha_Rambova.html) and her husband Rudolph Valentino (/knowledge/Rudolph_Valentino.html) hired him as costume designer for *A Sainted Devil* (1924). Adrian accompanied them to Hollywood to costume *The Hooded Falcon* (never completed) and other films, including Rambova's lush *What Price Beauty* (1925). When Valentino signed with United Artists, Adrian costumed *The Eagle* (1925) for him and then accepted an offer to work for Cecil B. DeMille's studio, where he made twenty-six films.

In 1928, Adrian became MGM's Head of Costume, often working on fifteen films a year. Described by Oleg Cassini (/knowledge/Oleg_Cassini.html) as "perhaps the only member of our profession powerful enough to impose his taste on a director," he was equally adept in every kind of fashion, be it flamboyant (*Madame Satan* , 1930), haute couture (*Dinner at Eight* , 1933), historical (*Marie Antoinette* , 1938) or fantastic (*The Wizard of Oz* , 1939). Responsible for the unique silhouettes of Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, and Jean Harlow, he never lost sight of the person within. He said, "I must know what an individual thinks about, what she likes or doesn't like before I can get personality into her clothes."

Through both his tailoring expertise and his business enterprise, Adrian played a vital role in making American couture the force it is today. He was credited with inventing padded shoulders and many "firsts," and his ideas launched more trends than any other United States designer, helping to establish a quintessential "American look." He further challenged France's domination of couture by vocally championing American over European fashion, noting the former's cleaner line and riskier extravagances. The financial success of his initiation of the mass production of cinema clothes in the early 1930s (with his puff-sleeved, layered, white organza gown for Joan Crawford in *Letty Lynton* , 1932) made American fashion an important economic contender.

In 1948, Adrian opened salons in Los Angeles and New York, producing fashion shows as opulent as Broadway musicals. After a heart attack, he moved with his wife, the actress Janet Gaynor, to their Brazilian ranch, although he returned to costume the Broadway hit *Camelot* with Tony Duquette in 1957.

FURTHER READING

Adrian Papers. New York: Fashion Institute of Technology, Special Collection.

Cassini, Oleg. *In My Own Fashion: An Autobiography* . New York: Pocket Books, 1987.

Gutner, Howard. *Gowns by Adrian: The MGM Years 1928–1941* . New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

Drake Stutesman

Hong Kong's *wuxia* (martial arts) films show a similar mix. China's rich textile history has produced equally strikingly visual dramas, notably those of Zhang Yimou, who made *Qiu Ju da guan si* (*The Story of Qiu Ju* , 1992); *Yao a yao yao dao waipo qiao* (*Shanghai Triad* , 1995), and *Wo de fu qin mu qin* (*The Road Home* , 1999) with the designer Huamiao Tong. An unusual period look, with stylized color schemes of black, white, and red, was adapted for Yimou by designer Zhi-an Zhang in *Da hong deng long gao gao gua* (*Raise the Red Lantern* , 1991). In the late twentieth century Asian styles considerably

influenced Western costume design and fashion, as seen in films such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, 2003), designed by New Zealander Ngila Dickson and by **Adrian.** Richard Taylor, who devised the armor. Eiko Ishioka, who created fabrics for Issey Miyake (/knowledge/Issey_Miyake.html) in the 1970s and costumed Cirque du Soleil (/knowledge/Cirque_du_Soleil.html) in the early 2000s, showed international blends in the science-fiction film *The Cell* (Tarsem Singh, 2000), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992, Academy Award[®]), and the Noh-like *Mishima* (Paul Schrader, 1985).

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