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Introduction to the themed issue of *Journal of Visual Culture*, 'Archaeologies of Fashion Film', vol.19, issue 3, December 2020, co-edited by Caroline Evans and Jussi Parikka.

Abstract for the themed issue:

The articles in this special issue emerge from the Archaeology of Fashion Film project (2017-2019). Situated at the junction of fashion history, media archaeology and new film history, the journal issue considers the relationship of historical and contemporary film, using media archaeology as a method to challenge linear or teleological accounts of film and fashion history. Instead, it proposes a 'parallax historiography' of their intertwining epistemologies and contexts. Contributions range between particular historical conditions of emergence, marginal voices in the historical record, and unexcavated archival materials; and the issue shows how they all contain feedback loops or recursive traits that resonate in contemporary practice. Rather than closing down the debate with definitive interpretations or conclusive definitions, this issue aims to open up the field at a time of accelerated change in contemporary fashion communications, in order to rethink new modalities of fashion, film and bodies in motion.

Keywords:

fashion, film, media archaeology, digital, cinema

Caroline Evans and Jussi Parikka

## **Introduction: Touch, Click, and Motion: Archaeologies of Fashion Film After Digital Culture**

I

The articles in this issue emerge from the *Archaeology of Fashion Film* (AFF) research project which ran from 2017-2019, and involved a range of academics, curators, archivists and fashion filmmakers.<sup>1</sup> The project's principal aim was to investigate the epistemologies and contexts of contemporary digital fashion film and its precursors. For several filmmakers, it was the first time they had watched silent fashion film projected on a large screen, showing early 20th-century fashions that were literally larger than life, hand-coloured, and modelled by women who, to the filmmakers' modern eyes, seemed endearingly unprofessional, even gawky, in their unaccustomed role as fashion models. The impact of this encounter was a galvanizing element in the project.

The AFF project also foregrounded the difficulties of defining fashion film itself. For all its predominant use in the fashion industry, the ubiquitous term was hard to delineate; for the purposes of the project, it included short, non-fiction films which might be independently made but which, after 2008, were more often commissioned by luxury brands such as Prada, Chanel and Gucci, or by film and digital media companies. These short films were used to promote new fashion via social media and e-commerce, just as, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, their equivalents had

promoted elite Paris fashion to international audiences through the medium of newsreel film in cinema programmes. The project did not look at the phenomena of fashion vlogging or live-streamed fashion shows. One of its aims, however, and of this journal issue, was to critique and expand this unduly narrow definition, not only in terms of the borders between experimentation and commerce but also, more crucially, between what the researchers saw as reductive distinctions between the historical past and the present.

As such, the project explored the under-investigated history of fashion film in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (specifically, between 1900–1929), and its legacy for the rapidly changing field of digital fashion communications in the early 21<sup>st</sup>. It brought two historically separate moments into a reciprocal relationship, and posited fashion film as an emerging form at the interface of two industries—film and fashion—at two distinct periods of accelerated technological and cultural change. It thus focused on points of convergence, as well as on instances of disjunction, rather than offering a chronological set of milestones for the development of fashion film. Indeed, this issue can be read in parallel with existing research that fills gaps not addressed here; for example, Nick Rees-Roberts (2018) has looked at wider categories of film, such as documentary fashion film, and traced more recent precursors of digital fashion film: MTV, the US television Fashion Channel, TV advertisements and, pre-dating all of these, the experiments in moving image of the fashion photographers Erwin Blumenfeld and Guy Bourdin.<sup>2</sup>

The project, situated at the junction of fashion history, media archaeology, and new film history, thus unearthed historical film from silent cinema (c.1895-1929) in the form of actuality, newsreel, dance, travelogue, trick and industrial films, to name but a few early classifications that were used in film catalogues, all featuring fashion or dress. The project was predicated on existing formulations of (fashion) film's three 'births': film as technology, cinema as an institution, and 'post cinema' or digital media. (see e.g. Gaudreault and Marion 2013; Elsaesser 2016; Denson and Leyda 2016). It was underpinned by what are, within the field of fashion studies, the unorthodox historiographical methods of media archaeology, which unearth forgotten, suppressed and even unrealised media forms in order to recast the technological present in a new light. The media archaeological approach was also used as a methodological tool to expand the historical agendas that are built into conventional approaches to genre. Following this line of methodological thought, this themed issue looks sideways, or even askew, at particular conditions of emergence, at marginal voices in the historical record, and at unexcavated archival materials. All of them contain feedback loops or recursive traits that resonate in contemporary practice (Elsaesser, 2016; Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011; Parikka, 2012; Strauven, 2013). For archaeologies of fashion film are not only excavated but also practiced, and, as practice, constantly remediated and curated anew, as we will argue in this introduction and in the articles that follow.

This issue also investigates the question the other (historical) way round: it not only engages with histories of the present, but also acknowledges the alternative imaginaries of past futures that were part of the early cinematic engagement with

fashion. This approach generates many questions, not least: where was (and is) fashion film in the contexts of the avant-garde, the experimental and the popular? How is it that fashion film is more or less invisible in the histories and archaeologies of cinema and fashion? And why look at archaeologies of fashion film now in particular, at a moment of radical change in the fashion industry, mediascapes, data economies and participatory cultures?

The second of these questions refers only to 'fashion film', the subject of this issue, rather than to fashion *in* film, which is a wider topic. The latter includes many more types of film, including fiction. Long marginalised in film studies, fashion (and film costume design) only began to receive significant critical attention from the 1980s (from, to name but a few: Ekert, 1978; Allen, 1980; Gustafson, 1982; Turim, 1983; Gaines and Renov, 1989; Gaines, 1989; Gaines and Herzog, 1990; Herzog, 1990; Turim, 1994; Bruzzi, 1997; Berry, 2000; Street, 2001; Ganeva, 2009; Munich, 2011; Tolini Finamore, 2013). In 2012 the field spawned its own journal, *Film, Fashion & Consumption*. However, historical 'fashion film' of the type referred to above, drawn from the genres of silent cinema (c.1895-1929) and the classifications of film catalogues, did not generally feature in these accounts, with rare exceptions (Cohen-Straytner, 1989; Hammerton, 2001; Hanssen, 2009). Indeed, fashion film only began to be identified as a distinct form in the 2010s by scholars who looked just at the emerging phenomenon of digital moving image.

The first forays into digital moving image were made by fashion creatives such as the photographer Marcus Tomlinson around 1999 but it was really the advent of web 2.0

in 2000 that created a platform for digital fashion film (Evans, 2013). 2000 saw the launch of SHOWstudio.com by the fashion photographer Nick Knight, who used the platform to explore the potential of moving image for fashion in a series of collaborations with artists, designers and filmmakers. Early digital fashion films were predominantly exploratory and experimental, but from about 2008, fashion film became increasingly commercial as the form was adopted by the fashion industry. In the emerging literature on this newly observed phenomenon (Rees-Roberts, 2011; Kahn, 2012; Needham, 2013; Mijovic, 2013; Shinkle, 2013) early film history tended to get left out, and fashion film was framed mainly as a contemporary event (with the exception of Uhlirova 2013b and 2013c). The fact that historical fashion film was held largely in archives and remained mostly undigitized meant too that contemporary filmmakers had no access to their own history, and thus often came to see fashion film as purely a product of the digital age.

The idea, then, that there might be genealogies to be explored between fashion film past and present went largely unconsidered. There were of course exceptions, including from two contributors to this issue (Uhlirova 2013a; Rees-Roberts, 2018; see too Karaminas, 2016). Uhlirova, in particular in her book *Birds of Paradise* (2013a), cut across cultural hierarchies, genres and chronologies through the simple but effective trick of foregrounding fashion and costume in filmic motion. Bringing into proximity three distinct historical 'episodes' in European and American cinema, and connecting forms and genres not usually brought together, from popular to avant garde, and mainstream to queer, her sideways look at fashion in film provides a singular methodological blueprint for this issue.

While archaeologies of fashion film, in the sense of predecessors, can be unearthed in the early forms of cinema, such as newsreels, commercials, industrial and instructional film, ethnographic film, home or amateur film, and even animation (see for example Hennefeld, 2016) this issue seeks to extend these contexts. The issue's methodological potential goes beyond particular genres, case studies and film histories, and in some ways its approach challenges the classifications of all three, by also invoking some conceptual ideas about the practices that border, and hence transform, cinema. (In this connection, see the concepts of paracinema and ex-cinema in Walley, 2003; Lippit, 2012.)

An archaeology of visual culture from film to fashion is premised as a parallax view that treats cinema and audiovisual culture circa 1900 and 2000 as specific epistemes (Elsaesser, 2016: 48-49. See also Albera and Tortajada, 2010): not merely technologically or aesthetically distinct historical periods but, rather, two perspectives on audiovisual culture that can reveal more in conjoined analysis than in separate steps or linear succession. On the one hand, we are dealing with archival research into histories of visual culture, fashion and film as evident for example in Moyses-Ferreira's text in this issue; on the other, we are interested in how the methodological perspective of a parallax view offers ways to transform the conceptual coordinates around which both archival findings and contemporary practices can resonate (see Uhlirova in this issue). Hence, early cinema becomes a way to investigate post-classical cinematic culture (Elsaesser, 2016: 79-80): in the context of fashion film, that means not only cinema but also the various (digital)



audiovisual expressions that pertain to moving images of fashion where the reference points are distributed across (music) video, animation, advertising, social media, retail, exhibition and publishing platforms, and more (see Rees-Roberts in this issue). While we emphasize that our methodology aims to address existing gaps and identify potential new crossovers in fashion and cinema, we also acknowledge that one of the limitations of this issue is the primary focus on European and North-American materials and archival sources. This realization is to be read both as a call for future research that expands the field, and as a question as to how reading fashion film can be productively interrogated or troubled with new archival and conceptual themes.

In other words, our approach is not to suggest that early fashion film is the archivally excavated truth about contemporary practices that must be also addressed in a broader global context, nor that contemporary practices are merely a palimpsest of past repertoires. Rather, we hope to set the stage for tactical encounters, epistemological echoes, and aesthetic resonances that chime with the methodologies of curating fashion film and the creative use of archival sources in contemporary practices. A parallel example is the *Conversations* book (Uhlirva, forthcoming), that documents a series of five workshops held at London's British Film Institute and Central Saint Martins in 2018 as part of the *Archaeology of Fashion Film* project.<sup>3</sup> Uhlirva, who conceived the workshops, modelled them – on a smaller scale – on the legendary FIAF 1978 congress in Brighton that focused on a substantial set of pre-1907 films. The FIAF congress was central for establishing new discussions between archivists and film scholars, and has been noted as one of the mobilizing

events for new film history, while also being instrumental for the birth of media archaeology. New film history was defined by an interest in a broad research base for the cultural history of early film, and an intention to read films in complex contexts of technology, economy, and culture. This combined focus on the institutions and practices of film – and, later, on the moving image in other technological ways too, including video and digital cinema – also contributed to media archaeological ways of developing new film history, as seen for example in Thomas Elsaesser’s work since the 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

The AFF workshops staged a series of screenings and conversations between contemporary filmmakers, archivists, film, fashion and media scholars, and film and fashion curators, creating an interface between fields and practices that usually remain unconnected: fashion and cinema history, fashion curation, film archiving, and contemporary fashion image-making and content commissioning. The screenings encompassed both historical and contemporary moving image, much of the former consisting of undigitized film projected in a viewing theatre. Media archaeological questions about the materiality of film versus digital were part of the seminar room exchange. Questions of screen size were also significant to the participants: some had never seen 35 millimeter fashion film projected before. Several films triggered a discussion about ‘authenticity’, a highly prized value in the eyes of one participant, Raven Smith who, as Commissioning Director at Nowness.com from 2013-2016, had had the job of commissioning one fashion film a day for three years. Nowness is a digital video channel set up in 2010 by the luxury goods conglomerate LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy) and acquired in 2017 by

the digital media company Dazed Media. Chasing web hits rather than direct fashion sales (though it also featured sponsored content), Nowness.com was part of a new digital economy that was distinct from the older economic models of fashion production and marketing. Smith's concerns – besides evidencing his remarkable stamina in commissioning over 1,000 films in three years – nicely encapsulated the commercialized context of the new fashion film industry in which values such as 'authenticity' and 'originality' were not only manifestations of creative labour but had also become commodified forms of distinction.

The workshops showed how, once opened up to new scrutiny by different audiences, the idea of fashion film as legacy can become a factor in the media archaeological mapping of surviving film and its remediation outside the cinema theatre. International film archives are an important (re)source in the 'rediscovery' of early fashion film, just as the archival played a key role in, and since, 1978, enabling the insertion of the missing genealogies of film into wider accounts of cinematic modernity and visual culture. For the AFF project, the potential repurposing in the workshops of historical fashion film through the hands and eyes of contemporary makers represented a second possibility, and an important one. These practice-oriented workshops functioned as an exemplar of media archaeological methods that required us to look for complexities of modes of expression and practice, for layered readings and for varied competences, instead of assuming clear-cut, teleological narratives of linear progress (cf. Elsaesser, 2016: 95). In short, definitions and living practices of fashion film became further complexified and contested.

A parallel site for such modes of divergent thinking is the recently emerged phenomenon of the fashion film festival; and the gradual inclusion of film in museum exhibitions. As regards film festivals, the first was the London-based *Fashion in Film Festival* (2006), followed by the Paris-based *A Shaded View on Fashion Film* (2008). In 2014, a further ten festivals were founded, and the list continues to grow (van der Linden, 2017). In fashion exhibitions, since the late 2000s, curators have routinely included some form of moving image, ranging from contextual historical film in e.g. *Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design* at London's Victoria & Albert Museum (2007), to digital visualisations of cut and construction in *Madeleine Vionnet: Puriste de la Mode* (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 2009) and specially commissioned animations in *Charles James: Beyond Fashion* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2014). In 2009, London's Somerset House staged *SHOWstudio: Fashion Revolution*, an exhibition dedicated to the influential website founded in 2000 which dubbed itself 'the home of fashion film'.

But as well as asking the question where is cinema, and where is fashion film, in this issue we want to pursue the question of when it is (Strauven, 2013: 61). Besides the issues of periodization, multiple histories and alternative beginnings, this is also, following Elsaesser, about recognizing the intensive and creative dynamics of re-emergence and recontextualisation: 'Media archaeology is therefore perhaps nothing more than the name for the non-place space and the suspension of temporal flows the film historian needs to occupy, when trying to articulate, rather than merely to accommodate, these several alternative, counterfactual, or parallax

histories around which any study of the cross-media moving image culture now unfolds.’ (2016: 99) The when of fashion cinema is a way of looking at it as an unfolding mode of expression with particular genealogies, and also with surprising remediations that take place in forms that help to map new coordinates for research into the archaeologies of visual culture.

While media archaeology had been significant in establishing an extended sense of cinema as a technology and film history outside the repertoire of text, audience, and industry (Peters, 2009), it has also spread in multiple directions to form not one single methodology but a field of alternative methodological opportunities. These methodologies provide ways of dealing with the gaps, ruptures, remediations, and residuals of media cultural expressions, while also foregrounding the importance of non-academic practices that reform our view – a history of the present, in Foucault’s vocabulary – of the historical record (Parikka, 2012). However, instead of naming media archaeology as a non-place as bluntly as Elsaesser does, we want to give it a place in the cross-disciplinary encounters between visual studies, fashion, cinema and contemporary industry practitioners. Specifically, the encounter between fashion history and media archaeology might offer something to both, including ways of approaching technologies of embodiment and movement.

In this context, we are aware of the multiple temporalities that define fashion film as stretched across a 120-year period – and even longer, as Strauven demonstrates in her methodological take in this issue – and the tensions of continuity and discontinuity that ensue from this approach. Reading across non-congruent historical

periods, and across cinema and data, while remaining aware of the dangers of anachronism, we draw on Uhlirova's (2013c) hypothesis of the 'delayed emergence' of fashion film. Uhlirova argues that the 20th-century fashion industry never fully made film its own until the digital age, which created the ideal conditions for a new cultural 'fit' of an old medium. In this way, today's fashion film can enrich discussions of non-narrative cinema, and even of the 'cinema of attractions', without succumbing to over-simplified parallels between separate periods. But it does mean that fashion film has been the ignored 'other' of these discussions, which is also why we wanted to put it at the centre of this themed issue.

## II

The delayed emergence of fashion film speaks to the extension and expansion of cinematic aesthetics across the contemporary landscape of data culture. On the one hand, this can be seen to be part of social media and the platforms of data capture. In this transformed visual media context, moving images of fashion are dynamically interactive as participation, streams and feeds on social media platforms (Khamis and Munt, 2010). This represents a significant challenge to questions of the moving image of fashion where movement happens on the level of data capture, analytics, and monetization.

In other ways too, the movement of contemporary fashion images today is not only about the visuality of fashion per se. It may also extend to ways in which the fashion image in movement is transformed by experimental products that articulate the

relationship between fashion design and touch, or haptics in new ways (on the relationship of representation and embodied action in new fashion media see Shinkle, 2013). In many ways, such prototypes are also a means to expand the notion of fashion as movement and technology (Smelik, 2017). An early example was the Hugshirt, designed by Cutecircuit in 2002, a wearable haptic telecommunications garment that enabled one person to send a long-distance hug to another via Bluetooth. The wireless Hugshirt had sensors integrated into the fabric to create the sensation of touch—its strength, duration and location, augmented by skin warmth and heartbeat.

While the Hugshirt was not a technology of moving images, its engagement with the other of cinema - through data, touch and proximity, as opposed to visual distance and projection – suggested some alternative legacies of early fashion film at the very moment of its (delayed) re-emergence. The technology of emotions that the suit embodied – like many contemporary data culture driven wearables and haptics (see Parisi, 2018) - intersected with a vast range of imagined and real experience, including of fashion and visual culture. As Giuliana Bruno (2002) argues in her substantial take on the archaeology of cinema in *Atlas of Emotion*, cinematic aesthetics have their roots in the wider cultural histories of emotions, transport, and even transmission. Developing her argument for this alternative lineage of the cinematic through geography and travelling, architecture and spatiality, film and the aesthetics of movement, Bruno argues for the centrality of the haptic in contact-based experience that speaks to both cinema and fashion: haptics and kinesthesia become part of cinema in ways that tie fashion to movement, bodies and lived

experience, and kinesthesia to the way 'our bodies [...] sense their own movement in space.' (Bruno, 2002: 6. See also Strauven and Baronian in this issue).

What then, if wearables such as the Hugshirt are also paths to alternative genealogies and media archaeologies of fashion film? More recently, this type of speculative design, that pushes the boundaries of media and fashion to embodied data capture, has become mainstream in the form of wearables such as earbuds and smartwatches. This platformisation (Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck 2019), of both fashion and the moving body, returns us to the question of (social media) platforms that work outside the screen as infrastructures of movement. This speculative example, however niche, thus shows how, in the new visual culture of fashion communications, visibility expands far beyond the scopic. This disjuncture might also facilitate the work of thinking beyond the usual confines of fashion film as it pertains to the history of cinema.

The haptics and kinesthesia of movement that characterised fashion in filmic motion that began in the late nineteenth-century (such as Annabelle's serpentine dance) and proliferated in the 1910-20s (e.g. newsreel and other) have in the early 21<sup>st</sup> found a new home in the digital screen and its multiple formats. These go beyond traditional cinematic ways of showing, and are visible for example in: mobile small screens, experimental projection formats, non-lenticular forms of visual culture like lidar, and other expressions that have pushed the boundaries of the cinematic. In other words, fashion and fashion film have unwittingly become a site where the



archaeologies and practices of the screen must be rethought, and re-experimented. (Cf. Huhtamo, 2016).

These formats span marginal experimentation and mainstream consumer culture. Luxury goods companies have increasingly foregrounded their digital offer, as in the Gucci films described by Rees-Roberts in this issue, while fashion retail sites such as NET-A-PORTER mimic magazines, spiking their sales pages with feature articles. Meanwhile fashion media production has shifted to another sort of a user-oriented action: clickable user-influenced content and the data-driven influencer economy of social media. (Rocamora, 2016 and 2018). Against this backdrop, where the culture and commerce of fashion is fast-changing, this issue engages with how fashion *film* might (or might not) remain a relevant term for the 120-year historical span of the cinematic entanglement with fashion.

Addressing visual culture and fashion studies, Bruno (2014: 40) proposes that the field needs 'a different "model" for the theorization of fashion, one that is able to account for the way fashion works as a fabric of the visual in a larger field of spatiovisual fabrications'. In this manner, this issue extends the discussion of fashion, surface and method to incorporate the various historical layers of early fashion film and its digital counterparts. There has been a significant amount of recent interest in new materialism and fashion, linked to the dynamics of matter, gender, and embodiment (Shinkle, 2013; Entwistle, 2015: 6-39; Kontturi, 2018; Smelik, 2018) and this issue runs with those interests, to explore how they connect not only with fashion and textiles but also with wider media technologies of visibility including

cinema. In other words, fashion studies become by necessity part of an interdisciplinary agenda, ranging from, for example, the aesthetics of movement, to the archaeological way of problematising traditional histories through an interest in haptics, touch, and the dynamics of materials. In this way, fashion film extends beyond the scope of cinematic references to embrace digital aesthetics, while at the same time highlighting how film itself has shifted institutional contexts beyond its former reference points.

It thus signals a transition in how cinema is conceived in the framework of current digital culture; and in the perspective of alternative histories, fashion film can be posited as a post-cinematic site of transformation, following Denson and Leyda's formulation of post-cinema as marking a 'transformation that alternately abjures, emulates, prolongs, mourns, or pays homage to cinema' (2016: 2). In some ways contemporary fashion film articulates a residual but recurring dialogue with the history of cinema, even where this is not a conscious act. But often, fashion film simultaneously mutates cinematic history, in terms of its practices of production, its industry context, and its aesthetic claim in which, as Rees-Roberts writes in this issue 'the visual dynamic of the feed (of marketing and data) might, in part, supersede the aesthetic framework of cinema (of narrative and drama)' A certain intermedial borrowing and awareness of multiple cinematic and post-cinematic styles underlines fashion film as an amalgamation of historical and contemporary forms of representation and digital interfaces, while itself increasingly looking for new contexts.

Furthermore, despite Rees-Roberts's important note about the feed, narrative still features as a constant reference point at least in industry discussions about cultural attraction and (re)production as to what is the definition of film in fashion film. Fashion films commissioned by big brands and using directors like David Lynch, Roman Polanski or Steve McQueen do still propose a narrative (sometimes sentimental), and some kind of psychological depth for the protagonists. Rees-Roberts's article ends with Steve McQueen's *Mr Burberry* and documentary-maker Asif Karpadia's *The Tale of Thomas Burberry*, both from 2016. The former is a rehash of the traditional fragrance advertisement format, while the latter resembles a commercial trailer for an unmade feature film, and relies on the conventions of heritage film, using found footage to shape a 'film narrative as an exercise in brand archaeology'. At the other end of the spectrum, however, Uhlirva's article puts into dialogue an early digital experimental fashion film by Marcus Tomlinson of Hussein Chalayan's *Aeroplane dress* (1999) with the rotating fashion models of early Gaumont and Pathé films from the 1910s. These films, like the early fashion films described by Uhlirva, or the 2011 film analysed in Baronian's article, comprise a flow of images that focuses more on surface and sensation than narrative.

Fashion film today spans commerce and culture; it is made by fashion image-makers or designers, experimental and art-house filmmakers, as well as major global film directors and often distributed primarily online. These short, largely presentational films are directly linked to the fashion industry and yet often exceed its limitations, demonstrating more than mere marketing or brand advertising. In this issue we ask how these practices are reforming, how they are currently reinventing the particular

question of cinema (Elsaesser, 2016). To quote D’Aloia, Baronian and Pedroni, ‘both fashion and cinema can be considered “dream machines” animated by many common features such as colour, cut, assemblage, composition, as well as motifs of masquerade, disguise and transformation’ (2017: 5. See also Leslie, 2013). While fashion and cinema might share such traits as being coined as dream machines, we are also invested in exploring whether fashion (film) might be one of the sites where cinema and visual culture are increasingly relocated (See Casetti, 2012).

### III

We began with a pithy opening definition of fashion film which we hope we have already complicated; in the articles that follow, it is further challenged and expanded. The articles cover questions of visual culture and technology over a hundred years, spanning cinema, digital platforms, and fashion. They show that any narrow definition of fashion film is insufficient, because its themes, tropes, aesthetic conventions and embodied forms are in flux: constantly disappearing and reappearing in changing constellations. The visual tropes of early films – pose, staging, movement, *mise-en-scène*, and filming techniques – recur in different forms across decades, requiring a media archaeological method to investigate the different, diverging and, in some cases, converging epistemes of these periods of images of fashion and movement.

Uhlirva’s article expands on several themes from our introduction. She surveys a broad range of films and genres, offering a wide overview of both contemporary and

historical fashion film. Her article reveals a wealth of detail derived from the extensive archival research she did as part of the *Archaeology of Fashion Film* project. Uhlirova mobilises this vast body of film material not simply to put it in the public domain, but also to ask how media archaeology might work as both a method and a conceptual rationale for challenging and widening existing ideas about what fashion film is, or might be. As she argues, this rediscovery of early film, much of it still undigitized, forces a reassessment of fashion film today. She maintains that it is not only a promotional form, but also something more wide-ranging, from the amateur, the small-scale and the experimental, to the more fashion industry-focused. Book-ending her contribution, at the end of this issue Rees-Roberts argues that the migration of promotional fashion film to social media and multiple formats puts into question the very category of fashion film; Uhlirova argues instead that it is the very multiplicity of early fashion film, challenging as it does both genres and typologies, that forces us to remap the modern.

Resonating with Uhlirova, Wanda Strauven's text offers a methodological argument that mobilizes media archaeology as a way to break out from genres and typologies. Her alternative approach to fashion and film searches for evocations and traces between the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; Strauven looks laterally, coupling both early cinema and digital film to textile technology via the 19<sup>th</sup> century technologies of sewing machines and jacquard looms. She identifies textile technology as a form of computational thinking leading to questions of data before the digital, thus looping back to weaving techniques in the early 1800s rather than the first film projection at the end of that century (ca.1895). In setting the methodological scene

in spatial terms, Strauven invokes the Foucauldian table top as a metaphor for the operations of media archaeology which becomes both a surface for the non-hierarchical ordering of things and ideas, and an operating table on which to dissect the connections between fashion and film.

The horizontal screen and table top are also central to how Marie-Aude Baronian articulates her approach that focuses on fashion designer Alexander van Slobbe's one-minute fashion film. Like Strauven, and citing her writing on table installations, Baronian uses horizontality to make connections between moving images and fashion as a material object, arguing for connections between flat pattern-cutting and the flatness of the screen, and between the materiality of fashion and of film. This she describes as the 'dialogical archaeologies' of two parallel practices where the question of the screen becomes central: what is the screen that frames practices of visibility in moving images of fashion and how does that imply the multitude of alternative screen practices? As Baronian writes, '[...]if screen-images materialize fashion through their own devices, fashion also materializes screen through its own "costumes", playing with themes of the expanded screen that is the dress and costume itself'. She implies a notion of visibility and screen that can be also worn: of van Slobbe's film she writes 'the film, by extension, is portable and wearable, conjuring the art of handling sartorial objects'. Although writing about a specific fashion film, her point has a wider application, returning to the themes of intermediality, haptics, and moving images of moving bodies.

Historical questions of intermediality are at the centre of Lucy Moyse-Ferreira's deep dive into another, much earlier fashion film made by the designer and artist Sonia Delaunay. Moyse-Ferreira looks at Delaunay's 1926 fashion film as part of a practice that spanned fashion, textiles, interior design and art, focusing especially on questions of gender in the modernist period. Delaunay was blithely indifferent to the cultural hierarchies of art and commercial design, in ways that still resonate today. Moyse-Ferreira rereads Delaunay's earlier work in both art and design as proto-cinematic, a term that reverberates with media archaeological questions about cinema beyond the cinema industry, and any linear normalised film histories. The proto-cinematic is found in this case in colour and colour-combinations or juxtapositions. For Delaunay, experiments in Simultanism were played out in multiple forms (or formats, in 21<sup>st</sup> century parlance), ranging from a dancing dress made for a Paris nightclub, to textiles displayed on moving rollers. From these experiments with colour and pattern in modernist motion, it was a small step to filmed fashion. And when Moyse-Ferreira describes a modelling scene where the standing model slowly turns a huge colour wheel behind her, she makes a link from embodied fashion to the technology of the film process, the designer's own interest in the science of colour, and the technology of human movement in a mechanical age.

Nick Rees-Roberts looks at contemporary promotional fashion films as a series of cross-platform social media practices, situated at the confluence of three things: digital interactivity, fashion branding and celebrity influence. He argues that this conjunction, combined with the mushrooming of diverse digital platforms such as

Instagram, Periscope, Snapchat and Line, means that fashion moving image today has become, at least partially, disconnected from the history of cinema. Instead, he proposes, fashion film is data, or information, due to the shift (following Manovich) from the analogue culture of representation to a digital culture of software. Rees-Roberts wonders whether, due to the proliferation of new platforms and file types, and their adoption by the fashion industry, the term 'fashion film' might become obsolete. There is a possibility, however, that in repudiating the term film we imply that we already know what fashion film is; and Rees-Roberts does not discuss the question of origins or definitions that might also include the constant transformations of the notion of film and cinema, including the use of the term 'video' in the context of contemporary industry practices. But perhaps that is part of the stake that the article brings out so forcefully: how is fashion film a useful heuristic that helps to look at the ways in which it is remediated, rather than being a description of a period of media or genre. Hence, the question of data, databases, and archives in social media is tied to the question of media history, of film history, and of fashion film styles. It is perhaps no accident that Rees-Roberts's final answer is open-ended, and none the less important for that.

Rather than closing down the debate with definitive interpretations or conclusive definitions, this issue aims to rethink new modalities of fashion, film and bodies in motion. The articles converge on the level of their interest: fashion film is conceived as a parallax view to re-look at many questions in visual culture, fashion, and cinema. But the articles also diverge at points, when it comes to nuanced questions about, for example, the persistence of cinema as a reference point for contemporary



fashion film: it asks in what ways we are dealing with remediations of the long heritage of cinematic aesthetics and conversations, and to what extent this is an insufficient reference point to understand the hybrid forms of audiovisual expression, whether called post-cinema or something else.

A third point emerges, furthermore, which is at the centre of Strauven's text too: what if we don't know, or definitively close down, the question of what cinema is? In this issue, instead, we aim to give the idea space to expand, not only as an open future, but also as an open past of new perspectives. Hence cinema (whatever that is, was, or may become) is also being refashioned in the context of these actual practices of fashion film, and the methodological excavations that try to find sufficiently complex inroads to this field of investigation. This themed issue aims to open up the subject of what fashion film is, was, and could be – not only as an analytical framework through which to refract fashion history, cinema history and visual culture, but also as a way to understand fashion film as a historically located media object of the future. Some of its multifarious complexities are explored in the articles that follow.

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<sup>2</sup> These can be seen on SHOWstudio.com. For Blumenfeld, see [https://www.showstudio.com/projects/experiments in advertising the films of erwin blumenfeld/fashion films?autoplay=1](https://www.showstudio.com/projects/experiments-in-advertising-the-films-of-erwin-blumenfeld/fashion-films?autoplay=1) . For Bourdin, [https://showstudio.com/projects/compulsive viewing the films of guy bourdin](https://showstudio.com/projects/compulsive-viewing-the-films-of-guy-bourdin). Accessed 2 July 2020.

<sup>3</sup> For summaries of the workshops and participants see: <http://archfashfilm.arts.ac.uk/workshops/archaeology-of-fashion-film-workshop/> and <http://archfashfilm.arts.ac.uk/workshops/fashion-film-workshop/>

<sup>4</sup> In the midst of scholarly discussions about new film history and media archaeology, notably by Elsaesser, Strauven and others, Horak's personal memoir of the 1978 event includes interesting notes. See Horak 2018.