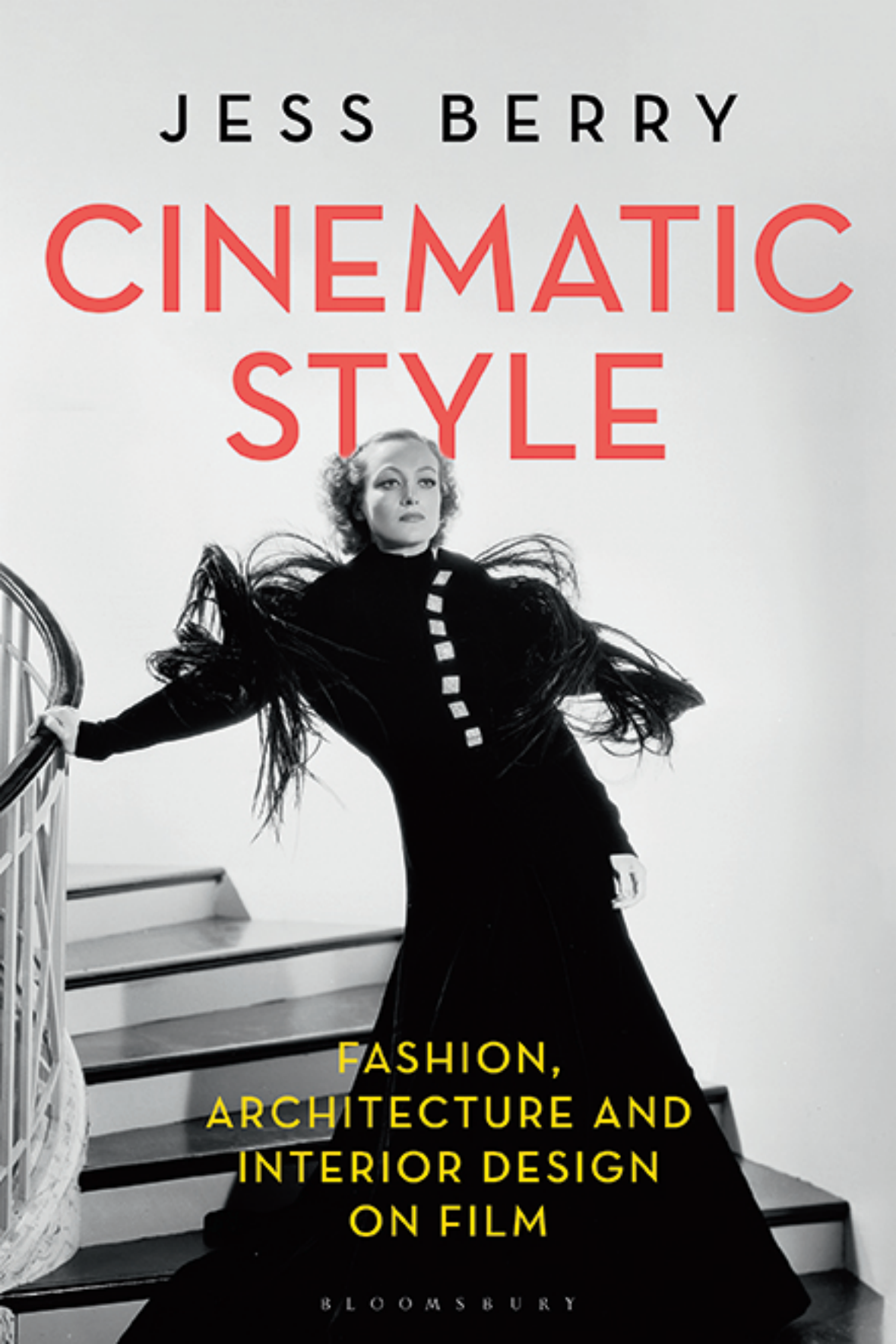
JESS BERRY

CINEMATIC STYLE



FASHION, ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN ON FILM

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Cinematic Style

Also by Jess Berry and also by Bloomsbury

House of Fashion: Haute Couture and the Modern Interior

Cinematic Style

Fashion, Architecture and Interior Design on Film

Jess Berry

BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2022

Cover design: Charlotte Daniels
Cover image: Joan Crawford (1908–1977) as Diane Lovering in Chained,
directed by Clarence Brown and costumes by Adrian. (© George Hurrell/John
Kobal Foundation/Getty Images)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN:	HB:	978-1-3501-3761-5
	PB:	978-1-3501-3762-2
	ePDF:	978-1-3501-3760-8
	eBook:	978-1-3501-3763-9

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

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Acknowledgements

Much of this book was written while I was on study leave during a year of great upheaval in the Australian university sector as a result of the global pandemic. The significant opportunity to dedicate time to research and writing was made possible due to the support of my colleagues at Monash University. Dean of Art, Design and Architecture, Professor Shane Murray and Associate Dean Research, Professor Melissa Miles deserve my deep gratitude for their support of this project. My sincere appreciation also goes to Associate Professor Gene Bawden, Associate Professor Nicole Kalms, Professor Lisa Grocott and Sarah Stratton who all provided stimulating discussion, guidance, mentorship and friendship in one way or another that has not only sustained me through the challenging year that was 2020, but throughout my time at Monash. The entire XYX Gender + Place research lab team similarly deserve my grateful thanks as a dedicated, ambitious, inspiring and supportive group of people to work with on projects at the intersection of gender, identity and spatial practice. Thank you also to the intelligent women of the Orbital reading group – Dr Alex Brown, Charity Edwards, Dr Helen Hughs and Dr Anna Parlane – who provided insightful discussion and thoughtful feedback on elements of the manuscript.

I owe an ongoing debt to Professor Susan Best. Her encouragement and mentorship over many years, along with generous reading of the manuscript and insightful critique, have been invaluable. Sue is also a dear friend; her patience and humour for problem solving Zoom calls is a further kindness that I much appreciate. Stimulating conversations and opportunities emerging from conferences helped hone many of the ideas in this book. I am grateful to Sarah Gillan for the opportunity to share my work at Fashion, Costume and Visual Cultures with colleagues in Zagreb. I would especially like to thank Professor Pamela Church Gibson who encouraged me to write this book at a conference organized by Professor Vicki Karaminas in New Zealand, her assurance that there was something in it was the catalyst for this project.

My deep gratitude to my brilliant editor at Bloomsbury, Frances Arnold, this is my second book with her, and her interest and enthusiasm for my work are much appreciated. Rebecca Hamilton and the rest of the team at Bloomsbury are incredibly helpful and make the publishing process a pleasure. I also thank

the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on the proposal and manuscript.

Lastly, thank you and love to my friends and family, especially Ruth and Wolfgang, Dale and Gary, Andrea, and Tori who have always been there when I needed them. Taco and The Dude Lebowski also deserve my thanks as borrowed fur friends who were great company while writing this book.

Introduction: Cinematic style – fashion, architecture and interior design on film

From cinema's silent beginnings the spectacular visual pleasures of fashion, interior design and architecture have enthralled audiences. Take for example Cecil B. DeMille's productions from the 1920s, in which 'sex, sets and costumes' were the secret to the director's success.[1] DeMille was amongst early pioneers who brought architects, designers, artists and costumers to screen-production paving the way for cinematic style to penetrate the imagination of a receptive cinema-going public. The extravagant and ornate mise-en-scène of films such as *The Affairs of Anatol* (1921) introduced audiences to the Art Nouveau designs of the celebrated French fashion illustrator, Paul Iribe.[2] It is clear that from very early on, cinema cultivated consumer culture through fashions and furnishings, where *Theatre* magazine claimed that: 'more women see DeMille's pictures than read fashion magazines … and then there are the tips on interior decoration and house furnishing … [educating] the taste of the masses.'[3] Iribe's visually arresting patterned fabrics for evening dresses and coats coupled with the alluring curvilinear décor of boudoirs and bedrooms were certainly glamorous images that portrayed an alignment between style, sexuality, luxury and pleasure. Yet, they conveyed more than just a glimmer of sexual impropriety. Just as design discourse of the time designated decorative coherence between fashion and the interior as an extension of women's psychological interiority, sets and costumes on screen revealed a character's personality, desires and arc of transformation.

Through the aesthetics of Art Nouveau in *The Affairs of Anatol* – as well as in the Natacha Rambova designed films *Camille* (1921) and *Salomé* (1923) – audiences soon became acquainted with a prevailing cinematic trope that saw sexually liberated, femme fatale figures represented by the glamorous clothes they wore, and the luxurious rooms they inhabited. Women were cast in a decorative mode, confirming links between interior, dress and lifestyle. As Louise Wallenberg summarizes in *Fashion and Modernity,* film's growing

popularity as a medium in the 1920s coincided with women's increased sexual, social and economic emancipation leading to archetypal representations that circumscribed coherence between the 'sexual woman' and consumption.[4] These themes resurfaced continually in design and cinema discourses throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and herein lies a problem that has long-lasting effects.

The gendered perception of glamorous and fashionable design modes marks them as lacking in substance. The film theorist Rosalind Galt describes how these types of screen surfaces trouble cinematic value by complying with qualities that are: 'carefully composed … richly textured … ornamental … [comprised of] detailed *mise-en-scène*, and an emphasis on [a self-evidently designed] cinematographic surface'.[5] She reminds us that: 'the rhetoric of cinema has consistently denigrated surface decoration, finding the attractive skin of the screen to be false, shallow, feminine or apolitical.'[6] In other words, while audiences may well be enamoured with the surfaces of cinematic style, fashion and the interior share a long association with social, cultural and psychological aspects of feminine and queer identities, resulting in their neglect within the broader histories of design and cinema.

Despite the spectacular technological advancements of twenty-first century cinema, stunning silhouettes and striking spaces still have the ability to dazzle to dramatic affect. Yet, the correlation between these modes of aesthetic production and consumption continues to be largely overlooked. That is not to say that significant scholarship regarding the relationship between fashion and film or spatial design and film does not exist. However, there is to date, no existing comprehensive academic volume that is solely dedicated to surveying the relationship between fashion, interior design and architecture as mediated through film that takes into account developments from the silent era to the present moment, as is the focus of this book.

Cinematic Style proposes fashion, spatial design and cinema as a triumvirate system of symbolic narrative production that enables the translation of glamorous lifestyles from the screen to real-life consumer culture. Specifically, I argue that two central concerns can be discerned from this triangulation. Firstly, the representation of gender and sexuality on screen is closely related to the aesthetic alignment of silhouettes, styles, and spaces to visually convey complex identity performances based in concepts of masquerade and interiority. Secondly, cinematic style is calibrated to the fantasies of consumer desire, where self-actualization is represented as realized through alluring surfaces and spaces. This results in a mutually reinforcing dialogue between fashion, spatial design

and film, which privileges narratives of transformation as the answer to self-fulfilment and is articulated through fashion spaces beyond the screen.

Recognizing that there is an intersection between fashion, interior design and architecture is not new. As I have previously outlined in *House of Fashion*: *Haute Couture and the Modern Interior* these seemingly disparate areas of design share much in common.[7] Since haute couture's inception, luxury fashion has sought to leverage architecture and interior spaces as a way of enhancing value. It is worth restating some of these confluences here to make clear my premise that fashion and spatial design can be understood in tandem with each other. This approach underpins the structure of the book. By considering body and space together rather than as separate entities, a holistic understanding of how mise-en-scène functions to produce narrative meaning is elucidated.

Fashion, interior design and architecture operate as both material and conceptual manifestation. That is, they act as physical space inhabited by bodies, but also appear as images and in the cultural imaginary aided by their representation in illustrations, photographs and significantly to this book – on film. It is my contention that film mediates the representation of interior design and architecture in ways that are fashionable, aligning them with the purposes of the fashion system. That is, the symbolic production of value that shifts clothing to fashion relies on the representation of fashion as image and cultural object associated with the social construction of identity, status and aesthetic tastes. These apparatuses of myth making can equally be applied to the consumption of the interior and architecture.

The aforementioned integration of fashion and spatial design through aesthetic form in the case of Art Nouveau is just one example of this relationship throughout the history of design that was reiterated in cinematic contexts. For instance, Art Deco saw confluences between the slick polished surfaces of steam liners and sumptuous hotels and the glamorous, silhouettes of streamlined evening gowns. Hollywood art directors and costumers including Cedric Gibbons and Adrian, as well as Van Nest Polglase and Bernard Newman, worked together on complementary interiors and fashions, orchestrating a cogent approach to shades of white styling in films such as *Grand Hotel* (1932) and *Top Hat* (1932).[8] In the post-Second World War era, Christian Dior's New Look (1947) and Tulip-Line (1953) silhouettes dominated fashion. This exaggeration of form was also carried out in mid-century modern home furnishings such as Arne Jacobsen's *Series 7 chair* (1955) and Eero Saarien's *Tulip Chair* (1956) heralding a shift in modernism towards organic forms.[9] This type of correlation can be seen in costumer Edith Head and set decorator Sam Comer's approach in films such

as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958).[10] Similarly, Pop materializations manifest in futuristic fashion looks by Paco Rabanne coupled with Op Art and Verner Panton style interiors such as those in *Who Are You Polly Maggoo?* (1966), and *Barbarella* (1968), demonstrate stylistic synergies across design modes. This set of examples, while by no means exhaustive, gives weight to John Potvin's claim that 'both fashion and furniture might be conceptualised as two dialects emerging from the language of design'.[11] Here, I extend this idea to interiors more broadly, along with architecture, to elaborate on how these dialects converge in film to convey narrative meaning.

Significantly, fashion and interior design not only share a common aesthetic history, they also play an important role in modern identity formation – their significance is underlined by their ability to act as sociocultural form linked with human individuality and self-hood.[12] The concept of architectural 'interiority' – the emergence of individual persona and its relationship to the decorated room as a marker of the inhabitant's personality or state of mind – also resonates with the way we understand fashion as an extension of one's distinctiveness, status, and taste linked to the performance of gender and sexuality.[13] In this way both fashion and the interior can be understood as a visible surface that conveys the 'interiority' of wearer or inhabitant. This position is somewhat complicated by the concept of masquerade. First identified by the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, in 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', she proposes femininity as a surface or mask to conceal traits that go against the grain of the cultural requirements of being a woman.[14] Through this concept, with the help of Mary Ann Doane and Judith Butler, we can assume that the accoutrements that aid women's performance of femininity – such as the fashion and the interior – might not represent the 'interiority' of a character on screen, but instead a mask assisting in the performativity of gender.[15] As such, masquerade can be held in tension with interiority – an outside in relation to an inside, surface to depth, performance to authenticity. The playing out of these complexities is not just pertinent to representations of femininity, but also masculinity, as well as gender and sexually diverse identities.

Fashion and the interior also come together in the physical spaces of consumer culture, such as department stores, boutiques and flagship stores. They are similarly conjoined in the representational spaces of fashion and design – in magazines, new media forms and cinema. Significantly, glamorous architecture has increasingly come to operate with this system also – where spectacular buildings by celebrity architects are a further manifestation of fashion's cultural capital. In the early twentieth century this commercial context contributed to circumstances

where couturiers and *ensembliers* were professionally aligned. Fashion designers recognized how the interior might contribute to fashion's spectacular reception. They also used these sites to enhance their own branded identities as entrepreneurs of lifestyle. Similarly, interior designers emulated the commercial strategies and workings of the fashion system in developing their own branded identities and by promoting change in redecorating the home to suit inhabitants' evolving tastes. The design historian Penny Sparke draws our attention to these developments and outlines how theatre also played a significant mediating role in this relationship, where couturiers and interior designers both recognized the stage as an important commercial strategy to display their wares.[16] As this book will show, this relationship also carried over to the screen, where the integration of luxury fashion and the interior reached new mass audiences throughout the twentieth century. These alliances continue in the current millennium.

Designer fashions have often played a starring role in film. For instance, Paul Poiret's exotic confections appeared in eighteen silent films between 1912 and 1932; Gabrielle Chanel's elegant gowns featured in a number of films including *La Règle du Jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939) and *Tonight or Never* (1931); and Yves Saint Laurent designed wardrobes for Catherine Deneuve in *Belle de Jour* (1967) and *La Sirène du Mississippi* (1969).[17] In these examples couture fashion creates visual spectacle, while complimenting film narrative and conveying character traits. Within the contemporary mediascape, as fashion and film scholar Pamela Church Gibson claims: 'Fashion has become omnipotent, moving now from walk-on parts of the past to claim not only its own narrative strand, but its complete mastery over *mise-en-scène*.'[18] Her book *Fashion and Celebrity Culture* provides convincing arguments regarding the ways that film intersects with the fashion system. Celebrities on and off screen have been integral to the promotion of designer fashions, fashion designers have appeared as stars in fashion films, and the glamour attributed to the stylish wardrobes of cinematic fantasies have fuelled consumer desire.[19] Fashion as it relates to cinema then, can be understood as a complex set of representations, embodiments, social relations and consumer culture products and images. It is for this reason I use the term 'fashion' throughout this book, rather than costume – as it implies the ways that dress circulates beyond the screen.

My interpretation of the 'fashion film' is similarly broad. Here, designated as films in which fashion is a significant component of the mise-en-scène, that also operates within commercial contexts either through magazine editorial, advertising, branding or retail strategies. This definition differs to how the term is primarily understood in the fashion industry, where the production

of digital content by designer labels has laid claim to the format as an integral branded media strategy in the new millennium. Nick Rees-Roberts' insightful book *Fashion Film: Art and Advertising in the Digital Age,* provides a thorough analysis of the fashion film in relation to these new media forms of branded entertainment, as well as recent interest in the lives of designers in documentaries and dramatized biopics.[20] These contemporary forms of fashion film also have their place in the context of this book. However, in taking a broader view to primarily focus on narrative cinema, I consider the long history of the fashion film – from the silent era to the contemporary moment – as a representational system that intersects with architecture and interior design, both on screen and in everyday consumer culture. It is worth noting here, that I also use the terms interior design, architecture and spatial design to describe what would be termed as set design or production design in film studies.[21] This not only allows for an engagement with rich interdisciplinary discourses, to further situate the significance of these cinematic examples within broader design histories; it also recognizes that audiences often associate the manifestation of space on screen in terms of these familiar, everyday designations.

Cinematic Style builds on perspectives that have focused on the role of fashion in film, as well as the appreciation of architecture and the interior as components of film production. The relationship between fashion and film has been examined by a range of scholars whose perspectives have foregrounded the symbolic role of costume in narrative construction and the ways that fashion on screen has intersected with consumer culture.[22] Edited collections such as Adrienne Munich's *Fashion in Film,* Rachel Moseley's *Fashioning Film Stars* and Jane Gains' and Charlotte Herzog's *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* contain many excellent essays that elucidate the relationship between fashion, gender, identity, and film.[23] This rich and diverse scholarship has spanned a range of genres, eras and styles, from the elaborate costumes of period films such as *Marie Antoinette* (2006) to the influence of designer Italian suiting in *American Gigolo* (1980), and much in between. Stella Bruzzi's important book *Undressing Cinema,* regarding the representation of dress and gendered and sexual identities on screen is fundamental to my approach here; where I am keen to extend the analysis of dress and unpick some of the complications that arise when fashioned identities also come into contact with architecture and the interior.[24]

Some of this analysis has been previously undertaken by Merrill Schleier in her book *Skyscraper Cinema: Architecture and Gender in American Film.*[25] Presenting the case for tall buildings as characters in films such as *The Fountainhead* (1949), and the ways that these structures mediate representations

of masculinity and femininity, Schleier's approach augments other texts that focus on cities in cinema.[26] Edited books such as David Clarke's *The Cinematic City* and Mark Lamster's *Architecture and Film* look to celebrated examples such as the buildings of *Metropolis* (1923), *Blade Runner* (1982) and Jacques Tati's *Playtime* (1967) to examine utopian and dystopian dichotomies of architectural modernism.[27] Particularly instructive to my purposes here is Pamela Robertson Wojcik's *The Apartment Plot* which offers an insightful model for the analysis of gender and sexual identity in relation to domestic spaces on film.[28]

Just as haute couturiers-cum-costumers have made their mark on cinema, interior designers and architects have also contributed to film narrative and character development. For example, the Art Deco *ensemblier* Francis Jourdain designed simple pared back furniture for Louis Delluc's *La Femme de Nulle* (1922) and Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) in his role as production designer; Charles and Ray Eames were consultants on *The Moon is Blue* (1953) which featured design classics such as the Vitra wire chair; and interior designer Violante Visconti di Modrone created a 'lived in quality' through a selection of eclectic furnishings for the Perlman family in *Call Me by Your Name* (2017).[29] These contributions to cinematic style can be understood more broadly in relation to the profession of set design, production design and art direction, where there has been significant scholarship on individual practitioners such as Cedric Gibbons and Ken Adam.[30]

Within this context, interior design histories have found an emerging scholarship that has sought to understand intersections with screen style. For example, Donald Albrecht's *Designing Dreams,* and Lucy Fischer's *Cinema by Design* and *Designing Women* are amongst the few monographs that recognize the multifaceted nature of design on film. Focusing primarily on interiors of the early twentieth century – the International Style, Art Nouveau and Art Deco – these important studies provide period-focused histories of design in cinema.[31] These design styles are significant to this book also. However, in thematically examining a broad range of films, I am interested in the reoccurrence of modes of representation across time, and their continuing influence on consumer cultures. Pat Kirkham and Sarah A. Lichtman's edited book *Screen Interiors* provides much needed further insight as to how interior décor conveys aspects of class, gender and sexuality.[32] Its broad reach across diverse genres spanning sci-fi, horror and romantic comedy amongst others speaks to the increasing scholarly interest in design's intersections with film. Importantly, its scope focuses beyond the golden years of Hollywood, with a range of contemporary examples used to explore the psychological element of the interior on screen, an approach which this book also shares in common.

This book relies on methods of analysis familiar to fashion and interior studies adopted from the fields of design history, gender studies and sociology. They are combined with the visual analysis of film to provide an understanding of the various ways that fashion, spatial design and film enrich each other's surfaces and embedded meanings. The approach throughout privileges discourses of fashion, interior design and architecture as they are represented in film examples, rather than the intricacies of critically reading cinematic histories and techniques. The selection of case study examples ranges from silent film, European art house, Hollywood cinema, break-through independent film and advertising short-film – deemed pertinent for their aesthetic circulation within the fashion system. Alongside the films themselves, images of fashion and spatial design provide important evidence of the ways that these modes of surface and style are conceptually and aesthetically aligned. This scope is intentionally broad, and undoubtedly significant examples are omitted. My aim is to demonstrate the reoccurrence of particular modes of intersection between fashion and spatial design across a range of cinematic and consumer contexts, in the hope that this survey will encourage further scholarship.

The book is structured in two parts. *Part 1: Fashion and the Interior as Filmic Device* thematically explores representations of gender and sexuality through fashion and interior design and architecture. Each of the chapters here contribute to the overarching argument that the interrelationship between fashion and spatial design is central to character and narrative development, while simultaneously aligning film with consumer culture and the fashion system. Recognizing the dynamic combination of sex, sets and costumes as an ostentatious showcase for the desires of consumer culture, the chapters in this section are underpinned by the argument that gendered and sexual representations of characters on screen are indebted to the culmination of fashion, the interior and architecture to provide audiences with an understanding of character's interior motivations and identities. I consider the ways that gender and sexual identity have been positioned in relation to sites of domesticity and kinship, and the ways that fashioned bodies both reinforce and contest traditional roles and representations.

Chapter 1 argues that bedrooms, boudoirs and bathrooms, as intimate domestic spaces, coupled with form-fitting sensuous silhouettes, have been inherently tied to women's gender and sexual identities. Drawing on a range of films spanning classical Hollywood cinema such as *Dinner at Eight* (1933) and *The Women* (1939), along with romances *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *Une Parisienne* (1957) amongst others, this chapter examines the figure of the modern woman across time and how her identity has been linked to luxurious surfaces on

the body and in the home. Here, I draw on the feminist film discourses of Laura Mulvey and Mary Ann Doane to articulate some of the contradictory positions of visual pleasure that are tied to these representations.[33] The intersection between female protagonist as spectacle and object of consumption is well-worn within cinematic discourse. However, it is relevant to revisit these debates in order to understand the complex ways that female characters seek to fulfil their own desires and visible autonomy within the context of the sensory pleasures of fashion and the interior. The regulation between maternal, marital, moral and material obligation that is played out in the cinematic examples discussed in this chapter is testament to the complex ways received concepts of femininity have been constituted through fashion and the interior on screen and interpellated within consumer culture.

The perceived overvaluation of surface and appearance that is associated with feminine identities is called into question in Chapter 2. The unconventional correlation between heroic masculinity, fashion, stylish interiors and glamorous architecture is brought to bear on Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) and the James Bond film franchise. While much film scholarship would have us believe that women have been unduly influenced by the consumer cultures of cinema, in fact it is clear that men have also sought to engage with the pleasures of fashion and spatial design. Here, I rely on the architect Adolf Loos' cultural theories of modernism to draw out some of the contradictions that have emerged regarding the relationship between masculinity, the modern body and the modern home. I argue that the protagonists of spy films can be understood as playboy dandies who engage with the consumerist desires of heteronormativity. This chapter considers the sexualization of space and bodies that have been promoted to male consumers in ways not dissimilar to the representation of feminine and queer identities. As such, Chapter 2 reinforces the argument that intersections between fashion and spatial design reveal the unstable relations of conventional assumptions regarding how gender identities are constituted through these surfaces.

Questions of gender and sexuality as they relate to fashion and spatial design culminate in Chapter 3. Focusing on queer film and representations of surface and space, this chapter moves towards a more complex theoretical position regarding the relationship between pleasure, spectacle and spectatorship. I argue that recent queer nostalgia films, *Carol* (2015), *A Single Man* (2009) and *Laurence Anyways* (2012) develop a queer sensibility through highly stylized dress and décor that operate in ways similar to Michel Foucault's 'heterotopias'.[34] That is, fashion and the interior have the potential to operate as spaces where

individuals are free to perform their gender and sexual identities in ways that challenge normative positions. The aesthetic excesses and artifice of queer cinema are situated here to challenge long-standing views that fashion and the interior, surface and style, lack substance and are instead revealed to convey emotional depth. With reference to Judith Butler, these examples further complicate relationships between bodies, clothes and space and reiterate the performative capacity of bodies and space to convey the fluidities of gender and sexual identities outside of cinema.

These three chapters, while covering a broad array of examples and theoretical perspectives, are underpinned by intersections that reveal synergies between fashion and spatial design, that both challenge and reinforce debates concerning the representation of gender and sexual identities on screen. These arguments are posed alongside consideration of these surfaces as constituting a form of visual pleasure that is at times contradictory. By drawing on examples from fashion and design media that promote screen lifestyles as a social performance that can be adopted by consumers in everyday life, I position the intersection of fashion, spatial design and cinema within the fashion system of representation, mediation and consumption.

The role of architecture and interior design as the mise-en-scène of fashion retail and its connection to cinematic discourses has gone largely unconsidered. The exception being Jean Whitehead's *Creating Interior Atmospheres,* which proposes mise-en-scène as a mode for interpreting interiors on screen, as well as domestic, exhibition and retail environments.[35] *Part 2- Film Interiors as Fashion Spaces* redresses this paucity in scholarship and examines the multiple ways that the fictional fantasies of film have been translated into commercial contexts. Focusing on spaces of fashion consumption, each of the chapters in part two demonstrate how film characters and narratives have been converted into fashionable products. As such the structure of the book highlights the confluence between fashion, spatial design and film, whereby part one demonstrates how film promotes luxury fashion styles and glamorous spaces to consumers; and part two demonstrates how fashion adopts film narratives and applies these to architecture and the interior so that consumers might experience these silver-screen fantasies in real life.

Chapter 4 provides historical understanding of the confluence between fashion and film mediated through the motif of the staircase. As a staging device, staircases have positioned bodies as spectacles for viewing pleasure, both on the catwalk and on screen. Arguing for the fashionable iconicity of these spatial affordances, I consider the staircase in fashion photography, film and