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Source: *Film History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Early Colour Part 2 (2009), pp. 107-121, P4

Published by: [Indiana University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40406016>

Accessed: 05-01-2016 09:09 UTC

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Symptoms of desire: colour, costume, and commodities in fashion newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s

Eirik Frisvold Hanssen

One of the most striking aspects of the relationship between costume and early cinema was the recurring tendency to colour clothes in hand and stencil coloured films. In fact, in some instances, the clothes themselves constituted the only elements in the film being coloured. Later, during the 1920s, stencil colouring, as a convention, was primarily limited to two specific newsreel genres: travelogues and fashion films, both of which focused extensively on clothing and apparel. While there are numerous examples throughout the silent era in which colour is used to emphasize clothing – such as costume pictures, diva films and historical and mythical subjects – my analysis focuses on the stencil-coloured (and in a few instances 'natural' colour) fashion newsreel of the 1910s and 1920s, a genre that demonstrates how clothing and fashion impacted aesthetic, technological, industrial, and ideological perspectives associated with the function of colour during the silent period.

The 1910s and 1920s are characterized by an interaction and coexistence among a number of different colour systems, methods and technologies – most importantly that between photographic and non-photographic colour – as well as the interaction between black and white and colour. Despite the variety of colour processes and methods employed during this period, and the extensive experimentation and discourse, primarily on photographic colour, it is also an era of indeterminacy and hesitation regarding the possible functions of colour. While the functions of (non-photographic) colour as spectacle and affect seem to have been easily integrated within the attractions-based aesthetics of early cinema, as Tom Gunning notes, the industrial, stylistic, and narrative

changes taking place during the so-called 'transitional' era (ca. 1907–1917) destabilized this attractions-based role for colour.¹

Within this historical framework, which encompasses transitional cinema, the establishment of Classical Hollywood cinema, and even the emergence of sound in the late 1920s, the fashion newsreel, one of the few genres where stencil colour continued to function as a convention, is a remarkably static genre.² As Elizabeth Leese reminds us, the conventions for the fashion newsreel genre did not significantly change between the 1910s and the 1930s.³ Similarly, in my previous examination of the emergence of Kinemacolor within the film historical context of the transitional period, I noted how films produced by the process differed in many respects from contemporary film practices.⁴ This was not only due to the fact that about 70 per cent of Kinemacolor films were non-fiction subjects; evidence found in the numerous discourses surrounding the aesthetics associated with the Kinemacolor process reveal it had more in common with earlier film conventions, specifically the cinema of attractions' mode of presentation which was based on 'showing' rather than

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'telling' in order to demonstrate the powers of the photographic process.

Thus, instances when colour arises in the cinema of the transitional period and in that of the 1920s – the polychrome stencil and 'natural' colour images of the fashion newsreel are a prime example – do not exist 'outside' of film history; they are, nevertheless, extremely difficult to categorize in terms of the specific stylistic developments of the period (like narrativization), as colour alternately functions in a variety of ways, with regards to realism or spectacle or abstraction. Similarly, the display of clothing and the female body in fashion newsreels is associated with, but also fundamentally different from similar kinds of display found in Classical Hollywood cinema.

Colour and costume in silent cinema

The newsreel genres of travelogue and fashion actuality do not constitute the only striking appearance of colour and costume in early cinema. Early films, as noted, often featured decorative costumes and clothing in colour through a variety of applied colour techniques. Philippe Dubois uses the term *hybridizations* to describe the effects of hand and stencil colouring, combining the black and white of the photographic film image with the polychrome elements of applied colour.⁵ The origins of the concept of hybridization are found in the cinema of attractions, and the phenomenon is, according to Dubois, linked to three different types of *ethos* – functions that applied colour performs in relation to the black and white photographic image. The most well-known and spectacular effect of hybridization is linked to attraction, to how colours function in their own right in terms of visual expressiveness, a type of effect that is often difficult to describe. As an example, Dubois refers to the hand coloured serpentine dance genre of the 1890s and the interaction between choreographic and chromatic movements as the dancer, the clothes, and the colours are in constant movement. In addition to a less common *ethos* linked to narrative and structural functions (the author's main example here is Émile Cohl's *Le peintre néo-impressioniste* from 1910, where colour functions as a diegetic element constituting the premise for the storyline), Dubois specifically points to the hand-coloured (and partly tinted) melodrama *Un drame à Venise* (Ferdinand Zecca, 1906) as an exemplary case of a descriptive and decorative *ethos*. The film demonstrates how hand colour functions within the

mise-en-scène as an ornament, and is – as in many other cases – limited to clothing, while the Venetian settings and the faces of the actors remain in black and white. In fact, colour in *Un drame à Venise* functions as a form of clothing, or an exterior value for the film image – it is an adjunct on the surface that does not emanate from the represented black and white world.

Referring to hand coloured Italian films from the 1910s, Giuliana Bruno notes how advertisements for the film *Maria Rosa di Santa Flavia* by Elvira Notari (1911) emphasize the links between colour and clothing in the production: 'the film used colour tonalities characteristic of the Calabrese costumes especially designed for the film'.⁶ Notari's company specialized in colouring, and colour, in this later example, is used to authenticate the image by reinforcing native and ethnic dress of southern Italy – it is a culturally specific reference that may also function decoratively, and address a particular southern Italian audience.⁷

In addition, early colour in both cinema and costume shared similar technological processes. For example, tinting and toning practices often involved dyes and techniques, such as mordanting, that were used for colouring wool, textiles, and other products, many of which are still available today.⁸ In contextualising the filmic practice of applied colour technologies within a larger nineteenth century aesthetic culture, Joshua Yumibe refers to the modernization of the textile industry and how the use of colour in tapestries, wallpaper and rugs entailed an industrialization of dyeing technologies:

These developments in the colorant industry ... not only determined the dyes used in early film production, but also, the technologies of textile dyeing proved to be an important inter-medial influence on the dyeing (tinting and toning) of film images. [I]f one looks to the methods employed in the tinting and toning of nitrate film, parallel procedural techniques are evident: vat dyeing and bleaching, the use of mordants, precise temperature control, related colorant mixtures.⁹

As in many other examples to be explored in this essay, we find a direct link between colour in cinema, and colours in commodities in the fashion industry, as well as in other industrial products. Thus, within the practice of tinting and toning, specific dyes might have been chosen for films not necessarily because of their specific narrative or aesthetic val-

ues, but because they were fashionable, or because they were new.

Although the use of applied colour techniques other than tinting and toning diminished at the end of the 1910s, in particular in narrative cinema, techniques such as stencil colouring were occasionally found in certain 'prestige' productions throughout the 1920s, typically foregrounding colourful costumes.¹⁰ *Casanova* (Alexandre Volkoff, 1927) is a late example in which stencil colour functions in different ways to enhance the surface of the image by creating visually complex details of light and shade throughout the *mise-en-scène*. Flickering colours reflected in the water of the Grand Canal emanate from fire-works, coloured illumination, and multi-coloured costumes, connecting colour in clothing explicitly to colour in other forms of visual spectacle.

Similar to the stencil coloured hybridizations described by Dubois, early examples of two-strip Technicolor sequences in otherwise black and white films during the late 1920s and early 1930s often emphasized costumes and sets, and in some cases even displayed fashion shows.¹¹ Jeanne Thomas Allen identifies costumes in the Technicolor fashion show segment of Howard Hawks' black and white comedy *Fig Leaves* (1926) as 'the *raison d'être* for color'.¹² Colour functions in this scene to underscore and draw attention to the costumes in the fashion show at the same time that it expands on a central theme in the film's narrative. The title, *Fig Leaves*, refers to clothing, and the story of Eve in Paradise wanting something new to wear; the story then jumps to the 1920s where similar concerns about dress plague the modern woman. The relation between colour and black and white in these early part-Technicolor films was not connected to specific, diegetically-determined spatial or temporal conditions, such as passages to dream worlds found in later examples such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Rather, it indicates a general divergence from how Classical Hollywood cinematic narration was usually defined, by linking the sudden appearance of colour (within the narrative flow in black and white) solely to notions of spectacle similar to those associated with the cinema of attractions.

Colour and costume: discourses of otherness and femininity

In fact, most accounts of colour in cinema seem to situate colour in relation to black and white, which may have to do with the fact that the emergence of

colour in cinema entailed what Tom Gunning has described as a surge of colour into previously monochrome territory.¹³ The relationship between colour and black and white is often discussed in terms of preferences, and very often in terms of a resistance towards colour. The primary visual difference between colour and black and white is the differentiation provided by the kind of polychrome colour images found in, for example, stencil coloured fashion newsreels: values of lightness depicted in the black-and-white image are supplemented by hue and saturation, as colour splits the cohesive monochrome image into different hues. Furthermore, hues are usually linked to the division between different objects. Films produced in early photographic colour processes such as Kinemacolor and the Gaumont Chronochrome process accentuate both the reproduction of colour and the origins of colour almost exclusively found in specific objects, and thus often attempt to demonstrate the verisimilitude of everyday objects as part of their main theme.¹⁴ As Jacques Aumont has pointed out, visual perception (and the perception of colour) is structured by the notion of the object, as much as the traditional categories of space and time.¹⁵ Thus, the colours in fashion newsreels are linked directly to the specific garments or objects displayed.

The differentiation provided by colour within a medium traditionally perceived as black and white has often been understood as a disturbance, a purely sensual addition with no essential purpose or function. Thus, discourses on colour and cinema in classical film theory, as well as industrial practices, have, to a large extent, been informed by notions of control and restraint. Discourses on 'colour restraint' are especially evident in regard to the integration of three-strip Technicolor within the narrative and stylistic conventions of Classical Hollywood cinema in the 1930s. Scott Higgins has examined how colour was often accused of being obtrusive or distracting, resulting in an 'aesthetic of restraint' in the mid-1930s before more assertive designs (integrated with Classical Hollywood conventions) emerged at the end of the decade.¹⁶ This resistance to colour film, with reference to the notion of colour as unnecessary, corresponds to the traditional art historical division between *disegno* and *colore*, between line and colour. Typically such claims refer to the superiority of the line, or, as art historian John Gage has put it, 'the ancient notion that an adequate representation might be made with line alone, colouring being an inessen-

tial adjunct to form'.¹⁷ Jacques Aumont draws parallels between this opposition and general western conceptions of the superiority of the spiritual over the material, exemplified by traditional 'dualities' like soul/body, word/image etc.¹⁸ Thus, discourses on colour based on notions of control and restraint do not only have aesthetic limitations, they also reveal problematic cultural prejudices – in particular with regard to connotations associated with colour and the sensual qualities of images, the trivial, notions of (non-western) otherness, and exoticism, often described under rubrics such as the 'primitive', and the 'feminine'.

These attitudes toward colour can also be traced to the writing of film history, as well as to early archival practices and a historical perception of early cinema as black and white. Giovanna Fossati notes that in the few instances where colour has been referred to in traditional film historiography, it has usually been labelled a primitive feature of cinema.¹⁹ Terry Ramsaye, for example, pointed out in 1926 that although hand colouring had been used for various purposes since Edison's serpentine dance films in the 1890s, it never attained 'any particular importance in screen art. It occurs only as a symptom of desire'.²⁰

Examining the various discourses on colour in cinema reveals that it is difficult to define exactly what colour was thought to add to a film – particularly within the realm of narrative cinema, which produced notions of colour as distraction or excess, an element that should not be noticed. Similarly, ideas of colour as affect can be linked to colour and certain nineteenth century conceptions of the 'feminine', what Gage, among others, has pointed out as the recurring assumption that a feeling for colour is a 'feminine' province.²¹ Likewise, women are often mentioned specifically as a potential audience for colour films.²² Yumibe has discussed the fact that film colourists usually were female, and connects this not only to lower wages and the repetitive task of colouring but also to the gendering of colour, as women were considered 'more susceptible' to the affective, sensual impact of colour.²³ Notions of the female spectator, in terms of specific marketing strategies as well as an understanding of cinema as a means of entry into the public sphere are, of course, central to a discussion of fashion actualities.

Additionally, Gage points out how 'a disdain for colour' in western culture was seen as 'a mark of refinement and distinction'.²⁴ The various associa-

tions between colour and the feminine mentioned above also echo associations between colour and general conceptions of a non-western 'other'. David Batchelor uses the term 'Chromophobia', a fear of colour, to describe what he characterizes as the effort to marginalize colour in western culture.²⁵ Attempts to diminish colour's importance in culture were made either by linking colour to 'some "foreign" body – usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive', or to 'the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic'. Colour is, therefore, linked to the dangerous as well as the trivial. Batchelor argues that the recurring demand to exclude colour demonstrates its importance – colour means something because it gets in the way.²⁶ I have previously traced an ambivalence to colour in catalogues and promotional material marketing Kinema-color, where colour, despite being the main selling point of the product, nevertheless is often linked to exoticism and 'otherness', to something characteristic of non-western (and, more specifically, non-British) culture.²⁷ This notion of otherness is, to a certain extent, evident in descriptions of the 'natural' colour system's ability to reproduce a variety of skin colours placed in opposition to whiteness, and is recurrently associated with the reproduction and foregrounding of clothing – the depiction of 'picturesque costumes'.

These attitudes towards colour in western culture have perhaps their ultimate expression in the taste for white and, in particular, black clothing established at the beginning of the sixteenth century (coinciding, as Michel Pastoreau has pointed out, with the introduction of book printing and engraved images), the emergence of a visual culture, and an imaginary in black and white.²⁸ The preference for sombre, dark clothing does not only reflect 'bourgeois' values, but also what Pastoreau characterizes as the 'chromoclasm' or 'war against colour', an important dimension in the new Christian morality of Protestantism. In fact, Pastoreau actually ties this 'chromoclasm' explicitly to the distinct cultural opposition between colour and black and white in cinema.²⁹ In his *Theory of Colours*, Goethe remarked, for example, how 'men in a state of nature, uncivilised nations, and children have a great fondness for colours in their utmost brightness', while 'people of refinement have a disinclination to colours'.³⁰

In most of the French Pathé-Revue stencil coloured travelogues of the 1920s, scenes focusing on landscapes and buildings are often followed by a

section at the end displaying 'studies' of the local inhabitants, or '*types des pays*'. Figures from Morocco, Crete, Tunis, Portugal, Madeira, Croatia, etc., usually wearing traditional costumes often labelled with intertitles like 'picturesque' and 'multicoloured', are featured. Additionally, these sections also often present close-ups of specific details of the costumes. An inter-title in the stencil coloured travelogue *La moisson de Bosnie* (Pathé Revue, 1926) comments on the 'curious Muslim costumes' ['curieux costumes musulman'] of the Bosnian peasants. *En Italie: Les costumes de Sarrentino* (Pathé Revue, 1926) is a travelogue about clothes, where specific details of colourful traditional costumes are emphasized and at the same time located in a specific place: a specific landscape which also is in colour.³¹ Thus, colour in these travelogues seems to visually reinforce general cultural conceptions of a non-western other, the exotic, and the foreign.

In addition to striking narrative and stylistic similarities between travelogues and fashion newsreels in colour, and the recurring contemporary links between colour, the feminine, and the primitive, there are, however, also significant differences. While parallels between colour and the ethnographic image of 'native types' in early travelogues is defined through skin colour and colourful clothing – constructing what Fatimah Tobing Rony calls images of 'a racialized Other' for a colonial gaze – it can be argued that fashion newsreels' explicit address to a female audience refers to the construction of identity and emancipation associated with women taking part in consumer culture at the beginning of the twentieth century.³² This relation of colour, clothing, and the potential female spectator is found in the hand and stencil coloured fashion actualités and newsreel films produced by Gaumont and, in particular, Pathé from the 1890s throughout the 1920s. Colour in this context is associated with a world of objects, which when turned into *commodities* for sale represents another practice associated with women: what Victoria de Grazia, among many others, refers to as the 'gendering' of consumption and shopping in Western society, a specifically female activity.³³ Thus, echoing Ramsaye's description of hand and stencil colouring as 'a symptom of desire', colour functions in fashion newsreels as a means for understanding the complex relationship between female spectatorship, cinema, and consumer culture, a subject examined in a number of important studies that provide important historical background to this essay.³⁴

Colour as visual material of desire in consumer culture

The direct links between colour in the cinema and colours in commodities in the fashion industry (as well as other industrial products within the broader context of consumer culture), demonstrates that interdisciplinary approaches are essential to understand how the history of colour in film is directly linked to specific industrial and cultural practices outside the cinema. In fact, colour film is often understood through comparison with sound, painting, music, and the black and white image. As Tom Gunning points out, with specific reference to the United States, 'an invasion of color into all areas of daily life' took place from the 1860s through the early nineteenth century, constituting 'one of the key perceptual transformations of modernity'.³⁵ Experimental art, popular culture, and industrial products were the sources of this radical change in perception. In addition to cinema, colour became available in electric lights (used in theatres, in the illumination of fountains, in colour organs), in different print media, in advertising, dyed fabrics, and stencil-printed wallpaper.³⁶ Thus, the everyday world was transformed through colour as the experience of daily activities, materials, and objects, often involving perceptual transformations, merged together beginning in the late nineteenth century and on through the 1930s.³⁷

For example, John Seitz predicted in 1930 how future uses of colour cinematography would 'play a great role in influencing public taste in the choice of dress, household furnishings, wall and floor coverings'.³⁸ During the 1920s and 1930s new industrial products for everyday use were produced in colour. An article in the February 1930 issue of *Fortune* magazine contrasted 'the home of 1920 and 1925', where most objects were in 'natural colors' (each object 'deriving its color from the material of which it was fashioned') with 'the thoroughly painted home of 1928'. Here we find kitchen sinks in a variety of colours; orange refrigerators; dishes, pots, and pans in 'bright gay tints and tones'; a bathroom pervaded by the colour green in the tiles, the tub, the towels, and even the toilet paper; as well as coloured glasses, cloths, garbage cans, typewriters, furniture, cars, etc.³⁹

With regard to film, Sumiko Higashi examines the connection between the use of colour in Cecil B. DeMille's productions of the 1910s and 1920s and the thematization of consumption, modernity, and the 'new woman', as well as Orientalism.⁴⁰ Higashi

identifies DeMille's use of applied colour (in particular, the Handschiegl colour technique) to accentuate the modernity of Art Deco sets and costume design in such films as *The Affairs of Anatol* (1921) with the subsequent increase in the use of colour in magazine advertisements for clothing and commodities during the 1920s.⁴¹

The invasion of colour in all these different arenas, as Gunning describes it, played a part in shaping a 'culture of sensationalism, based in sensual and emotional intensity'.⁴² Richard Abel, in discussing Pathécolor films and their relation to a 'feminized' 'aesthetic of imitation', or cinema as a cultural space of consumption, refers to William Leach's study of the emergence of the culture of consumer capitalism and identification of a new 'commercial aesthetic of desire and belonging' after 1880.⁴³ The new commercial aesthetic described by Leach displays a vision of the good life and paradise – as required and desired by any culture, but within a context specifically linked to consumption.⁴⁴ Show windows, electrical signs, advertisements, and billboards, as well as fashion shows, artefacts and commodities are the means for transmitting this new aesthetic that is shaped by 'the visual materials of desire – colour, glass and light'.⁴⁵ Leach notes how the importance of colour as a 'material of desire' was over-stressed within the emerging commercial aesthetic: 'By the 1920s so many commercial institutions and people had exploited the word 'color' that, according to *The New York Times*, the word itself had been "worn to a frazzle"'.⁴⁶

Colour, the fashion industry, and the female consumer/spectator

The fashion industry, and its display and use of colour in garments, was central to the importance of colour as a visual material within the new commercial aesthetic. After the late 1880s, as Leach points out, 'the tempo of fashion' was intensified through new communications media and methods of transportation that facilitated transmitting ideas and designs more rapidly.⁴⁷ For example, the textile and garment industries quickly expanded after 1885, and by 1915 the clothing trade was the third largest in America (after steel and oil). By 1910 every standard item of women's clothing had become 'ready-to-wear', and by the end of the 1920s mass-produced fashion was widely available, making the marketing of apparel more important to stores.⁴⁸

Fashion advertising became an important

means of transmitting this new commercial aesthetic of colour, glamour, and the exotic to the average consumer. According to Leach, fashion merchandising helped to 'democratize desire: it carried exciting meanings and introduced the mass of consumers to everything from the aristocratic glamour of Paris to the exotic allure of orientalism'.⁴⁹ At the same time, the democratization of luxury was limited to various forms of visual appropriation for many social groups.⁵⁰ The fashion show, originating in Parisian couture salons, was adopted in the United States in the late nineteenth century on a less intimate and exclusive (but more theatrical) scale for the mass market – identified by Leach as 'the most sensational innovation' in American fashion.⁵¹ Department stores arranged 'dress parades' to attract the growing market of middle-class women. By 1915 fashion shows were popular attractions in all major American cities. 'Living models paraded down ramps in store theaters', spotlighted by lighting engineers to a musical accompaniment, at times to a running commentary on the clothing.⁵² The popularity of large fashion shows in the 1910s and 1920s suggests that many in the audience were spectators rather than 'serious' shoppers.⁵³ Thus, spectatorship is evident as an important feature of the emerging fashion culture, linking cinema and fashion as cultural practices.

As a background to her study of fashion and notions of femininity in 1930s Hollywood films, Sarah Berry examines how the 'symbolic power of dress' was integrated in capitalism in the late nineteenth century, signalling a shift towards a 'symbolic economy', one concerned with attaching meanings to goods and lifestyles, a 'commodification' of social identity which became linked to what one consumes rather than what one produces.⁵⁴ Berry points out that while male identities traditionally have been associated with work, female identities have been associated with Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'physical capital' or symbolic values of beauty and style. Since the 1880s, women's fashion thus gave the female sex access to modernity, along with citizenship, possibilities for consumption, and other opportunities. Clothing and make-up became signifiers of social identity, emancipation and social mobility.⁵⁵ As Anne Friedberg has put it, regarding the practice of 'window shopping': '[T]he female flâneur, the flâneuse, was not possible until she was free to roam the city on her own. And this was equated with the privilege of shopping on her own'.⁵⁶

Women were seen as the primary consumers

of cinema, so there was overlap in the target markets of the film, fashion, and cosmetics industries, resulting in the emergence of a culture of cross-promotion and 'synergy', including Hollywood 'tie-in' labels, product placement in films, and extensive use of fashion publicity for upcoming films.⁵⁷ Female spectators were encouraged to use cinema as a fashion guide, for example by sewing their own versions of film costumes or buying costumes through magazines such as *Photoplay*.⁵⁸

In addition to fashion newsreels, film serials produced in the 1910s advertised fashion as a significant feature of individual episodes. Ben Singer notes how the 'serial-queen melodrama' often promoted 'fashion interest' – 'apparent both in the *mise-en-scène* of the serials and in extra-textual merchandizing tie-ins with fashion houses', as evidence of the genre's address to a female audience.⁵⁹ In 1910, *Moving Picture World* referred to women attending stage productions primarily to see the gowns, and recommended the film industry take advantage of this interest.⁶⁰

Shelley Stamp examines women's film spectatorship in the United States during the 1910s and places it within a broad consumer culture environment where the cinema and the department store are examined as key leisure sites for women.⁶¹ Films, department store displays, tie-in and tie-up promotions, and ads in women's magazines, for example, entailed a notion of 'the compatibility of shopping, browsing through magazines, and going to the cinema as related spheres of women's leisure. Fantasies of upward mobility were enacted through the woman's gaze – at product ads, at store display cases, and at the movies – as women's "inarticulate longings" were fed through consumer desire.'⁶²

Here, Stamp expands on the argument made by Jane Gaines regarding the inter-changeability of the motion picture and the department store: 'Cinema-going was analogous to the browsing-without-obligation-to-buy pioneered by the turn-of-the-century department store, where one could, with no offence to the merchant, enter to peruse the goods, exercising a kind of visual connoisseurship, and leave without purchase'.⁶³ Browsing in a department store, reading fashion magazines, and watching fashion newsreels as analogous forms of leisure were also noted by trade press articles that promoted the latter as superior:

No longer need women make a tiring tour in order to learn of the latest vagaries of Madame

La Mode; no longer need they be content with perusing dull, lifeless fashion-drawings. For a visit to the theatre showing the 'Fashion Gazette' is a far more delightful pastime.⁶⁴

Promotional strategies to advertise clothing often involved the careful amalgamation of all three: the printed press, the department store, and cinema.

Colour and the fashion newsreel genre

The integration of fashion and moving images in actuality films intensified in the 1910s, with Pathé taking the lead as the most prominent production company using colour in connection with the display of clothing and appealing lifestyles. A review in an October 1911 issue of *The Bioscope* noted the genre's increased popularity:

The delight with which the coloured fashions in Pathé's Animated Gazette have been viewed by thousands of feminine spectators every week has been a precursor of a frequently expressed desire for films giving a greater number of pictures showing the changes foreshadowed by Dame Fashion. To meet this desire and demand for fashion films, Messrs. Pathé are commencing a series showing the coming models from Paris. The present one gives coloured pictures of hats, dinner gowns, tailor-made costumes, walking dresses, negligees and tea gowns.⁶⁵

Newsreels regularly covered Paris openings; not surprisingly, early filmed fashion shows were described as a promotional tool for setting trends and promoting sales, 'facilitated by the tie-ins between motion pictures and women's fashion in order to sell both kinds of commodities'.⁶⁶ Pathé's skill at promoting its product was reinforced by the fashion genre. A *Moving Picture World* article of 1916 describes how the French company employed a sophisticated marketing strategy for its fashion newsreel series by employing key figures as spokespersons for their product, as in a series produced 'under the personal supervision of Miss Florence Rose, the country's famous fashion expert':

The most beautiful fashions ever seen in America shown at the same time in leading newspapers, leading department stores and leading moving picture theatres Leading newspapers will, every day for twelve days in advance of release dates, publish the fashions to be shown on the screens in each release.

Later, the garments will be on sale in the stores. This means that the women of America can first see them in the newspapers, then on the screen, and later at their own department store.⁶⁷

The 1910s also included productions in 'natural' colour – for example, *La mode de Paris* (Gaumont, 1913), which was shot in the Gaumont Chronochrome process.⁶⁸ During the mid-1910s, Natural Color Kinematograph, the company behind Kinemacolor, competed with and placed itself directly in opposition to Pathé's stencil colour in ads and other promotional materials featuring discourses on indexicality, 'deception', and truth, and by producing fashion films.⁶⁹ *The Kinematograph & Lantern Weekly* described how the Kinemacolor productions *New York Autumn Fashions* (1912) and the 'cinemagazine' *Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette* (which circulated in a few issues during 1913) featured

... beautiful women, posed in the most charming frocks, gowns, furs, hats, boots – in fact, all the various items which go to make the stylishly dressed lady. The beauty of the subjects and their apparel must interest not only the fair sex, but fascinate mere man. Some of the most renowned West End and Parisian firms of costumiers, milliners, etc., have allowed their 'creations' to be filmed and every lady who desires to be kept *au fait* with style and fashion should see these wonders. The advantage of thus presenting up-to-date fashions in all their tints and colours with the effect of movement cannot but be a delight to everyone interested in dress, except, perhaps, the poor husbands who have to pay for them.⁷⁰

A review of the Kinemacolor production *Paris Fashions* (1913), filmed in the fashion capital, noted how 'the newest designs by Paquin and the other French moguls paraded by living models, and in their truest colors' made the film 'an immensely interesting feature for women'.⁷¹ To further promote and make available its product, the 'Kinemacolor fashion service' also entailed 'special morning matinee performances for ladies only'. The matinees accommodated women's busy domestic schedules by offering intimate apparel, as well as instruction on how to properly wear it. Programs featuring 'intimate displays ... not [meant] for the general public', demonstrated 'the correct manner of wearing the latest style of French lingerie', as well as instruction on 'the correct method of donning a corset'.⁷² In her study of the

Pathé cinemagazine *Eve's Film Review* (1921–1933), Jenny Hammerton shows how the series was promoted specifically toward a female audience; in the trade press 'subjects essentially of interest to ladies' included fashion, gossip, 'hints and advice on the domestic arts, such as cooking and dressmaking' but also accounts of 'women at work in novel and interesting occupations'.⁷³

As indicated earlier, along with travelogues (which also, to a large extent, focused on costuming), throughout the 1920s and until about 1931 Pathécolor was mainly used in fashion films.⁷⁴ Pathé-Revue titles like *Fantaisies parisiennes* (1920), *Pour le soir* (*For the Evening*, 1920), *Chapeaux de printemps* (*Spring Hats*, 1924), *Éléphants ensembles d'après-midi* (*Elegant Ensembles for the Afternoon*, 1924), *Fantaisies féminines* (1924), *Modèles de printemps: Ensembles d'après-midi* (*Spring Models: Ensembles for the Afternoon*, 1926), *Mode pour la campagne* (*Fashion for the Countryside*, 1926), *Pour la promenade matinale* (*For the Morning Walk*, 1926), etc., suggested the garments displayed, as well as where and when to wear them. Additionally, these productions featured models displaying hats, dresses, fur coats, shoes, jewellery, handbags, lingerie, sportswear, accessories, and hairstyles. Some films, such as the stencil coloured *Une fête d'élégance au Polo Club de Bagatelle* (*An Elegant Party at the Bagatelle Polo Club*, 1926), imitate the narrative styles of other newsreel genres and give the impression of depicting an 'event' while still featuring close-ups of fashion accessories like dresses and hats. A number of fashion newsreels also featured children's apparel, such as *Mode de gosses* (*Mode pour fillettes*) (*Fashion for Children* [*Fashion for Girls*], 1924) and *Mode pour les moins de 10 ans* (*Fashion for Those Under 10 Years*, 1930), thereby offering additional subjects specifically targeting female maternal consumers.

Although models featured in the fashion newsreel in colour sometimes stand in front of neutral, black or white backdrops, in general the colouring of objects other than apparel (clothes, hats, and accessories) – for example, interiors, wallpaper, furniture, flowers, curtains, chandeliers – is just as striking. These objects and materials are as meticulously coloured as the fashion accessories and often are displayed within an environment of leisure surroundings – in Parisian salons or luxurious home environments – or picturesque settings like parks (sometimes with multicoloured flowers, or lakes),

terraces, and beaches.⁷⁵ The display of clothing within the context of specific social situations and milieus is a fundamental aspect of the style of the fashion newsreel, and demonstrates how colour functions in this genre. [Plate 1]

Fashion newsreels, enriched by the technique of stencil colour, usually take place within a setting where everything in the *mise-en-scène* is in colour (unlike examples of hand colouring in silent cinema, such as *Un drame à Venise*, where only the apparel has been coloured as a special feature to sell the film). Here the garments are integrated within an environment of luxury and colour, featuring other commodities to be desired apart from the clothing.⁷⁶ Contemporary practices used in department stores are likely sources for such filmic compositions and *mise-en-scène*. Leach examines how the assembling of merchandise – called 'making pictures' with goods – took on new forms during the 1920s, where 'colour coordination' was emphasized.⁷⁷ For instance, in *Damernas strumpor* (*Ladies' Stocking*, Pathé, 1923) the embroidery of a stocking (shown in an extreme close-up) functions to create a pleasing composition in contrast to the coloured ornaments on the rug on which the model's foot is placed. [Plate 2] Relationships established between garments and their surroundings in order to create interesting visual compositions were also accentuated in trade press discourse, by linking 'the artistic sense delighted by the *toute ensemble*' to notions of colour harmony:

One beautiful, filmy white frock, for instance, is worn in the midst of an old-world garden, the flowers and the foliage forming just the ideal contrast. A fountain with floating lilies suggests the restful, poetic 'atmosphere' that the simplicity of the gown requires ... There is not a discordant note struck anywhere; if the frock is worn in a garden, the very flower-beds will be found to blend harmoniously or, on the other hand, to contrast admirably with the dress-maker's creation. Again should the pose be made in an interior, the curtains, perhaps, or the hangings, even the furniture itself, will be found to be an ideal blend that completes the artistic whole.⁷⁸

Sometimes colourful backdrops and surroundings function to accentuate garments in black and white; the colourlessness of the clothing constitutes the centre of the image and is contrasted against the colour of the model's skin and hair, as well as the multicoloured surroundings. [Plate 3]

Thus, the combinations and interrelationships of different colours in the fashion newsreel are displayed through careful and meticulous colour compositions.

Fashion newsreels did not disguise their advertising function, and listed the names of the designers and the department stores where the clothes displayed could be bought – in contrast to the use of product placement in the *mise-en-scène* of Hollywood films.⁷⁹ In addition, intertitles indicated designs, types of garments, materials, etc., yet the models wearing the clothes usually remained anonymous faces and bodies. While the fashion and film industries were often associated with stars, fashion newsreels usually did not feature motion picture stars as models (something which at times would be commented upon).⁸⁰ However, some fashion newsreels featured upper-class women and celebrities, and frequently indicated the names of the (usually female) 'fashion experts' organising and producing the films.⁸¹ Products on display were associated with the social class, status, and commercial attraction of these women, thereby offering images of social mobility and self-representation through clothing to female working class and middle class audiences.

Close-ups, poses, and looks: colour, performance, and self-representation

Jane Gaines has pointed out how costume takes place within the discourse of the image of woman as cultural and industrial 'construction', where the continuity between the female body and dress, between attire and femininity, underscores woman's dress as a form of self-representation.⁸² The fact that the fashion newsreel displays this type of self-representation through *moving* images is not unimportant. José Teunissen refers to the nineteenth-century representation of fashion drawings informed by an aesthetic that negated movement; the movement of the body had no importance and this also determined the style of dress. Through various artifices the female body and its movements were carefully hidden in order to obtain ideals in terms of profile and stature. Towards the end of the century this aesthetic changed radically, due in part to the impact of cinema and photography, as well as an increased fascination with movement in culture in general. Teunissen notes that Jacques Henri Lartigue was the first photographer who did not have his fashion models pose in a studio, but photographed them doing daily activities in the Bois de Boulogne. He links this practice to a new approach to the female body – one

that is more physical and mobile; similarly, Paul Poiret's abandonment of the corset has been associated with the emancipation of women.⁸³

Within a relatively short period there was also a revolution in the approach to fashion: this radical change was documented by, and in numerous ways the result of, the cinema. Teunissen regards the tableaux of the fashion newsreel as a 'hinge' between the static aesthetics of the nineteenth century and the emerging dynamic aesthetics of the twentieth century, where careful colouring contributes to (or facilitates) making visible the clothes, as well as the bodies in motion wearing them. Films in the newsreel fashion genre are characterized by a presentational aesthetic, a direct address to the spectator similar to the cinema of attractions, with models posing and turning in front of the camera and looking directly into it. However, as Elizabeth Leese has shown in her brief discussion of the genre, the display of gowns sometimes progressed into a storyline built around the display.⁸⁴ With regard to the *Florence Rose* series, it was stated that 'a pretty story will be woven into each reel to increase the interest of the audience; the first instalment, titled *A Day with a Society Girl*, followed its protagonist 'from the time she wakes up in the morning until she leaves the Charity Bazaar that night'.⁸⁵ This practice is likely the result of the increased narrativization found in the broader contemporary film historical context, but Leese points out that although the early titles of the series indicated simple plots (such as *Weekend House Party* and *A Day in New York with Betty*), later titles (such as *The Season's Novelties* and *Style Information*) suggest a return to standard formulas for fashion newsreels.⁸⁶

Sometimes converging within the same scene, fashion newsreels combine narrative situations with poses in the tradition of the still image. In *Senaste modenytt från Paris* (Svenska Biografteatern, 1922) a woman arranges flowers, then immediately starts posing and looks straight into the camera. [Plates 1 and 4] Like the titles of many fashion newsreels, the presentation of these social, 'narrative', situations not only displays garments but also suggests how and when to wear them. On the other hand, the use of posing gave the spectator an opportunity to examine the garment, a type of scrutiny that took place in various media through the practices of tie-in promotional strategies. According to Charlotte Herzog, the intermedial nature of the preview

... facilitated an easy comparison between a [female spectator's] body type and the screen

model's. Noting how the dress would 'perform' could help the female viewer to decide whether or not her figure was suitable for the dress. If a woman was persuaded by the fashion preview that the dress complimented or flattered her, she could refer back to the newspaper for more information, such as department store advertisements indicating where similar outfits were for sale.⁸⁷

Scrutiny of this kind was made possible not only by the model's posing, but also through a number of cinematic devices, such as the close-up, which along with notions of 'visual access' and analysis produced a problematic of both the gaze and display of the female body, which to a certain extent becomes a commodity used in order to sell other commodities.

In some cases tilt movements scanned and scrutinized the body, as well as the details of the garment. [Plate 5] Similarly, the removal of a jacket could reveal previously unseen details of clothing underneath, in addition to displaying bare shoulders and arms. The display of clothes and of women wearing them is represented in these films through a dynamic use of distance and framing, from long shots of models placed within specific surroundings to close-ups and extreme close-ups fragmenting the body and giving visual access to (often multicoloured) details in the garments: embroidery, textures, etc. [Plates 2 and 6] As Herzog points out, both the details of clothing and the display of the body were important to female spectators, but there are visual and abstract qualities of these images that transcend the 'instructional' characteristics of the close-ups.

In addition to stencil colour and 'natural' colour, some early fashion newsreels featured other applied colour techniques, such as tinting and toning. In *Paris chaussures femmes aux Galeries Lafayette* (Pathé, 1912) close-ups of legs and feet wearing different shoes are toned in sepia, pink, blue and other colours. Here, the differentiation of colours is temporal rather than spatial: a montage effect, which is sensual rather than narrative, is constructed between the interplay of different colours. In the stencil-coloured *Damernas vårhattar* (*Ladies' Spring Hats*, Pathé, 1923) close-ups of hats with ornamented semi-transparent veils partly concealing a face, or embroidered stockings, or shoes, focus primarily on the abstract visual qualities of patterns and textures. [Plate 7]

There are several similarities between colour

and the close-up. As with the close-up, colour fragments the image by differentiating the spatial and compositional unity of the image through isolating, accentuating, and distinguishing objects. Jane Gaines refers to the close-up as a cinematic convention which has been associated with encouraging fetishization, and thus also the commodification of the body.⁸⁸ Marlene Dietrich for example, was frequently featured by Von Sternberg in close-ups and fragmented images of parts of her body – Dietrich's legs were also used for ads to sell stockings. In this case, the familiar image of the star being fragmented provided a subtle and subliminal mode of reinforcing the female body as a commodity associated with other commodities, the stockings.⁸⁹ Similar associations between photographic representation in colour and the female body can be found in a number of different contexts.

Steve Neale situates notions of the female body within the somewhat contradictory ideological discourses regarding nature, realism, spectacle, and art connected with colour and cinema:

Since women within patriarchal ideology already occupy the contradictory spaces of nature and culture (since they therefore evoke both the natural and the artificial) and since also they are marked as socially sanctioned objects of erotic looking, it is no wonder that from the earliest days of colour photography they function both as a source of spectacle of colour in practice and as a reference point for the use and promotion of colour in theory. The female body both bridges the ideological gap between nature and cultural artifice while simultaneously marking and focusing the scopophilic pleasure involved in and engaged by the use of colour in film.⁹⁰

Neale refers to the depiction of women in colour photographs from the 1910s and 1920s, as well as discourses about feminine beauty (both 'natural' and 'glamorous'), linking Technicolor with the female body and notions of the female star, lighting and make-up. Joshua Yumibe has also considered the early genre of hand-coloured 'serpentine dance' and how the coloured illumination of cloth, where the movement of colour is linked to the movement of the fabric, as well as the dancer's body, entails a colourful display of the moving female body.⁹¹

Within early feminist film theory Gaines traces two lines of descent that produced contrasting theories of body and costume: first, Laura Mulvey's influ-

ential notion of 'visual pleasure', a paradigm of voyeurism and fetishism positing a male spectator, and second the paradigm of the 'masquerade' (Mary Anne Doane), which functions as a supplement and reaction against the first paradigm.⁹² In many respects, the use of close-ups and models posing in front of the camera in fashion newsreels can be linked directly to Laura Mulvey's descriptions of the representation of the female body in Classical Hollywood cinema. That is, they function as spectacle by halting the narrative and, in terms of inscribing the spectator as a hypothetical subject within the film as text, imply a male gaze. However, the fashion newsreel genre obviously assumed a female audience – what Herzog has described as 'the critical "shopper's eye", the eye with which women measure themselves against store mannequins and size up the cut and line of the dress into which they project their (imaginary) bodies'.⁹³ The question remains whether or not the 'male look' merges with this kind of gaze. Herzog refers to 1930s film reviews pointing out how fashion-themed films would appeal to both female and male audiences – with women being interested in the clothes, and men in the models wearing them.⁹⁴

The nonfiction film from 1906 until World War I has been characterized by Tom Gunning in terms of what he calls a 'view aesthetic', that is, 'the way early actuality films were structured around presenting something visually, capturing and preserving a look or vantage point'.⁹⁵ Gunning's notion of the view is also applicable to fashion newsreels, in particular with regard to his discussion of the recurring 'returned looks' of people posing in front of the camera. Although the look entailed by the films examined by Gunning can be linked to 'colonial and sexist gazes', an important argument in Gunning's essay deals with how the act of looking nevertheless involves a variety of 'possible scenarios of dominance, curiosity, seduction, objectification and even identification'.⁹⁶ Hammerton argues that the direct look to the camera in fashion items 'marks a special relationship with the female viewer, a relationship characterised by sameness as opposed to difference', suggestive of a gaze into a mirror reflecting an ideal self.⁹⁷ In some of the 'narrative' situations found in the fashion newsreels, a notion of a 'female gaze', merging the categories of objectification and identification, is thematically integrated within a scene. For example, often two women display clothes in front of each other, both posing and turning for each other, as well as the

camera, till their looks meet, thereby supplementing their individual looks straight into the camera. Thus, the presence of two gazes is acknowledged – the camera's gaze and the 'diegetic' presence of an onlooker. In *Senaste modenytt från Paris* (Svenska Biografteatern, 1922) the two women eventually share a gaze as they both look at the pair of shoes that one of them is wearing. [Plate 8] The contested issue of women's relation to images of women is underscored, just as the colours of the fashion newsreel make the objects, garments, commodities and bodies of the image distinguishable from one another.

The films studied in this essay demonstrate how colour in cinema is in most cases an intermedial phenomenon, often having specific connection to other industries. The coloured fashion newsreel was part of a broader contemporary commercial and visual culture characterized by the increasing use of colour in commodities, and an emphasis on colour in marketing strategies. Colour in silent cinema was likewise achieved through a variety of technologies, sometimes photographic but usually related to colouring within other fields.

Returning to Dubois' notion of hybridization, within the fashion newsreel hybridization initially took place on a technical level, as colours in most of these films were external elements added to black and white photographic images. Likewise, the fashion newsreels can also be viewed as both instructional films – meticulously displaying knowledge of the latest fashion and its potential uses, achieved through *mise-en-scène*, cinematic devices such as the close-up, and precise colouring – and as aesthetic objects employing colour as a 'visual material of desire'.

In the fashion newsreel of the 1910s and 1920s colour functioned in terms of realism through the verisimilar colouring of specific objects, but often

also in terms of abstraction or affect, as 'pure' colour, as a quality in itself. It is usually difficult to separate these two seemingly contradictory functions when trying to describe colour in film images. In fashion newsreels this hybridity is also found in the *mise-en-scène*: social and narrative situations alternate with tableaux of poses, an ambiguous display of bodies, and direct address to the camera often within the same shot. The use of the presentational mode, and the emphasis on the visual, sensual, and abstract qualities of colour found in these films, recalls how colour functioned as spectacle in the earlier cinema of attractions, and also closely resembles experiments in colour abstraction in the work of Len Lye, Oskar Fischinger, and others – films that, just like the coloured fashion newsreels, often were funded as advertisements. These dual and simultaneous functions of verisimilitude, display, and abstraction demonstrate how colour as a stylistic element in film can be taken to the extreme in a number of seemingly opposite directions; colour is elemental in essentialist conceptions of cinema as 'total' realism or mimesis, as well as in conceptions of cinema as pure affect or abstraction.

Similarly, Ramsaye's description in 1926 of hand and stencil colour throughout cinema history as occurring 'only as a symptom of desire' can be linked to how colour functioned in the fashion newsreel on more than one level: first, the desire implicit in the visual reinforcement of the garments as well as the bodies on display through colour, and second, to William Leach's notion of colour as a visual material of desire taking part in the democratization of desire within consumer culture – where desire is not only linked to the specific garments and commodities on display, but also to the potential of these commodities as signifiers of social identity, emancipation, and social mobility.

Notes

1. See Tom Gunning, 'Colourful Metaphors: the Attraction of Colour in Early Silent Cinema', *Fotogenia* 1 (1994): 249–255
2. Referring to Ben Brewster, Tom Gunning has discussed the fact that 'many nonfiction films of 1910s, most especially travelogues, look surprisingly similar stylistically to nonfiction films from earlier periods'. See Tom Gunning, 'Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the "View" Aesthetic', in Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (eds), *Uncharted Territory:*

Essays on Early Nonfiction Film (Amsterdam: Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), 12.

3. Elizabeth Leese, *Costume Design in the Movies* (Bembridge: BCW Publishing Limited, 1976), 12.
4. See Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, 'Colour and the Construction of Film History in the *Catalogue of Kinema-color Film Subjects* (1912)', in Enrico Biasin, Roy Menarini and Federico Zecca (eds), *Le età del cinema / The Ages of Cinema* (Udine: Forum, 2008), 165–173.

5. Philippe Dubois, 'Hybridations et métissages: Les mélanges du noir-et-blanc et de la couleur', in Jacques Aumont (ed.), *La couleur en cinéma* (Milan/Paris: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta/Cinémathèque française, 1995), 77.
6. Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 97ff.
7. Bruno indicates that Elvira Notari did some of the hand colouring. According to Enzo Troianelli, however, Notari's husband Nicola, who was co-founder of Dora Films and worked as a cameraman, initially did the colouring. See Enza Troianelli, *Elvira Notari: pioniera del cinema napoletano (1875–1946)* (Rome: EUROMA Editrice Universitaria di Roma, 1989), 23ff. My thanks to Kim Tomadjoglou for this citation.
8. Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer, *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000), 180, 272ff. See also Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Color: An Aesthetic History of Applied Color Technologies in Silent Cinema* (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 2007), 177ff.
9. Yumibe, 59.
10. *Ibid.*, 206ff.
11. Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 12.
12. Jeanne Thomas Allen, 'Fig Leaves in Hollywood: Female Representation and Consumer Culture', in Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (eds), *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (New York/London: Routledge, 1990), 134.
13. Gunning, 'Colourful Metaphors', 250.
14. See Eirik Frisvold Hanssen, *Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema: Origins, Functions, Meanings* (Ph.D. diss., Stockholm University / Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), 45ff. A surviving early Kinemacolor test film, *Tartans of Scottish Clans* (G.A. Smith, Natural Color Kinematograph Company, 1906) features a sequence of Scottish tartans as a means to demonstrate the process.
15. Jacques Aumont, *Introduction à la couleur: des discours aux images* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1994), 17.
16. Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 79ff., 89ff. For criticism of the understanding of the stylistic development of Technicolor in the 1930s in terms of a gradual integration with Classical Hollywood cinema conventions, see Brian Price, 'Film Style, Period-Building, and Technological Determinism', in Biasin, Menarini and Zecca (eds), *Le età del cinema*, 387–392.
17. See John Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 117.
18. Aumont, 121.
19. Giovanna Fossati, 'When Cinema Was Coloured', *Tutti i colori del mondo: Il colore nei mass media tra 1900 e 1930 / All the Colours of the World: Colours in Early Mass Media, 1900–1930* (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 130ff.
20. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), 118.
21. Gage, 91.
22. See Adrian Bernard Klein, *Colour Cinematography* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1936), 308.
23. Yumibe, 140ff. See also Bruno, 106ff.
24. Gage, 31.
25. David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 22f.
26. *Ibid.*, 21ff.
27. Hanssen, *Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema*, 65ff.
28. Michel Pastoureau, *Dictionnaire des couleurs de notre temps: Symbolique et société* (Paris: Éditions Bonneton, 1992), 160ff.
29. *Ibid.*, 22f.
30. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours* [1810], trans. Charles Lock Eastlake [1840] (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1970), 326, 329. However, Goethe does not necessarily regard this reluctance as an expression of sophistication in itself; rather, the fact that women seemed to dress in white and men in black was due 'partly to weakness of sight, partly to the uncertainty of taste, which readily takes refuge in absolute negation'.
31. The relationship between clothing and 'ethnographic' representation in colour is also evident in the amount of images displaying colourful traditional dress in the autochromes from around the world featured in Albert Kahn's *Archives de la planète* project. See David Okuefuna, *The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn: Colour Photographs from a Lost Age* (London: BBC Books, 2008).
32. Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 1996), 10.
33. See Victoria de Grazia, Introduction to Part I: 'Changing Consumption Regimes', in Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (eds), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1996), 1ff.
34. These include Berry, *Screen Style*; the anthology *The Sex of Things*; the anthology *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*; Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the*

- Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1993).
35. Gunning, 'Colorful Metaphors', 250ff. For an examination of the relationship between colour and consumer culture during the period 1914–1934 within a broader cultural context, see Stephen Eskilson, 'Colour and Consumption', *Design Issues* 18:2 (Spring 2002): 17–29.
 36. See Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures: How They Are Made and Worked* (Philadelphia/London: J.B. Lippincott Company/William Heinemann, 1912), 289. See also Ezio Raimondi and Giuseppe Bertolucci, 'When the World Stopped Being Black and White', *Tutti i colori del mondo: Il colore nei mass media tra 1900 e 1930 / All the Colours of the World: Colours in Early Mass Media, 1900–1930* (Reggio Emilia: Edizioni Diabasis, 1998), 91.
 37. Yumibe, 29ff.
 38. John Seitz, 'Introduction', in Hal Hall (ed.), *Cinematographic Annual 1930, Volume One* (Hollywood: The American Society of Cinematographers, Inc., 1930), 17. See also Adrian Bernard Klein, *Colour-Music: The Art of Light* 1st edn (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1926), 28.
 39. 'Color in Industry', *Fortune* (February 1930): 85.
 40. Sumiko Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1994).
 41. *Ibid.*, 144, 177.
 42. Gunning, 'Colorful Metaphors', 252.
 43. Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1999), 40ff.
 44. William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Viking, 1993), 8f.
 45. *Ibid.*, 9.
 46. *Ibid.*
 47. *Ibid.*, 93.
 48. *Ibid.*, 93; Berry, 1ff.
 49. Leach, 91.
 50. See Higashi, 176.
 51. Leach, 101ff.
 52. *Ibid.*, 102.
 53. Berry, 55.
 54. *Ibid.*, xiii.
 55. For a discussion of the rise of women buyers, see Leach, 95ff; also Therése Andersson, *Beauty Box: Filmstjärnor och skönhetskultur i det tidiga 1900-talets Sverige* (Ph.D. diss., Stockholm University / Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), 13ff.
 56. Friedberg, 36.
 57. Berry, xv.
 58. *Ibid.*, 11.
 59. Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 224. See also Stamp, 122ff.
 60. 'Dress and the Picture', *Moving Picture World* 7: 2 (9 July 1910): 73ff.
 61. Stamp, 18ff.
 62. Stamp, 24. For a discussion of tie-in advertising, see Charles Eckert, 'The Carole Lombard in Macy's Window' [1978], in Gaines and Herzog, 100–121. For a discussion of cinema, fashion and advertising in a Swedish context, see Ylva Habel, *Modern Media, Modern Audiences: Mass Media and Social Engineering in the 1930s Swedish Welfare State* (Stockholm: Aura förlag, 2002), 97–104.
 63. Jane Gaines, 'The Queen Christina Tie-Ups: Convergence of Show Window and Screen', *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 11, 4 (1989): 35.
 64. 'Fashions on Film: A Chat with the Creator of the "Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette"', *The Picture Theatre Magazine* (22 November 1913): 211.
 65. Quoted in Leese, 9.
 66. Charlotte Herzog, "'Powder Puff' Promotion: The Fashion-Show-in-the-Film', in Gaines and Herzog, 134.
 67. 'Pathé Fashion Film to Have Wide Publicity', *Moving Picture World*, 22 July 1916: 640. See also Janet Staiger, 'Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising', *Cinema Journal* 29:3 (Spring 1990): 11.
 68. See 'The Gaumont Chronochrome' *Moving Picture World* (28 June 1913): 1346. See also Paolo Cherchi Usai, 'Le miracle de Chronochrome', *Cinémathèque* 3 (1993): 91.
 69. Bregtje Lameris, 'Pathécolor: "Perfect in Their Rendition of the Colours of Nature"', *Journal of the Popular and Projected Image Before 1914* 2, 2 (2003): 46ff. See also Hanssen, *Early Discourses on Colour and Cinema*, 58ff.
 70. 'A Boom in Kinemacolor: Big Changes and Additional Attractions', *The Kinematograph & Lantern Weekly*, 9 December 1909: 274. See also Emily Crosby and Linda Kaye (eds), *Projecting Britain: The British Guide to Cinemagazines* (London: British Universities Film & Video Council, 2008), 161; 'The Scala Theatre', Kinemacolor supplement to *The Kinematograph & Lantern Weekly* (26 September 1912); 'Kin Starts New Series', *Variety* (17 October 1913): 14; 'Fashions of To-Morrow: Dresses Photographed for

- Kinemacolor', *Pall Mall Gazette* (5 September 1913); 'Fashions on Film: A Chat with the Creator of the "Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette"', *The Picture Theatre Magazine* (22 November 1913): 211ff; Luke McKernan (ed.), *A Yank in Britain: The Lost Memoirs of Charles Urban, Film Pioneer* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 1999), 79. The cinemagazine was a format similar to the newsreel but differing in subject matter and address, often released on a weekly basis and focusing on fashion and similar topics rather than 'hard' news stories. In fact, the first British cinemagazine for women is considered to be the *Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette* in 1913. See Jenny Hammerton, *For Ladies Only? Eve's Film Review, Pathé Cinemagazine 1921-33* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2001), 8, 17ff.
71. Review of *Paris Fashions*, *Variety* (7 March 1913).
72. 'Kinemacolor Arranged for Ladies Only', unsourced New York review, 10 May 1913, Charles Urban papers, National Media Museum, Bradford, volume 3/1.
73. *The Bioscope*, 28 April 1921, quoted in Hammerton, 11. Hammerton (136, note 2) briefly mentions the use of stencil colour for fashion items in cinemagazines. See also Emily Crosby, 'The "Colour Supplement" of the Cinema: The British Cinemagazine, 1918-1938', *Projecting Britain*, 10ff.
74. See Lameris, 'Pathécolor': 54.
75. For a discussion the popularity of exotic and often spectacular décor in fashion show, see Leach 102ff.
76. Just as clothes, jewellery and similar coloured commodities were the topic for fashion actuality films in colour, films about coloured wallpapers (which were produced by stencil printing, a technique similar to the stencil colouring of films) were produced in both Kinemacolor and Pathécolor. The Kinemacolor production *Choosing the Wallpaper: A Very Severe Test of Color Photography* (1909), displayed differently patterned wallpapers as a means to, as the title suggests, demonstrate the capabilities of the colour process. The stencil coloured Pathé production of twenty years later, *Le home moderne* (Pathé Revue, 1929), seems more focused on selling a product; it features wallpapers in a number of different rooms, with intertitles emphasising the 'perfect harmony of style and colouring between the furniture and the wallpaper' ['parfaite harmonie de style et de coloris entre le mobilier et le papier peint'].
77. Leach, 317.
78. 'Fashions on Film: A Chat with the Creator of the "Kinemacolor Fashion Gazette"', 211ff.
79. Berry, 13.
80. See Hugh Hoffman, 'New York Fashion Show in Pictures', *Moving Picture World* 18: 1 (4 October 1913): 32.
81. See 'A Boom in Kinemacolor: Big Changes and Additional Attractions', *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (9 October 1913): 2556. See also 'Kin Starts New Service'.
82. See Jane Gaines, 'Introduction: Fabricating the Female Body', in Gaines and Herzog, 1ff.
83. José Teunissen 'La moda in movimento', *Cinegrafie* 3, 6 (1993), quoted in *Il Cinema Ritrovato* program, Bologna, 1993, 23ff.
84. Leese, 9ff.
85. 'Pathé Fashion Film to Have Wide Publicity', 640.
86. Leese, 11ff.
87. Herzog, 134.
88. Gaines, 'Introduction', 22f.
89. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16, 3 (1975).
90. Steve Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (London/Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1985), 152.
91. Yumibe, 106f.
92. Gaines, 'Introduction', 21ff.
93. Herzog, 159.
94. *Ibid.*, 157.
95. Gunning, 'Before Documentary', 14.
96. *Ibid.*, 20.
97. Hammerton, 55, 66-74.

Abstract: Symptoms of desire: colour, costume, and commodities in fashion newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s, by Eirik Frisvold Hanssen

This essay demonstrates how the stylistic use of colour in fashion newsreels of the 1910s and 1920s was derived and modified from earlier attractions-based film practices with regard to narrative integration and spectacle, and also related to conventions associated with the later narrative cinema. It places the use of colour in fashion newsreels within a broader visual and commercial context by exploring how contemporary cultural connotations associated with colour in relation to the terms 'primitive' and 'feminine' were both adopted and problematized in a film genre specifically addressing female spectators.

Key words: colour film, Kinemacolor, Pathécolor, motion picture newsreels, consumerism, fashion



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